



Corporate Social Responsibility: Considerations for Sport Management in the Age of Neoliberalism

ANTHONY J. WEEMST[†], JUSTIN R. GARNER[†], KRISTI OSHIRO[†], and JOHN N. SINGER[‡]

Center for Sport Management Research and Education, Department of Health and Kinesiology, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, USA

[†]Denotes graduate student author, [‡]Denotes professional author

ABSTRACT

International Journal of Exercise Science 10(6): 900-914, 2017. For financial reasons, in efforts to maintain legitimacy, and in response to social pressures, sport organizations increasingly engage with corporate social responsibility (CSR). However, with the rise of global neoliberalism, the logic of CSR can be problematic. In this essay, we provide a brief overview, critique, and reconstruction of CSR in the sport industry. Specifically, we call into question three popularized forms of CSR: (1) diversity, inclusion, and diversity management, (2) environmental responsibility, and (3) health and physical activity-based initiatives. In a neoliberal context, CSR in sport provides, at best, a limited response to social issues. At their worst, CSR initiatives may be socially irresponsible programs that further engender inequalities and inequities while a neoliberal logic serves to rationalize and augment sport organizations' place(s) in society. We discuss these issues and challenge the field of sport management to further consider how we may demonstrate a more legitimate social concern in the 21st century.

KEY WORDS: CSR, critical social science, qualitative inquiry, neoliberalism, elite white men, diversity, environmental responsibility, sport for health

INTRODUCTION

One contemporary issue in sport management that has gained a great deal of attention from scholars in the 21st century is corporate social responsibility (CSR). In a special issue on CSR in the *Journal of Sport Management* (JSM), Bradish and Cronin (9) sought "to enhance and expand the literature by examining research and issues related to CSR within the sport context". These scholars defined CSR broadly "as the responsibility of organizations to be ethical and accountable to the needs of their society as well as their stakeholders" (9), and suggested an organization's CSR obligations and initiatives should ideally incorporate both social and economic interests. They did, however, acknowledge the potential tensions and inherent contradictions associated with the principles and practices of CSR (e.g., competing social and

economic agendas, competing corporate and community agendas, authentic interpretations and commitment of CSR philosophies and programs).

According to Bradish and Cronin (9), the majority of work on CSR in sport management has focused on cause-related sport marketing (i.e., partnerships between sport organizations and charitable causes and related communication strategies and marketing programs). They also mentioned how sport events, environmental sustainability, and corporate citizenship are other areas of emphasis among sport management scholars interested in CSR. Articles within Bradish and Cronin's (9) special issue focused on a general overview of CSR and theoretical and practical implications for sport management (33); internal and external factors contributing to CSR among professional sport teams (6); the relationship between CSR and sport consumer attitudes (66); and the relationship between sporting events and community development in urban contexts (48).

We focus on this special issue in the current essay as a departure point in CSR research as much CSR research in sport management since 2009 has continued to reflect similar orientations. For example, researchers have further explored the linkage between CSR and the "bottom-line" arguing that stakeholder awareness of CSR activities may allow organizations to leverage the benefits of CSR (36). Similarly, Walker and Mercado (67) suggested that the "real merit of 'going green' is the ability to appeal to suppliers, concert promoters, event planners, local and state politicians and other stakeholders that can significantly influence the facilities bottom-line". Additionally, scholars have not only further explored the direct impacts CSR activities may have on bottom-line performances but also CSR's impact on an organization's image or reputation more broadly (64, 65).

Godfrey's (33) review article in the JSM special issue is of particular interest to us because as a self-proclaimed outsider to the sport management discipline (i.e., he is a management scholar) he illuminated key issues related to CSR in the 21st century (i.e., social impacts of CSR activities, tradeoffs, ethical blowback, hypocrisy, CSR in a global economy), and raised important questions for scholars and practitioners in our field to ponder and act upon. As another "outsider" to the discipline of sport management, sociologist Jay Coakley (13) has argued that essentialist beliefs about sport serve to bolster national and global processes of neoliberalism. Therefore, we believe these commentaries and the 2009 special issue of JSM in particular serve as a useful starting point for a critical examination of CSR in sport management. However, we emphasize the need for more critical approaches to the study and analysis of this contemporary issue. Frisby (32) and other sport management scholars have stressed the need for critical social science (CSS) and other innovative approaches to research and practice in our field (3, 24). This work has indeed encouraged us to expand our horizons and pay more attention to "the good, the bad, and the ugly" (32) aspects of sport management.

