

“Let the Marketplace be the Judge”: The Founders Reflect on the Origins and Trajectory of NASSM

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Founders of the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) set out to realize a future in which the management of sport was part of a broader vision that included exercise, dance and play. However, the organization quickly became untethered from this broad interpretation of sport management. In this mixed-method historical research and Delphi study, 10 founding members of NASSM explain the underlying reasons why NASSM leaders redirected the organization's focus over time. Drawing from the literature on institutional legitimacy as a lens to understand the development of NASSM, the findings suggest an emphasis on commercial sport emerged over that of exercise, dance, and play. This emphasis was perceived to offer a more sustainable niche within the crowded sport and physical activity academic society continuum. Shaped by market- and culture-driven processes, NASSM's legitimacy-seeking efforts ultimately catalyzed a narrowing of the organization's scope.

Keywords: NASSM, Delphi, legitimacy, exercise, dance, play, history

On October 4, 1984, Dr. Earle F. Zeigler of the University of Western Ontario (UWO) wrote a letter to Dr. Janet Parks of Bowling Green State University about an upcoming invited lecture she was to give at UWO. In the letter, Zeigler expressed the need to form a North American sport management organization to supplant the Sport Management Arts and Science Society (SMARTS). As the correspondence indicated, Zeigler, along with Trevor Slack (of the University of Alberta) and a handful of other colleagues, believed SMARTS to be overrun by “those concerned with professional sport and those who had profit as their primary concern, not the generalization and dissemination of knowledge about sport organizations” (T. Slack, Letter, September 14, 1984). Parks agreed with the sentiments expressed by Zeigler regarding the need for a new North American society, and over the course of the next year, their correspondence revealed much about the development of a new organization. Their letters, and separate conversations with other scholars

described therein, forged an agenda that would set the field of sport management in North America in motion. The vision for this new organization was to blaze a path for sport management that would establish the field as unique and legitimate, while maintaining an inclusive intellectual environment related to the management of all sport and physical activity. In essence, the organization would have “no formal identification” with the few preexisting sport organizations such as SMARTS, the United States Sports Academy (USSA), the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AAHPERD), or the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (CAHPER; E.F. Zeigler, Letter, April 11, 1985). Further, NASSM's incarnation of sport management would enable the field to stand on its own as a contributing member of the sport studies academy.

The notion that sport management should be a home for teaching and conducting research about the management of all sectors of sport and physical activity for all populations remained a priority for those who founded the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM). Correspondence between Parks and Bob Boucher (of the University of Windsor) supports this position of fostering a diverse field of study. Specifically, Parks and Boucher desired to “not put people in boxes” and contended that the “emphasis on pro sport should be downplayed—SM [sic] is far bigger than pro sport”

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(J. Parks, Letter, October 2, 1986). Parks and Boucher also highlighted that what becomes of the emerging field should reflect the interests of the scholars who comprise it, and that the new sport management organization should “let the marketplace be the judge.”

In accordance with this viewpoint, the first official meetings of the NASSM founders established a vision for an organization that would be broad in its disciplinary foci and would span the spectrum of sport and physical activity sectors, not just those sectors related to commercial sport. In the minds of Zeigler and many other founders involved in this process, such an overemphasis on commercialism had been at the core of the undoing of SMARTS, and this was a mistake they sought to avoid for NASSM. In service to this broader vision for NASSM, Zeigler drafted an intentionally diverse and inclusive organizational constitution:

The purpose of the Society shall be to promote, stimulate, and encourage study, research, scholarly writing, and professional development in the area of sport management (broadly interpreted). This statement of purpose means that members of this Society are concerned about the theoretical and applied aspects of management theory and practice specifically related to sport, *exercise, dance, and play* [emphasis added] as these enterprises are pursued by all sectors of the population. (second draft, November 16, 1985)

The preceding historical narrative, derived from research conducted through the NASSM organizational archives housed at Bowling Green State University, served as the thematic basis for this analysis—which offers a compelling starting point from which to explore the organization’s path from nascent spin-off to legitimate intellectual institution. Contemporary sport management scholars may be surprised to learn that the initial scope supported by the founders of NASSM explicitly included the management of domains such as exercise, dance, and play; moreover, it may come as an even greater surprise that this statement remains virtually unchanged today (North American Society for Sport Management., n.d.). A cursory examination of the publication history of the *Journal of Sport Management (JSM)*, NASSM’s official journal and one of the most influential vehicles for the field’s research interests, supports this disconnect. A search through the journal’s publication archives reveals that although a few dozen empirical research articles investigated exercise programming and facilities, only one empirical study pertained (incidentally) to dance (Hata & Umezawa, 1995), and only two incorporated play (Green, 1997; Hill & Green, 2008). Apologists may point anecdotally—and not incorrectly—to a broader range of domain coverage within the presentation topics throughout the history of NASSM’s annual conferences, but the fact remains that NASSM’s official research journal reflects a far more focused representation of sport management than the constitution promotes.

There are probably many reasons for such a narrow representation, and they no doubt encompass the proverbial chicken-or-egg debate: Perhaps few NASSM scholars submitted empirical research from these domains, or the research submitted may have been subpar or met with editorial and/or reviewer resistance (de Wilde & Seifried, 2012). Perhaps the relatively narrow scope relates to the larger ongoing debate about which department North American sport management programs are most suited to—kinesiology, business, or recreation—and how appointments held by editors and reviewers in disparate departments may shape or constrain the underlying value for noncommercial sport and physical activity (Amis & Silk, 2005; Doherty, 2013). Further, it is possible that the preexistence of other journals with foci more directly related to empirical inquiry into the realms of exercise, dance, and play may have generated a “path dependence” that naturally funneled these types of manuscripts away from the journal (Mahoney, 2000). In all likelihood, some combination of the aforementioned possibilities coalesced and, in so doing, influenced the organization’s pursuit of legitimacy for itself, the journal, and the developing field of sport management in North America.

Thus, the primary purpose of this study was to understand the roots of NASSM’s inception and development, with a particular focus on elucidating the reasons underlying the organization’s shift away from the broad, inclusive purview identified as salient within the initial debate among the founders about the institutional *raison d’être* for NASSM. To undertake such an abstract analysis, this study used a mixed-method approach to examine the historical foundation of NASSM and to understand the factors influencing the development of the organization. The primary analytic lens of the study drew upon the Delphi technique and derived directly from research questions developed inductively through a historical investigation of early organization documents found within the NASSM Archives. In this regard, the historical component of this study served an essential function in generating the formative research questions related to NASSM’s founding that constituted the starting point for the Delphi technique.

