

**A Socioecological Framework for Leveraging Sport Events for Youths Sport Participation**

## Abstract

Proponents of sport events maintain that sport events foster sport participation among host community members, particularly among youth. However, the evidence to support these claims is lacking. The use of theory provides a guided approach to investigating and understanding a phenomenon. Often used to design, implement, and evaluate interventions for youth sport participation, Social Ecology Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how sport events can be used in interventions to foster sport participation among youth (i.e., leverage). Thus, this article proposes a socioecological framework for leveraging sport events for youth sport participation. The proposed socioecological framework explains how the different socioecological levels (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, political) and systems (i.e., micro, meso, exo, macro, chrono) interact to better understand how to design, implement, and evaluate leveraging initiatives for youth sport participation from sport events.

Key words: social impacts; community partnerships; sport events; youth sport; theory

### **A Socioecological Framework for Leveraging Sport Events for Youths Sport**

Despite well documented benefits of youth sport participation (i.e., physical health, mental health, wellbeing; Eime et al., 2010; Eime et al., 2013; Oosterhoff et al., 2017), rates of youth sport participation are steadily declining in western nations (Berger et al., 2008), while rates of obesity and other negative health outcomes associated with sedentary behaviours are increasing (Bauman et al., 2012; Berger et al., 2008). Potential hosts of major sport events have capitalized on these trends by claiming that hosting sport events can inspire youth in the host region to become more active (i.e., the demonstration effect; Weed et al., 2015). However, empirical support for these sport participation claims is mixed (Teare & Taks, 2021). Some studies have found no change in youth sport participation associated with sport events (e.g., Craig & Bauman, 2014; Griffiths & Armour, 2013). For example, through the use of pedometers, Craig and Bauman (2014) found no change in youths' physical activity in British Columbia from before the 2010 Vancouver Olympics to after the Games had concluded. Other studies have found support for impacts on sport participation in specific populations and not others (Kohe & Bowen-Jones, 2016; Potwarka & Leatherdale, 2016). For example, also in the context of the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games, Potwarka and Leatherdale (2016) found that female youth in North Shore and Richmond (i.e., regions that housed venues) demonstrated higher rates of sport participation in winter sports after the Games had concluded. No significant changes in participation were found among males in the same regions, and among both male and female youth in British Columbia, at the provincial level. Moreover, the investigations that have found impacts on sport participation are unable to determine the nature of participation (i.e., new participation, or current participants participating more or in a different sport). These inconsistent

findings indicate that the nature of youth sport participation from sport events is still unclear (Teare & Taks, 2021).

### **Event Leveraging**

When investigating sport participation legacies (i.e., changes to sport participation well after an event that can be attributed to the event; Preuss, 2016; Thompson et al., 2019), little evidence has been found (e.g., Hayday et al., 2017; Orr, 2018; Pappous, 2011). As such, sport scholars and practitioners alike have begun to accept that there is no inherent association between hosting sport events and increasing new sport participation among the host community (e.g., Chalip et al., 2017; Misener et al., 2015; Taks, 2013; Taks et al., 2013, 2014, 2018). The emerging perspective is that purposeful tactics must be in conjunction with the sport event to stimulate sport participation, if that is a pre-determined goal as identified by community stakeholders (e.g., Chalip et al., 2017; Taks et al., 2018). This strategic use of existing resources to bring about a desired outcome is called event leveraging (Chalip, 2006, 2014). There have been attempts in recent years by scholars to suggest models to inform leveraging initiatives (i.e., Chalip et al., 2017; Misener, 2015; Taks et al., 2018; Weed et al., 2015) and endeavours to design and implement leveraging initiatives (Chen & Henry, 2016; Chen & Misener, 2019; Hoskyn et al., 2018; Potwarka et al., 2019; Taks et al., 2014, 2018). As discussed in detail below, these previously established models have merit and have contributed to better understanding the phenomenon of leveraging sport events for sport participation. However, some limitations of these models are discussed and the remainder of the chapter is dedicated to presenting an alternative approach.

Weed et al. (2015) have suggested that the transtheoretical model of behaviour change (Prochaska et al., 2008) might be helpful to understand how watching an elite sport performance

(e.g., a sport event) might lead spectators to want to take up sport. The transtheoretical model is rooted in the psychology to help explain the processes individuals move through to arrive at change in behaviour (Prochaska et al., 2008). Though this is not an explicit leveraging model, it has been used to understand how spectators might become inspired by elite sport competitions to intend to participate in sport (e.g., Ramchandani et al., 2014, 2015, 2017; Ramchandani & Coleman, 2012). Findings from these investigations have largely found that spectators who were already involved in sport were inspired by the elite performances to participate in more sport (Ramchandani et al., 2014, 2015, 2017; Ramchandani & Coleman, 2012).

