World Peace and Sustainable Tourism Development: Promoting Dialogue through the Commerce of Sports - The Case of the Special Olympics

By

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Abstract

Today, the commerce of sports is expanding not only the number of international mega sporting events but also the strategic value of sports-related business in the promotion of international dialogue and advancement of world peace. Support of and participation in sports can transcend political, sociocultural, and economic barriers globally. As spectators and athletes come together on a scale larger than ever before, national and local governments must collaborate with non-government, private, and non-profit sectors to develop and implement policies in support of sustainable forms of tourism that benefit local communities, nations, and international alliances alike.

This paper examines the potential to facilitate dialogue to advance peace through world sports and identifies past achievements in conflict resolution and increased knowledge exchange following an international sporting event. The research includes comparative critical analysis of several major mega-sports events case studies, such as the development and sustained growth of Special Olympics (SO). This paper highlights the SO for its transformative power on a global scale. Over the past four decades, Special Olympics, and particularly its World Games, had led to increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and socialization of participants—characteristics essential to the foundation of strong civilizations. In this light, his paper also explores past, present, and future international mega-sports events such as the 2008-2009 regular season National Basketball Association and National Football League games in London, the 2009 World Baseball Classic held in multiple destinations worldwide, and the upcoming 2010 World Cup in South Africa, 2012 Summer Olympics in London, and 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, among others. These upcoming events offer opportunities to address past challenges to dialogue for peace using new collaboration strategies through sports commerce. The paper also examines aspects of international leadership in sports through review of renowned sports broadcasters such as Jim McKay in the US, among other international figures.

This paper concludes with a summary and recommendations for tourism policy-makers and international sports organizations to support both existing approaches and new strategies for promoting peace through the commerce of sports.

KEY WORDS: peace, policy, ethics, social change, commerce, dialogue, global, world, government, international relations, tourism, sports tourism, mega-sports, soccer, cricket, baseball, basketball, football, Olympics, Special Olympics, World Cup, South Africa, China, Shanghai, Ireland, London, Los Angeles, Boise, Idaho, NFL, MLB, leadership, Jim McKay.
“Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”
Special Olympics Athlete Oath

Introduction and Overview

Today, the commerce of sports is expanding not only the number of international mega-sporting events but also the strategic value of sports-related commerce in the promotion of international dialogue and advancement of world peace. Support for and participation in the business of sports are transcending political, sociocultural, and economic barriers globally. As spectators and athletes come together on a scale larger than ever before, national and local governments must collaborate internationally with non-government, private, and non-profit sectors to develop and implement international policies in support of sustainable forms of tourism, now inclusive of mega-sports events, that benefit local communities, nations, and the formation of global alliances and coalitions regarding public health and wellbeing.

This paper examines the potential to facilitate dialogue to advance peace through world sports, and identifies past achievements in conflict reduction and increased knowledge exchange leading up to and following international sporting events. The research provides several major mega-sports events examples, with particular a focus on the development and sustained growth of Special Olympics (SO) which this research posits has become one of the most powerful emerging forces for social change and dialogue for world peace in the world today. This research highlights the history and growth of SO in evidence of its transformative power on a global scale. It provides mini-case studies on SO Ireland (2003), Shanghai (2007), and Boise, Idaho (2009) World Games as a laboratory for this critical analysis.

In a similar context, this research briefly mentions other present and future international mega-sports events in football, baseball, soccer, and summer Olympic Games. Finally, this research briefly
examines related aspects of international leadership in sports through interviews with New York University sports faculty members regarding renowned sports figures such as US sports broadcaster Jim McKay, athletic teams, and individual athletes. The paper concludes with a summary and recommendations for tourism policy-makers and international organizations to support both existing approaches and new strategies for promoting peace through the commerce of sports.

**Relevant Literature**

Mega-sporting events have captured the attention of millions of spectators, and as a result have been the medium by which many organizations and individuals have promoted their cause. Television, film, and now Internet display not only the sporting events themselves but also the demonstrations that often coincide with opening or closing ceremonies for these events. Demonstrators understand the magnitude of media coverage mega-sporting events receive and often choose to highlight the need for issue resolution (environmental, social equity, justice, and human rights concerns, etc.) and peace when the cameras come their way.

While scholarly literature on sports tourism and peace is neither extensive nor long-standing, the proliferation of scholarly research on this and related topics in recent times merits notice. In addition to those referenced in-text, acknowledgement of several recent authors and titles include Parent and Sequin (2008), “Toward a Model of Brand Creation for International Large-scale Sporting Events,” Vijayakar (2004) “India, Pakistan to Play Cricket for Peace in Sharjah,” among others. The recent advent of scholarly research journal articles on such subjects further highlights this trend.

The Special Olympics organization’s prolific documentation of their World Games series has identified connections between involvement in Special Olympics activities and increased awareness of those affected by intellectual disabilities and their improvements in physical health and social development worldwide. Still, a clear connection between sports commerce and the facilitation of meaningful dialogue toward peace in areas of conflict has not yet been clearly identified. Though there is a wealth of existing research on the impact of participation in sports in general across a vast array of
subjects -- leadership, academic performance, career success, self-confidence, social development, etc. - research identifying a correlation between sports commerce and peace is scarce.

There is an abundance of literature attempting to link participation in sports and leadership development. In one such study, Rayburn, Goetz, and Osman (2001) describe dynamics between sports and leadership in men and women. Useful for its discussion on skills associated with peacemaking or peacekeeping such as negotiating, planning, and communicating, the study shows that participants are more influenced by their peers in a sporting environment than by family members in the home setting. Still, it is unrelated to sports commerce and peace. Extejt and Smith (2004) compared high school sports team membership and participation with seven levels of leadership skills and, counter to common belief, found no correlation. This leads one to question whether something greater is at work in the creation of potential links between the commerce of sports and the seeming emergence of dialogue for peace today versus sports participation alone. While other literature (Hall, Forrester, and Borsz, 2008) refutes Extejt and Smith’s findings, their work does elevate the question of leadership through sports commerce to a different playing field. Spangler and Vinluan (2006) advocate public leadership for parks and recreation organizations to advance their leadership roles in convening public officials and community stakeholders to advance the business of child-centered youth sports through local to national public/private sports partnerships across the United States.