Given the subjective nature of the processes shaping the organization’s inception and growth, the empirical orientation of this study sought to allow the original voices of the organization to shape both the guiding research questions and the subsequent reflections on NASSM’s path. Therefore, rather than presupposing an a priori theoretical framework, this study used an ex post facto interpretive lens to consider why the organization ultimately took the path that it did. Pursuant to this analytic approach, the literature on legitimacy ultimately offered a useful explanatory heuristic through which to understand NASSM and the behavior of its founders. Examining the organization’s path toward legitimacy—a path that led the organization away from a broad, multidisciplinary purview toward a conceptualization of sport management narrower than that initially defined by the founders—ultimately permitted the researchers

to engage with the dynamics of the legitimacy-seeking actions steering the organization away from its original ethos. In situating the organization's trajectory through the lens of legitimacy, which Suchman (1995) defines as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574), we offer an explanation of how the organization's pursuit of legitimacy may have contributed to its shift in focus from a broader interpretation of sport and physical activity management to one that appears to emphasize the studies of professional and commercialized sport, the predominance of which the founders explicitly sought to mitigate.

Theoretical Framework

The search for legitimacy is a fundamental challenge facing new organizations, including membership-based professional organizations such as NASSM (DiMaggio, 1988). In fact, the very survival of an organization depends on its ability to attract members. Consequently, members (and potential members) must see the organization as a legitimate representative of their interests. For nascent professional societies seeking to build their organization with reference to an emerging field, the task is complicated by the lack of consensus surrounding the parameters of the field itself (Scott, 2008). Thus, institutional legitimacy offers a compelling framework for understanding the ways in which an organization such as NASSM establishes and perpetuates itself. Furthermore, the framework provides potential insight into the reasons why the NASSM leadership chose to shape the organization in the ways that they did.

Although the historical and Delphi components of this study fostered an inductive, grounded approach to the thematic development of the analysis, the literature on institutional legitimacy offered a theory-derived explanatory basis for the forces shaping NASSM throughout its history. However, for institutional theory to offer an instructive interpretive framework for this investigation into the history of NASSM's development, it is useful to understand how NASSM functions as an institution. Within Washington and Patterson's (2011) efforts to explore the connections between sport management research and institutional theory at-large, the authors note that despite the broad and myriad definitions used within institutional theory, they do not believe that "everything is an institution" (p. 3). Instead, they identify Greenwood, Oliver, Suddaby, and Sahlin-Andersson (2008) as providing the clearest working definition of an "institution" for sport management scholars: "more-or-less, taken-for-granted repetitive social behaviour that is underpinned by normative systems and cognitive understandings that give meaning to social exchange and thus enable self-reproducing social order" (p. 4–5).

With respect to how an organization such as NASSM demonstrates these defining features of an institution, Chelladurai (2005) and Costa (2005) identified three

areas that enable the "self-producing social order" of any academic discipline: the development of degree programs and academic standards; the production of peer-reviewed academic journals; and the creation of professional or scholarly associations. Collectively, Chelladurai and Costa suggest that a scholarly or professional society serves an essential function in supporting a discipline by promoting and encouraging members to engage in the construction of theory, peer mentorship, the exchanging of scholarly and practical ideas, and the development of self-regulation. This assessment also supports Scott's (2008) argument that associations (e.g., NASSM) are an "important class" of institutions along with nation-states, professions, and social movements (p. 100).

Drawing on Greenwood et al.'s definition of an "institution," Washington and Patterson (2011) "take the view that organizational legitimacy refers to the degree of cultural support for an organization—the extent to which the array of established cultural accounts provide explanations for its existence, functioning, and jurisdiction" and they assert that "organizations that desire an increase in legitimacy and 'taken-for-grantedness' . . . may enact institutional strategies aimed at defining boundaries and activities that afford the organization more legitimacy within the institutional context" (p. 5).

The present study focuses specifically on how NASSM's path toward legitimacy was shaped by common institutional forces. In particular, we undertake an exploration of how the social reality surrounding the organization was constructed to support NASSM as a legitimate academic vehicle for the field. Johnson, Dowd, and Ridgeway (2006) note that this is one of fundamental issues surrounding the pursuit of legitimacy by any institution:

Legitimacy is a problem in the construction of social reality. It consists of the construal of a social object as consistent with cultural beliefs, norms, and values that are presumed to be shared by others in the local situation and perhaps more broadly by actors in a broader community. Through this construal process, what is becomes what is right . . . it is a collective process . . . it comes about through and depends on the implied presence of a social audience, those assumed to accept the encompassing framework of beliefs, norms, and values, and, therefore the construal of the object as legitimate. Legitimacy depends on apparent, though not necessarily actual, consensus among actors . . . as a collective construction of social reality, legitimacy has both a cognitive dimension that constitutes the object for actors as a valid, objective social feature and a normative, prescriptive dimension that represents the social object as right. (p. 57)

Furthermore, Washington and Patterson (2011) offer several key elements critical to this examination. First, they suggest that organizations appear susceptible to influence through "their institutional contexts," which may include both the internal and external environments

along with market conditions (p. 3). Next, they posit that isomorphism is enhanced by the desire of organizations to be recognized as legitimate in their preferred organizational arena. This practice is recognized by organizational leaders and promoted to their followers and/or peers as necessary to maintain survival through competitive advantage. However, the consequence of such action(s) may lead the institution toward a particular way of thinking that Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest may contradict other organizational goals and/or pursuits. Moreover, the promotion of a particular way of thinking may become “deeply institutionalized which subsequently leads to institutional isomorphism” (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008, p. 78). DiMaggio (1988) identified this as institutionalization, or as “the product of the political efforts of actors to accomplish their ends” (p. 13).

In this manner, NASSM is assumed to be composed of “both formal structures and informal rules and procedures that structure conduct” (Thelen & Steinmo, 1992, p. 2). Moreover, institutions such as NASSM are positioned as the aggregate of individual choices put into collective action and influenced by some context/environment that may impose some unplanned or unintended consequences (Pierson, 2004). Individual preferences are therefore viewed as generally resulting from constraints provided by institutions, other external stakeholders, and the environment (Scott, 2008). Specific avenues for individual activity are further prescribed by strong forces presented by the institution related to expected behavior and modes of action toward an institutional agenda focused on legitimacy. That agenda is often viewed historically as the result of competing internal interests for recognition or the achievement of some planned goals influenced by past activities or choices (Campbell, 2004; Pierson, 2004). This position is supported by Scott, Ruef, Mendel, and Caronna (2000), who argued that organizations or institutions seek out methods or actions that will provide them with credibility or social acceptability (i.e., legitimacy) among peer groups. In other words, legitimacy is constructed or “created subjectively” as a resource for the institution (Suchman, 1995, p. 574).

Scott (2003) reasoned that proclaiming legitimacy and displaying indicators of legitimacy are critical in the symbolic demonstration to outsiders of the rightfulness and/or authority of the institution’s claim to “space” in an industry—or, in this case, field of study. Berger and Luckmann (1967) similarly identified institutions as actively pursuing and promoting repeated patterns, conduct, or behavior to generate a collective understanding among group members. They described this process as necessary to produce legitimacy—or, as Meyer and Scott (1983) put it, the “degree of cultural support” (p. 201)—for the institution, particularly during its early stages of development.