In a provocative article entitled "Sport without management" in JSM, Newman (51) boldly challenged us to rethink both the study and practice of sport management in ways that go well beyond being economically generative, to more of a focus on cultural and social transformation. He critiqued our field's seeming obsession and hyper-alignment "with the

prevailing systems of capital, science, and managerialism" (51) by interrogating how the marketization and commercialization in sport management research, education, and practice today is characteristic of a wider emergence of a global neoliberal regime. Drawing from political economic theory, Newman (51) defined *neoliberalism* as "a global economic movement founded upon the notion that *only* through the freeing of markets and market-based relations can the individual—indeed society itself—achieve *freedom*". He discussed how sport management research has trended toward satisfying market interests, and acknowledged that CSR is one of the "striations of inquiry" that has "come to dominate research published in the major sport management journals" (51).

From our perspective, CSR serves as an organizational manifestation of neoliberalism, and therefore, we concur with Bradish and Cronin (9) that it is indeed "one of the most important components of contemporary sport management theory and practice". In this regard, the purpose of this paper is to focus on a few pertinent examples of how CSR has been constructed in the field of sport management within this current neoliberal context. More specifically, we critically interrogate how sport-based CSR initiatives in the areas of a) diversity, inclusion, and diversity management, b) environmental responsibility, and c) health and physical activity-based programs are steeped in global neoliberalism, and why this can be problematic. While this article is not meant as an exhaustive assessment of CSR in sport, we contextualize our postulations as *considerations for the field of sport management in the age of neoliberalism*. The forms of CSR examined in this article were chosen because not only do they speak to this contemporary issue in sport management but they also align with the interests of the authors of this paper. In actuality, there are many other forms of CSR than the three examined in this article that warrant further examination (e.g., philanthropy, educational initiatives, cause-related initiatives, and more). We invite scholars, educators, and practitioners in sport management as well as the broader fields of health and kinesiology to critically reflect on their (our) individual and collective research agendas and roles within this global neoliberal regime, and conclude with brief implications for research, education, and practice.

CRITIQUE OF SPORT-BASED CSR INITIATIVES

Diversity, Inclusion, and Diversity Management

Although it is often conceptualized as a stand-alone topic for organizations, diversity, historically and contemporaneously, plays an important role in CSR discourse and initiatives. Godfrey (33) argued that diversity issues functioned as a type of "litmus test" for an organization's commitment to CSR in the 1990s. Since that time, the topic of diversity has garnered a significant amount of attention from sport management scholars (16, 19, 22, 30). But what exactly is diversity (and inclusion) and why have sport organizations sought to promote this implicit and explicit form of CSR? Cunningham (15) defined diversity as "*the presence of socially meaningful differences among members of a dyad or group*" (italics in original), and inclusion as "*the degree to which employees are free to express their individuated self and have a sense of workplace connectedness and belonging*" (italics in original). He contended diversity and inclusion is and will continue to be vitally important and of great interest to sport managers for a myriad of reasons, including changing demographics, changing attitudes toward work,

changes in the nature of work, legal mandates, social pressures, negative effects of exclusion, and the value in diversity/inclusion hypothesis.