Some literature suggests that countries supporting international sporting competitions are strategically more focused on stimulating national pride and international dominance rather than maintaining positive relations with other countries (Allison, 2008). Allison points to the establishment of mega-sporting events by Nazi and Fascist governments, and later the U.S.S.R. as a show of force and success according to the quantity of medals won. In response, hosting and organizing mega-sporting events became part of British governmental policy. This decision was not born out of the desire to promote peace and cultural acceptance, but instead out of the felt need to be seen as a powerful leader. Johnson’s study (2003) supports the use of sports, namely the Freidenfahrt cycling races in East Germany in the 1950s, to create national identity, not international unity by demonstrating the unification of the
state and political influence through the races. In line with Johnson and Allison, Jones (2008) illuminates again the use of sports to establish national identity, or a national brand, during international events rather than for the purpose of intercontinental accord. An earlier work, Smith (1996), echoes Johnson, Allison, and Jones by challenging the notion that the Olympics are a stage for forging peaceful dialogue, ironically based on observances during the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta during which security against terrorism took center stage.

Despite promising titles, some works lack the detail desired to better understand the relationship between peace and sports. In “Peace and Understanding through Sport: An International Symposium in Ein Ged, Israel” (Pfister, 2001) describes only the topics covered, attendees, and sponsorship of the event. Reid’s “Olympic Sport and Lessons for Peace” (2006) is idealistic and detached from real-world scenarios that introduce complexities not considered in the article. Both articles are suited for an introduction to the consideration of peace through sports, but they fail to establish proof of a bond.

Closest in scope and substance to the peace and sports topic of the literature reviewed, Ogi’s “Sports Are a Tool for Global Social Change” (2005) specifies impacts of United Nations-sponsored sports programs in Kenya, Jordan, United States, and Canada. Though not a scholarly piece, the examples identified by Ogi are useful in building a case for the promotion of sports programs for relief of social ills such as HIV/AIDS infection, decrease in school dropout rates, and other positive health and education-related issues. To fully explore the relationship between peace and sports, further research and published documentation are required as evidenced by the dearth of literature linking or disproving strong and valid association between the two subjects.

**Research Rationale**

The rationale for using qualitative methodologies for this research is because the relationships examined linking international relations interactions surrounding the commerce of mega-sports with dialogue for peace are complex and little studied. Qualitative data collection methodologies including intensive interviews and comparative case studies best serve the purpose of this type of formative research enabling greater access to and understanding from comparative critical analysis. For example, it is not just about a
number, RevPAR in hotel occupancy and revenue statistics, or RBIs (runs batted in) for baseball players. It is about recognizing emerging interactions and relationships. Interviews unveil the emerging phenomena of dialogue in the interest of peace, which happen to be centered in the common ground of sports. The study of sports tourism and the meaning of leadership in sports are emerging fields, rooted in sociology, the study of people within societies in the context of commerce they conduct. For primary data collection, Professors Robert A. Boland and Michael J. Cramer, New York University Sports Business faculty members in the NYU Preston Robert Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism, and Sports Tourism, New York, New York, USA, were interviewed to obtain their views on the growth of megasports and sports tourism, the evidence of resulting dialogue for peace, and the meaning of leadership in sports over time.

Case study materials for this research stem from secondary sources, and especially through collaboration with Andrea Cahn, co-author and Special Olympics Director of Project Unify, and SO research division. Additionally, characteristic of the openness of the Special Olympics organization at large, many valuable and pertinent materials relating to this study were readily available in public domain through the SO website. Data from scholarly and trade journals, the Internet, and mass media also assisted in supporting case study findings. To the degree available, quantitative data in terms of megasports attendance, growth figures, projections, etc., are also incorporated.

**Special Olympics Case Study— A Force for Peace through Social Change**

**Why Special Olympics?**

What government, UN peacekeeping organization, or international affairs committee has the power of access and distribution of 230 mega-event programs in 180 economies, with a growth rate of 14% in 2007? Unbeknownst to many, Special Olympics is the world’s largest sports organization. Founded in 1968, it now manages yearly over 21,000 competitions, 230,000 coaches, 6,000,000 family members, and 750,000 volunteers worldwide. All this is in support of what has grown to be over 2,900,000 intellectually disabled athlete participants worldwide (75% outside the USA) -- and in 2008, 550,000 in
USA; 500,000 in China; 210,000 in India; 4,400 in Rwanda, and 600 in Afghanistan, to name only a few nations. Key principles from the SO philosophy and mission statement (publicly available through the SO website) include, among others, those inherent in doctrines supporting sustainable tourism, e.g., (1) “that all SO activities – at the local, state/provincial, national and internationals – reflect the values, standards, traditions, ceremonies and events embodied in the modern Olympic movement to broaden moral and spiritual qualities and enhance dignity and self-esteem,” and (2) “that, although SO is primarily a program of sports training and competition, efforts are made to offer athletes a full range of artistic, social and cultural experiences through activities such as dances, art exhibits, concerts, visits to historic sites, clinics, theatrical performances and similar events.”

In consideration of this, several research questions arise regarding the potential role of mega-sports events, including SO World Games competitions, in supporting dialogue for peace and social change through the commerce of sports. These questions include: Can we apply sports commerce concepts to promotion of peace/public diplomacy? Can we harness the power/potential of emerging forms of “goodwill” tourism, such as voluntourism, health tourism, pro-poor tourism, agritourism, for example, in service to local through global causes, such as sustainable tourism’s role in climate change mediation?