There have also been models posited to help inform the creation of leveraging initiatives. For instance, through consultation with expert panelists, Chalip et al. (2017) developed a model for leveraging sport events for sport participation and development. The panel of twelve experts who could be involved in and benefit from leveraging initiatives included marketers, public school representatives, event experts, public sector sport executives, a university sport administrator, and a community development specialist (Chalip et al., 2017). Together, the experts and the research team developed a framework to inform how community organizations could work together to leverage sport events for community sport participation (Chalip et al., 2017). The model outlines the resources needed for leveraging, the types of organizations that might engage in leveraging, and hierarchical nature of the event leveraging context (Chalip et al., 2017). Chen and Misener (2019) used Chalip et al.'s (2017) model to explore how a non-host region in England leveraged the 2012 London Olympic Games. The findings of this study indicated that the goals of partnering organizations must be aligned from the outset for leveraging initiatives to be effective (Chen & Misener, 2019).

Through an action research project, Taks et al. (2018) suggested an Event Leverage Framework to help community sport clubs leverage sport events taking place in their community. The framework suggests that sport clubs should integrate the event into their overall marketing mix. Consistent with additional inquiries (e.g., Hoskyn et al., 2018; Misener et al., 2015; Taks et al., under review), the action research conducted with two different sport clubs found that community sport clubs simply lack the capacity to effectively leverage events that take place in their community on their own (Taks et al., 2018).

Misener (2015) has developed the Parasport Leveraging Framework, which is a framework for leveraging parasport events for sport participation. The framework emphasizes the importance of considering the wider policy context for people with different abilities, and the central role of a champion individual or group for accessibility. To our knowledge, there has yet to be an investigation that has used Misener's (2015) Parasport Leveraging Framework to inform the creation of a leveraging initiative. In fact, though there have been attempts by scholars to create leveraging initiatives, with the exception of Taks et al. (2018), few use the models described here (i.e., Chalip et al., 2017; Misener, 2015; Taks et al., 2018; Weed et al., 2015) to inform the design of the leveraging initiative, but rather allude to one or more of the models in the final written manuscript (Teare & Taks, 2021). Thus, although frameworks exist to guide leveraging initiatives for sport participation from sport events, they are not being utilized in practice, and therefore cannot be evaluated for effectiveness (Teare & Taks, 2021).

Each of the models described are useful to help inform various aspects of leveraging initiatives. For instance, the transtheoretical model is helpful in understanding the individual aspects of behaviour change (Prochaska et al., 2008; Weed et al., 2015), but lacks a wider societal perspective. The model for leveraging sport events for sport participation and

development is helpful in understanding community and organizational relationships and wider societal aspects of leveraging (Chalip et al., 2017), however, lacks the individual (potential) participants' perspective. The Event Leveraging Framework is helpful for internal use for organizations to understand how they can integrate events into their marketing practices (Taks et al., 2018), but also does not consider individual perspectives. The Parasport Leveraging Framework's (Misener, 2015) consideration of the wider policy context and acknowledgment of the importance of a champion is also helpful in considering the wider community implications of sport events, but still lacks the individual factors such as the ones present within the transtheoretical model. Though the presently available models for leveraging sport events for sport participation when taken together can be comprehensive, individually each seems to lack a key aspect to stimulate sport participation. Moreover, many of the models for leveraging sport events for sport participation are not specific to youth populations; as the nature of youth sport participation is different than that of adults, youth-specific models should also be considered.

### **An alternative approach**

An alternative approach to informing leveraging youth sport participation from sport events is Social Ecology Theory (SET; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Stokols, 1992). As described in detail below, SET allows for the systematic consideration of the many complex aspects of social and physical environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Stokols, 1992). Although leveraging models have yet to be informed by SET, the theory has received much support and advocacy for use in studies addressing adult sport participation from sport events (Annear et al., 2019; Derom et al., 2015; Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015).

SET has yet to be employed in the study of youth sport participation from sport events, however, it has been used quite often to investigate youth sport participation (without an event)

in many western contexts (e.g., Bengoechea et al., 2013; Hobin et al., 2012; Jefferies et al., 2019), as well as to evaluate interventions to stimulate youth sport participation (Pardo et al., 2014; Perry et al., 2012; Young et al., 2007). In the event context, interventions can be designed to use the event to achieve further, indirect benefits outside of the event's mandate, such as stimulating sport participation, which is of course, event leveraging (Chalip, 2006). Thus, drawing from socioecological models and frameworks for youth sport participation, and adult's sport participation from sport events, the purpose of this chapter is to propose a socioecological framework for youth sport participation from sport events.

The following sections will describe SET in detail. Each facet of the theory will be described in general terms, as well as specific applications to youth sport participation and adult sport participation from sport events. Drawing from the applications and theoretical underpinnings, possible pathways in which sport events can be used to elicit youth sport participation from sport events, and associated gaps, will be offered. These insights will then be integrated to present a socioecological framework for sport participation from sport events. The chapter will conclude with implications for the proposed framework.

