

EARLE F. ZEIGLER LECTURE

Journal of Sport Management, 1995, 9, 338-345
© 1995 Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc.

Sport Management Research: Ordered Change

Gordon A. Olafson
University of Windsor

At the inaugural E.F. Zeigler Lecture in 1989, Dr. Zeigler outlined in a retrospective historiographic presentation, his academic/professional development and his interest in sport management. In his concluding remarks, which focused on "What We Should Do—The Professional Task Ahead," Dr. Zeigler noted that:

We should first truly understand why we have chosen this profession, why we have specialized in sport and PE management, as we rededicate ourselves anew to the study and dissemination of knowledge, competencies and skills in human motor performance in sport, exercise, and related expressive movement. . . . We should search for young people with all the attributes needed for success in our field. . . . We must place quality as the first priority of our professional endeavours . . . undergirded by solid knowledge about the profession. [And further] . . . the obligation is ours . . . we must sharpen our focus and improve the quality of our professional effort. (Zeigler, 1992, pp. 213-214)

Building on these perspectives, Chelladurai (1992), while focusing on opportunities and obstacles, extended Dr. Zeigler's suggestions as follows:

We spread ourselves too thin to be able to specialize in any one aspect and create a unique body of knowledge in that specialization. . . . We need to hustle and lay claim to our domain lest others take over the field by default. . . . The success of our endeavor is predicated on our reliance on and use of the knowledge generated by other subdisciplines. . . . We should recognize that the domain in which we play our game . . . sport, etc. is also shared by other subdisciplines. . . . We should learn to co-opt them as partners in our pursuits. . . . We all realize that there is no justification for our specialized field of study if it does not contribute to professional practice. We need to make a concerted effort to clarify . . . the various subareas within the field we call sport management and . . . the process of differentiation is logical and necessary. . . . The larger question is, Should

Gordon A. Olafson is with the Department of Kinesiology, University of Windsor, Windsor, ON, Canada N9B 3P4.

these two fields—that is, the management of human services in sport and the management of entertainment services through sport—be integrated at all? (Chelladurai, 1992, pp. 216-218)

Both Zeigler and Chelladurai, while taking slightly different approaches, focused on the significance of sport management as a profession and the importance of knowledge and the significance of professional practice within the discipline. Chelladurai took us one step further—the need to identify the subsets of the field.

At the 1992 lecture, Dr. Parks focused our attention on Zeigler's concept of the dissemination of knowledge and the call for research with a theoretical base as expressed by Sheffield and Davis (1986), Olafson (1990), Parkhouse (1987), Parkhouse and Ulrich (1979), Parkhouse, Ulrich, and Soucie (1982), Paton (1987), Slack (1991), and Zeigler (1979, 1987). Dr. Parks' central theme was "how best to translate sport management theory into practice"—a long standing concern of Zeigler. Employing Boyer's four styles of scholarship as a basis of analysis, Parks offered the following directive to the field of sport management:

I suggest that through the scholarship of application, we can take into the sport industry a synthesis of the scholarships of discourse, integration and teachers . . . the two bottom lines of sport management will emerge, because as Boyer (1990) reminded us, "Theory surely leads to practice but practice also leads to theory" (p. 16). Through this merger . . . we can take advantage to get another opportunity to express our independence and to reject the old calf path for a more enlightened path of our own making. (Parks, 1992, p. 227)

This direction further exemplifies what Zeigler called "a solid knowledge about the profession" (Zeigler, 1992, p. 215).

The main theme of DeSensi's (1994) address in Edmonton, "social action within the management of sport" (p. 63), represented a further extension of Dr. Zeigler's long-standing concern for equality and equity within and among the peoples of the world. The problems of gender, race, ethnicity, and class discrimination are associated with oppression, and power of authority in terms of the governance and management of sport were adroitly presented. DeSensi's concluding comments, which echo the sentiments long held by our distinguished colleague, Dr. Zeigler, are as follows: "My hope is for a true multicultural understanding within sport and especially on the part of our sport managers/administrators, as well as educators preparing these professionals" (p. 73). Thus, each Zeigler address has challenged the discipline of sport management to seek a higher ground where sensitivity, commitment, creativity, curiosity, and scholarship, all hallmarks of Dr. Zeigler's long and distinguished career, should be central to the development of the field.