Special Olympics Research Evaluation of the Effectiveness of SO Programs

An NGO headquartered in Washington, DC, USA, Special Olympics has conducted extensive research over recent years in recognition of the fact that the general public has minimal exposure to individuals with intellectual disabilities and, despite its global presence, has limited awareness of the size and scope of the Special Olympics organization itself and its activities. Through a variety of exhaustive studies publically available through their website, SO has determined that worldwide, most of the public (52%) know a person with intellectual disabilities (ID) – in other words, 11%, 12%, and 29% of the public, respectively, have a family member, work with someone, or know a non-family member with ID. Worldwide, the public has little awareness of SO with only 40% aware and 20% involved in SO. In the US and Ireland (where the 2003 SO World Games were held), however, 90% are aware and 60%
involved. In general, SO learned that the public confuses Special Olympics with other sports organizations, as indicated in a study of South Africa. The public does not think about ID or intellectual disabilities regarding people with “disabilities.” There is some encouragement regarding increasing awareness in SO research evaluations of the effectiveness of their programs and competitions for youth with ID; for example, 70% of US youth and 50% of Japanese youth know a person with ID. (SO is headquartered in the US, and the 2005 World Games were held in Nagano, Japan.) Furthermore, 77% of US youth and 35% of Japanese youth have heard of Special Olympics.

Research carried out by SO in conjunction with the 2003 Ireland and 2005 Japan World Games, while limited in scope, presents preliminary evidence about the role Special Olympics plays in changing attitudes -- indicating that the World Games events can help challenge stereotypes of inability and raise awareness as to the broad ranging capabilities of people with intellectual disabilities. In this regard, if involvement in the commerce of sports (and by extension sports tourism) - and especially those aspects dedicated to environmental, sociocultural, and economic sustainability, goodwill, and the wellbeing of others - increases youth awareness and acceptance of differences among peoples, these early SO research findings bode well for emergence of peacekeepers among the next generation of future world leaders.

Special Olympics Regional Collaboration Center – Wenzhou, China

As early as 2003, the Special Olympics and Wenzhou Medical College, Wenzhou, China, joined forces in the establishment of the Special Olympics Regional Collaborating Center to hold a training event for research and education to change the social environment of the upcoming SO 2007 World Games in China. As it turned out, going forward, the formation of this unique relationship has enhanced the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities throughout the world in terms of global healthcare provision. This initiative created a base of trained health professionals to expand the SO Healthy Athlete program (for health screenings) begun in 2003 for implementation throughout China in 2004. Tied to this was an aggressive ID athlete growth campaign launched by SO China with Chinese government support to increase SO athlete participation in China from 50,000 to 500,000 by 2005. “As Special Olympics continues to grow throughout the world, it is essential that we have the best institutions engaged in
supporting our Movement,” said SO Chairman and CEO Timothy Shriver, Ph.D. “With the establishment of Regional Collaborating Center like Wenzhou Medical College, we will be able to utilize the expertise of educators, health professionals, and researchers to expand the Movement by improving the quality of life of individuals with intellectual disabilities, as well as help change the world through social acceptance around understanding” (Special Olympics News, 2003).

Special Olympics 2007 Shanghai World Games

Special Olympics has been present in China for over 20 years; however, growth in the numbers of Chinese SO athletes over the last five years is staggering – from 60,000 in 2003 to over 500,000 by 2008. In the 2008 Paralympic Games (for the physically disabled) in Beijing which generally follow the Olympic Games, there were 4,000 athletes. Special Olympics Chairman Timothy Shriver met with Chinese Vice Premier Hui Liangyu during the Paralympics in Beijing on September 6, 2008. Vice Premier Hui said to Shriver, “The Special Olympic World Games last year and the Paralympic Games in Beijing will serve as a platform for people with disabilities from around the world to realize their dreams. The two Games will also further understanding and promote the well-being of people with a disability in China.” Hui praised SO’s efforts to expand the movement globally and continue its efforts in China and in enhancing bilateral cooperation for further progress. In 2008, China was the largest Special Olympics Program in the world, with more than 600,000 athletes (Special Olympics News, 2008). By 2009, the number of SO athletes in China is projected to exceed 700,000.

The Special Olympics 2003 Ireland and 2007 Shanghai World Games were broadcast to millions of homes, and the immediate impacts of the Games were documented by the Special Olympics shortly following the events. Among the outcome described is the “Ireland Effect” (Norins et al, 2007), a term coined to describe the forces set in motion during the SO Ireland World Games to foster an environment of acceptance, free of fear, prejudice, embarrassment, and indifference which lasts after the Games have ended. In this environment, respect and understanding are encouraged, as participants and spectators learn to appreciate and celebrate small differences and identify common ground.
The Special Olympics held its 2007 World Games in summer in Shanghai, China, marking the first time the SO World Summer Games had been held in Asia. Following is a chart illustrating the Special Olympics goals in stimulating athlete growth in SO East Asia programs:

**Table 1 – Special Olympics East Asia Growth Target**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S0 PROGRAM</th>
<th>2008 GOAL</th>
<th>2009 (projected)</th>
<th>2010 (projected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athletes</td>
<td>873,108</td>
<td>976,676</td>
<td>1,078,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>57,270</td>
<td>67,370</td>
<td>77,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Families</td>
<td>13,020</td>
<td>14,200</td>
<td>15,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REGIONAL TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>943,398</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,058,246</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,171,606</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Shanghai Games were at the invitation of China to host a major world mega-sports event as a dress rehearsal for China’s readiness for the upcoming 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics and as a demonstration of China’s leadership in the underrepresented area of recognition and support for people with disabilities. For China, it also can be seen, in part, as a reflection of its new economic rise emblematic of the future yet with few outlets currently for charity.