Deephouse and Suchman (2008) argued that without legitimacy, member organizations may struggle to exist because legitimacy serves as the anchor for internal stakeholders and their collective positioning among peer institutions. Yang, Su, and Fam (2012) further highlighted

legitimacy as connected to the level of social acceptance desired by outside organizations, associations, or institutions. Overall, the conformity of an organization to the practices of external peer groups prompts the organization to practice behaviors and support mechanisms that sustain the organization or move it toward more entrenched professional legitimacy within an institutional context (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Ruef & Scott, 1998; Suchman, 1995; Thomas & Lamm, 2012).

Deephouse and Suchman (2008) also contend that “identifying who has collective authority over legitimization” exists as a major challenge within legitimacy and organizational research (p. 55). Suchman (1995) highlighted the importance of this by suggesting that legitimacy be regularly managed and/or controlled to help an organization realize its goals of internal and external stakeholder respect. For example, Washington (2004) argued that many institutions of higher education have tried to be associated with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) over the lesser-known National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) because the former was perceived as more legitimate. On the other end of the sport spectrum, Chalip and Green (1998) used Hotelling’s (1929) location game to analyze the struggle faced by a modified youth soccer program to maintain its legitimacy to parents and other soccer organizations when its alternative programming distanced it from the approaches of traditional youth sport programs. Sociopolitical legitimacy has also been recognized as occurring when key people involved with the creation of an organization or its decision-making processes are recognized as legitimate themselves (Aldrich & Foil, 1994).

The diversity of various established elements within institutions may also generate conflicting goals within a broader field and may prevent the diffusion of new initiatives, orientations, and pursuits that contradict the traditions already held within (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Heimer, 1996). Likewise, other research on institutional diffusion has described organizational leaders as critical filters, advocates, and barriers to change (Mizruchi & Fein, 1999; Scott, 2008). For instance, Campbell (2004) noted that established institutions generally have a “continuing effect on subsequent decision-making and institution-building episodes” (p. 25). Furthermore, as Jepperson (1991) suggested, institutions may emerge as distinct through their resistance to change and that this may be maintained by subsequent generations.

The present work endeavors to explore this aforementioned contradiction with respect to NASSM’s own inception and development. Again, the relative absence of three of the four pillars identified in the organization’s purpose statement (i.e., dance, play, and exercise) within the organization’s outlets (e.g., *JSM*) compels an analysis of the deliberations surrounding NASSM’s *raison d’être* and its historical path toward legitimacy. Moreover, this apparent disconnect offers the members of the organization an opportunity to consider whether the place of play, dance, and exercise contributed at all to the growth and development of the organization, and whether there is

any utility or obligation in redressing their absence for NASSM's future. On a larger scale, tracing the developmental history of NASSM may help to inform the ongoing internal debate within the organization about the current and future reputation of the broader field of sport management, particularly in North America—a debate that has drawn the attention of multiple Zeigler Award recipients, many of whom have provided clarion calls for the need to understand how NASSM can play a role in legitimizing not only the work of its members, but also the place of sport management in both academe and industry (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Danylchuk, 2011; Frisby, 2005; Mahony, 2008; Thibault, 2009).

Method

To produce a thorough, contextualized analysis regarding the trajectory of NASSM from its inception, this study integrated both a traditional historical research component and the Delphi technique as its methodological lenses.

As Figure 1 summarizes, the current study adopted an integrated four-step analytic approach to foster an inductive thematic analysis of NASSM's development pathway throughout the decades after its founding. Although somewhat nontraditional in sport management research, the archival historical research was incorporated as a means through which to allow the preserved voices of many of the same founders participating in the Delphi component of the study to shape the initial research questions to which they responded. Whereas Costa's (2005) Delphi study used the extant literature to generate research questions, the current study instead drew on the NASSM historical archives and the issues germane to the founding members according to meeting minutes and correspondence. In effect, the contemporary conversations taking place between the founders in the Delphi component is also a conversation between the past and present selves of the founding members.

Historical Research

The historical research into the founding and development of NASSM was undertaken through an archival analysis of the organization's historical documents, made possible through access to the digitized NASSM organizational

archives housed at Bowling Green State University. The archives include preformation and early organizational correspondence between founding members, executive council meeting minutes from 1985 to present, all drafts of organizational operating codes, ethical codes, and constitutions, as well as a number of documents pertaining to the establishment of the yearly conference and the *JSM*. In addition, the archives house digitized video of conference panel discussions in which the original NASSM founders reflect on aspects of the organization's history. All of these sources were consulted before the formulation of this study and incorporated into the development of the research questions and purpose driving this study.

In addition to examining the digitized NASSM archives, the archival analysis of *JSM* publications was conducted to establish relative support for the lack of research presence for the nonsport (i.e., play, dance, and exercise) domains outlined in the organization's constitution. Specifically, this archival analysis involved an article-by-article examination of the journal's entire publication history since its first issue in January 1987 through the March 2011 issue. The article-by-article examination was then cross-checked against electronic searches within the journal for keywords (e.g., "exercise," "dance," "play") to ensure that pertinent articles had not been inadvertently overlooked in the manual examination process. Articles were identified on the basis of explicit reference to the theoretical or practical aspects of the three nonsport domains.

It should be noted that the *JSM* article and NASSM organizational document reviews followed closely the process required by content analyses. Specifically, the archival analysis attempted to produce conclusions from a systematic and objective process that included the identification and quantification of data within NASSM's organizational documents and various *JSM* manuscripts through use of an outline and spreadsheet. Such an approach was developed by Salant and Dillman (1994) and Krippendorff (2004), who supported content analysis as an important tool for mixed-method approaches involving primary sources and organizational/institutional practices. Finally, Mallen, Stevens, and Adams (2011) similarly advocated for evaluating historical information through such an approach because it provides compelling conclusions about the "unique" through the trends that emerge.

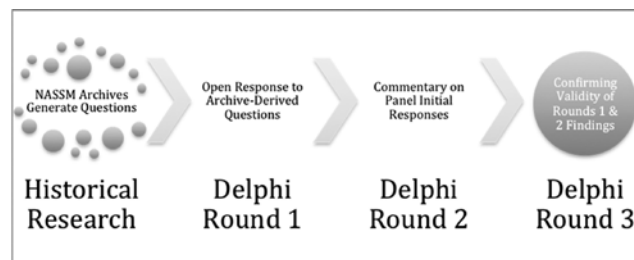


Figure 1 — Overview of analytic process.

Delphi Technique

The Delphi technique offers a methodological framework that focuses on the responses of a panel of experts in a given realm (Martino, 1983). The technique is designed to “elicit judgments on problems that are highly complex and necessarily subjective, requiring significant levels of knowledge and expertise on the part of the respondent” (Garrod & Fyall, 2005, p. 86). Although the approach is often used as a forecasting mechanism—in other words, a future-oriented decision-making tool—previous studies have demonstrated its utility in serving not only as a useful lens for understanding the critical issues surrounding the development of a field (e.g., Bijl, 1996) but also as a means to facilitate expert retrospection about a field’s historical trajectory (e.g., Hill & Goodale, 1981).

