



NONTRADITIONAL
RESEARCH

Sport and Organizational Studies

Exploring Synergy

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A number of phenomena of interest to management and organizational scholars have been investigated within the context of sport (e.g., compensation–performance relationships, escalating commitment, executive succession, sustainable competitive advantage). The authors are unaware, however, of any systematic effort to address the rationale, benefits, and potential of conducting organizational research within sport. The purpose of this

article is to investigate how studying within the context of sport can contribute to an understanding of management and of organizations with a focus on how such contribution can be achieved with creative and innovative research approaches. The authors present a general overview of the rationale for studying organizational phenomena within sport and provide a concise review of such research. With this as background, the authors discuss a number of organizational phenomena that they have studied within the domain of sport. The article suggests how organizational research might benefit by using sport as a context in ways not yet evident in the literature.

Keywords: *sport; multilevel evolution; competitive advantage; stakeholder management; performance teams; organizational identification; diversity*

This study was a direct test of the pay distribution—performance relationship in a field setting where individual and organizational performance were observable and could be reliably measured over an extended period of time.

Bloom (1999, p. 25)

This paper presents one of the first quantitative field studies in the escalation literature . . . designed . . . to know whether the amount one initially spends on a course of action can affect subsequent commitment.

Staw and Hoang (1995, p. 475)

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of successors' abilities on the results of succession.

Pfeffer and Davis-Blake (1986, p. 73)

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which the congruence between an organization's strategy and its human resources affects performance.

Wright, Smart, and McMahan (1995, p. 1053)

In this study, we investigate a central tenet of the resource-based view of the firm—that tacit knowledge often lies at the core of sustainable competitive advantage.

Berman, Down, and Hill (2002, p. 13)

Each of the articles referenced above addresses a different phenomenon of interest to organizational scholars; that is, the pay distribution—performance relationship; escalating commitment; effects of executive succession; congruence among strategy, human resources, and performance; and the influence of tacit knowledge on sustainable competitive advantage. What each article has in common is that the phenomenon of interest was studied within the context of sport. Sport, thus, has proved to be an effective setting within which to conduct organizational research. We are unaware, however, of any concerted, systematic effort to address the rationale, benefits, and potential of such research.

The purpose of this article is to investigate how research within sport can contribute to our understanding of management and of organizations with a focus on how such a contribution can be achieved with creative and innovative approaches not previously addressed in the literature. We present a general over-

view of the rationale for studying organizational phenomena within sport, summarize its advantages and limitations, and provide a concise overview of such research. With this as background, we discuss a number of organizational phenomena that the authors have studied within the domain of sport. We attempt to push the envelope by suggesting how organizational research might benefit by using sport as a context in ways not yet evident in the literature.

It is our experience that studying within sport has the added benefit of being "fun." Most of the coauthors did not start out conducting research within sport but have found this high-energy environment to be challenging, enjoyable, and, in turn, productive. Although we believe that conducting research that is fun is worthy in its own right, fun also has more legitimate arguments working for it. Fun, enjoyment, and energy are underlying themes of Jane Dutton's (2004) essay on her renewal as a scholar. Recent discoveries generated by the new field of positive psychology

AUTHORS' NOTE: This article is a synthesis, and further development, of ideas first presented at an Interdisciplinary Committee on Organizational Studies (ICOS) workshop held at the University of Michigan (November 2000) and at a subsequent Academy of Management Symposium (Wolfe, Dukerich, & Crown, 2001). We would like to thank Pamela Barr, Associate Editor, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, two anonymous referees for very helpful comments and suggestions, and ICOS for their support of this project.

might help explain Jane's experiences as well as the pragmatic benefits of working in a fun environment. Research in positive psychology suggests that emotions such as joy, interest, amusement, and fascination result in broadening the scopes of attention, cognition, and action; thinking becomes more creative, integrative, flexible, and open to information (Fredrickson, 2003). Such broadened scopes should contribute to new theoretical insights as research is conducted in the fascinating field of sport.

A related, though more applied, rationale for studying organizational phenomena within sport is that examples from sport resonate with the practitioners organizational/management research is meant to influence. Corporate executives appear to be fascinated by what they believe they can learn from the realm of sport. Such fascination explains the best seller status of management books by successful coaches and managers (e.g., Croce & Lyon, 2000; Jackson & Delehanty, 1996; Krzyzewski & Phillips, 2001; Pitino & Reynolds, 1998; Riley, 1994; Shanahan & Schefter, 2000; Summit & Jenkins, 1998; Torre & Dreher, 2000) as well as the number of corporate executives drawn to the speaking engagements of such individuals. And although the gender balance of this fascination remains an empirical question, a quick glance at the authors of this article demonstrates that the use of sport in organizational studies knows no such boundaries.

Although the use of sport as a metaphor is alluring to the practitioner and can be informative, our purpose is to contribute to scholarship by investigating how research within this fascinating domain can contribute to our understanding of management and of organizations.

ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES WITHIN SPORT

Because a considerable number of organizational phenomena, in various literatures, have been studied within a sport context, no attempt is made to offer a comprehensive review of such studies and their findings here. Rather, a conceptual overview of organizational research conducted within sport is presented. We begin with a general discussion of the arguments made for conducting such research. This is followed by a more systematic assessment of organizational/management studies conducted within sport with a

focus on the rationale presented for using sport as the research setting as well as the extent to which generalizability is addressed. We then review the studies' topics, theoretical bases, constructs, and methods.

Organizational Studies Within Sport: The Raison d'Être

A recurring theme in the sport studies literature is that sport can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger society:

Sport is an institution that provides scientific observers with a convenient laboratory within which to examine values, socialization, stratification, and bureaucracy to name a few structures and processes that also exist at the societal level. The types of games people choose to play, the degree of competitiveness, the types of rules, the constraints on the participants, the groups that do and do not benefit under the existing arrangements, the rate and type of change, and the reward system in sport provide us with a microcosm of the society in which sport is embedded. (Eitzen & Sage, 1997, p. 14)

Closer to our organizational "home," it has been argued that

the world of sports mirrors the world of work . . . game or play structures parallel work structures. . . . Each of the three major team sports . . . baseball, football, and basketball, represents a generic organizational model. . . . Baseball is a metaphor for the autonomy of organizational parts, football for hierarchical control over the parts, and basketball, for voluntary cooperation among the parts. (Keidel, 1987, pp. 591-592)

Keidel (1987) argued that "the different varieties of team sports can serve as a living laboratory for organizational inquiry" (p. 608) and that sport can serve as a heuristic to guide researchers in analyzing, and managers in running, organizations (Keidel, 1984, 1987). Consistent with the arguments of Eitzen and Sage (1997) and Keidel (1987), some propose that studying organizational phenomena within sport provides organizational scholars with certain advantages infrequently found in other domains. For example, Goff & Tollison (1990) proposed that

1. The availability of data due to the frequency and regularity of athletic events, transparency of changes in strategies and processes, and clarity of outcomes

results in unique opportunities to observe, measure, and compare variables and relationships of interest over time,

2. Although organizational researchers must frequently test hypotheses using proxies for measures, many relevant variables are measured with great accuracy in sport as sport leagues tend to be prolific data collectors.
3. Doing research within sport mimics laboratory research in that hypotheses can be tested in relatively controlled field environments. Moreover, sport overcomes the laboratory research challenge of having motivated participants.

Sport, thus, provides opportunities to observe, accurately measure, and compare variables of interest over time and to test hypotheses with highly motivated respondents in quasi-laboratory conditions.

Organizational Studies Within Sport: A Review of the Literature

As mentioned earlier, sport has proved to be an effective setting for studying a number of organizational phenomena. As examples, the following have each been studied within sport: loyalty (Adler & Adler, 1988), pay equity (Harder, 1992; Howard & Miller, 1993), pay structure (Bloom, 1999), motivation and performance (Mizruchi, 1991), the relationship of managerial succession to organizational performance (Allen, Panian, & Lotz, 1979; Brown, 1982; Gamson & Scotch, 1964; Grusky, 1963; Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1986), escalating commitment (Staw & Hoang, 1995), new product development (Takeuchi & Nonaka, 1986), the human resources strategy match (Wright, Smart, & McMahan, 1995), and the resource-based view of the firm (Poppo & Weigelt, 2000).¹

In order to develop a sense for the current state of research that has addressed organizational/management phenomena within sport, we conducted a review of such studies that had been published in five leading general management journals.² In Table 1 we present a summary of the review indicating each study's topic, theoretical basis, constructs, methods, setting, rationale for the setting, and the extent to which generalizability is addressed.