**Conflict Reduction/Ceasefires Inspired by SO**

The SO Shanghai World Games was the largest sports event in the world in 2007 – with 9,000 athletes, 160 economies, 40,000 volunteers, plus thousands of athlete families, coaches, and spectators. China with 1,200 athletes had the largest delegation. Countries that have experienced the most desperate of conditions engulfed in war and political chaos – East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq, Myanmar, Cambodia, among others – competed in Shanghai (Special Olympics Annual Report, 2007). Throughout its 40-year
history, SO competitions have repeatedly proven that people of all backgrounds and ages can work
together peaceably to celebrate what they have with those in need, that intellectually disabled athletes and
their coaches, families, and fans, and volunteers can collaborate when they represent nations or areas that
have been divided:

In Beirut, Lebanon, the city halted a civil war so Special Olympic athletes could compete on the
streets. At the 1999 Special Olympics World Games, the Palestinian Authority competed side-
by-side with neighboring nations. In the Balkans, 500 athletes from 11 countries, including
Bosnia, competed in the first-ever Southeast Europe Friendship Games. And most recently, Iraq
and Afghanistan have been gathering SO teams to practice together. As a result, both countries
were able to send their first-ever delegations to the SO 2007 World Summer Games in Shanghai
(Special Olympics, 2009).

During the strife in Ireland, the Northern Ireland athletes were regularly allowed to travel across the line
of fire in order to be able to compete in SO Games and competitions. Ireland always competed in SO
World Games as one country, with athletes representing Northern Ireland on the same team. Similarly,
China and Chinese Taipei compete in the SO Games as individual delegations - a magnanimous gesture
on the part of China in honor of SO mission and vision. At the 2004 Middle East SO Regional Games in
Tunis, conflict factions in the region – through the neutrality of SO collaboration and leadership - came
together in creation of “safe zones” or cease fire areas to allow SO athletes to travel safely to and from SO
competitions. Iraq and Iran were both able to send intellectually disabled athletes, their families, and
coaches to regional SO Games in 2004, to Dubai in 2006, and to Abu Dhabi in 2008, even though travel
was unsafe. This was achieved largely through multilateral considerations made by various groups
through the auspices of SO.

In order to provide a cultural experience for the visiting athletes and their families, and a show of
welcome from the local community, for the 2007 World Games in China, Shanghai citizens opened their
residences for home-stays throughout the Games - one of the oldest forms of community-based
sustainable tourism. This incredible SO international mega-event featured not only sporting competition
but also a host of other unprecedented global policy setting activities. These included knowledge
exchanges between Chinese citizens and visiting Special Olympic athletes and their supporters on the
meaning of cultural exchange, the value of excelling despite the challenges of intellectual disabilities, and
the importance of organizations such as the Special Olympics in facilitating global exchange on mutually shared human goals and objectives. During the SO 2007 Shanghai World Games over 1,400 journalists from more than 120 nations were in attendance, generating over 10,000 stories in print, broadcast, and Internet media outlets worldwide. The Opening Ceremony helped the Games make an early global impact as the event was broadcast on China’s CCTV and other international broadcast outlets, enabling hundreds of millions of viewers throughout China and 80 other countries to watch the Games.

International media viewership via the Internet exceeded hundred million spectators. This occurred largely as a result of higher education collaboration for online coverage between Shanghai’s Fudan University and the University of North Carolina/USA faculty, students, and administrators. Through this partnership, these novice broadcasters enabled streaming video footage, though slightly delayed, of each day’s Game competitions over the Internet 24 hours a day.

Healthy Athletes Screening

The free “Healthy Athletes Screenings” program was implemented for the first time for all athletes to identify previously unknown health issues. The free program, launched in Shanghai with 19,000 health screenings, includes health, vision, dental, audiology, and physical therapy assessments – sponsored by such major global corporations as Lions International, Essilor International, The Safilo Group, Wal*mart, Coco-Cola, Bank of America, Starwood, DHL, Mattel, Midwest Trophy Manufacturing, Inc., The Proctor and Gamble Company, Minor League Baseball, PGA of America, and the United States Golf Association, among others. The Healthy Athletes Program, begun as an initiative in 1997, is now an institutionalized component of all SO competitions worldwide with enormous policy implications for amelioration of global health as a consequence:

Health Athletes has a presence in more than 100 countries. Its influence is evident with more than 76,000 healthcare full health screenings provided to more than 700,000 athletes, and 50,000 free pairs of eyeglasses given to athletes. And Healthy Athletes continues to grow each year with help from a global network of volunteers, in-kind donations and other financial support (Special Olympics, 2009).

The CDC (Center for Disease Control) and Lions Clubs International Foundation recently announced continued support for SO and its health and research efforts with funding commitments. CDC renewed a
five-year cooperative agreement with SO for services and education at US$4.34 million per year plus a five-year US$1 million per year research cooperative agreement. The Lions Clubs extended its seven-year US$9.1 million commitment to the SO-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes program, a vision program that has effectively provided more than 100,000 vision screenings to SO athletes and has provided more than 40,000 SO athletes with prescription eyeglasses, by earmarking an additional US$1 million in funding (Special Olympics Annual Report, 2007).

Global Policy Summit

Additionally, at the 2007 World Games, the SO convened its first ever Global Policy Summit in Shanghai. During the summit leaders from around the world - within government, academia, health care, sports and entertainment, corporate to small business enterprises, and philanthropic organizations - came together in an historic summit to discuss the challenges faced by millions worldwide with special needs. This represented an unprecedented leadership activity cross-over between celebrity prestige and financial resources.

The Vice Premier of China, Governor of California, Director of UNICEF, President and COO of the Coca Cola Company, Chairman of Special Olympics International, among others, addressed the crowd. The first ever Global Youth Summit was convened during the SO 2007 Shanghai World Games and telecast simultaneously on MTV in the United Kingdom to assemble youth with and without intellectual disabilities to inspire and educate each other. Out of this has sprung the SO policy for “Unified Football” in which youth with intellectual disabilities as young as age eight years old have the opportunity to play sports on soccer teams with peers without intellectual disabilities. Other Policy Summit outcome included a convening of world-wide leaders from government, academia, health care, sports, business, and philanthropic organizations -- China’s President Hu Jintao and Vice Premier Hui Liangyu, Shanghai Party Secretary Xi Jinping, actors Jackie Chan, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, hoopster Yao Ming, and other Chinese senior officials plus the Governor of California, Director of UNICEF, President and COO of Coca Cola, and Chairman of Special Olympics International to discuss challenges faced by those with special needs.
Unified Sports

As a direct result, Italian Inter Milan, one of the world’s leading icons in global football (soccer), in February, 2009, teamed up with SO through its Unified Sports concept to promote human dignity and support for young people with intellectual disabilities. Led by Javier Zanetti, Inter’s legendary Argentinean star, the team will involve its fans in Italy and around the world in support of those becoming donors to SO’s Global Football initiative. SO Global Football is supported by soccer greats such as Osvaldo (Ossie) Ardiles, Gerard Houllier, Doris Fistchen, and Christine Lilly. In Africa, SO is now a partner with FIFA’s Football for Hope movement incorporating united teams. The SO Team Ambassador Program targets inclusion of the ten top football clubs worldwide by 2010 with the philosophy that what is good for the elite clubs, local communities, and unified soccer teams and players provides an important social role worldwide.