Costa (2005) introduced the *JSM* readership to the Delphi technique as a valuable framework for allowing “leading sport management scholars from around the globe” to arrive at “points of agreement about . . . sport management as an academic discipline” (p. 120). The present study borrows not only conceptually but also methodologically from Costa (2005), who asserts that any endeavor to understand a field such as sport management (and its attendant academic society, in this case, NASSM) must be undertaken as a collective exercise that allows experts to build consensus about the origins and solutions for key issues (Kennedy, 2004). Costa’s (2005) cogent defense of the Delphi technique speaks directly to its appropriateness over other common methods considered for the nonhistoriographic component of this research project:

Content analysis focuses primarily on the present status of the debate rather than future possibilities, at least when current literature is the focus of the analysis; group discussion suffers from status influence and insufficient time to consider alternative points of view, especially when conducted face-to-face; individual interviews do not allow for different ideas to confront one another in the manner enabled by group discussion; and one-time surveys impose the researcher’s categories on respondents. (p. 119)

Given the intent of the analysis to understand how the founders of NASSM charted a path toward legitimacy for the organization and the field, the Delphi technique offered a framework that fostered critical levels of interactivity and responsiveness among this group of experts. The traditional levels of insularity sought for participant responses in other types of research endeavors and analyses, although serving an important function to preserve the individuality of participant perspectives, also build in a natural disconnect between the participant and the body of knowledge the study is seeking to inform. Delphi studies, on the other hand, build in mechanisms for participants—experts—not only to engage with the ideas of others but also to foster a level of interactivity that has the potential to generate new and meaningful understandings through synthesis (Skulmoski, Hartman, & Krahn, 2007).

In this study, the Delphi technique allowed those scholars involved in the founding of NASSM and the development of sport management (in North America) to discover and/or rediscover points of agreement and disagreement about the past, present, and future of NASSM and the field in a manner permitted by few methods outside of the Delphi technique. In searching for consensus about the history of the organization, the Delphi technique allowed the NASSM founders to iteratively work toward a common recollection of the bigger picture issues and trends that shaped its origins and trajectory.

Procedures. We used the organizational archives to predetermine expert panelists for participation through an examination of the historical record indicating their presence at formative meetings for NASSM. On the basis of these records, an e-mail solicitation explaining the aims of the project was sent to any living original founders of NASSM. Ten founders agreed to participate, a commitment that required them to respond to rounds of questions distributed via e-mail. This approach drew on Linstone and Turoff’s (2011) assertion that “Internet-based collaboration” through the Delphi technique offers an efficient means of connecting experts that “will gradually penetrate more formal organizations” (p. 1718). In accordance with the format of the Delphi, these e-mail-based rounds of questions were iterative in nature, with each round building on the last (Martino, 1983). In the case of this study, the Delphi technique was used to collect, synthesize, and present participants’ responses to a series of prompts designed to elicit retrospection and introspection about the historical foundation of NASSM by the founders

Participants. Participants in this study were 10 of the NASSM founders present at the initial organizational meetings during the fall of 1985 and the spring of 1986. Potential participants were identified through archival research of the pre-NASSM meeting minutes. Although more than 10 founders were present at these early meetings, full representation was precluded by one or more of the following issues: a founder’s lack of response to e-mail solicitation, the fact that a founder had left the field and no longer felt comfortable commenting on sport management’s past and present, or the fact that the founder had passed away. Of the 10 initial participants, 8 completed the entire study, with 2 of the founders withdrawing after the first round because they had left NASSM so long ago that they felt uncomfortable commenting on the evolution of the organization beyond their early experiences.

Although few established requirements exist to determine with exactitude the appropriate sample size for a Delphi study, the final sample size of the current study falls on the smaller side of the spectrum of published studies; Delphi studies have been published with as few as three expert participants (Lam, Petri, & Smith, 2000) and with more than 45 expert participants (Schmidt, Lyytinen, Keil, & Cule, 2001). Skulmoski et al. (2007) argue that an assessment of the appropriateness of sample

size should be based not on quantity, however, but on a number of factors, such as homogeneity/heterogeneity of the experts, the marginal gains of reducing group error versus managing additional data, and the opportunities for future studies that can provide internal/external verification. With that in mind, the relatively homogeneous makeup of this group of experts (i.e., academicians) and the relatively small population (14–17, depending on the particular gathering) of NASSM founders support the acceptability of the final sample size.

Data Analysis

Findings from each round were compiled, synthesized, stripped of any identifiers, and provided back to the panelists for response. Per the methodological protocol of the study, participant anonymity was maintained through the removal of identifying information before synthesizing and representing responses for the next phase of panel response. Further, the decision was made that panelists not be identified (even with pseudonyms) in the reporting of the data because of the sensitive nature of the comments. In each successive round, panelists were prompted to explain their responses and to identify areas of agreement or disagreement with other panelists' responses. The literature indicates that three iterations are sufficient for identifying points of consensus and disagreement (Costa, 2005; Dietz, 1987). Rather than using Weber's (1990) procedure for analyzing the data for content to identify themes as Costa (2005) did, the resulting qualitative data were collated and organized by question to initially include every response from every panelist. This approach was appropriate because of the historical nature of this inquiry and the effort to understand, at least initially, items that may have contributed to the development of legitimacy for the organization.

Round 1. In Round 1, panelists were asked to respond to an initial series of questions derived from the historical analysis of the issues occupying the attention of the founders during NASSM's formational period. This archival-based round of questions was designed to stimulate reflection about the founders' thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding the early development of the field of sport management—primarily with respect to the historical period during NASSM's formation (see Appendix A for research questions). In responding to each question, panelists were encouraged to write as much or as little as they liked, but to keep in mind that the depth and richness of their responses would have a direct impact on the depth and richness of the data that the panel considered in forthcoming iterations. Panelists were also encouraged to elaborate beyond the parameters outlined in each question with anecdotes or issues that they believed to be germane to the understanding of their experiences during the formative years of NASSM as well as in the decades since its founding.

Round 2. In the second round, panelists responded to a consolidated and synthesized representation of the panel's

responses to the first round of questions to elaborate on and clarify the various points of agreement or points of disputation. Per the methodological protocol of the Delphi technique, the second round of questions were derived directly from the panel's responses to the first round, and in so doing, afforded panelists two different opportunities: to address the initial responses of the panel, with the option to reply to specific assertions, amend their own responses, and/or elaborate on any aspect of the debate; and to expand their reflection in responding to questions emerging from the points of agreement/disagreement offered by fellow panelists. Panelists were provided a synthesized report of all responses to each question from Round 1 and were instructed first to comment directly about the Round 1 responses and then to answer the additional questions emerging from the Round 1 responses to elicit further consideration of points raised (or sometimes not raised) within the initial responses (see Appendix A). Although Costa adhered to a more traditional Delphi protocol and created Likert-type scales in Rounds 2 and 3 asking panelists to respond to items generated from Round 1 responses, we offered panelists another opportunity in Round 2 to expound on the issues broached in Round 1 before moving to a "confirmatory" scale in Round 3. This deviation was designed to provide as much opportunity as possible for the voices of the founders—as opposed to the will of the researchers—to hone the thematic direction of the analysis.