Organizational Studies Within Sport: Topics, Settings, and Methods

Of the 18 studies we reviewed, sport being an ideal setting in which to address the focal phenomenon is a rationale in 12 studies, data advantages is a rationale

in 9, and the relatively controlled environment of sport is a rationale in 3 studies. Examples of studies in which the rationale is that sport is an ideal setting are Harder (1992): "This paper explores the relationship between individual pay and individual performance in professional sports, a context in which individual performance is a clear component in the determination of individual rewards" (p. 321) and Weekley and Gier (1989) who argued that the only setting found to satisfy achieving the upper limits of performance evaluation reliability and validity "was that of judges rating the performance of athletes in world-class sporting events" (p. 214).

Examples of authors being motivated by the data advantages of using sport as a research context are Bloom (1999) and Pfeffer and Davis-Blake (1986). Bloom studied the pay distribution-performance relationship in Major League Baseball (MLB) wherein "individual and organizational performance were observable and could be reliably measured" (p. 25). Pfeffer and Davis-Blake (1986) examined the effects of succession and successor abilities on organizational performance in the National Basketball Association (NBA), a context in which "performance and succession measures are readily available and relatively easy to interpret" (p. 76). Some authors pointed to unique opportunities to compare variables and relationships over time: "I used pay and performance information on 1,644 (MLB) players on 29 teams for the years 1985 through 1993" (Bloom, 1999, p. 28). Similarly, Pfeffer and Davis-Blake (1986) "attempted to overcome some of the limitations of (previous research) by examining several organizations (NBA teams) over time and by directly measuring past performance of new managers" (p. 75).

Testing hypotheses in relatively controlled field environments, but with motivated subjects, is another rationale mentioned by researchers. Berman, Down, and Hill (2002) argued that "All teams in the NBA are governed by standard rules of competition . . . eliminat(ing) many factors that would otherwise substantially increase the complexity and reduce the power of this study" (p. 20). Staw & Hoang (1995) argued that it is uncertain whether escalation effects found in earlier studies can be generalized because almost all escalation research was laboratory based. They, therefore, used the NBA as the research setting, a setting "devoid of the props, scenarios, and student samples generally used by laboratory researchers" (p. 475).

Table 1
Organizational Studies Conducted Within Sport: A Review

Study	Topic	Theoretical Bases	Constructs	Methods	Setting	Rationale for Conducting the Study in Sport (as stated by the author(s))	Generalizability
Adler & Adler (1988)	intense organizational loyalty	organizational loyalty; grounded theory	domination; identification; commitment; integration; goal alignment	case study involving 5 years of participant observation	college basketball team	Get at phenomenon: "examples of such organizations (in which intense organizational loyalty exists) might be . . . high performing athletic teams" (p. 402); "college athletic teams generate an intense loyalty" (p. 413)	"the type of loyalty we have discussed here . . . is different from that found in most other organizations" (p. 413)
Allen, Panian, & Lotz (1979)	the relationship between managerial succession and organizational performance	vicious-circle, commonsense, and ritual scapegoating theories of managerial succession	winning percentage; managerial succession frequency and inside versus outside; personnel turnover.	Correlations; path analysis; analysis of covariance	Major League Baseball	Data: "quantitative measures of organizational performance on an annual basis over a relatively long periods of time" (p. 167); get at phenomenon: "baseball teams are relatively small organizations, . . . provid(ing) a critical test for . . . theories which presume that managerial succession has an impact" (pp. 167-168); controlled environment: "Professional baseball teams have the advantage of being highly comparable on each of these (relevant) variables" (p. 167).	"The professional baseball team resembles a work group similar to those found in most large organizations . . . it may seem that the results . . . have only limited applicability to larger organizations . . . however . . . the senior management group in any large organization bears . . . resemblance to other kinds of work groups (pp. 178-179).
Becker & Huselid (1992)	the efficiency and incentive properties of organizational reward systems	tournament theory and/or models as part of the larger literature on wage theory and/or compensation systems	adjusted finish (order and relative speed); spread of prize money as function of finish; race length; lap length; caution flags; miles per hour; start position	regression analysis	auto racing; NASCAR and International Motor Sports Association	Data: "the data limitations are daunting" in studying tournament effects in other organizational settings (p. 349); get at phenomenon: "auto racing allows for a direct estimate of the effects associated with varying magnitude and distribution of the tournament prize" (p. 347).	"The reader should be aware of the limitations . . . important distinctions (include) the time frame for exercising discretionary effort . . . employees make choices over a very long period . . . (in) sports . . . activities require(e) relatively short bursts of effort . . . this raises the question of whether similar response patterns can be expected in both contexts" (p. 348).

Berman, Down, & Hill (2002)	tacit knowledge and its contribution to sustained competitive advantage	the resource based view of the firm	wins; team assists; shared team experience; average draft position; average age of players; coaching experience	regression analysis	National Basketball Association	Data: "sports organizations offer the distinct advantage of completeness and objectivity of the data describing their operation and performance" (p. 17); get at phenomenon: "(basketball) is a setting in which . . . tacit knowledge . . . is likely to be of significant importance" (p. 18); controlled environment: "All teams in the NBA are governed by standard rules of competition . . . eliminat(ing) many factors that would otherwise substantially increase the complexity and reduce the power of this study" (p. 20).	"Generalizations from sport teams to the business world should be made with care. . . . Untangling the trade-offs between the quality of employees and the benefits of a stable workforce is needed . . . linking work such as this with ongoing work in employee retention and turnover may be enlightening" (p. 29).
Bloom (1999)	the relationship of pay distribution to performance	wage theory and/or compensation systems	player performance (three measures for nonpitchers; adjusted batting runs, fielding runs, and total player rating and 3 for pitchers: adjusted earned run average, pitching runs, and total pitcher rating); team on-field performance (winning percentage, fan attendance, finishing position); team financial performance (gate receipts, media income, total income, and franchise value); pay dispersion (the gini coefficient; rank of pay on team); series of control variables	regression analysis	Major League Baseball	Data: the study was conducted in Major League Baseball wherein "individual and organizational performance were observable and could be reliably measured" (p. 25); "I used pay and performance information on 1,644 players on 29 teams for the years 1985 through 1993" (p. 28); get at phenomenon: this study was a direct test of the pay distribution—performance relationship in a field setting where individual and organizational performance were observable and could be reliably measured over an extended period of time (p. 25).	the authors "underscore the importance of understanding contextual factors that mitigate the effects of pay distributions"; in some contexts individual performance is closely tied to organizational outcomes (e.g., law, accounting, consulting) whereas in others the contributions of individuals are difficult to separate from organizational performance (e.g., fire fighting, theatrical casts, hotel customer service) "(t)he open-endedness of baseball salaries, the restricted ability of some players to move freely from team to team, . . . may make baseball a unique context" (p. 38).

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Study	Theoretical Bases	Constructs	Methods	Setting	Rationale for Conducting the Study in Sport (as stated by the author(s))	Generalizability	
Brown (1982)	the relationship between managerial succession and organizational performance	vicious-circle, commonsense, and ritual-scapegoating theories of managerial succession	winning percentage; off-field components of the organization; number of off-field officials and of middle managers, family member in management, coach and general manager same individual; head coach succession; new CEO; number of new assistant coaches and of new players	regression analysis	National Football League	Get at phenomenon (more appropriately than previous studies): "The study differs importantly from past studies of other sport organizations. Football teams are larger . . . characterized by a much more specialized division of labor . . . (which) is mirrored in supervisory (coaching) functions . . . football teams are . . . like small organizations with two operating divisions . . . (and) in contrast to . . . baseball managers the head football coach makes both strategic and tactical decisions . . . football teams thus resemble 'small' organizations more than small groups . . . that may seem more appropriate for baseball or basketball teams" (pp. 4-5).	"(though) football organizations are probably more representative of the general organizational population than are other sports organizations. There are . . . enough other 'peculiarities' . . . to limit . . . external validity . . . (e.g.,) changing opposition . . . means that new conditions must continually be anticipated . . . sports leagues have a . . . motive for promoting competition . . . random factors (e.g., injuries, . . . bad calls) add more unpredictability . . . the shortness of the series of trials means that . . . performance can be significantly affected by . . . stochastic elements . . . there are, however . . . contexts quite similar to this one. Entertainment industries . . . for instance" (pp. 14-15).
Eitzen & Yetman (1972)	the relationship between managerial succession and longevity and organizational performance	Negative effect due to different rules, interpretations, and sanctions; positive common-sense effect due to the successor's qualities; and no change theories of succession	winning percentage; turnover rate; coach tenure	correlation; comparison of percentages; chi-square analysis	college basketball	Data: "the records of (sport) teams . . . winning percentages . . . provide a precise measure of team effectiveness" (p. 110); controlled environment: "(sport) teams . . . unlike most other organizations . . . are identical in size, official goals, and authority structure" (p. 110).	"if this (result) holds in other types of organizations . . . one key assumption underlying the studies of leadership must be discarded" (p. 113); "the validity of this (finding) might fruitfully be examined in other organizational contexts" (p. 115).