The 2007 SO Shanghai policy document, entitled the Well-Being of People with Intellectual Disabilities, had nearly 70 signatories and was a statement of support for the growth of the Special Olympics and the positive impact of sports training focusing on health care, education, recreational sports and employment policies especially in Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, El Salvador, Jamaica, Panama, and Uzbekistan.

SO Family Summit, Get Into It, Be a Fan, Fans in the Stands, Cheer Team Programs

Additionally, the SO held a Family Summit in Shanghai with 43 delegates from 40 countries to expand the Family Support Networks involving SO athlete parents and family members in collecting and sharing family stories and parenting information. The School Enrichment Program, prior to the 2007 Games, engaged 1.6 million youth representing 2,500 primary, intermediate, and secondary schools throughout all 19 Shanghai districts– and 50,000 teachers in the SO Get Into It program. These activities, with descriptions now publicly available on the SO website, supported establishment of Be a Fan, Fans in the Stands, and Cheer Teams programs.

Over the past four decades, Special Olympics World Games have led to increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and socialization of participants– characteristics essential to the foundation of
strong civilizations. For host communities such as China, support for the Special Olympics movement resulted in the construction of a hospital in Beijing for children with intellectual disabilities, among other significant outcome – the first of its kind in the developing world – all within a year following the 2007 SO Shanghai World Games.

Special Olympics 2009 World Winter Games – Boise, Idaho, USA

In September, 2008, the U.S. Department of Education awarded a $4.4 million grant to fund Project Unify, promoting and funding community- and school-based Unified Sports teams in various sports throughout the US with the motto: “On the field we’re teammates. Off the field we’re friends” (Swift, 2009, p. 12). In February, 2009, Boise, Idaho, hosted one of the largest winter sporting events ever and the largest sporting event in the world in 2009. Over 2,400 athletes with intellectual disabilities from 107 nations competed in alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, snowboarding, figure skating, speed-skating, floor hockey, and snowshoeing on mostly unified teams making the SO winter mega-sports event larger than the 2002 Salt Lake City, USA, and 2006 Torino, Italy, Winter Olympics.

There were many “firsts” in Idaho, including between 300 and 500 athletes in Boise, says SO Chairman Tim Shriver, “seeing snow for the first time” (Swift, p.12). Unified floor hockey dominated the events with 1,175 athletes competing. Speaking of the teams from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Somalia, Iran, and India, Shriver says, “They’ve been practicing over sand in the desert” (p. 12). Other “first-evers” in Boise (SO World Games Updates, 2009) included:

- Honduras, India, Uruguay – first time female floor hockey teams
- Jamaica – first SO floor hockey athlete
- Somalia, Comoro Islands, and Djibouti – first time representation (snowshoeing) in a SO World Games with latter two the newest SO Programs in the Middle East/North Africa region
- Saudi Arabia – first time competition in SO Winter Games
- SO athlete officials
  - Greatest representation of athlete officials (outside of host Program) for SO Winter Games
  - Bharat, India – first floor hockey athlete official
  - South Africa – first SO athlete official
- Curling – first demonstration as potential new SO sport
- Snowshoeing – largest number of snowshoeing athletes at a World Winter Games
- Global Youth Assembly of Delegates
  - Largest ever gathering with 20 countries and over 130 young leaders
  - First assembly to vote on motions of activation
• Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) – first Challenge Day at SO World Games
• SO College – first global launch for university-based volunteerism, advocacy, and fundraising
• Athlete health and health behaviors – initiation of multiyear, longitudinal study in conjunction with University of Illinois (Chicago), Center for Disease Control, Sunray Company, Fudan Company, and Healthone.

Furthermore, the 2009 SO Winter World Games pumped over $35 million into the Boise economy during a period of global economic downturn from sales of small ticket items such as Idaho huckleberry tea, coffee mugs, and locally made jewelry to high-priced women’s fashion clothing. “The spending is happening in most downtown stores – what would typically be a slow month after the Christmas rush, is helping retailers get through the hard times” (Bilboa, 2009, p.). Boise downtown business owners say they would like to see more events, more venues of all types come into the capitol city to bring more money to the economy (SO World Games Updates, 2009).

Leadership in the Business of Sports

Athletes, coaches, and sports organizations have been instrumental in raising issues to the forefront on a global level. When these individuals and organizations use their fame positively, they have the potential to foster change which may result in an improvement of the quality of life for the world’s citizens. It also can have a positive impact on both social and community development.

Tiger Woods, for example, as a sports leader, is at present the world’s best-known and admired golf champion. The charitable organization he established – The Tiger Woods Foundation – has funded grants and scholarships for children and children’s character development programs across the world in an amount of over $30 million. Also notable for their international presence are US Olympic gymnastics coaches Bela and Marta Karolyi who defected to the US in 1981 from Hungary. The couple has enjoyed a successful gymnastic coaching career, training Romanian and American teams to gold medal performances. Their sports leadership style in athletic training, persistence, and triumph over adversity has become a key element in the development of training programs for athletes in various sports disciplines across the world.
On an organizational level, the International Institute for Sport is playing a leading role in shaping the character of athletes internationally. The organization has hosted membership lectures on leadership given by a Nobel Laureate, US Senator, former US President, and former US Secretary of State, among others. The Institute, in conjunction with the World Youth Peace Summit, aims to advance education, athletics, and understanding of all cultures worldwide through sports.