Round 3. In the third and final round, the format shifted to a more simplified structure that asked panelists to rate, using a five-point Likert scale, their level of agreement with statements of consensus that emerged from the first two rounds (see Appendix B). Although standard Delphi protocol, the change in format became particularly salient for two reasons. First, the amount of data generated from panel responses to Rounds 1 and 2 became prohibitively large and complex; otherwise, each panelist would have been required to read and respond to the myriad points raised within 70 single-spaced pages of data. Second, the simplified format permitted panelists to address their level of individual agreement with the major points of consensus emerging from the first two rounds. For panelists who wanted the option to clarify their ratings, space was provided beneath each item for them to supplement their rating with additional comments. These supplemental comments were included and integrated into the results to foster as emergent a thematic analysis as possible.

Results

NASSM, which began with a broad statement of purpose proclaiming "that members of this Society are concerned about the theoretical and applied aspects of management theory and practice specifically related to sport, exercise, dance, and play as these enterprises are pursued by all sectors of the population," witnessed an almost-immediate

narrowing in its scope as a result of the organization's pursuit of legitimacy in a relatively crowded scholarly organization marketplace (second draft, November 16, 1985). To more clearly articulate the forces influencing this narrowing (in particular, toward an emphasis on professional and college sport), the results of the present analysis are organized not by the order of original questions or by listing all of the major themes to emerge from each, but instead by the processual linkages explicated throughout the responses of the NASSM founders panel. Further, to assist with the logical ordering of the processual linkages, the relevant statements of consensus presented in Round 3 are used to provide the framework for the organization of the analysis (see Table 1). Within Table 1, the mean and standard deviation provided demonstrate the level of agreement expressed by the panel with respect to each item. For each statement included in the framework, the panel conveyed satisfactory levels of agreement to ensure a valid representation of the overall thoughts and experiences of the group of founders.

The statements from Round 3 also serve as an outline for the combined panel responses from Rounds 1 and 2 that gave rise to them. In synthesizing the processes, four phases emerge in NASSM's pursuit of legitimacy and subsequent narrowing in scope. It is important to note that these phases, although presented as a seemingly deterministic progression, actually occurred organically pursuant to the organization's goals for itself and the field at the time. In fact, although legitimacy arises to varying degrees as an issue within each phase, the theo-

retical framework itself was identified *ex post facto* by the researchers as a suitable mechanism through which to explain the implicit and explicit concerns broached by the founders.

With respect to these phases, the founders first broadly defined the field to include the management of virtually all types of human movement and physical activity to allow NASSM the space to grow and evolve with the interests of its members as quickly as possible. Specifically, Table 1 indicates high agreement (and low response variance) to the statements expressing the need to define a broad scope for the field and the need for more research outlets for the study of organized sport at the time. Second, the founders set out to establish sport management as a unique field of study with NASSM as the main vehicle driving this establishment. Again, this was evidenced by the high levels of agreement to the statements about differentiating sport management and creating a distinctive discipline. In the third phase, the founders let the "marketplace" of ideas and interests chart the direction of sport management (in part through the editorial policies of the *JSM*), as evidenced by the levels of agreement with the statement that the emphasis on professional and college sport was driven by market forces (related, as we will see, to legitimacy). Finally, in the fourth phase, the scope of the field narrows to focus primarily on professional and major college sport to the exclusion of the initially broad range of foci identified in the NASSM constitution. The panel agreed with the statements that NASSM has become narrower in its focus

Table 1 Organizing Framework and Descriptive Statistics for Statements of Consensus (n = 8)

Item (1 = <i>strongly disagree</i> , 2 = <i>disagree</i> , 3 = <i>neutral</i> , 4 = <i>agree</i> , 5 = <i>strongly agree</i>)	Mean (SD)
Phase 1: The Founders Define a Broad Scope for the Field	
At the start of NASSM, it was important to ensure a broad range of domains for sport management scholars to study.	4.50 (.76)
At the start of NASSM, there were few outlets for research about the management of professional and college sport.	4.88 (.35)
At the start of NASSM, there were few outlets for research on the management of participant sport.	4.75 (.46)
Phase 2: NASSM Must Position Sport Management as a Unique Discipline	
At the start of NASSM, it was necessary to differentiate sport management (and NASSM) from other fields (e.g., physical education, recreation) and organizations.	4.25 (.71)
A key driving force in the founding of NASSM was the creation of a distinctive discipline.	4.63 (.74)
Phase 3: Let the "Marketplace" Decide	
The emphasis on professional and college sport in the field of sport management has been driven by "market" demands, including student demand.	3.88 (.99)
The field of sport management has made significant strides in elaborating the nuances of different realms of study (e.g., marketing, finance, law, management) within the context of entertainment/spectator sport.	4.13 (1.36)
Phase 4: Sport Management Narrows its Foci	
The field of sport management is narrower in the types of sport contexts its scholars study than the original vision for the organization (viz., the NASSM constitution, and statement of purpose therein).	4.14 (.90)
NASSM originally envisioned participant-based sport as a core domain of sport management.	3.43 (1.40)
Informal sport and play are not under the current purview of sport management scholarship.	4.25 (1.16)

Notes. SD = standard deviation. NASSM = North American Society for Sport Management.

than they initially intended and that informal sport, exercise, dance, and play are not currently well represented in the literature. The reasons underlying this narrowing are discussed within each phase below.

Phase 1: The Founders Define a Broad Scope for the Field

One of the key driving forces behind the establishment of the new organization was to broadly define the discipline in a manner that would not exclude members with varied interests in the management of all forms of physical activity. SMARTS, as previously noted, had contributed to the need to form NASSM to a certain degree by promoting a narrow vision of the field. Moreover, the role that most founders viewed for themselves in the process was to get the field up-and-running and let the evolving interests of the members dictate the direction of the field over time; most made no specific reference to the identification of sport, exercise, play, and dance as the areas of focus for sport management research. The founders primarily wanted to establish NASSM as quickly as possible and to set the policies governing scope to allow for the organization to grow along with the field. As an example, one panelist highlighted, “we were primarily concerned about creating an organization, not about the nitty-gritty.” Other panelists also highlighted that most of the important initial foci were on getting the field established, after which they believed sport management could evolve to define itself: “I believe that the most important focus at the time of the founding of the society was the academic field itself.”

As NASSM sought to establish its initial identity, the most natural starting points proved to be the areas in which the founders already conducted research. One panelist captured the sentiment of many of the panelists in noting that “The major focus at that time was on management theory, organizational behavior, sport history/philosophy and gender issues as a reflection of the interests of the founding members.” In addition to emphasizing the existing interests of the founders, it was also determined that at this nascent stage “it was useful to conduct research on what sport management is or should be—thus some philosophical, historical, and survey research on what others in the field were doing.” Resulting from this shared mentality to define the field, the process of legitimizing NASSM was characterized far more often by harmony than by discord. Although this relative harmony did not mean that the proceedings were without their share of healthy debate, 7 of the 10 panelists explicitly referred to the absence of conflict during the discussions about what the scope of sport management was to be (in Round 1). As one panelist reflected, “I do not recall any conflicts [about the scope of NASSM] per se; there was excellent debate to clarify the need for rigorous research methods and results which could be applied to the management of sport.” Another panelist reinforced this notion and captured the general mentality of the founders during this formative period:

Quite frankly I do not recall any particular conflicts. People had some slightly different points of view but people were willing to resolve issues and most importantly take on responsibilities and volunteer to do whatever was necessary to get the organization off the ground.