### **Social Ecology Theory**

SET is a comprehensive theory to understand how the social environment and built environment interact to affect individual behaviours (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). According to SET, the individual, sociocultural context, and physical environment are interrelated aspects that shape the nature of various phenomena (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The theory divides the socioecological context through which the individual interacts with the phenomenon into different levels, all of which are important in shaping behaviours (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). As seen in Figure 1, these levels include the intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, and political levels

(Bronfenbrenner, 1977). SET also emphasizes the importance of interactions between levels of society, referred to as systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; McLeroy et al., 1988). The specific systems include: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Each level and system will be described below and in relation to youth sport participation and sport events.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

### **Intrapersonal level**

Factors at the intrapersonal level originate within the individual, such as personality, past experiences, and preferences (McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz, 1988). Intrapersonal factors can also include demographics characteristics. In term of youth sport participation, SET studies have found that boys are more likely to participate in sport than girls (Best et al., 2017; Hobin et al., 2012; Vella et al., 2014). Youth who come from families with higher socioeconomic status tend to participate in sport more often than their lower socioeconomic status counterparts (Best et al., 2017; Vella et al., 2014). This could be due to the time and financial requirements required for organized sport. Moreover, youth with a higher physical literacy tend to be more active than those with lower physical literacy (Jefferies et al., 2019), perhaps due to higher physical literacy being linked with ability to recognize the importance of physical activity and ability to adapt activities to surroundings. Moreover, those who are more confident in their physical abilities tend to participate in sport more often than those who are less confident (Best et al., 2017; Casey et al., 2009).

Youth participate in sport primarily for fun and to socialize with peers (Bauman et al., 2012; Casey et al., 2009; Perry et al., 2012). Secondary motives for participating in sport include the ability for goal setting, and to feel a sense of autonomy (Bauman et al., 2012; Perry et al.,



2012). Youth also seek various outcomes from their sport experiences, including building their work ethic (Casey et al., 2009; Holt et al., 2011) and fitting in (Casey et al., 2009). Moreover, participation in sport also tends to be linked to youths' previous participation in sport, which helps shape preferences and attitudes toward different sport participation activities (Best et al., 2017; Veitch et al., 2013). Moreover, youth who are sedentary are more likely to be sedentary adults compared youth who are active (Lefevre et al., 2000).

SET examinations into adult sport participation from sport events have found that changing attitudes toward sport participation and generating awareness for sport participation opportunities via various promotional initiatives through the event (i.e., leveraging) have been attempted (Aizawa et al., 2018; Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015). Ultimately it has been found that uptake of these leveraging attempts has been mainly influenced by past participation (i.e., those who were already active will engage with sport post-event) and demographics (i.e., males, those with high socioeconomic status; Aizawa et al., 2018; Derom et al., 2015; Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015).

**Insights for youth sport participation from sport events.** Intrapersonal factors that might contribute to youth sport participation from sport events include past participation in sport (Best et al., 2017; Veitch et al., 2013) and messaging that highlights fun, opportunities for socializing, a sense of autonomy, and challenge (Bauman et al., 2012; Casey et al., 2009; Perry et al., 2012). Previous studies that have not used SET have found that active youth might be more enticed to try a different sport than inactive youth (Potwarka et al., 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020). Messaging that highlights the aspects of sport participation that will satisfy the reasons youth participate in sport (i.e., fun, socializing) might help youth become more open to participation. Previous explorations have found that sport events can help change attitudes toward sport

participation (e.g., Potwarka et al., 2020), however, it remains unknown how events can be used to translate attitudes into participation.

### **Interpersonal level**

Factors at the interpersonal level encompass the interactions that the individual has with others around them (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). These could include the interactions with close reference groups such as family and peers, as well as more momentary interactions such as strangers in social contexts. SET inquiries into youth sport participation have found that interpersonal relationships with key reference groups have profound impacts on youth sport participation. When youth are younger, their parents are the most influential reference group for sport participation (Bengoechea et al., 2013; Perry et al., 2012). This is due to parental support through time, money, and encouragement (Perry et al., 2012; Veitch et al., 2013). As youth age, the emphasis from parents as key reference groups starts to shift to friends and peers (Holt et al., 2011). Parental support is still important, however, peers' preferences start to become more prominent in socialization (Bengoechea et al., 2013; Best et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2012). Siblings are also a key reference group for sport participation (Vella et al., 2014). Finally, relationships and interactions with coaches are also important in shaping the quality of sport participation experience (Holt et al., 2011).

Few inquiries (using SET or otherwise) into sport participation from sport events have had an explicit focus on interpersonal factors. As reference groups can have a profound impact on youth sport participation, perhaps leveraging initiatives should also include interpersonal relationships.