Consistent with the foregoing, as doctoral students in sport management at the University of Illinois under Dr. Zeigler, we were required to read extensively the education administration literature written by such notable scholars as Barnard, Halpin, Litchfield, Griffiths, Gross, McCleary, Gordon, Sergiovanni, Getzels,

and Thompson as the theoretical basis for our dissertation research. As a result, the foundational research conducted by Paton (1970), Penny (1968), and Spaeth (1967) provided the basis for Dr. Zeigler's seminal authorship with Dr. Spaeth of *Administrative Theory and Practice in Physical Education and Athletics*. The chapter entitled "Theoretical Propositions for the Administration of Physical Education and Athletes," which was presented to the American Academy of Physical Education in March 1968, was the main required reading in our graduate sport administration class. In this noteworthy manuscript, Zeigler listed 20 general propositions that could be considered appropriate starting points for research in sport administration. His concluding statement still holds true:

It would seem logical to turn to the steadily increasing body of knowledge available through the behavioral sciences. It does now appear that we are on the way to a truly definitive inventory of administrative theory and research. Gradually there will be a synthesis and integration of the knowledge made available by social and behavioral scientists and then we will have a body of concepts that will provide a vastly improved operational basis for those concerned with the application of administrative theory. . . . The logic of this approach seems evident and it is most assuredly up to the field of physical education to what extent a relationship with this movement will be established. (Zeigler & Spaeth, 1975, p. 32)

Since this paper was written in 1968, the field of sport management has indeed progressed by utilizing theories and instruments from the behavioral and managerial sciences. With the establishment of the North American Society for Sport Management (due to the primary interest of Dr. Zeigler), the relationships with the field management science has been firmly grounded as is evident by this, the ninth annual conference and the establishment of the *Journal of Sport Management*.¹ As an area of study, whether within a defined discipline or profession, Zeigler's desire that sport management rededicate itself anew to the study and dissemination of knowledge and that quality be first and foremost, requires persistent academic scrutiny. As we conduct our own research program, as professors and students, a constant and persistent question must be, How will this contribute to the theoretical bases of management in general and more specifically to sport management?

Order Out of Disorder

In his concluding comments on the subject of "Sport Management Research—What Progress Has Been Made," Paton (1989) noted, "Our research may need a new direction" (p. 30). Consistent with this perspective, Olafson (1990), following an extensive comparison of sport management and administrative science journal articles, stated, "The SM literature abounds with conclusions that must be considered tentative at best and that still require empirical verification" (p. 118). Further, in a recent perspectives article in *JSM*, Slack (1993) argued that "the majority of the research conducted by sport management scholars is based on an image of organizations as either machines or organisms" (p. 189). Similarly, while arguing for the utilization of focus groups in concert with other

methods, such as the triangulation perspective of Jick,² Inglis (1992) presented a convincing argument that sport management researchers have relied too heavily on quantitative methods at the expense of alternative, and often complimentary, qualitative methods. Recall what Parks (1992) suggested that we need to attend to: (a) the scholarship of discovery—"what new knowledge is needed in sport management and how do we discover it" (p. 224); (b) the scholarships of integration—"what do the findings mean" (p. 224); and (c) the scholarship of application—what are the practical implications. The foregoing positions are collectively an extension of Zeigler's long-standing interest in linking the synthesis and integration of research knowledge in order to meet the characteristics of an acceptable theory as outlined by Thompson and Litchfield in their seminal papers published in Volume I of the *Administrative Science Quarterly*. Utilizing these perspectives, future research must focus on the development of a sound theoretical base. Further, as noted by Griffiths (1959, p. 45), "if the study of administration is to become scientific, administration must assume the characteristics of a science. Inquiry in administration . . . must come to be characterized by objectivity, reliability, operational definitions, coherence or systematic structure and comprehensiveness." As well, Griffiths noted that "administration is a specialized branch of science, and must therefore meet an additional set of criteria. . . . A theory of administration must provide guides to action, to the collection of facts, to new knowledge and to explain the nature of administration" (Griffiths, 1959, p. 45).