Fizel & D'Itri (1999)	the relationship between managerial succession and organizational performance	one theory suggests that managerial turnover is disruptive, a second that it has no effect, and a third that it has a positive effect	winning percentage; years of coaching experience; years of coaching at a particular college; player talent; opponent strength	data envelopment analysis	college basketball	Data: "inputs (player talent, opposition power) and output (winning percent) are clearly defined and easy to interpret . . . basketball teams play many games . . . providing opportunities to average out random variations" (p. 568); get at phenomenon: "dimensions of basketball coaching parallel those of business managers . . . personnel decisions . . . motivation . . . and strategic planning . . . basketball is a sport with essentially one coach. This reduces . . . contaminating influences on . . . performance" (p. 568).	findings are related to "personnel decisions" and "managers" in business settings without addressing any limits to such generalization.
Harder (1992)	motivation; the relationship between pay and performance	equity theory; expectancy theory	performance, seniority, salary-determination procedures (e.g., free agency), All-Star status, race or ethnicity, organizational variables, and position played	regression analysis	Major League Baseball, National Basketball Association	Data: "properties that made the sports context a good area for this research—published salaries and clear performance measures" (p. 322); get at phenomenon: "This paper explores the relationship between individual pay and individual performance in professional sports, a context in which individual performance is a clear component in the determination of individual rewards" (p. 321); Harder argued that previous research relating performance to inequity has been conducted primarily in laboratory experiments and, therefore, that "what is needed is more research into the relationship between perceptions of inequity and performance in organizational settings" (p. 322).	addresses advantages and disadvantages of having adopted sport as his study's research context: "the professional sports context is in some ways unique. Salaries are much higher . . . than in most other occupations. In addition . . . published salaries and clear performance measures—also limit the generalizability of the study" (p. 322); "it would be interesting to compare the effects of inequity on organizational citizenship behavior . . . these findings also have implications for the design of reward systems in organizations" (p. 333).

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

<i>Study</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Theoretical Bases</i>	<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Methods</i>	<i>Setting</i>	<i>Rationale for Conducting the Study in Sport (as stated by the author(s))</i>	<i>Generalizability</i>
Howard & Miller (1993)	pay equity	equity theory	player offensive and defensive statistics; number of years played; player salaries; player position	data envelopment analysis	Major League Baseball	The authors do not explicitly address the rationale for choosing Major League Baseball for their study though data accessibility clearly contributed to the study which "transform(ed) 29 performance inputs into a single outcome, salary, for 433 . . . baseball players" (p. 887).	Although the authors do address data envelopment analysis, and its applicability to determining potential compensation inequity, the particularities of Major League Baseball, and therefore, potential generalizability limitations of their research is not addressed.
Latham & Stewart (1981)	an examination of how organizational objectives are developed and transformed	organizational objectives can be considered as a hierarchy including ultimate, penultimate, and subsidiary objectives; said objectives are situation and/or organization specific and involve trade-offs.	winning percentage; criteria-objectives	interviews; questionnaire; discriminant analysis	National Football League	interest in learning about the NFL itself	not addressed

Pfeffer & Davis-Blake (1986)	the effect of managerial succession on organizational performance	three theories: (a) the common-sense view, claims that succession improves performance; (b) the vicious-circle theory holds that succession has disruptive effects and performance deteriorates, and (c) a third holds that succession has no effect.	percentage of games won by team; number of new players on team-coaching change; ability of new coach (previously coached in the National Basketball Association, previous cumulative win percentage, improvement and/or decline of previous teams)	regression analysis	National Basketball Association	Data: "one of the advantages of using sport . . . is that . . . teams have a clear measure of success" (p. 77) "succession measures are (also) readily available and relatively easy to interpret" (p. 76). These authors "attempted to overcome some of the limitations of (previous research) by examining . . . (National Basketball Association teams) over time and by directly measuring past performance of new managers" (p. 75); get at phenomenon: whereas in baseball "strategy and coaching probably have only a small effect on performance . . . (and) football teams' . . . larger coaching staffs . . . and shorter seasons mean that random variation . . . can have significant effects on win-loss percentages, . . . basketball . . . with essentially one coach and many games played . . . appears to be a useful starting point for the analysis" (pp. 76-77).	not addressed; in discussing their rationale for using a sport setting, the authors stated, "Because this research attempted to extend an idea developed in the study of sport teams . . . if a different type of organization were used . . . it would be difficult to determine whether our hypotheses or . . . the types of organizations . . . were responsible. Attempting to extend the ideas in their original context eliminates this potential problem" (p. 76).
Sonnenfeld & Peiperl (1988)	staffing policy	career and human resource management theories	supply of personnel- individual versus group contribution	theory development	baseball team	Effective metaphor: "many sport teams, especially baseball teams, rely on skilled, individual performers who have talents that can be taken to other teams" (p. 590). A baseball team is thus used as a metaphor for an organization with an external supply of personnel, personnel whose contribution tends to be individualistic.	baseball team used as metaphor

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Study	Topic	Theoretical Bases	Constructs	Methods	Setting	Rationale for Conducting the Study in Sport (as stated by the author(s))	Generalizability
Staw & Hoang (1995)	sunk costs and escalation of commitment	escalation of commitment	number of minutes played; player trade information; player injury information; player performance (factor analysis resulted in three indices: scoring, toughness, quickness); player position; team win percentage	factor analysis; event history analysis; regression analysis	National Basketball Association	Data: "escalation predictions have not (previously) been confirmed or falsified in real organizational settings, using data that are generated in their natural context" (p. 475); "we used readily available information . . . (as) sources of data" (p. 478); get at phenomenon: although almost all previous escalation research is laboratory based, the authors used National Basketball Association data such that "we may have greater confidence that escalation hypotheses can be generalized . . . devoid of the props, scenarios, and student samples generally used by laboratory researchers" (p. 475). "The main purpose of the present study was to validate the sunk-cost effect in a natural organizational setting" (p. 491).	minimal direct discussion of generalizability, however, results are related to previous sunk-cost effect studies that addressed product usage and project completion. Also, the authors stated that "Our task in future research . . . is to . . . involve as much understanding of the context as the theoretical forces involved" (p. 492).
Stern (1979)	a process view of interorganizational networks	interorganizational relations	four determinants of network structure (administration, complexity, new resources); processes that link structure to organizational interests (incentives for action, political interests, structural constraints)	a case study of the development of the National Collegiate Athletic Association	the National Collegiate Athletic Association	Get at phenomenon: "A network is a convenient construct for organizing analysis of large numbers of actors concerned with similar activities" (p. 264); "simple measures of network structure . . . provides an inadequate explanation of the development of the National Collegiate Athletic Association" (p. 246).	in discussing the application of network analyses from a process perspective, the author addresses regulatory agencies.

Stern (1981)	interorganizational coordination through surveillance and sanctioning	resource dependence and interorganizational network perspectives	infractions; sanctions; athletic rankings; academic prestige; conference membership; institution type (college or university)	difference of proportions; chi-square analysis; regression analysis	the National Collegiate Athletic Association	Get at phenomenon: the study "is designed to show the extent to which private systems of regulation . . . control organizational practices" . . . the "National Collegiate Athletic Association imposes penalties for violations of its interorganizational agreement" (p. 16)	"implications for . . . government regulatory agents are drawn" (p. 15); "the study . . . has implications on several levels of analysis" . . . it is related to "the use of regulatory mechanisms for the accomplishment of public policy" (p. 29); results are related to the antitrust area as well as to regulation in the areas of health care, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), utilities, and trucking.
Weekley & Gier (1989)	performance evaluation	performance evaluation reliability and validity	ratings of olympic figure skaters	intraclass correlation coefficients; analysis of variance	olympic figure skating	Get at phenomenon: the only setting the researchers found to satisfy achieving the upper limits of performance evaluation reliability and validity "was that of judging the performance of athletes in world-class sporting events" (p. 214).	findings are related to the worksite as issues such as "different levels of jobs" and "routine" versus "ambiguous" work are compared.
Wright, Smart, & McMahan (1995)	the relationship among organizational human resources, and performance	the resource-based view of the firm: strategic human resource management; the congruence approach to organizational effectiveness	coaches preferred strategy; strategy actually used; skills coaches sought in players; team skills; team performance (ranking, coaches assessment)	survey and secondary data collection; regression analysis	college basketball	Get at phenomenon: "we chose to examine the match between human resources and strategies among . . . National Collegiate Athletic Association men's basketball teams . . . (because) . . . a team's success relies almost entirely upon its people . . . rather than on technology or equipment, . . . there is congruence regarding the strategies a team might pursue . . . (and) each strategy requires different human resources" (p. 1058).	the authors addressed generalizability in detail, discussing "obvious differences between basketball teams and businesses" while also indicating that they "share a number of characteristics" (p. 1058); results in light of business firms (Southwest and Continental Airlines: pp. 1068, 1069); and stating, in summary, that "(g)iven the organizational peculiarities of basketball teams . . . results should be applied to large multifaceted organizations . . . with caution . . . (however) this study is useful for the purpose of theory testing . . . provid(ing) an internally valid test of theoretical propositions" (p. 1070).