**Insights for youth sport participation from sport events.** As parents (Casey et al., 2009; Perry et al., 2012), siblings (Vella et al., 2014), and peers (Bengoechea et al., 2013; Best et

al., 2017; Casey et al., 2009) influence youth sport participation, interpersonal factors that might affect youth sport participation from sport events could include generating interest in sport among a youth's key reference groups (i.e., parents, siblings, friends), which in turn may influence the youth to also participate in sport. Moreover, leveraging initiatives that include "bring a friend" options might help entice shy youth or non participants try a sport opportunity. However, this line of inquiry has yet to receive attention among researchers.

### **Institutional level**

Factors at the institutional level encompass institutions with organizational characteristics within the society of the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). These types of institutions have formal roles in society, such as schools and hospitals. SET investigations into youth sport participation have found that both sport clubs and school physical education classes are important institutional factors for youth sport participation. The availability of sports in schools has been found to be linked to the culture of the school in its support for physical activity (Casey et al., 2009; Langille & Rodgers, 2010). Moreover, the ability of the physical education teachers to make participating in sport fun for all students, not just those with high physical abilities, has been linked with sport participation (Vella et al., 2014).

The structural aspects of sport clubs such as availability and schedule of programs impact the ability for youth to become registered in programs (Basterfield et al., 2016; Best et al., 2017; Holt et al., 2011). The financial demands of different sports can also inhibit accessibility of participation (Elder et al., 2006; Holt et al., 2011). Finally, a positive club culture can entice families to be part of particular sport clubs, while a negative club culture can be a deterrent for participation and membership (Elder et al., 2006).

SET studies of adult sport participation from sport events have found that the accessibility of the sport event can affect sport participation; for instance sport participation outcomes were more likely when the event was accessible to local spectators (Derom et al., 2015; Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015). A high cost of entry to the event can be a deterrent for local spectators (Derom et al., 2015), as well as the ability for community members to access engagement opportunities surrounding the event (Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015). Moreover, the broadcasting network used for the event can provide further barriers for engagement (Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015). For instance, the event is less accessible when it is broadcasted over stations that require a specific subscription than on public access television stations. Moreover, as online viewing and streaming becomes more popular, the availability of watching the event online might also become an important factor.

**Insights for youth sport participation from sport events.** Institutional factors that might affect youth sport participation from sport events could be found in both schools (Casey et al., 2009; Langille & Rodgers, 2010) and sport clubs (Basterfield et al., 2016; Best et al., 2017; Elder et al., 2006). Schools could leverage sport events by integrating the sport event as a theme in not only physical education classes, but other aspects of school as well (e.g., writing about the sport event, learning about nutrition for athletes etc.; (Bell & Gallimore, 2015; Nordhagen & Fauske, 2018). For example, in conjunction with the Lillehammer Youth Olympic Games, a school-based initiative was implemented to facilitate Olympic education (Nordhagen & Fauske, 2018). In a non-host region of England during the London 2012 Olympic Games, several agencies were engaged to leverage the Olympic games for a sport participation legacy, including schools (Bell & Gallimore, 2015). These approaches did not yield desired outcomes, for reasons elaborated upon in subsequent sections. Moreover, the sport event can be made accessible to

community members through leveraging the event for school trips to spectate (Potwarka et al., 2019; Taks et al., 2014).

The increased resources (e.g., new/upgraded facilities, financial resources, volunteers) for sport in host communities might lead to the creation of new sport clubs, additional programming, or increased capacity for existing clubs (Chalip et al., 2017). The issue presented at the institutional level is how to leverage these increased sport resources to deliver sport participation opportunities (Taks et al., 2018).

### **Community level**

Factors at the community level encompass informal networks within the society of the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). These networks, as seen in Chalip et al.'s (2017) model for leveraging sport events for sport participation and development, can include community values and norms, and societal attitudes toward particular phenomenon. SET investigations into youth sport participation have found that the space in communities is important in facilitating participation in sport for youth. Specifically, spaces that are close to youths' homes and spaces that are accessible are linked to higher rates of sport participation compared to youth in communities with few appropriate spaces for sport participation (Bauman et al., 2012; Solmon, 2015; Veitch et al., 2013). Moreover, youth who live in a neighborhood that they perceive to be safe are more likely to participate in sport in the community than youth to perceive their neighbourhood as unsafe (Loureiro et al., 2010). Furthermore, rural communities tend to have more open spaces, but less sport clubs than urban communities, thus, there are more opportunities for organized sport participation in urban communities (Bauman et al., 2012; Casey et al., 2009; Hobin et al., 2012). Finally, the values that communities have toward sport

participation are typically reflected in youth sport participation practices; communities that value sport tend to have more active youth than communities that do not value sport (Holt et al., 2011).

SET inquiries into adult sport participation from sport events have found that the liminality (i.e., feeling that something special, out of the ordinary is happening; Chalip, 2006) created by hosting sport events in communities can help engage adults with the event, and thus assisting them to be more open to receiving marketing messaging (Aizawa et al., 2018; Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015). Moreover, it has been suggested that the ability of community members to use the spaces where the event had taken place might impact the uptake of sport by community members post-event (Derom et al., 2015).