Cunningham's (15) definitions of diversity and inclusion and his discussion of these key reasons for the emphasis on diversity and inclusion in sport organizations helps in our general understanding of this topic and its connections to CSR. However, from our perspective the lack of a critical, race-based gaze in the diversity and inclusion discourse in sport management has limited its utility in helping sport organizations engage in progressive CSR initiatives that can foster more equitable outcomes and equal opportunities for historically underrepresented and marginalized groups. Diversity discourse has been plagued by what Bell and Hartmann (8) referred to as "happy talk" or "a vision of diversity that is happily blind to the problems of race and inequality". Certainly, important work on stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination (15), and the organizational cultures of similarity (22) that exist in many sport industry organizations that typically have white, Protestant, able-bodied, heterosexual males at the top of the leadership hierarchy (30) has been done by scholars in the field. In addition, sport management scholars have utilized CSS to interrogate the gendered nature of sport organizations (58, 59). But most diversity-related scholarship in sport management does not explicitly or directly address the white normative perspective that pervades this discourse (8, 39), and the cultures of white supremacy (37, 55) that permeate many sport organizations and academia more generally (see 60 as one of a few exceptions). Therefore, in this section we focus on the racialized and gendered politics of diversity. This is not to say that other dimensions of diversity are not as meaningful; however, within a capitalistic system, racism and sexism coalesce to (re)produce various dimensions (27). For example, heterosexism is directly tied to the sexist system and hegemonic constructions of gender and sexuality. Thus, we take an explicit focus on the intersection of race and gender as they relate to diversity in sport organizations and the elite white men that remain the primary beneficiaries of diversity programs.

Scholars, activists, and social commentators in other fields such as the sociology of sport have interrogated cultures of white supremacy in sport (40, 41, 46). Others have problematized the dominant discourse around diversity and inclusion for its failure to shift the focus, attention, pressure, and scrutiny from the marginalized "other" (e.g., racial minorities, women) to elite white males, who serve as the norm and power brokers who created and continue to maintain organizational cultures of white supremacy (27; 28). In a speech entitled, "Beyond diversity: Challenging racism in an age of backlash", anti-racist activist and writer, Tim Wise (68) discussed how these power brokers do not necessarily have a problem inviting racial minorities and other "othered" groups into their organizations (especially if it benefits the organization), as long as these individuals acquiesce to the norms and standards (i.e., white supremacy thinking) of the leaders and dominant group members (i.e., elite white males). He argued and suggested that instead of focusing on trying to get the "othered" to always conform to the status quo and viewing those who do not as deficient, the dominant group should show a willingness to critically interrogate and question their organizational culture and dynamics, and strongly consider changing them when necessary. In other words, being

socially responsible goes well beyond “including” othered groups, and involves a much more (self) reflexive approach to change.

We argue that instead of only asking whether or not leaders in professional sport leagues should adopt the Rooney Rule like the NFL in efforts to make the hiring process more equitable for women and racial minorities, as Godfrey (33) suggested, sport management scholars and leaders should also be asking what can be done to disrupt and dismantle these organizational cultures of similarity and white supremacy that too often exist in professional sport leagues and franchises. Perhaps elite white males such as Dan Rooney (the late owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers and former chairman of the NFL diversity committee who the rule is named after) engaged in such self-reflexivity and this helped inspire the NFL’s decision to create and implement this diversity and inclusion policy (23, 57). However, we are also acutely aware of potential problems and limitations of such policies (e.g., bogus interviews of “minority” candidates). More importantly, we argue that such policies have been designed by whites and for whites (particularly males). Moreover, these policies help maintain the notion of diversity, and the effective management of it as the neoliberal project it was constructed to be. Policies such as the Rooney Rule allow sport organizations to give the impression of being socially responsible, while also capitalizing on the benefits of diversity (e.g., hiring talented African American head football coaches). But these policies often do not require these organizations to deconstruct their cultures of similarity (i.e., white supremacy), and ultimately reconstruct them into truly equitable environments. As substantiated by the success of (white male) diversity scholars and practitioners (35), David Embrick (25) argued that the diversity ideology keeps major transnational corporations both white and male (physically, structurally, culturally, ideologically, etc.) in the context of globalization.