*Organizational Studies Within Sport:
Researchers' Rationale*

Although using sport as a research setting might offer a number of advantages, we were also interested in the extent to which authors addressed the question of generalizability from that perceived, advantaged setting. As presented in Table 1, this varies considerably across studies. While Harder (1992), for example, addressed generalizability directly: "the professional sports context is in some ways unique. Salaries are much higher . . . than in most other occupations. In addition . . . published salaries and clear performance measures . . . also limit the generalizability of the study" (p. 322), Howard and Miller (1993) were relatively silent on the particularities of MLB, and therefore, the potential generalizability limitations of their research.

Other statements concerning a study's generalizability follow. Bloom (1999) stated that "(t)he openness of baseball salaries, the restricted ability of some players to move freely from team to team, . . . may make baseball a unique context" (p. 38). Adler and Adler (1988) acknowledged that determinants of the intense loyalty they found in a college basketball team—domination, identification, commitment, integration, and alignment—tend to be present in particular types of organizations (e.g., high-performing sport teams, combat units, intensive surgical teams, astronaut work groups) that they contrast with "ordinary work organizations." Similarly, Wright et al. (1995) stated that "(g)iven the organizational peculiarities of basketball teams . . . the observed results should be applied to large multifaceted organizations only with caution" (p. 1070). However, Wright et al. also stated that such research can be useful for the purpose of theory testing as "(t)here is no reason to expect that the propositions gleaned . . . are only applicable to profit-seeking enterprises engaging in business strategies" (p. 1070). We were struck by the number of studies (five) that did not, or only minimally, address the issue of generalizability: Fizez and D'Itri (1999); Howard and Miller (1993); Latham and Stewart (1981); Pfeffer and Davis-Blake (1986); Staw and Hoang (1995).

*Organizational Studies Within Sport:
Authors' Discussion of Generalizability*

The topic studied most frequently (five studies) was the effects of leader succession on performance (Allen et al., 1979; Brown, 1982; Eitzen & Yetman, 1972;

Fizez & D'Itri, 1999; Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1986). Another four studies investigated the effects of reward systems (Becker & Huselid, 1992; Bloom, 1999; Harder, 1992; Howard & Miller, 1993). Two related topics were the foci of two articles: performance evaluation (Weekley & Gier, 1989) and staffing policy (Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1988). Of the remaining papers, two investigated interorganizational networks (Stern, 1979, 1981) while organizational loyalty (Adler & Adler, 1988), tacit knowledge as a source of competitive advantage (Berman et al., 2002), the development of organizational objectives (Latham & Stewart, 1981), escalating commitment (Staw & Hoang, 1995), and the human resources-strategy match (Wright et al., 1995) were addressed in one article each.

The sport settings used most often are college basketball, MLB, and the NBA, each of which is the setting in four studies. In addition, the National Football League (NFL) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) are each the setting twice while figure skating and motor-sport are each the setting once. Concerning methods/research approaches, there is 1 theory-building article and 17 empirical studies; of the latter, 15 were quantitative and 2 were qualitative studies.

*Organizational Studies Within Sport:
Topics not Addressed*

Considering this review from the perspective of what is not addressed in management/organizational research conducted within sport provides insight concerning potential research opportunities. For example, sport is a context in which multilevel theory development and testing may be facilitated. Sport leagues and teams face pressures for concurrent competition and cooperation within an environment characterized by substantial pressures for change (Wharton, 2002). Sport allows an examination of competition and cooperation at multiple levels of analysis as we can observe individual athletes competing, then cooperating, with team members as teams compete against each other. Teams, while competing on the field of play, collaborate as members of leagues and conferences. There have been many calls for multilevel theory and research (e.g., Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999). Although it has yet to be used in this manner, sport is a context that provides advantages for such research.

Although emotion is so characteristic of many aspects of sport, the study of emotion, and/or its effects, were not the foci of any of the reviewed research. Research in positive psychology (Fredrickson, 2003) and positive organizational scholarship (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003) provides new insights into how emotion plays very important roles in individual and organizational performance. Given emotion's centrality to sport, this represents an opportunity for future study. As just one example, a sport setting could be used to assess the proposition that positive emotions fuel upward spirals toward optimal individual and organizational functioning that can reverberate across organizational boundaries to customers (Fredrickson, 2003). One might investigate the extent to which positive emotions influence individual and team performance aspects of the performance of a team's fans.

Diversity is a seminal topic of organizational studies and of organizational functioning. Although diversity, of gender and race, are current topics of great import in the world of sport, none of the studies in the journals we reviewed addressed diversity within the realm of sport. This, too, would appear to present an opportunity for management/organizational researchers. We found only one use of sport in a theory-building piece—and therefore, unlike the popular press, only one use of sport as metaphor. It appears as though there are opportunities for greater use of sport in conceptual, theory-building pieces. We address each of the above opportunities for management and/or organizational researchers in the next section.

SPORT AND ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES: RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

We now present a number of recent examples wherein the authors used sport as a context within which to study organizational phenomena. We move from macro to micro phenomena as we address multilevel evolution, creating strategic advantage, stakeholder management, performance teams, organizational identification, and diversity. These examples are indicative of the wide range of organizational issues that can be addressed in the context of sport.

Multilevel Evolution

There is a paucity of work that examines the processes of variation, selection and retention among dif-

ferent levels of organizational entities (Baum & Singh, 1994). A key objective in this area should be to understand how and why evolutionary processes at one level of a nested ecological hierarchy might facilitate or constrain evolution at other levels (Van de Ven & Grazman, 1999, p. 189). This is particularly important given compelling evidence that fitness strategies at one organizational level often work in opposition to those at other levels (Baum, 1999). We suggest that the sport context is a rich one in which to study multilevel evolution.

Sport leagues and teams are organizations that compose nested hierarchies. Moreover, organizations at both of these levels face various acute pressures to adapt. Examples of how adaptation at one organizational level can work in opposition to those at another are readily apparent when one considers salary cap and revenue-sharing policies implemented to facilitate league competitiveness but which are perceived as being detrimental to richer, more successful teams and as challenges to be circumvented.

The Problem of Parts Versus Wholes

At its most basic, adaptation of parts versus wholes involves the uneasy tension between the efforts of organizational subunits (e.g., manufacturing and sales) to adapt to their relevant subenvironments and the imposition of coordination and control by the larger organization (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). However, where subunits are functionally equivalent, such as in franchise and chain operations (or in the sport team within a league context), the advantages of local adaptation that derive from factors underpinning heterogeneous resource environments can be successfully combined with system level advantages (Usher, 1999). Examples of heterogeneous resource environments in the sport context include consumers and/or fans in different areas being differentially attracted (repelled) by athlete and team behaviors (e.g., fighting in hockey, celebrations in football), teams receiving different levels of tax relief, and differential government support for infrastructure. Systemwide coordination and control advantages might include the presence of economies of scale in purchasing, marketing, and selling as well as less obvious benefits such as facilitating intraleague competitiveness via policies concerning labor (e.g., player drafts, free agency) and finances (e.g., revenue sharing, salary caps).

*Exploring Multilevel
Evolutionary Change in Sport*

We suggest that studying multilevel organizational issues within sport provides a number of advantages that can advance our understanding beyond sport. First, we find a profound clarity to the nested hierarchies and attendant governance mechanisms when we examine sport teams and leagues. Second, investigating multilevel evolutionary processes is predicated on selection and/or adaptation and, therefore, on environments with pressures for change. In sport, organizations at the team and league levels of analysis face various, acute selection pressures. Professional teams and leagues face serious challenges in the areas of attendance, television viewership, rapidly increasing expenses, viability of small-market teams, and problematic behaviors off the field of play, to list a few. Third, professional sport teams face pressures to concurrently compete and cooperate. We do not focus on pressures to compete here as sport is, by definition, competitive; in addition to competing "on the field," teams compete for resources (e.g., coaches, players, sponsors). There exists as well, however, a concurrent need to cooperate based on the uncertainty of outcome hypothesis that argues that close competition confers benefits to leagues and teams. Domination of a league by a single or a few clubs reduces public interest, lowering overall attendance. In the long run, even dominant teams suffer (Downward & Dawson, 2000, p. 21). To achieve desired levels of competition, policies related to labor and to finances are instituted. Cooperation among teams is necessary to develop, approve, and enforce such policies.