The shared goal to legitimize and launch the organization through developing a “a good academic vehicle,” as one panelist put it, that could effectively bridge a broad range of interests manifested itself in the drafting of a constitution, “to promote, stimulate, and encourage study, research, scholarly writing, and professional development in the area of sport management (broadly interpreted).” In the words of another panelist, “the field of sport management was/is considered multidisciplinary in nature and is focused on research and practice of ethical management of the enterprises associated with sport, recreation, and dance as practiced by all segments of society.” The panelists’ very high levels of agreement with the statements in Round 3 suggest that there were few outlets for research into both elite/commercial sport (4.88) and recreational/participative sport (4.75), although the founders indicated less agreement (3.43) that participant-based sport represented a core domain of sport management. This agreement over the lack of outlets supports the broad management-oriented scope to help differentiate sport management from other sport-related disciplines and thus gain legitimacy for the embryonic iteration of NASSM.

At least one panelist, however, did not recall the inclusion of the latter domains as a major area of discussion in the formation of NASSM: “I don’t recall any debate (friendly) regarding the status of play/recreation and how these areas overlapped with or were defined as different within sport management.” A second panelist noted that “we were not really worried about domains. We did, however, want to be inclusive.” Still, as another panelist clarified, establishing a broad organizational purview was an explicit goal at the early meetings: “My hope here was that NASSM would be concerned with the management of sport and physical activity within both the public sector AND education. Physical activity was to be broadly interpreted. I don’t think I was alone in this regard.” Finally, a third panelist suggested, “The various foci [were] needed within the broad scope of sport management to show the various dimensions of the field and that expertise from a broad cross-section of research methods/techniques and theories are needed to explore the dimensions.”

One of the primary organizational mechanisms put in place by the founders to help guide the process of broadly defining the field was the establishment of the *JSM*, the initial voice for NASSM’s research interests:

As I recall, the discussions of research areas were primarily associated with papers that were eligible to be accepted in *JSM*, which was designed to reflect and support the purpose of NASSM. The editorial policy that was published in volume 1, issue 1 of *JSM* identified the following areas of research: “sport, exercise, dance, and play.”

Early editorial policy encompassing “sport, exercise, dance, and play” undeniably fostered a broad interpretation of sport management as a field, yet one would be hard-pressed to find much research on dance and play (and to a lesser extent, exercise) published in *JSM* today. Although the breadth of research within “sport” has expanded tremendously throughout the years to help secure legitimacy for *JSM* and NASSM’s community of scholars, research under the umbrellas of the management for other domains of physical activity seems to have remained in an arrested state of development. As one panelist conceded,

The domains listed in volume 1, issue 1 of *JSM* reflected the breadth of the area that the founders agreed upon. We were a very congenial group and respected each other’s opinions, and those domains emerged from the democratic process. Our decisions were not always unanimous. The original domains have since narrowed in practice.

Phase 2: NASSM Must Position Sport Management as a Unique Discipline

As the historical research in the opening of this article attests, the narrowing alluded to by the founder in the previous paragraph may have started with the perception that NASSM needed to establish itself as a unique entity distinct from the preexisting organizations such as SMARTS, AAHPERD, CAHPER, and USSA. Still, although Earle Zeigler aimed to help establish a new society as unique and legitimate, correspondence from him revealed that he was wary of NASSM narrowing sport management to the exclusion of its related disciplines:

Maybe this is a hopeless ideal, but I think not. In just about every society that has been established outside of the physical education realm in both the United States and Canada, the tendency has been to pander to the related discipline(s) and to slander and disregard poor old “PE.” As I see it, this is being out and out unfair and just about traitorous to the field where almost all have our degrees. This serves no purpose in my opinion; we are simply making great efforts to give our field away and to condemn it to trade (not professional) status. There simply must be a way to have it both ways! This brings up the problem of an acceptable name for the new society. Despite what I have said above, I don’t think the term “physical education” belong[s] in the title. However, it should[n’t] be only “sport management” either. Where does this leave us? The best that I can come up with at the moment is NASSPAM or the (North American?) Society for Sport and Physical Activity Management. I think that would do it—and not specifically turn off any group. What do you think? (E.F. Zeigler, Letter, August 8, 1985)

As most panelists conveyed, however, links to the established organizations in the early 1980s offered

little opportunity for the field to grow to its potential. As one panelist noted, “The point was that AAHPERD and CAHPER (Canada) were not doing enough in the area.” Therefore, in reflecting on the initial discussions about what NASSM should or could become, the overwhelming majority of the panelists highlighted—in one way or another—that the overarching need to legitimize sport management as a scholarly field superseded debate regarding other issues such as the inclusion and exclusion of the other recognized domains under its umbrella. Panelists recalled the collective sentiment at the time that to be accepted as a legitimate organization—and, ultimately, field of study—NASSM needed to lay the foundation for a unique discipline that could effectively wed theory and practice in a way that other organizations or societies appeared unable or unwilling to do. This foundation required a few key elements, highlighted by many of the panelists. As one panelist remarked, “The scholarly aspects of an organization such as NASSM were important in order to be accepted as a unique field of study and inquiry on both the research and practical level.” Another panelist described the important role of *JSM* to establishing NASSM’s scholarly aspects: “I have little real recollection of the exact domains, but I was aware of an immediate need for legitimacy by the establishment of the *Journal of Sport Management* at the earliest possible date.”

To be seen as a legitimate organization, it was viewed as imperative that NASSM position sport management to “stand alone” as its own unique field, separate from physical education: “A professional discussion regarding the separation of physical education-related courses from sport management courses took place. Sport management was to stand alone and not be a part of physical education pedagogy in order to establish credibility.” This strategy of separating sport management from physical education was based on more than conjecture alone, as one panelist highlighted the systematic approach of the founders:

Several studies were conducted in an effort to discover the coursework that sport management programs should offer. The founders were very specific that sport management should be different from physical education professional preparation. They were alarmed that although many colleges and universities were changing the name of their PE programs to “sport management” in order to attract students, they weren’t changing the content of the programs. The NASSM founders found this practice to be counter to the values and ethics of higher education.

Moreover, the efforts to separate from physical education derived, according to one panelist, from the founders’ desire for NASSM to establish sport management as a field to be taken more seriously than physical education. One panelist inferred the need to distance the field from “Mickey Mouse” course offerings that had stigmatized physical education:

There is one historical point that I would like to make, and it may apply to some of us who were a little older. During the 1960s, programs in Education and even more so in Physical Education came under heavy criticism, primarily because the old USSR had put up “Sputnik” in 1957. This (i.e., Cold War) had an immediate impact on education, and higher education in particular, due to [the] fact that the Russians suddenly appeared to have advanced significantly ahead in science education. All of North American education came under fire from a variety of critics; faculties of Education came under particular heavy criticism for offering “Mickey Mouse” courses and doing little meaningful research.