**Insights for youth sport participation from sport events.** Accessible spaces in communities are important to foster youth sport participation opportunities (Bauman et al., 2012; Solmon, 2015; Veitch et al., 2013). Thus, community factors that might affect youth sport participation from sport events could include allowing the spaces created for the sport event to be available to community members (Derom et al., 2015), also amplifying liminality (Chalip, 2006). The issue presented at the community level is how to make informal sport experiences more accessible through sport events.

### **Political level**

Factors at the political level encompass public policies and laws (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). These policies can be at the municipal, provincial, and national levels. SET explorations into youth sport participation have found that schoolboard and educational policies can influence sport participation. In particular the policies around the physical education curriculum can expose youth to certain sports and not others (Elder et al., 2006; Solmon, 2015). Moreover, the

policies in schools that tend to privilege academic success over physical fitness have been found to negatively affect youth sport participation (Langille & Rodgers, 2010; Solmon, 2015).

SET studies of adult sport participation from sport events have found that there is presently a lack of cooperation among the different levels of government when planning sport events (Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015). A more streamlined approach is thought to lead to more impactful strategies to increase sport participation (Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015).

**Insights for youth sport participation from sport events.** Political factors that might affect youth sport participation from sport events could include the sport system policies and government hosting policies at the different government levels that determine the supports for sport. As suggested by previous research, the resource allocation between elite and grassroots sport development can create inequalities for the different pathways (Toohey, 2010). Thus, a streamlined approach among the levels of governments in resource allocation might help create conditions necessary to positively affect youth sport participation (Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015).

### **Socioecological Systems**

A core aspect of SET is that the socioecological factors interact with each other, and thus the relationships between levels must also be considered (McLeroy et al., 1988). As previously mentioned, the systems include: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). It is important to note that the socioecological systems take on a nested structure, meaning that each level is nested within broader systems. The systems will be described in order (i.e., each system is nested within the following systems; Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

**Microsystems.** Microsystems encompass the relationships between the individual and others (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Similar to interpersonal factors, microsystems involve interactions of the individual with parents (Bengoechea et al., 2013; Casey et al., 2009; Perry et al., 2012), siblings (Vella et al., 2014), and friends (Holt et al., 2011).

**Mesosystems.** Mesosystems encompass the interactions of the individual's various environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), for example the relationship between family and school. In SET studies of youth sport participation, it has been found that social support is associated with greater sport participation among youth with access to spaces to practice sport (Graham et al., 2011). This finding indicates that the interactions between different socioecological levels can amplify conditions to foster youth sport participation.

**Exosystems.** Exosystems encompass the mesosystems that indirectly affect the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). For example, this could be the relationship between home and youths' parent's or sibling's sport environments. Studies employing SET, have found that the ways that schools and teachers integrate and value the physical education curriculum and policies provided by governments affect how youth are exposed to and taught physical activity (Hobin et al., 2012), shaping how youth engage with and value sport participation.

**Macrosystems.** Macrosystems encompass the society's values and norms (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Previous examinations of interventions for youth sport participation have found that there should be synergies between the school (i.e., instructions) and community (Holt et al., 2011). Presently, leveraging initiatives for sport participation from sport events have been siloed by socioecological level (e.g., only considering sport club initiatives; Bell & Daniels, 2018; Hoskyn et al., 2018; Taks et al., 2018), or perhaps integrated two levels of society (e.g., considering sport clubs and facilities; Misener et al., 2015; Taks et al., 2014). Whereas these



socioecological synergies could be more effective when multiple levels are used. For example, considering initiatives that can work toward shifting individual perceptions of sport, allowing youth to participate with friends, address sport club structures and initiatives, increase accessibility of facilities, and generate public policies for more sport resources could prove to be more effective for leveraging sport events for youth sport participation.

**Chronosystems.** Chronosystems encompass how the individual society, and the built environment develops over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). As youth age, their preferences for activities change, and their time priorities shift (Best et al., 2017; Hobin et al., 2012). Moreover, the presence of sport events may also alter the built environment (i.e., facilities) and societal values (i.e., attitudes toward sport; Aizawa et al., 2018).

**Insights for youth sport participation from sport events.** Microsystems might be leveraged by creating opportunities for participation where youth can practise sport with their family and friends. Mesosystems could include the relationship between the family unit who may watch an event together, and the youth's sport club, where the youth could practise envisioning themselves as an elite athlete. As youth who receive greater social support tend to participate in more sports (Maitland et al., 2013), addressing mesosystems in leveraging initiatives could prove beneficial. An issue presented here is how to integrate school relationships, home relationships, sport club relationships, into leveraging initiatives.

In terms of exosystems, there should be alignment with the funding provided by different levels of government (i.e., political level) in terms of goals and priorities of funding outcomes. These funding goals should consider the different institutions such as schools and sport clubs (i.e., institutional level) and broader community initiatives (i.e., community level) to provide adequate funding for leveraging initiatives.