Sport management is beginning to develop a stronger theoretical base in which sets of assumptions are tested, analyzed, and examined as evidenced through the papers presented at each NASSM conference,³ through the manuscripts published in the *Journal of Sport Management*, and through international organizations such as the Japan Society of Sport Industry, which published a journal of the same name, and the European Association for Sport Management, which published its first issue of the *European Journal of Sport Management* in 1994. Additionally, a growing number of NASSM scholars, in recent years, have published theoretically sound textbooks.

However, the challenge that remains for each of us is to explore the truly unknown. Rather than taking "the road most travelled," which is comfortable and secure, professors and graduate students should begin to recognize the importance of seeking and searching for the "black holes" of organizational science, especially when it comes to masters' theses and doctoral dissertation research. Given recent scientific developments such as the discovery of a black hole propounded by Einstein and popularized by Stephen Hawkins in *A Brief History of Time*, the possibilities of fusion in a jar by Ponds and Fleishman, and the ramifications of chaos theory, the scientific community, while skeptical at the outset, is convinced, often belatedly, of the significance of the theoretical importance of the idea. Prigogine and Stengers (1984), in their book *Order Out of Chaos*, described a theory that was drawn from chemical processes, in which radical change in the structure of a system occurs when a system's dynamics are thrown far from equilibrium. Economists at the Sante Fe Institute have extended this concept and have suggested that existing economic systems are always on "the edge of chaos" (Waldrop, 1992, pp. 250-251).

In his publication, *Chaos: Making A New Science*, James Gleick (1987) noted:

Chaos has created special techniques of using computers . . . pictures that capture a fantastic and delicate structure underlying complexity. The new science has spawned its own language [of] . . . fractals, and bifurcations, intermittency and periodicities. . . . Now that science is looking, chaos seems to be everywhere. . . . A dripping faucet goes from a steady pattern to a random one. Chaos appears in the behaviour of the weather. . . . No matter what the medium, the behaviour obeys the same newly discovered laws. That realization has begun to change the way business executives make decisions about insurance. (p. 5)

Because chaos theory is a universally accepted phenomenon that breaks across the lines that separate scientific disciplines, future sport managers will, of necessity, be required to appreciate the ramifications of chaos theory,⁴ if for no other reason than as Gleick (1987) stated, “[It] poses problems that defy accepted ways of working in science. It makes strong claims about the universal behaviour of complexity” (p. 5). We frequently study organizational factors such as leadership, marketing, and effectiveness, but how often have we explored the complexities⁵ of the dynamics of organizational change incorporating the theoretical components of complexity, continuity-non continuity, linearity-non linearity, self-reinforcing mechanisms and environmental factors such as public attitudes, technology, the economy, suppliers, markets, competitors, and regulators (Kotter, 1972). Change and fluctuations are common in “turbulent environments—environments in which events occur frequently and unpredictably” (Huber, Sutcliffe, Miller, & Glick, 1993, p. 225). Thus in all chaotic systems, including the field of sport management, fluctuations are of utmost importance to an organization’s succession and to its system viability. The opportunities to explore the significance of these and other factors in the field of sport management are limitless. And to this end, we must begin to examine the multiplicity of “things” that operate simultaneously in any environment.

Throughout the qualitative research that has dominated the manuscripts published in *JSM*, the often conclusive nature of the decisions arrived at by the researcher should be reviewed carefully in terms of the not-so-apparent or obvious nonlinear relationships that emerge due in part to the “butterfly effect.” The butterfly effect is often viewed as “sensitive dependence on initial conditions in which very small partitions or fluctuations can become amplified into gigantic, structure-breaking waves” (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984, XV-XVII). As Huber, Sutcliffe, Miller, and Glick (1993) have noted: “Change is no longer linear, constant or predictable” (p. 384). To that end, future researchers must utilize innovative methodologies and analysis techniques⁶ that consider the implications and ramifications of chaos theory, nonequilibrium change theory, etc.