The neoliberal goal of “capitalizing on the benefits” of diversity through management is, we argue, antithetical to the metaphysical foundation of diversity. By its very nature, diversity is an eclectic concept. Diversity exists in and of itself, removed from the management of. The rationalization and management of a concept such as diversity has proven to be problematic in the sport industry. For example, who is it that “manages” this diversity? Who is it that implements and benefits most from diversity programs and policies? With regard to notions of inclusion, who is it that is being included and who is doing the including? What type of culture are they being included into? The notion of diversity management fails to adequately account for these and other questions. This does not mean, however, that diversity and inclusion is “broken.” Rather, diversity in sport organizations functions exactly as it has been constructed in the age of neoliberalism. White and male decision-makers continue to be overrepresented at the top of sport organizational hierarchies (61) even in the midst of the widespread, ceremonial adoption (47) of diversity management practices (e.g., Rooney Rule). Moreover, emphases on interpersonal relations (both in practice and in mainstream diversity literature) have befogged structural problems with contemporary organizations. The management of diversity in sport organizations continues to perpetuate these systemic inequalities while simultaneously legitimating these organizations as socially responsible entities.

As suggested by Acker's (1) work on gender, the paradoxical nature of managing diversity is amplified for sport organizations in the age of neoliberalism. The neutralization and disembodiment of organizational structures is problematic and it masks the neoliberal strategy of industrial control that is inherently built upon deeply ingrained inequities and inequalities (1). But if effective diversity management practices are not the answer, then what is the answer? In his 2014 article, Newman (51) stated the following:

Rather than seek to *better manage* gender or racial diversity... in sport, we should instead seek to give our teaching and research over to – to *be made by* – the very corporeal pluralities and potentialities we have too often sought to regulate or classify in the name of industry. (italics in original)

Sharing this disposition, we suggest the notion of *diversity without management*. Moving beyond the limited conception of diversity management policies and practices, sport management scholars and practitioners should look to re-imagine the ways in which we study, teach, and practice diversity. As the quote from Newman (51) suggests, that re-imagination begins with centralizing the needs of the very people whom diversity programs are oftentimes superficially intended to benefit (i.e., women, racial “minorities”, etc.). For instance, rather than integrating historically marginalized groups into inequitable organizational structures designed by and for white men, scholars, practitioners, and activists can seek to re-shape organizational structures to better fit the needs of diverse groups (see 18 as an example of differences in decision making between Eurocentric and Afrocentric organizational structures).

Environmental Responsibility

Environmental concerns have led to another sector of CSR-based programming in sport (33, 63). In response to public criticisms on the overconsumption of natural resources, sport organizations increasingly adopt “environmentally responsible” policies and practices. This is especially important given the visibility and impact of the sport industry in general. In discussing the regulative nature of sport, for example, Godfrey (33) posed the question, “...what effective measures can sport organizations take to reduce levels of pollution, congestion, and garbage generated at their events”. While this question appears to demonstrate a legitimate concern about the environmental impact of sport events, there are a number of problems with such a question. Primarily, the perspective taken in such a question normalizes sport events and the sport industry as a naturally occurring phenomenon. The social and environmental concerns in this case become a post hoc approach to environmental responsibility which legitimizes environmentally “draining” events while seeking to lessen their negative impact.

As the sport industry has developed over the course of centuries, and particularly in a (post-)industrial era, large-scale sporting events have developed as wasteful ventures with regard to natural resources (e.g., land “development”, water consumption and pollution, garbage, carbon emissions, etc.). While those with primarily private interests have long-shaped the planning, development, and operation of sporting events, the levels of pollution, congestion, and garbage with which Godfrey (33) was concerned has become a direct product of the events in question. Sport events and their ecological impact are, as they have developed together, a

pair. A post hoc approach then normalizes this development. However, this problem becomes exacerbated in a neoliberal context – a context in which CSR in sport seeks to address these issues.

Partnering with various professional sport leagues and franchises, the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) advises leagues on how, when, why, and where to “go green”. According to their website, the NRDC provides three key reasons to be green: good business, the environment, and brand enhancement. Since 2004, the NRDC

...has been a leader in the greening of professional and collegiate sports. NRDC is the principal environmental advisor to Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Basketball Association (NBA), the National Hockey League (NHL), Major League Soccer (MLS), and the United States Tennis Association (USTA), NASCAR and one of the advisors to the National Football League (NFL), the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) and National Lacrosse League (NLL). NRDC’s work greening North American sports leagues is the most comprehensive and successful sports greening initiative in the world (54).