As macrosystems for youth sport participation from sport events might encompass the extent to which a society values sport (e.g., Aizawa, Wu, Inoue, & Sato, 2018), perhaps for more effective leveraging initiatives, all levels of society should be integrated and streamlined to generate youth sport participation from sport events. Presently, it is unknown which entity should take responsibility for sport participation leveraging initiatives. Investigations have found that the sport event organization is focused on running the event (Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015), rather than community benefits. On the other hand, community sport organizations lack the adequate resources to leverage events (Taks et al., 2013, 2014, 2018). Finally, chronosystems describe the long-term affects of sport events on sport participation, which remain largely unknown.

### **Socioecological Framework for Leveraging Sport Events for Youths Sport Participation**

Each level of society presents challenges for leveraging sport participation from sport events; we argue that the main gap of leveraging models or frameworks for sport participation from sport events is the integration of the different socioecological levels into several leveraging initiatives for a comprehensive leveraging strategy. As the discussion below will show, sport events can play a role at each level of SET, providing opportunities for leveraging initiatives for youth sport participation.

There have been attempts at leveraging sport events for sport participation to-date, with few studies examining sport participation leveraging initiatives for youth specifically. For instance, Hoskyn et al. (2018) attempted to leverage elite tennis events in Australia for sport participation by offering a free tennis lesson to spectators. The spectators were able to participate in the lesson at a community club near their home, as several tennis clubs in the region agreed to participate (Hoskyn et al., 2018). Though there was some uptake of lessons, the overall

engagement by community members was limited (Hoskyn et al., 2018). Similarly, a research team had explored leveraging initiatives associated with various medium-sized sport events in Canada, overall finding limited effectiveness associated with leveraging initiatives (Misener et al., 2015; Taks et al., 2013, 2014, 2018). When partnering with community sport clubs for leveraging sport events for community sport participation, it has been found that sport clubs put little effort into leveraging initiatives. This was mainly due to an overall assumption that sport events generate awareness which “automatically” increases sport participation from sport events, but also because clubs were lacking knowhow and capacity to plan and implement initiatives (Misener et al., 2015; Taks et al., 2013, 2014, 2018).

Overall, these attempts have not been particularly effective in eliciting sport participation among youth in the host regions. The leveraging attempts described above address only one or two levels of society. The present proposed socioecological framework for leveraging sport events for youth sport participation, as depicted in Figure 2, addresses these shortcomings. First, by drawing from SET and its applications, the framework is theoretically informed to create a framework for future leveraging initiatives. Second, a key underlying premise of the framework is that all levels of society should be addressed through multiple initiatives when designing a leveraging strategy. The initiatives aspect of Figure 2 is simply an illustration of how multiple strategies could be included in the overall initiatives; it is not to say that those lines should be the specific initiatives in event leveraging case. Rather, each overall strategy created for each individual event should contain a robust portfolio of initiatives that, together, address every socioecological level (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, political) in different ways.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to leveraging sport events for sport participation. Each event will be operating in a different political context ranging from different federal, regional, and municipal policies for education, sport and other community development perspectives. Moreover, each event will have different levels of political support, leading the alignment of policies at different levels to vary from event-to-event. For example, the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa was used as a way of establishing South Africa's global image (Cornelissen, 2014; Swart et al., 2019), whereas the 2000 Sydney Olympics were used to further an elite sport agenda (Toohey, 2010), and the London 2012 Olympics were framed as a way to make the nation more active (e.g., Henry, 2016). Moreover, Derom and VanWynsberghe (2015) found that through a leveraging initiative around a cycling event in Flanders, Belgium received support from the different levels of government; if the government levels had been streamlined in terms strategic goals, the resources provided for the event could have been more effective. As per the youth physical activity intervention literature, the way in which physical education policies are delivered in schools impact how youth perceive and engage with physical activity (Elder et al., 2006; Perry et al., 2012). In alignment with the sport event leveraging literature (Bell & Daniels, 2018; Chen & Misener, 2019; Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015), when policies are created for physical activity, there must be a streamlined effort among all levels of government for the effective implementation. Thus, the policies for physical education and physical activity should be implemented consistently, with buy-in from those at the front-line who will be delivering content directly to youth. As these front-line content deliverers (e.g., physical education teachers, program leaders) are integral to the youths' experiences, leveraging initiatives should also include communication and promotional campaigns targeting these content deliverers to help facilitate enthusiasm and buy-in.

From the community context, each community will have a different perspective toward sport events, and the event itself will allow varying access to event venues before, during, and after each event. The support of the community for the event will impact the attitude of the community toward the sport event, and thus the engagement with leveraging initiatives (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Kurscheidt & Prüschenk, 2020). Moreover, high costs of larger sport events have been found to be accepted more so by host residents who perceive the event as a public good (i.e., have a more favourable attitude toward the event; Kurscheidt & Prüschenk, 2020). The youth physical activity intervention literature indicates that the perceived (e.g., safety of neighbourhood) and actual (e.g., physical space) accessibility of physical activity spaces strongly correlate with youth physical activity (Loureiro et al., 2010; Perry et al., 2012; Veitch et al., 2013; Vella et al., 2014). Thus, leveraging strategies should include initiatives that help youth feel safer in their communities and that allow access to spaces created for the event.

