



Sport and Intergroup Relations Youth Sport Summit September 24, 2014

Dr. Jon Welty Peachey

Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Sport's Role



- UN Office of Sport for Development and Peace
- Sport-for-Development (SFD): “The use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youths, and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution” (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011, p.311).
- Sport as one engine of development (Levermore, 2011).

Why Sport?



- Sport can be a place where boundaries and stereotypes are overcome and persons from different backgrounds and cultures actually draw nearer to one another.
- Literature suggests sport initiatives have the potential to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and contribute to peace-building efforts (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011; Sugden, 2008; Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012; Welty Peachey et al., 2014)



Intergroup Contact Theory

- Intergroup contact used to explain how relations among groups that are experiencing conflict can be improved.
- Ability to collaborate and share ideas leads to increased understanding and appreciation of different points of view. This can lead to diminished prejudice and stereotyping (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; 2006).
- Four criteria must be present: Equal status, common goals, acquaintance potential, support of authorities.
- Sport and intergroup contact potential.



Sport-for-Development Theory

- Utility of sport depends upon HOW programs are designed, structured, and implemented.
- SFD interventions and programs should be organized around 5 components (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011):
 - Organizational
 - Sport
 - Educational
 - Cultural
 - Impacts assessment



Example – Doves Olympic Movement



- Olympism used to target improved intergroup relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriot youth.
- Reduced prejudice and negative stereotypes, fostered cultural understanding (Lyras, 2012).



World Scholar-Athlete Games (WSAG) – Targeting Local Actions through Global Interventions



- 2,500 high school scholar-athletes from 175 countries
- Held every four years
- Features sport competitions, cultural and educational activities
- ***Mission*** is to bring together the future leaders of the world to break down stereotypes, foster peace and understanding, and effect attitudinal and social change



WSAG Findings



- Sport played a role in prejudice reduction and change agent self-efficacy (Welty Peachey et al., 2014).
- Educational and cultural components work in tandem with sport.



Other Initiatives



- Israel
- Northern Ireland
- Sri Lanka

Challenges



- Neo-colonial agenda of many SFD organizations
- Mantra that sport is all powerful and can solve all issues (evangelical rhetoric) – where is the evidence?
- Difficulty in conducting long-term assessments and showing impact
- Mission drift of SFD organizations
- Isolation/skepticism from mainstream development organizations

Conclusions



- Sport can be effective at helping to improve intergroup relations, and in reducing prejudice and stereotypes, provided careful and strategic thought is given to the design and implementation of the sport program.
- Non-traditional sport may be more effective in some instances.
- Sport should be used in complement to educational and cultural activities for optimal effect.