Zeigler and two of his doctoral students, Marsha Spaeth and Garth Paton, although not operating under the premise of chaos theory, argued in 1968 for “the employment of historical, descriptive, philosophical and experimental group methods and techniques” and to “involve scholars and researchers from many disciplines with a variety of backgrounds.” (Zeigler & Spaeth, 1975, p. 19). As if acting as foretellers, Zeigler, Spaeth, and Paton (1975, p. 15) noted that “such

a comprehensive program would appear to be absolutely necessary to keep up to date in these rapidly changing times," that "innovation may be needed in many aspects of our total program, . . . and that every effort should be made now to restructure our efforts so that we may offer sound administrative theory as a basis for practice." These directives are as true today as they were when this claim was made at the AAHPER Convention in 1967.

It has been previously noted that sport management research may need to change direction (Paton, 1987, p. 30). The question of "may," however, no longer exists. Sport management research requires a new direction to account for the changing schools of scientific thought.⁷ No longer should we just research simple unidirectional problems. No longer should we just anticipate linear relationships. No longer should we just draw conclusions for the sake of conclusions. Rather, the call initiated by E.F. Zeigler in the mid 1960s for a sound theoretical base coupled with carefully conducted empirical research must be heeded and must be central to the research exercise. We need research programs that focus on specific aspects of the management of sport. We need to create research consortia and/or centers of excellence that will attract colleagues and facilitate collaborative research. But above all, we need curious, creative, committed thinkers who are prepared to delve into the "black holes" of sport management. Wheatley's (1994) observation complements this suggestion: "This is a world of wonder and not knowing . . . there is a new kind of freedom, where it is more rewarding to explore than reach conclusions, more satisfying to wonder than to know, and more exciting to search than to stay put" (p. 7). The application of Wheatley's observation reflects Dr. Zeigler's unending desire to seek out surprises, to relish the unpredictable and thereby "sharpen our focus."

In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to Dr. Zeigler, for without his sense of excellence, his flair for curiosity, his undying energy to seek the truth, his belief in his students and colleagues, and his efforts toward setting the agenda to create our society, we would not be assembling each year to share and exchange knowledge and ideas in the management of sport.

Finally, the following quotation from Robert Browning's *Andrea del Sarto* (1855) summarizes Dr. Zeigler's unending vision for and contribution to the discipline of sport management: "Ah, but a man's reach, should not exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for" (l. 97).

Notes

¹A significant debt of gratitude must be accorded Dr. R. Martens, Publisher, Human Kinetics for his initial and continued support.

²The reader is directed to the December 1979 issue of the *Administrative Science Quarterly*, which was devoted entirely to qualitative methodology. This issue was later published as a monograph by J. Van Maanon (1983).

³W. Frisby and S. Crawford presented "Participatory Action Research: Its Potential Application to Sport Management," and D. Soucie, A. Armstrong-Doherty, and K. Babiak presented "Introducing a Taxonomy of Research Themes and a Model for Examining Relationships Between Variables in Sport Management Research" at the 1994 NASSM Conference, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

⁴Eric K. Drexler (1986) in his book, *Engines of Creation: The Coming Era of Nanotechnology*, presents a fascinating perspective on order from chaos in chapter 2, "The Principles of Change," pp. 21-38.

⁵The reader is directed to M.M. Waldrop (1992) for an enlightening treatise on the science of complexity and its application to many disciplines including management.

⁶While a multitude of qualitative and quantitative techniques are available (cf. Olafson, 1990), recent developments related to the application of covariance structure analysis based programs, LISREL 7 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1989) and EQS (Bentler, 1985) offer the opportunity to consider the causal connections between latent variables with an observed set of covariances between variables and the degree to which these observables are a function of a hypothesized set of latent variables (cf. Stone-Romero, Weaver, and Glenar, 1995).

⁷M.J. Wheatley (1994) offers a riveting connection between scientific thought and the management of organizations.