Yet another panelist harkened back to the troubles of physical education from a generation before the founding of NASSM as a driving force for the differentiation—and legitimation—of the organization as a serious academic vehicle:

As a part of Education, Physical Education was viewed as the worst of the worst, and within P.E. “Administration” courses were criticized as the bottom of the barrel. This led to great soul searching and the search for [the] defining of our real “discipline” and “field of knowledge,” in many cases “Admin.” Courses were given no house room. Hence, a movement for a “theoretical base” in sport management began, led primarily by Earle Zeigler and many of his master’s and doctoral students at the University of Illinois-Champaign/Urbana. Thus, our preoccupation with theory and solid research 15–20 years later when NASSM was envisioned.

Perhaps nowhere is this tension more evident than in an early letter from Earle Zeigler to Janet Parks, in which Zeigler grapples with what appears to be the inevitable splintering away from physical education:

One point really has me both puzzled and concerned. This is how we can capture the interest of both those people who are interested in management theory and those who are primarily concerned with physical education and athletics administration. I feel this is an extremely important issue because, if either amorphous group senses that it is unwanted or can’t see the sense in becoming involved, it could (in my opinion) spoil the whole undertaking to a great degree. (E.F. Zeigler, Letter, August 8, 1985)

Phase 3: Let the “Marketplace” Decide

At the heart of the shift away from physical education and its associated leisure/recreation connotation was a staunch adherence by the NASSM founders to allow the marketplace to decide what sport management would become. In this sense, the “marketplace” refers not to strict economic considerations but instead to the more democratic notion that the interests and ideas of the majority would emerge as the focus (or foci) of the

organization. Those comprising the marketplace were NASSM members and scholars, students enrolling in sport management programs, and the general thrust and emerging maturation of sport business. The reticence of the panelists to depart from this market-oriented stance, even 25 years later, was clear and recognized as critical to helping the field flourish.

In fact, when panelists considered which sectors within the sport industry the organization has emphasized over others throughout its development, they tended to default to laissez-faire types of explanations, which connect directly to isomorphic legitimacy-seeking actions supported in the literature. Although play and dance, for example, were identified as important in the initial NASSM constitution and statement of purpose, panelists are largely ambivalent about the fact that they have received less emphasis (at least in terms of the publication history of the *JSM*):

I am in agreement with the assertion that play and dance have not developed as an “area within sport management.” While sport management was broadly defined to include these areas, nothing to date has emerged within the literature to this effect.

One of the other panelists pointed to conducting a brief analysis of the publication history of *JSM* (which has already been introduced as a basis for some of the claims made in this article):

I do not recall discussions regarding the sub areas of dance and play within NASSM, but would suggest that an “inventory” of published papers in *JSM* would be an indicator of their inclusion or exclusion. A lack of attention, if substantiated, could be the result of the creation of separate conferences and publications that focus specifically on dance and play.

Further reflection by the panelists revealed more about their perspectives regarding the role of dance and play (as examples) within sport management at the time of NASSM’s founding, allowing them to speculate about the reasons why these areas have received comparatively less attention over the ensuing years. Panelists uniformly conveyed little objection to the inclusion of dance and play within the original jurisdiction of sport management, noting, as one panelist did, “I was comfortable with it We ‘defined’ sport management ‘broadly’ and dance and play were still part of the academic programs that many of us worked with.” A second panelist bluntly stated that “dance and play are forms of human movement. They deserve to be ‘managed well’ like other forms.” A third panelist elaborated on the rationale for including dance and play at the time:

I believe at first, I did consider that dance and play had a place within the definition of sport management, particularly within the definition of dance as competition (i.e., dance sport), but play to me was a theoretical perspective inherent in game and sport—not sport management per se.

Still, other panelists asserted that the inclusion of this broader spectrum of domains was primarily attributable to the efforts and initiative of Earle Zeigler, recalling that “the dance [and] play provisions were Earle Zeigler’s input. Some may have been influenced by AAHPERD and CAPHER.” As one panelist surmised,

My guess is that the “dance and play” phrase came from Earle Zeigler who provided us with our first draft of the constitution. If you review his earlier writings, and even his current writings, you will notice that he still argues for the inclusion of these terms in our broader field, e.g., “sport, dance and exercise”. I know that he continues to dislike the name “Kinesiology” (for that matter so do I).

Despite the relative acceptance of these original domains as areas of inquiry for the evolving organization, panelists offered a number of compelling reasons for the lack of attention play and dance, in particular, have since received. For example, one panelist believed that the choice of the name “sport management” within the NASSM moniker served to influence the perceived jurisdiction of the field: “Obviously the choice of the original name led people to think that the managerial aspects of exercise, play, and dance were not to be included.” Other panelists felt that the less obvious management implications for dance and play have made them difficult domains to “manage” and therefore less relevant to what sport managers concern themselves with: “I believe that both of these terms certainly deal with movement, but not in the sense of their ‘management’ from a sport perspective. This is still open to debate however.” As another panelist added,

The NASSM Constitution clearly [laid] out our domains of purview although we might not have addressed all areas—dance, for example. If one were to study the management or marketing of dance studios, it would be under the purview of sport management.

Still, other panelists offered the explanation that the preexistence of other professional organizations, as well as the particular interests of those entering sport management, have dissuaded more scholarly attention toward dance and play. For example, one panelist points to the lack of emphasis in these areas as resulting from the fact that “NIRSA (National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association) [and] AAHPERD are better forums. However, if a well-written scholarly article on the governance of play or dance associations was submitted to *JSM*, I’m sure it would be considered.” Another panelist pointed to the early interests of those involved with NASSM as having an important impact on its scholarly direction:

Most people involved at that time—and after—focused on college athletics, college recreation, or pro sport. There were not many interested in the management aspects of dance and the growing lei-

sure/recreation journals & conferences attracted the folks interested in leisure/rec[reation].

One panelist expounded on that idea and offered an assessment about why dance, for example, has never developed a foothold within the organization’s outlets for scholarship:

A personal opinion: I feel that many of [the] faculty members, and students, felt that “pro” and “college sport” was their primary interest and focus. As an outcome there tended to be a very heavy focus on “marketing and advertising” aspects of the field. This may have led to a downplay of management skills for people who had interests in running fitness and exercise businesses. In the case of dance, historically dance people felt that they were getting a bad deal within physical education/sport units, the “poor second cousin” so to speak. Now dance people often find more comfort within performing arts, or even music faculties, as has just been the case at [my university]. Here . . . there is no longer any dance offered, and very few sport activities. These areas are often left to Education/Physical Educ[ation] Programs.