Finally, sport can be an effective context within which to study multilevel evolution because leagues differ considerably in terms of how they have adapted to their environments and, of particular relevance here, in the extent to which they have implemented policies to support competitive balance. For example, while the NFL has adopted relatively strong cross-subsidization policies related to revenue distribution, MLB has been resistant to adopting such policies. In addition, the NFL's policy for drafting incoming players is considerably more comprehensive than is that of MLB. Such differences provide natural experiments for addressing issues related to variation, selection, and retention at league and team levels of analysis. Notably, MLB and the baseball players' union recently signed a collective bargaining agreement that includes more expansive policies related to revenue sharing

and player drafts. It will be interesting to follow this league-level adaptation in terms of its effects at the league level as well as the type of team-level adaptations it will generate.

*Multilevel Evolution: Potential
Studies Within Sport*

We expect that leagues will be "managed ecologies" of teams in that attempts will be made to intervene in the natural course of events. Determining what initiatives work presents interesting opportunities for researchers studying multilevel evolution. For example, do more comprehensive cross-subsidization policies result in a disincentive for teams to invest? To what extent has the "fitness" of the New York Yankees, and in turn their recent dominant position in baseball, affected MLB's outcomes? What would be the effect of exposing teams to selection pressures wherein markets discipline league franchises, that is, weak teams are allowed to fail? A variation that imposes market discipline and maintains the interest of fans of even the least competitive teams exists. Major soccer leagues in Europe relegate teams with the worst records at the end of each season to a lower ranked league. Demoted teams can return to the higher ranked league only by finishing at the top of the lower league. Could such a variation be selected in North America? Institutional theory has potential to inform us, and be informed, on the adoption of such innovations (Leblebici, Salancik, Copay, & King, 1991) as well as on resistance to such new forms and structures (Powell & DiMaggio, 1983). Although we focused on professional teams and leagues here, the arguments presented can be extended to other leagues, other forms of sport governance (e.g., the Olympic games, world championships in tennis and soccer, etc.), and to other levels of analysis (e.g., individual players or specialty units such as offensive lines in football).

Competitive Advantage

The field of strategic management is organized around a central question: "Why do some firms persistently outperform others?" that scholars have tried to answer for close to a century (Barney & Arikan, 2001). Until recently, economic approaches as represented by Porter's (1980) assertions about the relationship between industry attractiveness and firm performance dominated the discussion (Barney, 2001). During the past decade or so, the resource-based view

(RBV) of the firm has emerged as a major strategic management paradigm (Berman et al., 2002). As we return to later, sport provides excellent opportunities for studying industry attractiveness–firm performance relationships. First, however, we focus on the RBV.

The RBV's logic is simple and compelling: Better resource management gives managers a lower cost position or distinct products relative to rivals, thereby resulting in above normal economic performance (Poppo & Weigelt, 2000). Although the RBV has quickly become a dominant approach to studying and teaching strategic management (Barney, 1997; Grant, 1998; Wernerfelt, 1995), empirical studies are few in number and tend to examine limited aspects of the theory. For example, empirical work examines the rarity and imitability of resources, and their impact on performance (Henderson & Cockburn, 1994; Makadok, 1999). However, studies have not been structured in a manner that tests a seminal aspect of RBV's logic: whether resources are acquired in imperfect factor markets, and if so, whether managers exploit market imperfections by achieving higher returns than acquisition costs. Testing this requires resource cost and performance data. We review a study conducted within sport that was so structured.

Competitive Advantage: A Study Within Sport

Poppo and Weigelt (2000) conducted one of the few empirical RBV studies that examined the value created from the acquisition and deployment of assets. These authors were interested in evaluating the performance contribution of MLB free agents. The authors focused on MLB because weak asset complementarities exist among players in baseball relative to other team sports and corporations (Keidel, 1987). The authors, thus, were able to examine a particular asset, the accumulated skill set of free agents, that may be a source of competitive advantage. Moreover, the study's context was one in which cost and performance data were available. Although the setting's simplicity limits the generalizability of results, it provides a type of "wind tunnel" test. If the authors could not determine in this setting that a manager can exploit uncertainty about an asset's true value in generating returns, then it is unlikely that it can be done in more complex situations.

Following Barney (1986), Poppo and Weigelt (2000) defined *value creation* as a rent that occurs when the

acquisition cost of assets used to implement a strategy is less than the performance contribution of the assets. This definition assumes that imperfect information exists: Managers do not know a priori the performance contribution of the asset. The authors addressed the following seminal RBV research questions:

- Do imperfections exist in the free agent market?
- Does uncertainty over a player's performance contribution characterize the wage revision process?
- Does owner/management superior knowledge of free agent(s)' likely contribution constitute a resource that creates value (i.e., do owners extract a rent by underpaying free agents relative to their performance contribution)?

Results show that although market imperfections appear to underlie the payment of baseball free agents, one cannot easily determine whether this imperfection results in above-normal returns or whether teams exploit imperfect factor markets by amassing superior informational strategies or investing in complementary assets. As suggested by Poppo and Weigelt (2000), the difficulty in testing RBV propositions, even when using of a relatively simple empirical setting, "suggests the existence of factor market imperfections is not sufficient to support a resource-based competitive advantage" (p. 609). It might be, however, that there are informational strategies and complementary assets that do lead to a resource-based competitive advantage. Recent approaches for assessing player talent as done by the Oakland As, a very competitive small market team, is indicative of this resource-based competitive advantage (Lewis, 2003).

The RBV and Contingencies

It may be that the RBV is not a one-size-fits-all perspective; perhaps one must be more sensitive to industry effects on its explanatory power than has been the case; that is, the relative contribution of resources (physical, human, and organizational) may be different in industries that emphasize different technologies (Smart & Wolfe, 2003). For example, the influence of resource type, and quality, on performance may depend on whether an organization employs pooled, sequential, or reciprocal technology (Thompson, 1967). Three types of interdependence stem from these technologies; just as the technologies become more complex as they move from pooled to sequential to

reciprocal, so too do the resultant interdependencies (Thompson, 1967, p. 64).

Keidel (1987) suggested that studies within sport present an opportunity to investigate the extent to which technology and interdependence influence the relative contribution of resources on organizational performance: "Baseball is a metaphor for the autonomy of organizational parts, football for hierarchical control over the parts, and basketball, for voluntary cooperation among the parts" (p. 592). Smart and Wolfe (2000, 2003) have investigated the extent to which technology and interdependence influence the contribution of resources on organizational performance. These authors studied the relative contribution of physical, human, and organizational resources on performance in intercollegiate football (Smart & Wolfe, 2000) and MLB (Smart & Wolfe, 2003). The authors found that in intercollegiate football

the resources that lead to . . . competitive advantage are what Barney (1991) categorizes as organizational capital resources . . . the history, relationships, trust, and culture that have developed within the program's coaching staff over many years. . . . An organization may obtain a sustained competitive advantage by applying its organizational resources in a manner which exploits its human and physical resources more completely than other organizations. (pp. 144-145)

On the other hand, in MLB, it was found that player resources explained the vast majority (67%) of the variance in winning percentage (Smart & Wolfe, 2003).

These results are consistent with a contingent RBV perspective. It seems reasonable to assume that tangible resources such as player skills and abilities would be very valuable in baseball that is characterized by pooled technology wherein discrete activities are cumulated to yield total organization output (Thompson, 1967) and there exists relative autonomy of organizational parts (Keidel, 1987) such that interdependence is relatively low. In contrast, the value of intangible resources (i.e., history, relationships, trust, and culture developed within the program's coaching staff) would be considerably more important in football that employs sequential technology, wherein the output of one activity becomes the input of the next (Thompson, 1967), where there exists hierarchical control over the parts (Keidel, 1987), and interdependence is considerable.

Keidel's (1987) suggestion that basketball, football, and baseball are organized as different prototypes of interdependence implies a further contingency ques-

tion. Sports with different forms of interdependence are often managed by a front office that is organized in a more traditional, hierarchical, often autocratic form. Sport teams, with their relatively "pure" forms of interdependence, are embedded in top management forms that may reinforce or undermine the purity of their teams' forms.³ A related research question is thus whether teams whose prototypical form is inconsistent with the organizational form of top management suffer a decrement in performance.