At the institutional level, different sport clubs and facilities with varying levels of resources will be available for participation opportunities in different socioecological environments. As the sport clubs are the institutions that will be tasked with taking on the anticipated increased number of participants, they must be considered when planning leveraging initiatives (e.g., Chalip et al., 2017). As identified previously, many sport clubs lack the capacity to plan and implement leveraging initiatives (e.g., Misener et al., 2015; Taks et al., 2013, 2014, 2018). However, through hosting sport events, new facilities or upgrades to existing facilities might create more space and resources for sports that had not been previously available (e.g., Taks, Green, Misener, & Chalip, 2018). A challenge that has arisen at the institutional level is the inequitable distribution of these resources, leaving some clubs and facilities to benefit from hosting sport events, while leaving other programs with little resources (Taks et al., 2018;

Toohy, 2010). From a larger event perspective, more resources have been allocated to elite sport over recreational sport, and to sports with an Olympic pathway over sports that do not appear in the Olympics (Toohy, 2010). From a smaller sport event perspective, one study found that the resources for post-event upkeep of a new facility meant that an existing facility in a lower-income neighbourhood had to be shut down, thereby decreasing participation (Anderson & Taks, 2019). Drawing from the youth physical activity intervention literature, an effective way of reaching inactive youth is through schools (Elder et al., 2006; Pardo et al., 2014). Thus, leveraging strategies for youth sport participation from sport events should include initiatives that incorporate the school environment to help reach youth who are not particularly sporty. Existing leveraging frameworks suggest to incorporate education systems in leveraging initiatives (e.g., Chalip et al., 2017; Misener, 2015). However, these frameworks have yet to be applied.

Finally, at the interpersonal and intrapersonal levels, youth will all have different preferences for sport and different experiences with sport. Thus, within each event, the overall leveraging strategy should consist of a variety of leveraging initiatives, to attract different groups of youth, similarly to marketing segmentation (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Although it is well established that youth participate in sport primarily for fun and also to socialize (e.g., Casey et al., 2009; Holt et al., 2011; Mallinson-Howard et al., 2018; Schwab et al., 2010; Tannehill et al., 2015), there are additional reasons for participating for different groups of youth. For example, Sirard et al. (2006) found that girls participated in sport for social benefits, while boys participated for social benefits as well as to experience competition. Mallinson-Howard et al. (2018) found that youth with perfectionist traits also participated in sport to experience success and excel at the activity. In the sport event context, Potwarka et al. (2020) found that youth who were active sport participants were more likely to be inspired to try a new sport demonstrated at

a sport event than their inactive counterparts. Moreover, the interpersonal factors have been under-researched, and under-utilized in leveraging strategies. Thus, initiatives included in leveraging strategies should try to facilitate interaction among youth, and allow youth to participate with peers, and include parents in the communication mix.

Importantly, each socioecological level needs to be integrated into one streamlined strategy, rather than several siloed initiatives. It is, however, not clear as to which entity should be responsible/ take the lead for the planning, implementation, and maintenance of these strategies (e.g., Chalip, 2014). A bottom-up approach is necessary, where the final participants have input into the strategies, as they are the ones who the strategies will be for. Moreover, a top-down approach is also important as the decision-makers hold critical resources for the strategies. Although governments provide funding for the event and ancillary initiatives, they tend to take a hands-off approach when it comes to community level leveraging strategies (e.g., Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015). This hands-off approach has led to problems as each level of government has different goals and expectations associated with the event, and thus, a lack of direction to the community level. Sport clubs have also attempted to lead these leveraging strategies; however, they lack the knowhow and the human and financial capacity to take on additional initiatives (e.g., Misener et al., 2015; Taks et al., 2013, 2014, 2018). The public-private conflicts of leveraging sport events for sport participation are evident perhaps innovative partnerships should be explored when public entities and private sport clubs work together to leverage sport events, rather than one entity taking the bulk of the responsibility.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This chapter proposes a socioecological framework for leveraging sport events for sport participation. The framework is informed by SET and draws from previous studies that have

used SET to design, implement, and evaluate interventions for stimulating youth sport participation, as well as previous studies of sport participation from sport events (conducted primarily with adult populations). In doing so, this framework provides a theoretically informed approach to leveraging sport events for youth sport participation and suggests that leveraging strategies should encompass every level of society.