To further examine the emergence of mega-sports events as commerce or the business of sports in the context of peace, co-author Sybil Ford interviewed New York University sports faculty members Robert A. Boland, Esq., and Michael J. Cramer, Esq. Following are their remarks pertaining to international leadership in sports as it relates to renowned sports media figures, athletic teams, and athletes.

Professors Bob Boland and Mike Cramer, in the New York University Preston Robert Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism, and Sports Management, suggest there are links between social tolerance or social acceptance through participation and leadership in sports. In interviews in December, 2008, and February, 2009, respectively, Professor Bob Boland and Professor Mike Cramer were asked about sports leadership and whether sports can facilitate dialogue for peace. Both agreed that the Olympics, Special Olympics, as well as other smaller-scale sporting events held at the local level, are instrumental in fostering environments for problem-solving. Participation in sports inherently results in some form of leadership by its participants, and the playing field becomes a common ground for all involved, transcending race, age, culture, or income; however, participation and leadership may not always come from athletes, and they may not always come on the playing field. Professor Robert Boland, whose background includes but is not limited to sports agency, management, athlete contract and negotiation, coaching, and consulting, recalled late American Broadcasting Company (ABC) sportscaster Jim McKay’s influence on the millions of viewers of Wide World of Sports, a sports anthology that aired from 1961-1998. On changing Americans’ view of Russians during The Cold War, Boland said, “Jim McKay carried viewers through the lives of not only American athletes but also international athletes as
well. McKay’s show may have led to the softening of Americans’ stance on Russia through those portrayals of the Russian athletes. Americans were able to see that the Russian athletes had the same hopes, same troubles, and same desires as they did.” Boland continued, “Wide World of Sports encouraged the development of a peace movement – it opened the doors of community activism more than any other non-diplomatic act. In the short-term, the Soviets were able to make allies simply to avoid war, but in the long-term, they were portrayed differently. Americans were able to put a face to the enemy, and see them as humans” (Boland, 2008).

Finally, Boland theorizes that leadership shown by the late tennis great Arthur Ashe during his visits to apartheid-stricken South Africa in the 1970s and his influential role in improving the treatment of Haitian immigrants worldwide infused those negatively affected by those conditions with a sense of purpose and possibility. Though Ashe passed away just one year prior to the official renouncement of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, Boland asserts that Ashe’s involvement with South Africa pre-empted the integration of the country over two decades following his visits. Ashe’s calls to action on the world stage against apartheid may have been instrumental in the divestment of the country. Many believe this divestment by major global corporations had a crippling economic effect on South Africa, and was among the main catalysts that led to the end of apartheid there.

Professor Michael Cramer, business executive and former president and CEO of Major League Baseball’s Texas Rangers and Dallas Stars, echoed Professor Boland’s comments, and offered other examples of leadership and acceptance achieved through sports. On the storied boxing matches between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling, two athletes representing two countries in the midst of social turmoil during the 1930s, Cramer states that the boxing matches between African-American Joe Louis and German Max Schmeling helped unite a segregated America, with Louis’ defeat of Schmeling occurring only two years after African American Jesse Owens’ historic gold medals in track and field in the 1936 Summer Olympics hosted by Germany under Adolf Hitler.
Still subject to the Jim Crow Laws in effect enforcing segregation in certain areas of America at the time, Joe Louis ironically became an American symbol of victory and triumph over Germany and the Nazi regime after first losing to Schmeling in a 1936 match, then defeating him with in a second-round knock-out in 1938. Overcoming the tense rivalry between them, Louis and Schmeling later became friends in the 1950s (PBS, 2008). The leadership shown by Louis and Schmeling in recognizing each other as individuals beyond national boundaries clearly transcended athletics and sports competition and set a prominent example of peaceful collaboration in their times for all the world to follow.

Professor Cramer also describes the Harlem Globetrotters basketball tours around the world as representative of American sports leadership at its best to citizens of other countries, and in these circumstances, language, race, culture, or even politics were never a barrier. “The Harlem Globetrotters are known for having visited communist countries when no other non-communists would have been welcomed. Their games were more than just games. They were performances. The Globetrotters made people happy “(Cramer, 2009). In 1951, the United States State Department asked the Globetrotters to play in East Germany to counteract a communist youth rally. Later that year, the team played in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe. President Gerald Ford bestowed them with the title, “America’s Ambassadors of Goodwill” (PBS, 2005)

The leadership evidenced during Special Olympics competitions and within the Special Olympics athletes’ communities at local and national levels mirrors the far-reaching affects of the examples cited by NYU Professors Robert Boland and Michael Cramer. The success of the Special Olympics’ programs makes a strong case for continued investment in these events for an improvement in the world’s social landscape.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

From all indications, dialogue for peace through the commerce of sports has a strong future. General Colin Powell (in Zinn, 2000) states that perpetual optimism is a force multiplier, that “…enthusiasm is contagious. A positive can-do attitude among all players increases their strength and abilities.” His focus
is on basketball coaching as leadership in creation of this ripple effect from optimism. Future research should be conducted to determine how sports organizations can take advantage of the broad audiences supporting their games through not only physical attendance but also especially though televised spectatorship … and the general goodwill engendered. This notion, while not new by any means, is also reflected by then Time Warner Chairman Gerald Levin (in McConville, 1996, p. 76) regarding the upcoming New York '98 Goodwill Games in saying the games carry an intangible goodwill value. McConville further reports that in the first three Goodwill Games – in 1986, 1990, and 2004 - Turner Broadcasting lost an estimated $70 million combined, $40 million in 1994 alone.