Sustained Competitive Advantage and Dynasties

Sport is one of the few places where people talk regularly about "dynasties." The UCLA basketball team under John Wooden, for example, won seven consecutive national championships between 1967 and 1973. Chuck Noll, in eight seasons coaching the Pittsburgh Steelers, amassed a record of 88 wins and 27 losses. In doing so, Noll provided Tom Peters with one of the first riveting stories that moved him toward some of the key ideas found in the book he coauthored with Waterman, *In Search of Excellence* (1982). However, if one partitions the Pittsburgh wins into those made against opponents who won less than one half their games in the season and opponents who won more than one half, we discover that this dynasty had a record of 59 wins, 1 loss against those opponents under .500, and a record of 29 wins and 26 losses against teams with a winning record above .500.

The Pittsburgh dynasty got that way through small wins and doing the easy stuff. Dynasties might represent a counterinstance of one of the mainstay ideas in organizational theory—Danny Miller's Icarus paradox (1990). The storyline of the Icarus paradox is that success generates complacency, which generates a downfall. For the Steelers, however, success begets further success and competence, and some portion of that success is attributable to an unusual form of competence, namely, small wins. The revised storyline is potentially more complicated and more valid than is a simpler tale of growing success, complacency, inattention, and failure.

Competitive Advantage: Extant and Potential Studies Within Sport

The study of sport organizations lends itself well to examining questions posed within strategic management. This is evidenced by a small, though growing,

number of articles that address challenges faced in the empirical validation of the RBV (Amis, Pant, & Slack, 1997; Gladden, Milne, & Sutton, 1998; Smart & Wolfe, 2000, 2003; Wright et al., 1995). Similar to Poppo and Weigelt (2000), these articles capitalized on data that were available in sport, but which most corporations consider proprietary. For Poppo and Weigelt, the availability of cost (i.e., salary) and performance data over time was critical to assessing the effect of assets on performance. In addition, the choice of MLB, an industry with relatively weak asset complementarities, facilitated measurement of the net contribution of a singular asset. Sport organizations are also particularly well suited to longitudinal studies as well as single industry case studies, both of which are critical to tests of resource-based propositions (Barney, 2001; Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999).

Sport also provides excellent opportunities for studying industry attractiveness–firm performance relationships. This can be approached by considering Porter’s (1980) five forces from the perspective of league (NFL, NHL, NBA, MLB) performance and/or from the perspective of the performance of teams within managed ecologies. Contributing to the latter approach, as stated in the multilevel discussion above, leagues differ appreciably in terms of how they have adapted to their environments; they differ in the extent to which they have implemented policies to support competitive balance. As examples, the NFL has adopted strong revenue sharing and player draft policies compared to MLB. Such differences can result in variations in the extent of rivalry, threat of entry, buyer power, and supplier power faced by teams in various leagues. Taking a managed ecology approach thus provides natural experiments in which to address the effects of industry attractiveness (Porter, 1980) on team performance within, and across, leagues. As in the case of RBV, studies such as those implied here could capitalize on longitudinal data that are available in sport and are critical to studying and understanding competitive advantage.

Stakeholder Management

The view that stakeholder management and favorable performance go hand in hand, though rarely tested, has become commonplace in the management literature, academic and professional (Wolfe & Putler, 2002). It has been proposed that stakeholder management could contribute to the management of sport.

For example, it has been argued that a stakeholder approach could be effective in managing intercollegiate athletics (Wolfe & Putler, 2002) in that this aspect of university life can have important effects on a number of salient stakeholders. Consistent with this perspective, Shulman and Bowen (2001) and Duderstadt (2000) suggested that the interests of a number of stakeholders (e.g., alumni, financial contributors, legislatures, the media, faculty, and student athletes) must be taken into consideration in the governance and potential reform of intercollegiate athletics.

The hypothesis underlying stakeholder management is that creating compatibility between organizational and stakeholder priorities produces a good fit between the organization and its environment and, thus, increases the probability of the organization’s success. However, one is faced with a number of challenges in testing this hypothesis, not the least of which have to do with developing measures necessary to assess stakeholder and organizational priorities and organizational success.

Consistent with arguments presented earlier, conducting studies within sport could contribute to addressing measurement challenges in stakeholder research. We consider measuring organizational performance first. As suggested by Pfeffer and Davis-Blake (1986), “One of the advantages of using sport . . . is that . . . teams have a clear measure of success—their won-loss records” (p. 77). Sport, then, does offer an advantage in studying stakeholder management by providing a clear measure of organizational performance. However, a second measurement challenge exists—that of assessing stakeholder priorities. This challenge, which is perhaps more complex than the first, was recently addressed by Wolfe and Putler (2002).

Stakeholder Management: A Study Within Sport

Wolfe and Putler (2002) tested the homogeneity assumption, the implicit assumption of strong homogeneity of interests within stakeholder groups, inherent in much of the stakeholder literature. Using conjoint analysis (Green & Srinivasan, 1978; Malhotra, 2000), the authors assessed the homogeneity of stakeholder priorities within the context of intercollegiate athletics. Wolfe and Putler found substantial heterogeneity within the stakeholder groups they studied and concluded that an assumption of homogeneous

priorities within stakeholder groups is of questionable validity. Of most relevance to this article, sport proved to have advantages as a domain in which to study an important aspect of stakeholder management—stakeholder priorities. The context of intercollegiate athletics (as well as other sports) lends itself to a stakeholder perspective as one can easily identify salient stakeholders. In addition, clarity of outcomes and access to many relevant variables proved very valuable in Wolfe and Putler's study.

Stakeholder Management: Potential Studies Within Sport

As in the case of Wolfe and Putler's (2002) research, it is apparent that sport could prove to be an effective context for addressing other questions raised in the stakeholder literature. A seminal question being posed currently is the extent to which organizational leaders' priorities concerning competing stakeholder claims influence various organizational outcomes (Agle, Mitchell, & Sonnenfeld, 1999). One could envision studies addressing how leaders' priorities influence the exploits of professional sport teams, on and off the playing field, and, in turn, how such exploits influence various stakeholders' identification with the team, the local community, and the sport. Another direction stakeholder researchers could take would be to investigate Wolfe and Putler's proposition that there will be considerable heterogeneity within a stakeholder group in cases when common self-interest within the group is not implied by a particular issue, as emotions then motivate priorities (p. 68). Assessing stakeholder group priorities as they relate to using public funds for a new stadium or investing scarce university resources in athletics could be fruitful opportunities to address this proposition.

Sport (Performance) Teams

Sport teams have been used as models for organizational work teams (Katz, 2001). However, to effectively use sport teams to extend our knowledge of organizational work teams one must address the similarities and differences of sport and nonsport teams. Adopting a theoretically grounded framework can facilitate such comparisons. In this section, we introduce a framework developed by Crown (2000) that

can contribute to appropriate generalization of team research conducted within sport.

Relating Sport (Performance) Teams to Other Types of Teams: Relevant Dimensions

In Crown's (2000) model, sport teams represent a special type of performance team that can be compared to other types of organizational teams in a systematic manner. *Performance teams* are defined as teams producing the primary product of the organization—that product being a performance (Crown, 2000). Producing the performance (e.g., a concert, a play) is the primary task of team members. Within the context of sport, the principal performance is the game. Performance teams are not unique in producing a product; in fact, most organizational work teams produce some product, albeit the nature of the product may vary (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). For example, the type of product might be an object (e.g., automobile), commercial service (e.g., audit), or a human service (e.g., psychiatric counseling). Although performance teams have similarities to other types of production teams, there are also differences that are important to note. These differences are to be found in training and development, structure, time, and boundary conditions. We address these next.

Training and development. One distinguishing feature of performance teams is that members are often hired for their innate abilities. Effort is not discounted in contributing to performance; however, the weight placed on ability is greater in performance teams than in other types of teams (Libkuman, Love, & Donn, 1998). In addition, compared to other teams, performance teams spend a significant amount of their time on issues of coordination (Friedman, 1990) versus strategy formulation, innovation, learning, and so on.

Structure. Performance teams are housed within the operating core of a professional adhocracy (Mintzberg, 1973). Team members are the principal producers of the organization's product. Top management may guide and direct their actions, and support staff members may help them hone their talents; however, team members are considered essential determinants of organizational success. As such, the rest of the organization goes to great pains to insulate them from unnecessary disturbances and environmental "noise" (Mintzberg, 1973).