References

- Bentler, P.M. (1985). *Theory and implementation of EQS: A structural equation program*. Los Angeles, CA: BMDP Statistical Software.
- Blalock, H.M. (1985). *Causal models in the social sciences*. New York: Aldine.
- Boyer, E.L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Chelladurai, P. (1992). Sport management: Opportunities and obstacles. *Journal of Sport Management*, 6(3), 215-219.
- DeSensi, J.T. (1994). Multiculturalism as an issue in sport management. *Journal of Sport Management*, 8(1), 63-74.
- Drexler, E.K. (1986). *Engines of creation*. New York: Anchor.
- Gleick, J. (1987). *Chaos: Making a new science*. New York: Penguin.
- Griffiths, D.E. (1959). *Administrative theory*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Huber, G.P., Sutcliffe, K.M., Miller, C.C., & Glick, W.H. (1993). Understanding and predicting organizational change. In G.P. Huber & W.H. Glick (Eds.), *Organizational change and redesign: Ideas and insights for improving performance* (pp. 215-265). New York: Oxford.
- Inglis, S. (1992). Focus groups as a useful qualitative methodology in sport management. *Journal of Sport Management*, 6(3), 173-178.
- James, L.R., Mulaik, S.A., & Brett, J.M. (1982). *Causal analysis: Assumptions, models and data*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Joreskog, K.G., & Sorbom, D. (1989). *LISREL 7 user's reference guide*. Morrisville, IN: Scientific Software.
- Kotter, J.P. (1972). *Organizational dynamics: Diagnosis and intervention*. Reading, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Olafson, G.A. (1990). Research design in sport management: What's missing, what's needed? *Journal of Sport Management*, 4(2), 103-120.
- Parkhouse, B.L. (1987). Sport management curricula: Current status and design implications for future development. *Journal of Sport Management*, 1(1), 93-115.
- Parkhouse, B.L., & Ulrich, D.O. (1979). Sport management at a potential cross discipline: A paradigm for theoretical development, scientific inquiry, and professional application. *Quest*, 31, 264-276.

- Parkhouse, B.L., Ulrich, D.O., & Soucie, D. (1982). Research in sport management: A vital rung of this new corporate ladder. *Quest*, **34**(2), 176-186.
- Parks, J.B. (1992). Scholarship: The other "bottom line" in sport management. *Journal of Sport Management*, **6**(3), 220-229.
- Paton, G.A. (1970). An analysis of administrative theory in selected graduate administration courses in physical education. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana.
- Paton, G. (1987). Sport management research—What progress has been made? *Journal of Sport Management*, **1**(1), 25-31.
- Penny, W.J. (1968). An analysis of the meanings attached to selected concepts in administrative theory. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana.
- Prigogine, I., & Stengers, I. (1984). *Order out of chaos: Man's new dialogue with nature*. Boulder, CO: Shambhala.
- Sheffield, F.A., & Davis, K.A. (1986). The scientific status of sport management: An evolving disciplinary branch of study. *Quest*, **38**, 125-134.
- Slack, T. (1991). Sport management: Some thoughts on future directions. *Journal of Sport Management*, **5**(1), 95-99.
- Slack, T. (1993). Morgan and the metaphors: Implications for sport management. *Journal of Sport Management*, **7**(3), 189-193.
- Spaeth, M.J. (1967). An analysis of administrative research in physical education and athletics in relation to a research paradigm. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana.
- Stone-Romero, E.F., Weaver, A.E., & Glenar, J.L. (1995). Trends in research design and data analytic strategies in organizational research. *Journal of Management*, **21**(1), 141-157.
- Van Maanon, J. (1983). *Qualitative methodology*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Waldrop, M.M. (1992). *Complexity: The emerging science at the edge of order and chaos*. New York: Touchstone.
- Wheatley, M.J. (1994). *Leadership and the new science: Learning about organization from an orderly universe*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Zeigler, E.F. (1979). The case of management theory and practice in sport and physical education. *Journal of Physical Education and Recreation*, **50**, 36-37.
- Zeigler, E.F. (1987). Sport management: Past, present, future. *Journal of Sport Management*, **1**(1), 4-24.
- Zeigler, E.F. (1992). Using the rays from history's shining lantern as we face an uncertain future. *Journal of Sport Management*, **6**(3), 206-214.
- Zeigler, E.F., & Spaeth, M. (1975). *Administrative theory and practice in physical education and athletics*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Zeigler, E.F., Spaeth, M., & Paton, G. (1975). Theory and research in the administration of physical education. In E.F. Zeigler & M. Spaeth (Eds.), *Administrative theory and practice in physical education and athletics* (pp. 2-21). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Acknowledgment

This paper was the Earle F. Zeigler Award lecture presented at the North American Society for Sport Management, June 1994, Pittsburgh, PA.