The NRDC has inspired over 100 professional teams to adopt environmental initiatives at their stadiums or arenas. For example, the Philadelphia Eagles “Go Green” program that focuses on reducing energy use, recycling, installing solar panels, and water-efficient fixtures has helped the Eagles organization save over \$3 million since 2005 (54). In 2007, the NRDC arranged an energy efficiency and water audit at the STAPLES Center in Los Angeles (the home of three major professional sport organizations) which has resulted in various projects related to conserving these natural resources. In 2009, a 2.5-acre green roof was installed at the Target Center where the Minnesota Timberwolves play their home games.

However, even with the organizational and technological advancements that have contributed to a lessening of sport events’ environmental impact, there is little evidence that suggests that these events are environmentally “responsible” from their inception. For instance, as the STAPLES Center’s changes have led to reductions in the arena’s negative impact on the environment, this does not account for the fact that three major professional sport franchises use the facility. This means that three different, but potentially overlapping, organizations and their fan bases use the facility, compounding the negative effects associated with major sporting events. Moreover, Los Angeles, a major US city with a significant depletion of natural resources such as water (38, 44, 45, 50), has recently become the home of two newly relocated NFL franchises: the Rams and the Chargers. Despite which “environmentally responsible” programs and policies are adopted by these organizations, one cannot help but question the responsibility of bringing in two more major professional sport franchises and their future impact on the environment in the greater Los Angeles area.

The necessary utilization and consumption of natural resources by sporting entities can be counter-intuitive to acting in environmentally responsible ways. However, the sanctioned, post hoc approach to minimizing negative effects of sport organizations and events on the environment fails to account for this. This drawback to the current discourse on environmental

responsibility in sport fails to equip organizations, scholars, and activists with the necessary tools to pursue goals of sustainability. Yet, neoliberalism continues to rationalize and promote such approaches. In this case, there is no balance of economic and social factors as generally espoused through CSR discourse. Neoliberalism facilitates the primacy of sport business whilst relegating the social and environmental aspects to ancillary and peripheral roles. More appropriate questions regarding environmental responsibility then may include taking more of a proactive approach and asking if certain organizational endeavors are socially and environmentally responsible to begin with. Is it responsible to bring more professional sport franchises to the city of Los Angeles? Is it responsible to bring mega sport events (e.g., Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, etc.) to resource-deprived cities/nations? Proactively addressing these kinds of questions in the decision-making process can demonstrate a more legitimate balance between social, environmental, and economic factors. However, if not examined more critically in sporting spaces, the current "green" discourse may serve to legitimize socially irresponsible actions by sport organizations.

Health and Physical Activity-Based Initiatives

The intersection of sport, physical activity, and health continues to be a foundational legitimation for the field of sport management (11, 12). While there are clear connections between sport, physical activity, and health, there are also many issues with the essentializing of sport's role in promoting "good health." Chalip (12) discussed this discrepancy when he suggested that "sport as we practice it is not likely to be a candidate for health promotion that is credible to policymakers" (p. 4). For example, sport, as comprised of "athletes," can often exclude the very people who may benefit the most from such physical activity (i.e., those not typically considered to fit the stereotypical athlete body type) (12). Physical injuries are another aspect associated with sport play, often from overuse, risky physical movements, or collisions (29). Additionally, the *amount* of physical activity associated with certain sports falls short of the recommended amounts of moderate-to-vigorous levels of physical activity (43), with research demonstrating that physical activity levels may drop even lower for games than during practice (34).