Time. The notion of time within the context of work teams typically refers to whether a team is temporary or permanent (e.g., Cohen & Bailey, 1997). Arrow and McGrath (1995) expanded this dichotomy suggesting three categories: task forces (temporary), teams (somewhat permanent), and crews, which are defined as “people assigned as the need arises to an existing set of tools designed for a specific purpose” (p. 380). An example is an airline cockpit crew, where members come together for relatively short periods of time to undertake specific tasks. Arrow and McGrath noted that the need for member-to-member relations within crews are minimized because members have externally trained expertise, along with clear role assignments. This characteristic is relevant to performance teams, which, as a rule, are considered permanent entities. However, consistent with the definition of crews, sport teams can integrate new team members as the need arises (e.g., via trades or calling players up from the minor leagues). The recent increase in player mobility as a result of free agency increases the crew-like nature of teams.

In addition to viewing time as the period team members are together, temporal patterns of team processes can differentiate types of teams. Most organizational work teams have relatively stable pacing patterns, whereas performance teams exert a high level of effort during the execution of the performance, with drastic fluctuations in the pacing of behaviors prior to the performance.

Boundaries. Team boundaries are another factor that differentiates performance teams. One boundary-related issue stems from the nature of the team’s task—a performance. This task necessitates an audience, which, by definition, increases the visibility and exposure of the team. The public display of the task creates unique boundary-related issues (Law, Masters, Bray, Eves, & Bardswell, 2003). A relatively unique sport team boundary issue is related to incidents, which though they may be off the playing field, are often in the glare of the public via the media.

Sport (Performance) Teams: Future Research

Rather than relegating *sport team* to a metaphor used to inspire practitioner-oriented applications, sport settings are ideal sites to test complex ideas. For

example, the pervasive competitiveness in sport may have relevance for a concept such as status contests. Team sports are eternally beset by the tension of team cooperation that is impeded by individuals who are more concerned with their own statistics, visibility, and heroics. The reverse of that situation also is noteworthy as when potential star individuals resist the lure of heroic individualistic visibility and facilitate team functioning. The larger point is that the debate between collective versus individual contributions in team performance has been replaced with the view that both are needed, and they are needed among team members and within each member for adaptive performance. The ways in which sports preserve and manage this tension provide leads for interdependent activities in other settings.

Staw and Hoang’s (1995) analysis of the NBA draft underscores this point. Their data, which probed deeply inside basketball, show that team-oriented skills such as rebounding, blocked shots, assists, and steals are less predictive of personnel decisions, such as amount of playing time allowed, than are more individualistic measures such as ability to score. Basketball may epitomize Keidel’s (1987) cooperation in the abstract; however, in reality, personnel decisions on basketball teams appear to load more heavily on individualistic skills. Might such tendencies in NBA personnel decisions change with the Detroit Pistons winning the NBA title in 2004 by dominating the star-laden Los Angeles Lakers with a focus on team-oriented skills?⁴ Possibly, but questions of whether player notoriety is a bigger draw than actual team outcomes and whether winning for individual players is more about endorsements than championships need also to be addressed in a full calculus of causality. Team-related topics that can readily be studied within sport include the affects of collective/individualistic personnel decisions, of manager/leader succession (Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1986), of changes in team membership (Nicholson, McTeer, & White, 1998), and of emotional contagion (Totterdell, 2000) on individual/team performance. Based on Keidel (1987), the impact of interdependencies (e.g., pooled, sequential, reciprocal) on the above issues can be examined by collecting data from different sports such as baseball (pooled), football (sequential), and basketball (reciprocal). Moreover, based on Keidel’s arguments concerning differential interdependencies across sports, one would assume that, and could assess whether, the

recent increase in player mobility and its attendant increase in the crewlike nature of teams has differential effects on baseball, football, and basketball teams.

Sport (Performance) Teams: Generalization

We see that there are a number of dimensions (i.e., task, training and development, structure, time, boundaries) to be addressed when contemplating generalizing from sport teams to other types of organizational teams. However, considering these dimensions within a theoretically grounded framework (e.g., Crown, 2000) clarifies the potential of generalizing from one context to another. Theories about the determinants of team effectiveness may be disproven, not because they are wrong but because the supposed teams being observed might actually be individualistic crews, more akin to temporary systems of pilots in a cockpit. Likewise, generalizing from a sport team to other types of teams must consider the extent to which the teams in either setting are characterized by innate ability, insulation from the rest of the organization, and visible production.

Organizational Identification

Answering questions such as “who are we?” and “who am I?” is particularly important in contemporary organizational life. As the environment becomes more dynamic and complex, organizations become ever more organic. The flattening of hierarchies, growth in teamwork and empowerment, and outsourcing of traditional functions result in conventional organizational forms being dismantled. Because of the loss of traditional organizational moorings, organizations increasingly reside in the heads and hearts of their members. It thus becomes more important to have an internalized cognitive structure of what an organization stands for and where it intends to go. As a result, organizational identification becomes an increasingly important issue (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000). In this section, we focus on how organizational success (in sport) results in identification as well as how identification might endure in spite of failure.

Cialdini and his associates (Cialdini et al., 1976; Cialdini & De Nicholas, 1989; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980) have found that a fan associates with a winning team to project a “winning” image, thereby enhancing his or her own feelings of attractiveness (termed *bask-*

ing in reflected glory or BIRG). The same fan then disassociates to preserve a positive image when the target is failing. However, how can we explain persistent demonstration of an affiliation with a losing team or target? We suggest that the sport context provides a vehicle for understanding the affiliation of individuals, including persistent affiliation with a losing team or failing organization.

In the original Cialdini et al. (1976) research, university students were found to be more likely to wear clothing bearing school logos following a win by the university football team than following a loss. Cialdini and his coauthors considered the management of one’s positive image to be the motivation powering this BIRG phenomenon. However, if a favorite team begins to lose, its image is no longer positive, and the fan should cease public associations to preserve his or her image. Based on the model proposed by Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994), Dukerich, Simmons, and Dickson (2001) argued that the attractiveness of the construed external image of the organization (or the team, in this case) may explain why fans physically display an affiliation with it. When an organizational outcome improves the attractiveness of its external image (i.e., the team winning, the organization performing well, the production team being awarded an efficiency prize), the individual basks in this glory. The individual’s desire to be affiliated with a winner leads him or her to physically demonstrate, through individual symbolic markers (e.g., clothing, bumper stickers, banners), the affiliation.

How then can the behavior of individuals be explained who continue to demonstrate their affiliation with a team (or organization) that fails? Numerous accounts describe sport team fanatics who remain intensely loyal even when successful seasons are few and far between (e.g., long-suffering Chicago Cubs’ fans). Early research by Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter (1956) on belief perseverance might illuminate this question. These authors described the characteristics of a situation in which individuals may persevere in their commitment to a group in the face of strong disconfirmation. It may be that when people strongly identify with, as well as publicly commit to, a particular organization that has lost prestige, they do not want to define themselves as being a loser, so instead they persist in their beliefs in the value of the organization and continue to publicly demonstrate this belief. Thus, a fanatic will not disassociate because

his or her self-concept is implicated. Accordingly, to explain fanatic behavior we need to include the concept of organizational identity, which has implications for definitions of self (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Specifically, when individuals find the identity of the organization (or sport team) to be attractive they use their association with the entity to define themselves. Through this process, identification with the target increases, explaining why they might continue to demonstrate an affiliation with the target, even when the image is less attractive in others' eyes.

*Organizational Identification:
Research Replication and Extension*

In empirical work, Dukerich et al. (2001) attempted to replicate and extend the original Cialdini et al. (1976) research. In one study, the researchers collected sales data for logo-bearing items from a university-affiliated store over a period of 5 years. The results indicated that the sales of logo items were significantly higher when the football team was winning than when it was losing. In a second study, Dukerich et al. (2001) measured students' strength of identification with the university at the beginning of a football season and then examined the logo-wearing behavior of these undergraduate students following football weekends. Their observational data supported the existence of the BIRG effect: Students were more likely to wear university logo-bearing clothing after a football win than after a football loss. As a result of both of these studies, the authors argued that BIRG is a current phenomenon that may explain the behavior of fans that desire to affiliate with a particular target. The authors also found support for the esteem management argument. Individuals who indicated stronger levels of identification with the university were significantly more likely to display university logos after a loss than those students with weaker identification.

The different processes of image management (as depicted by fan behavior) versus esteem management (i.e., fanatic behavior) may be applied to a broader organizational context. Organizational members who maintain an intense loyalty in the face of negative information about their employer may do so because they find the organization's identity to be very attractive. Those employees whose sense of self is closely tied to the organization may be less sensitive to negative perceptions of others. When the organization fails in some regard, these employees may continue to pro-

mote their affiliation with the organization. Organizational identification processes can enhance our understanding of fan behavior in a sport context, and the sport context can also inform current views of organizational identification processes.