Innovative partnerships should be established to create, implement, and maintain leveraging strategies for youth sport participation. For example, drawing from event leveraging literature, future leveraging strategies could include initiatives that have buy-in from all stakeholders from the outset; include policies that integrate all levels of government (Bell & Daniels, 2018; Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015); increase equitable access of safe spaces for youth to practice sport (Loureiro et al., 2010; Perry et al., 2012; Veitch et al., 2013; Vella et al., 2014); provide resources to increase capacity for sport participation in both clubs and schools (Elder et al., 2006; Pardo et al., 2014; Taks et al., 2018); allow youth to participate with friends (Casey et al., 2009; Holt et al., 2011; Mallinson-Howard et al., 2018; Schwab et al., 2010; Tannehill et al., 2015); and use different tactics to attract distance segments of youth (e.g., non-participants vs. avid participants; Kotler & Keller, 2009). These partnerships would be able to address issues of ownership over leveraging strategies, and ensure that each level of society is considered in the development of leveraging strategies and initiatives. These innovative partnerships should include members from public and private organizations, and could be assisted by researchers. Thus, future research should use the proposed framework to inform, implement, and evaluate leveraging strategies and subsequent initiatives.

As previous scholars have attempted (e.g., Taks et al., 2019), participatory action research is a promising way for the researcher(s) to help organize and mobilize community



resources. The researcher would not design the leveraging initiative themselves, but rather connect different community groups to help leverage existing community resources to generate these innovative partnerships. As community groups often advocate for a specific cause, the researcher role would be an important way of helping the community to set goals and effectively mobilize resources.

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Figure 1.

*Social Ecology Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994;1997)*

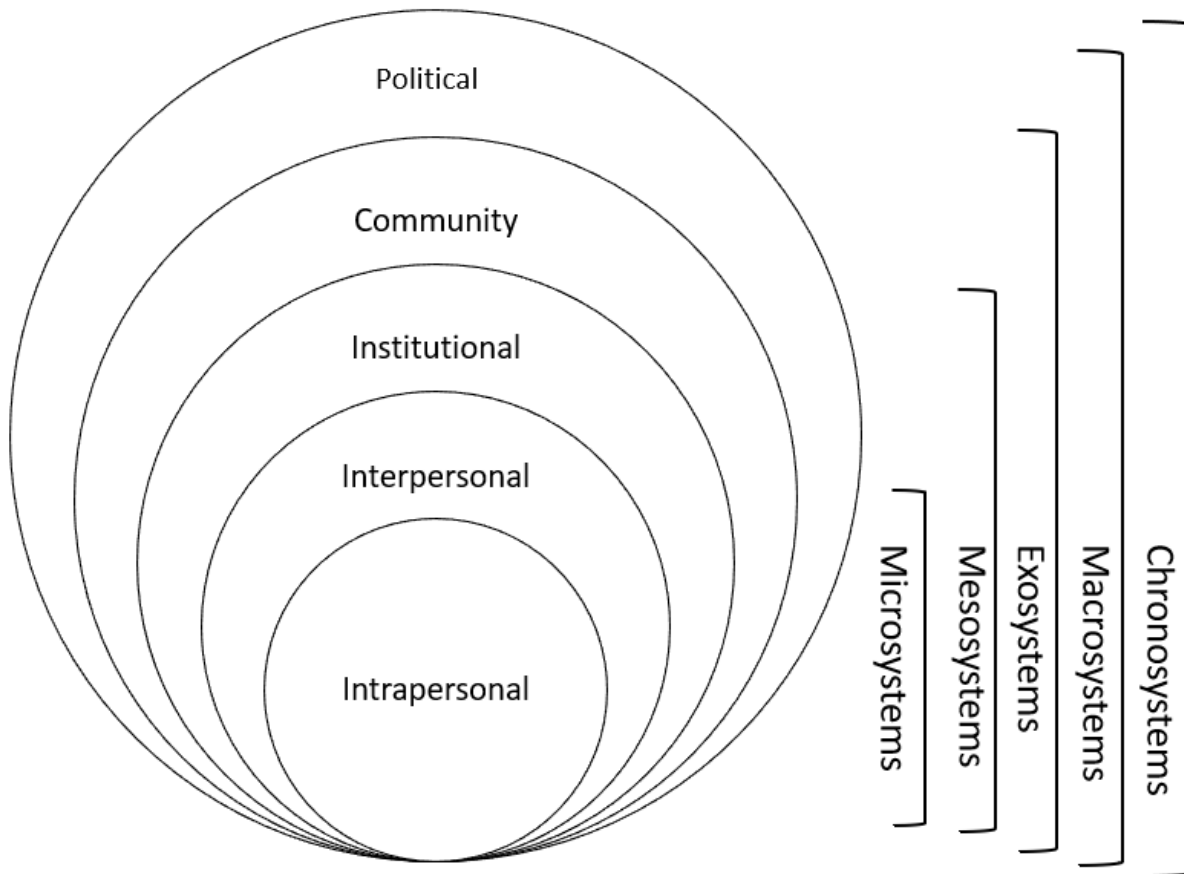


Figure 2.

*Socioecological Framework for Leveraging Sport Events for Youth Sport Participation*