The Special Olympics capture the attention of 100s of millions of viewers as evidenced through years of documented statistics. This organization, this movement, has set the standard for others to follow, including other sports organizations and governments. Local, national, and international governing bodies may consider applying sports commerce concepts exemplified by the Special Olympics to the promotion of peace and public diplomacy, and to the alleviation of conflict and poverty. For example, the Law Enforcement Torch Run for SO Supporters is the SO’s largest and oldest (25 years) grassroots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle; more that 85,000 law enforcement officers from around the world volunteer for the movement. It is sponsored by International Association of Chiefs of Police, Fraternal Order of Police, with Krispy Kreme as fundraising partner. In 2007, for the first time, the “Flame of Hope” traveled the globe on a 35,000 kilometer journey (22,000 miles) as a single event. Sponsored by DHL, the world’s leading express delivery and logistics company, the Torch touched down on five continents over the course of three months before arriving in Shanghai, where it ignited the cauldron at the Opening Ceremony of the 2007 Shanghai World Games on October 2. This positive SO international sports leadership initiative - a symbol of peace – is open to participation by nations worldwide.

Transformative Power of SO Global Movement

The 2007 SO Shanghai World Games provides further evidence of intense national pride in the host countries in domestic resurgence and ascendance on a world stage. For example, China held a day-long
symposium on best practices in raising children with intellectual disabilities and backed this up with implementation of public policies. These included building on the network of Sunshine Homes begun in Shanghai in 2003 which grew into thousands of Sunshine Centers across the Chinese provinces to provide vocational and literacy training to intellectually disabled individuals ages 16 to 35 in their homes. Buddies, Shanghai’s convenience store chain, operates an intern program with Sunshine Home alumni. Buddies Vice President Luo Jinson in an interview with Newsweek Magazine said “that customers often choose to shop at Buddies in part because of the chain’s commitment to helping people with disabilities” (Special Olympics Annual Report, 2007).

Following the 2007 SO Shanghai World Games, China also founded in Beijing the first hospital in the developing world dedicated to treating children with disabilities. In so doing, the SO sets a strong example of the positive effect of sports on development of children and adults across cultural divides. The SO’s past international sporting events have put in place unprecedented instrumentalities for promoting dialogue for bilateral and international collaboration. It is a grassroots process built on the success of both ordinary and extraordinary people serving as stakeholders supporting the SO events through local community contribution and employment; and local, national, and international government engagement. This in turn spurs positive corporate sponsorship support for future SO Games and programs. In a climate where global downturn is undermining the stability of Asian sporting events, the 2008 Beijing Olympics attracted $866 million from its 12 leading sponsors, while at the same time Honda scraped its estimated $400 million per year support for its Formula One team and Swiss Ban UBS pulled its five-year sponsorship of $2.5 million in prize money in 2008 for the Hong Kong Open golf tournament (Agence France-Presse, 2009).

Creating a World of Acceptance and Social Good – One Person at a Time

Chinese President Hu Jintao urged the Chinese people to use the 2007 SO Shanghai World Games “as a springboard to ‘build a civilized society’” (Special Olympics Annual Report, 2007). In this regard, the transformative power of the Special Olympics movement can be seen to support adoption of the following
sports business concepts or principles in promotion of dialogue for peace and sustainable tourism through
the commerce of sports:

- Unified assembly
- Respectful expression
- Exemplary self-conduct
- Acknowledgment of accomplishment
- Meaningful cooperation and partnership

Singh reflects the sentiments expressed above by NYU Professors Boland and Cramer. Singh, who is
adjunct professor at the NYU Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism, and Sports Management, states that
social entrepreneurship or social business efforts “employ a business-disciplined approach to actually
generate profits, those monetary in nature, and a new definition of profit – social good” (2009, p. 24). In
this regard, Singh adds an encouraging view to those in sports that agents for change today are not
exclusively major entities:

A recent program sponsored by Nike and the Ashoka Foundation’s Changemakers initiative
spurred almost 400 emerging organizations from 69 countries to compete for monetary prizes to
fund their efforts addressing issues ranging from girls’ rights, to gender equity, to clean water
access, to conflict resolutions, and AIDS prevention education. But maybe more important for
the world of sports, it brought to the public’s attention numerous examples of efforts by
entrepreneurial men and women, young and old, to use sports to drive change in local and
international communities (Singh, 2009, p. 23).

Social entrepreneurship through the commerce of sports would seem to provide another cogent imperative
for further research.

The Future

A number of international mega-sports events -- old timers and new -- offer future researchers unique
public policy and international relations laboratories in which to study emerging dialogue for peace
through the commerce of sports. These include the 2007 Cricket World Cup, the 2008-2009 regular
season US National Basketball Association and US National Football League games in London, the 2009
World Baseball Classic held in destinations throughout the world, and the upcoming 2010 World Cup in
South Africa, 2012 Summer Olympics in London, and 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. These current
and upcoming events offer opportunities to address past challenges to dialogue for peace using new collaboration strategies developed through the commerce of sports.

**Continued Legacy of Cricket**

Wildly popular just about everywhere outside of the US – people in the Caribbean, Europe, India, Southern Africa, and the Middle East are huge fans of the game of cricket. Lack of inclusion of cricket in this paper is a function of research domain and scope. The 2007 Cricket World Cup, attended by hundreds of thousands of spectators, was held at venues on the Caribbean Islands of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago. The 2007 Cricket World Cup matches were broadcast by television to over 2 billion homes. As one of the most dominant sports worldwide, cricket represents a critical focus area for further research on the topic of mega-sports and dialogue for peace.

**2009 World Baseball Classic - Multiple Global Destinations**

The first ever World Baseball Classic was held in 2006 in an effort to promote baseball internationally. According to Nielsen Research, over 1,736,000 viewers in the USA alone tuned in. This was the third-most watched non-division series game in ESPN2 history. Though the majority of the players participating in the event are from Major League Baseball organizations around the world, a select number of amateur players are selected to play as well. Players from China, Japan, Korea, Canada, Mexico, South Africa, the USA, Cuba, Netherlands, Panama, Puerto Rico, Australia, the Dominican Republic, Italy, and Venezuela were present in 2006, and players from even more countries participated in the 2009 tournament. The 2009 tournament was held in venues in Tokyo, Mexico City, Toronto, San Juan, San Diego, Miami, and Los Angeles, with the exciting finals matches watched worldwide between Japan and South Korea – ending in victory for South Korea.