*Organizational Identification:
Potential Studies Within Sport*

We believe that other important research questions concerning organizational identification can be effectively addressed within sport. Examples are questions concerning the relationship between identity and diversity as represented by demographics (Brickson, 2000) and subentity membership (e.g., offense, defense in football), and the extent to which the management of multiple identities is vital to an organization's long-term success (Pratt & Foreman, 2000). The temporal dimension of identity can also be studied within sport; for example, what effects do member transitions and changes in leaders have on identification? Does replacing top management with outsiders who have self-definitions developed elsewhere provide an identification "fix"? (Scott & Lane, 2000). Addressing such questions within sport capitalizes on transparency concerning changes in organizational membership and leadership, clarity of performance measures, and the availability of longitudinal data that is critical to studying and understanding changes in, and effects of, identification over time.

Diversity

Gender, race, and ethnicity are key variables in understanding diversity within a wide variety of organizational settings. Scholarly attention to diversity has increased as the numbers of women and minorities rise within the workforce and among leadership positions within organizations. The notion that understanding and "managing" diversity in organizations are keys to effectiveness and sustained competitive advantage is a central feature in organizational training, workshops, and policy statements concerning diversity (Cox, 1993).

Although attention to gender and diversity in organizations has steadily increased over the past decade, some argued that organizational scholars have had only limited success in advancing our understanding of the effects of diversity on organizations. For example, Ferdman (1999) argued that theorists and

researchers must be more precise about the ethnic, racial, and cultural context for their work and the identities of their participants, particularly those studying gender in organizations. Dreher (2000) critiqued the current state of psychological research on organizations and concluded that there is little interest in considering race or ethnicity as central analysis variables. Similarly, Bell, Denton, and Nkomo (1993) commented that the literature on gender in organizations seldom addresses the perspectives and experiences of women of color, a point that has also been offered by feminist scholars such as Collins (1998) and Ely (1991).

Understanding Diversity: Potential Synergy Among Organizational and Sport Theorists

While organizational theorists struggle with the role and importance of race and gender, sport research has produced a considerable amount of information concerning the impact of gender and race on a variety of individual, team, institutional, and industry-level outcomes. This work has complemented and borrowed from work done on bias, discrimination, and the impact of affirmative action in organizations (see Konrad & Linnehan, 1999, for a review). It may be that attention paid to diversity in sport relative to that devoted to organizational studies is because sport is more visible within our society than are traditional workplace settings.

It is interesting to note, organization scholars rarely incorporate the sport literature on gender and diversity into their work. Issues such as team composition and performance, team identity, team aggression, and team cohesion have been extensively researched within the sport realm; however, such research is rarely cited by organizational scholars. Research on diversity and team-based outcomes in organizations could greatly benefit from sport research given sport's realistic context as well as its clearly definable and measurable outcomes.

Diversity and Organizations: Potential Studies Within Sport

A number of areas of research offer interesting opportunities for synergy among sport and organizational scholars. For example, an important perspective on diversity developed within social psychology has been the impact of contact between different social

groups on intergroup harmony/hostility. Sport can be a valuable context within which to explore this theoretical perspective. One could address whether contact within a sport setting facilitates greater understanding and advancement of diversity in a nonsport, organizational, setting.

A second potential area of study is the assessment of short-term versus long-term benefits and consequences of specific diversity strategies. As Barry and Bateman (1996) argued, diversity can represent a social dilemma or "trap" between individual versus collective interests and between short-term versus long-term gain. Studying the complexity of diversity strategies viewed through the lens of social dilemmas can be a fruitful area of organizational research conducted within sport.

While sport can be an effective context for studying various aspects of organizational diversity, *sport*, as a metaphor for organizations, is not without controversy. As Nelson (1994) wrote, "Sports offer a pre-civil rights world where white men, as owners, coaches and umpires still rule. Within a sports arena, a man can express racist, sexist and homophobic attitudes not tolerated in many other parts of society" (p. 7). Similarly, the almost exclusively sex-segregated nature of sport, although ostensibly maintaining "fairness," may be seen by many as socially anachronistic. Conversely, Harris (1986) argued that sport can facilitate the creation of new modes of normative behavior through exemplars and what she terms the *heroes of play*. Harris describes sport as an idealized social form that can stretch existing behavioral norms.

Although opportunities for synergy among sport and organizational researchers exist, some caution must be observed when using sport as a metaphor and as a context for understanding diversity within other settings. Issues such as social norms and regulatory compliance differ greatly between sport and other organizational settings. Notwithstanding this caution, there is considerable potential for research synergy, which could lead to increased understanding of diversity within and without sport.

SPORT AS A CONTEXT FOR ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH: UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

Embedded in the work reviewed above are examples of advantages of studying organizational phenomena within sport. To varying degrees, the

reviewed studies make effective use of the data advantages found within sport and of sport providing quasi-laboratory opportunities within which to examine organizational phenomena. We now attempt to push the envelope somewhat by suggesting the potential of sport-based organizational research to contribute in ways not yet evident in the literature.

As noted by Karl Weick (2001), a trademark of organization theory is its preoccupation with statics, structure, equilibria, and reification, all of which are not much help when the prevailing questions are "what are people doing?" and "what is going on?" Answering such questions is the domain of verbs; organization theory, however, suffers from poverty in the use of verbs and images. Sport, on the other hand, thrives on verbs and images. Consider the following example. Writer Buster Olney (2001) marveled at the fact that 38-year-old New York Yankee pitcher, Roger Clemens, had pitched all nine innings of a game and, in the ninth inning, was still throwing pitches at 96 mph. Here, in Olney's words, is why that performance is notable.

A pitcher wounds his arm every time he throws a baseball hard. There is microscopic tearing, fluid leaks, cells are damaged. There is physical erosion. Calcium slowly collects in the places where there is microscopic tearing, and it inevitably affects the muscle, as ice cracks a sidewalk. The calcium impedes, the muscles weaken, the explosive movements of the legs and shoulder capsules are retarded. This affects the pitcher's ability. . . . Arm speed is lost, pitch speed is lost. This is the toll of aging. (sect. 8, p. 1)

Consider the verbs in that 83-word segment. We are only three words into the quotation before we hit the graphic word *wounds*; a pitcher wounds his arm every time he throws hard. There are actions of throwing, tearing, leaking, damaging, eroding, cracking, impeding, weakening, exploding, retarding, and aging. These are things that people do and things that happen to people. They are processes, changes, and evolutions. They have animation. It is tough to talk about sports without nuanced verbs. Unfortunately, it is easy to talk about organizations without such verbs. That's reason enough to consider organizing within sports where the outcroppings of that organizing may be thought about with more active imagery.

Sport also evokes images, and the reality, of living at the edge. Consider the examples of downhill skiing and cycling. The secret to winning in these sports is to move at a pace that approaches being out of control. If you get lucky and make it through the course intact,

you win because others are holding back to retain control. Sport performance tests the edge. Although there are exceptions (e.g., emergency medicine, firefighting, turnarounds forestalling bankruptcy), working at the edge is relatively rare in nonsport organizations, though common within sport. What can we learn about organizational success by studying organizations that work at the edge? Dutton (2003) argued that we need to breathe life into organizational studies. The imagery that is evoked in a sport context may facilitate achievement of this goal.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this article was to demonstrate to management and organizational researchers the value of conceptualizing and empirically testing theories of management and organization in sport. We provided a rationale for, and examples of, doing so. Yet in no way did we fully explore the possible synergy between sport and organization studies. We hope we have stimulated thinking about research at the intersection of organizational studies and sport, and we welcome future related research. Not to be forgotten is that it is our experience that conducting research within this high-energy environment is challenging, enjoyable, productive, and, not least important, fun.

NOTES

1. Sport has been used as the context for research in a number of academic fields other than organizational studies. As examples, we find research within psychology (e.g., Bretz & Thomas, 1992; Cialdini et al., 1976; Cialdini & De Nicholas, 1989; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Harder, 1991; Lord & Hohenfeld, 1979), labor relations (e.g., Ehrenberg et al., 1990; Hill & Spellman, 1983, 1984; Kahn & Sherer, 1990), and economics (e.g., Blass, 1992; Kahn & Sherer, 1988; Lehn, 1984; Scully, 1974; Vrooman, 1996; Wallace, 1988).

2. The journals are *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of Management*, *Organization Science*, *Strategic Management Journal*.

3. Whereas Keidel argued that *baseball* is a metaphor for autonomy, *football* for control, and *basketball* for cooperation, he acknowledged that these are not "pure" forms; all teams (and organizations) need degrees of autonomy, control, and cooperation (Keidel, 1985).

4. We thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out the relevance of the Detroit Pistons winning the 2004 NBA title to our discussion of the influence of collective and/or individualistic skills on personnel decisions.

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