As an example of this form of CSR in sport, NFL Play 60 is the NFL's campaign that serves to bring together

the NFL's long-standing commitment to health and fitness with an impressive roster of partner organizations. In addition to national outreach and online programs, NFL PLAY 60 is implemented at the grassroots level through NFL's in-school, after-school and team-based programs. The NFL PLAY 60 initiative is prominent during the NFL's key calendar events, including Super Bowl, Pro Bowl, Draft, Kickoff and Thanksgiving and is supported by many NFL players and coaches year round. To date, the NFL has dedicated over \$200 million to youth health and wellness through NFL PLAY 60. (52)

While physical activity can certainly be beneficial, is the sport of football the ideal vehicle to socialize children into healthy and active lifestyles? The self-proclaimed "long-standing commitment to health and fitness" by the NFL casts a shadow over the chronic injuries that are inherently associated with the sport of football. Concussions and related mental health issues,

for example, have gained more attention in recent years than perhaps ever before due to the collisions that are intrinsically a part of professional football (20, 26). Moreover, this has proven to be a significant issue for youth football players who are often still in developmental stages (17, 42). With such negative health implications, is it socially responsible for the NFL to lead a youth-based program like NFL Play 60?

Indeed, these were the type of questions that Murphy and Waddington (49) were concerned with nearly twenty years ago from a public health perspective. Examining "Sport for all" policies and programs, Murphy and Waddington (49) highlighted key social differences between sport and physical activity – such as the aggressive and often violent characteristics of certain sports (e.g., football) that pose serious health consequences based on social differences. Therefore, in agreement with these authors, we question the ethicality of sport programs such as NFL Play 60 and call for more critical perspectives in sport management that examine how particular sports contribute to positive health outcomes and for whom. Ultimately, it is the incongruities that emanate from the notion of "sport for health" that led Chalip (12) to suggest that the "... question is whether sport managers and marketers are prepared to devise and implement sport programs and processes that are demonstrably conducive to health". As neoliberal policies and practices continue to become a powerful institutional force in today's sporting industry, we as sport management scholars and practitioners must ask ourselves if we are doing enough to maximize the potential health benefits of sport and physical activity rather than ceremonially adopting "socially responsible" health programs.

DISCUSSION

With the rise and dominance of global neoliberalism, CSR, as adopted by sport organizations, not only falls short of addressing social issues (7) but it becomes oxymoronic in the sense that these initiatives may be *socially irresponsible* programs from their inception. The exaltation of diversity and diversity management as a form of "social responsibility" in the sport industry, for example, contributes to the placation of social criticism. The dominant way of "doing diversity" in sport organizations obscures the racialized and gendered politics of justice in the organizational setting, ultimately keeping sport organizations white and male while reproducing other exclusionary practices. Environmental responsibility initiatives and "green" management programs for complex sport organizations are often approached from a post hoc perspective, rationalizing major sport events and the rapid consumption and depletion of natural resources. Similarly, health-based initiatives often fail to account for negative health implications while marginally contributing to positive health impacts (12). In the age of neoliberalism, these issues are exacerbated due to pro-corporate approaches to solving social issues. As we can reasonably come to expect sport organizations with primarily private interests to continue to pursue these ends, CSR in sport will continue to marginalize a truly democratic response to social issues. With these thoughts in mind, we briefly discuss implications for sport management research, teaching, and practice. Categorically, we discuss the relevance of CSS perspectives, qualitative inquiry in the age of neoliberalism, and the need for multidisciplinary approaches to creating socially responsible programs.

Critical Social Science

In 2005, Frisby (32) discussed the importance of CSS perspectives in the field of sport management, contending that CSS had been "...underused in sport management at great cost". According to Alvesson and Wilmott (2), CSS itself emerged from a disillusionment with traditional forms of managerial theory, practice, and research. This disillusionment stemmed primarily from scholars with an orientation toward social justice as mainstream management theories inadequately addressed social issues (32). For this reasoning, Frisby (32) challenged the field of sport management to examine "the good, the bad, and the ugly" of the sporting industry. In a similar fashion, Banerjee (7) utilized CSS to analyze "the good, the bad, and the ugly" of CSR and its related discourses. Banerjee (7) concluded that CSR discourses served as ideological movements designed to consolidate and legitimize organizational power. Despite the emancipatory rhetoric of CSR, it is this consolidation and legitimization of power that prevents organizations from accomplishing espoused egalitarian goals.