**US International Basketball and Football Leagues**

Both the USA’s National Basketball Association (NBA) and National Football League (NFL) are making attempts to spread the popularity of American basketball and football around the world to develop new
international leagues. The NBA and NFL played regular season games outside of the USA, in London, England, to sold-out crowds of over 90,000 people per game in 2008. Both the NBA and NFL have established European leagues. More regular season games in London occurred for these leagues in 2008.

2010 World Cup Soccer, South Africa

Among the most popular international sporting events is the annual World Cup Soccer Tournament. In 2010, the tournament will be held in South Africa. The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has stated that one of its missions is to bring attention to Africa and encouragement development and social responsibility within the continent. The globally televised 2006 event held in Germany was witnessed by over 26 million viewers. Analysts expect viewership to exceed 30 million fans during the 2010 tournament. Future research resides in increasing US involvement with World Cup Soccer.

Opportunities are opening to examine the face of the commerce of sports and determine its entry points into the international arena. For example, how is sports commerce becoming a “player” in economic, sociocultural, and environmental issues inherent in North South divide. How and why is dialogue for peace and the commerce of sports not a US issue, not a British issue…not a Western issue, per se? World Cup Soccer has always provided an avenue for promoting international dialogue of all kinds. One research question for consideration might include why have American sports not “caught on” in other regions of the world in light of the globalization of soccer or cricket?

2012 London Summer Olympics

The Special Olympics is modeled after the longest running sporting event in the history of the world – the summer Olympic Games. The economic, social, and environmental impacts of the Olympic Games are tremendous, and for the 2012 Olympic Games, London, Paris, New York, Madrid, Moscow, Rio de Janeiro, Istanbul, Leipzig, and Havana fiercely competed to host this event. London was awarded this honor. The 2012 London Summer Olympics Games will be a follow up to the 2008 Games in Beijing. Six hundred eighty million Chinese viewers alone tuned in to watch the Beijing Olympic Games. Planning and development for the 2012 Olympic Games are already well underway with some business schools in London. The schools plan to use the Olympic preparations as a teaching tool by incorporating
olympic lessons into their curricula, hoping the efforts will spur classroom discussion and illustrate important principles in areas such as tourism and marketing (gardiner, 2008) and allay protests by olympic opponents (lydersen, 2009).

2014 brazil fifa world cup

brazil is hard at work preparing to meet the fifa rules and requirements for hosting the 2014 world cup. lacking sophisticated land and air transportation organizations and infrastructure, brazil plans to feature its urban and rural destination cities in innovative and unique ways in the hopes of using the world cup games to introduce brazil as a tourism destination to the world. from the ministry of tourism in brasilia and leaders of the central bank in sao paulo to the rio hotel association headed by the general manager of the copacabana palace hotel and administration of fifa in rio, all believe that despite seemingly insurmountable challenges brazil will be ready by 2014. following in china’s footsteps, this research suggests that hosting a special olympics 2013 world games in brazil may be one way to invite local, national, and world acceptance and accord.

in conclusion

well stated, in closing, in their own words, special olympics invites volunteer and financial support in saying:

we are also a catalyst for societal change, fostering community building around the globe. we are a leader in diversity bringing young people with and without intellectual disabilities together in our youth and schools outreach. we are active with governments, non-governmental organizations (ngos) and the private sector to develop new ways to include people with disabilities in all aspects of society. we are the world’s largest public health organization serving people with intellectual disabilities through health screenings in the world’s most neglected populations. and we are the fastest-growing grass-roots volunteer movement with the potential to improve the quality of life for 200 million people with intellectual disabilities – 3 percent of the global population (special olympics, 2009, p. 1).

this research concludes that concepts portrayed through the commerce of sports offer opportunities for mediation of past challenges to dialogue for peace. these mega-sports concepts now can be seen to align better in place and time with key principles of sustainable tourism development than ever before, raising yet again significant research questions. can we harness the strategic value of “sports commerce concepts” to signify:
• sustainable cultural heritage exchange subsuming geopolitical, economic divide?
• sustainable public policy/diplomacy supporting organized, peaceful demonstration?
• sustainable bilateral/multilateral cooperation promoting individual health, wellbeing while mediating climate change at the same time?

Can we deconstruct past and current approaches to conflict/poverty/political instability and reconstruct old and construct new using sports commerce and sustainable tourism principles involving acceptance, inclusion, fairness, equity, appreciation of diversity in leadership – local to global – and especially in regions of unrest, conflict, terrorism, and war? EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner states that multilateralism is the only effective way in which to deal with a host of global challenges such as climate change, health pandemics, international terrorism, and financial crises. “But there is something we can do – both to address today’s problems and to prevent them [from] occurring again in the future. International cooperation is the key,” she says. “[F]or multilateralism to work we need a new form of global governance, with institutions equipped to manage today’s challenges…. [this includes] voice and representation” (EU NewsBrief, 2009).

The integrative international collaboration strategies developed and implemented over the last 40 years by Special Olympics and its World Games now involve over 2.9 million athletes worldwide. This international mega-sports initiative provides a living laboratory for the study of a globalization movement for social change – and one to such a degree to be considered worthy of the nomination of Special Olympics – through the far-sighted and omniscient generosity of founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver and generations of SO leadership by the Shriver family - for the Nobel Prize for Peace for their creation of a community of nations united through the concepts of sustainable tourism development and leadership through the commerce of sports. Further research and evaluation of sports commerce, in the context of sustainable tourism development, may help to set the stage to better understand how to address the complex interdependence of fundamental challenges facing contemporary and future civil societies, to identify through outcome assessments a set of sustainable criteria for measuring capacities for promoting dialogue for peace at all levels, and to engender sustainable tourism policy and sports commerce protocol
for shaping individual citizen attitudes – one person at a time - through social movements such as Special Olympics – in the hopes of changing the world soon enough to make a difference.
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