As an example of how CSS can be used to critically analyze CSR in sport, Polite and Santiago (56) highlighted the paradoxical relationship between sport and CSR, specifically the responsibility and accountability of sport in the intercollegiate setting. The authors suggested innovative approaches such as exploring the intersection of critical race theory (CRT) and CSR to examine the challenges faced by Black male athletes amongst other prevalent issues in the intercollegiate context. As scholars, we must remain mindful that it is important to act in socially responsible ways while holding ourselves accountable in the pursuit of social justice (56). While CRT is one emancipatory CSS tool that can be utilized for college sport reform (62), various forms of CSS can provide sport management scholars with tools to ensure accountability more broadly, particularly regarding CSR in sport (32, 56).

Qualitative Inquiry

Too often, sport management research has privileged the researcher over the research participant, which has led to a reproduction of old and a creation of new inequities in research and practice (51). One way to combat the potential negative effects of these forms of research (70) is through the use of critical qualitative inquiry. Nite and Singer (53) have argued that qualitative inquiry can be used as a method to empower the research participant while also transforming the research itself. This democratizing approach to research helps to ensure that marginalized voices are included in the development of policies and practices that are designed to impact their lives (53). Contextualizing the aforementioned concept of diversity without management and what that may look like, critical qualitative approaches can then help to centralize the needs of historically marginalized populations. Heeding Tim Wise's (68) words, these needs may include more critical reflections on the dominant groups within sport organizations (i.e., elite white men). This is particularly the case with neoliberalism. In a 2015 book co-edited by sport management scholar, Michael Giardina, Cannella and Lincoln (10) pulled from the work of Foucault to (re-)conceptualize the potential of critical qualitative research in the age of global neoliberalism. As Cannella and Lincoln (10) argued, the saturation of neoliberal logics in research, teaching, and practice "provide prospects for critical actions that would counter and even deterritorialize neoliberalism". Critical qualitative research, then, not only serves to empower participants in the research process (53) but it also provides

possibilities for resisting dominant power dynamics (10, 31). As a democratizing tool, sport management scholars can utilize critical qualitative research to help appropriately address key issues in society.

Multidisciplinary Collaboration

Lastly, if sport is to *become* the promotion of social and environmental well-being that large sporting bodies often claim it to be, then sport management scholars must consider and carry out the task of collaborating across disciplinary fields and developing holistic sport programming. For example, in working with various subdisciplines in the field of kinesiology, sport managers can be better prepared to implement effective and appropriate physical activity programs (4). As Chalip (12) postulated, a key challenge moving forward for sport management scholars and practitioners in this area is:

to create inclusive programs that enable people with differing levels of skill and varied body types to compete, and then to provide systems of training and competition that provide sufficient physical activity to be beneficial while reducing the risk of injury.

The programming that can result from this kind of collaboration is not just a consideration for the field of sport management; it is an imperative in order to ensure the survival of sport management as a discipline. As Allison Doherty (21) argued in her Earle F. Zeigler Award Lecture, “it takes a village” to solve the complex problems that arise in sport. We argue that this is especially the case with regard to problems that stem from and arise within global neoliberalism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, CSR has garnered significant attention in and through the sport industry in recent years. This is evident by publications such as the 2009 special issue of the *JSM* on CSR and subsequent work since this publication. However, as an organizational manifestation of neoliberalism, CSR remains severely limited in its ability to address social issues while consolidating and legitimizing organizational power (7). While it is not our intention to entirely dismiss the approaches introduced in the special issue of *JSM* and CSR in general, sport management scholars should understand the contextual limitations that sanctioned CSR practices have in responsibly contributing to society. In this current age of global neoliberalism, Zeigler’s (69) call for sport management scholars to demonstrate social concern in the development of theory continues to ring true. Zeigler (69) stated that “It is the social facets of the enterprise that the field of sport management needs to consider more carefully in the 21st century”. Invoking more of a social justice orientation, Cunningham (14) concurred by arguing that “We are all impacted by structures, systems, and cultures that engender inequality” and thus we all have responsibility to ensure that sport is socially just and inclusive. From this perspective, we agree with scholars such as Zeigler (69), Cunningham (14), and Newman (51) and challenge sport management scholars (including ourselves) to consider how current CSR scholarship and practices may be reshaped to comprise a more equitable sporting industry in the age of neoliberalism.

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