Finally, a different panelist provided an explanation suggesting that the shifting academic backgrounds of graduate students choosing to study sport management altered the appreciation for these domains as important areas for management:

Doctoral students are no longer coming from PE undergraduate or master’s programs, so they have no educational background in dance or play. This is the logical result of creating sport management curricula that are different from PE curricula. Consequently, today’s young faculty members have neither the knowledge nor the desire to pay scholarly attention to dance or play. Personally, I do not see dance or play as part of sport management from a scholarship perspective. Both of those fields have their own bodies of knowledge. They also have scholarly associations where academics can share their research and perspectives . . .

In essence, as one panelist eloquently borrowed from a popular turn of phrase, “Like beauty, what is important for sport management is in the eye of the beholder.” More bluntly, an additional panelist explicated the prevailing sentiment that many of the others had alluded to in the discussion in affirming a belief to “Let the marketplace decide! I can’t let my personal biases dictate what is important to other people in other programs.” Ultimately, these results show that if the preference for commercially based entertainment sport is preferred, the journal and conference will demonstrate that; however, if preferences or orientations change, then so be it, because the marketplace should drive the direction of the society and its tools.

Phase 4: Sport Management Narrows Its Foci

Although there is an overriding sense that the research examining commercial entertainment-based sport (i.e., professional sport and major college athletics) has become much more elaborated and diverse over the course of NASSM's development, the breadth of contexts that sport managers study seems to have, at the same time, narrowed considerably in terms of examining different settings for sport and physical activity. To further support this point, two panelists expressed disappointment with the apparent lack of interest/focus on the management of participant sport for nonelite populations. One panelist commented, "I would be . . . pleased if we take greater interest in and emphasize participant sport," and yet another opined on the exclusion of this area within the purview of the organization: "I am disappointed that the management of sport and physical activity for 90% plus of children and youth is being essentially ignored."

Panelists were asked to what extent they viewed this homing in on commercial sport to be the "norm" and whether the narrowing in the contexts of study since NASSM's inception poses a potential problem for the field's future. Many of the panelists acknowledged the narrowing of contextual focus over the course of NASSM's growth but did not view this phenomenon as a significant concern. One panelist captured the sentiments of many of the others in stating that "NASSM can't be all things to all people[;] there are other academic vehicles for others." Conversely, a few panelists highlighted that this trend may be cause for concern. One of these panelists lamented that "it is unfortunate that the major focus has been on entertainment sport. As I have shown elsewhere entertainment sport is only one third of the sport industry. We need to focus more on participant sport." Another panelist noted that North American-centric emphases on elite sport have emerged to the detriment of focusing on mass participation: "Division I athletics and pro sport are prominent. Amateur sport, children's sport and the European 'sport for all' areas are underrepresented in our research." A third panelist also went so far as to suggest that the narrow focus on primarily elite, commercial sport is an affront to the scope outlined within the initial NASSM constitution, in which participant populations were identified as a pillar of the organization's definition of the field: ". . . two primary areas of concern were designated. Sport and physical activity (!) management in (1) the public sector and (2) within education. Note: In my opinion this is where we have dropped the ball."

Many of the other panelists took issue with this particular assessment that the organization has "dropped the ball" in its lack of attention to these areas. In fact, the "dropped the ball" comment incited the most heated responses from panelists wrestling with how to reconcile the initial vision for NASSM with the path that the organization has since traveled. To capture the debate that ensued regarding NASSM's duty to serve the breadth of domains identified in the constitution versus the evolving

interests of the membership, many of the panelist quotes in the remainder of this section have been preserved in their entirety, despite their considerable length. The intention of the researchers in adopting this approach is to shine a proverbial spotlight on the fundamental issue to emerge from the findings of this study and to offer an opportunity for the *JSM* readership to appreciate the passion and the principles of NASSM's founders.

With respect to the "dropped the ball" comment, one panelist countered that the claim was simply inaccurate: "Absolutely not. Although I retired . . . my colleagues, with whom I have kept in touch, are active contributing members in the public and education sectors." A second panelist took issue with the notion that participant sport has been overlooked, and even offered data to support the rebuttal:

[I]t could be that most of the folks that contribute to sport management information/knowledge are associated with universities and colleges. These folks probably write and speak about what they see and relate to on a regular basis . . . Pitts & Pedersen's *JSM* 2005 article found that 40% of all articles related to intercollegiate athletics, next highest (13.3%) was participant sport and professional sport was third at 12.8%. Additionally, it is interesting to note that Mowrey's findings showed "different interests in sport industry segments between the three associations. Whereas EASM papers were focused on governance and SMAANZ papers were focused on tourism and leisure based sport management, the NASSM papers were centered around intercollegiate sport."

A third panelist was concerned about how the very claim was being defined, noting,

I do have a couple of questions: (1) What evidence is there that participant sport has been "overlooked as opposed to entertainment sport"? (2) Are you talking about the prominence of entertainment sport in the curricula, the research, the jobs the students get, or all of the above? Just because academics don't study and publish research on grassroots sport to the extent that they study professional and intercollegiate sport doesn't mean that students aren't learning about all kinds of sport in their programs and getting jobs in grassroots sport.

Two additional panelists argued that emphasizing sport within the public, education, or, more broadly, participation sectors may not be the role of NASSM, particularly if the management of these sectors does not meet the interests of the members. As one panelist pondered, "Perhaps this is not our role. We have resisted the temptation to be a lobby group. While this is an important consideration, local, state, and provincial governments should be responsible in this area." Another panelist pointed directly to the overarching philosophy identified in the previous phase in suggesting that the marketplace be the determining factor for NASSM's foci:

NASSM's main vehicles for doing something are the conference and the journal. The content and focus of what NASSM produces is not directed by the "management" but evolves from what the members provide and are interested in. There is no key player who has the "ball to drop"—NASSM is what it is . . . and that's fine with me . . .

An additional panelist contended that through studying collegiate sport and through including public and education-based sport in course material, sport management has not "dropped the ball" with respect to public sector sport and education-based sport:

The study of collegiate sports in both the U.S. and Canada, and the investigations over sport governing bodies around the world and the role of governments in promoting sport and supporting sport governing bodies have been done well. So I would not say that we dropped the ball in these areas.

Offering further support to this assertion, another panelist presented a nuanced defense for the lack of emphasis on sport within these domains, once again drawing from a market-based argument:

I'm not sure why this person thinks we have dropped the ball. Public sport and educational sport are certainly covered in our textbooks, particularly those written at the introductory level. Most students, however, do not choose these venues as foci of their doctoral programs. Consequently, if a person looks only at our research, it could appear that these areas are omitted from the field. Also, those sport management majors who go on to careers in public sport or educational sport (intramurals) have their own professional organizations and publications.

Despite these reasonably cogent counterarguments, two other panelists agreed with the initial sentiment that sport management may have "dropped the ball" in these areas and that the lack of attention paid to these sectors stems from many in the field's infatuation with higher-profile "business interests." As one of the two noted, complex forces based on student perceptions and demand often have an influence on sport management curricula:

I share this belief to some extent. I think that sport management has become preoccupied with pro/college sport and in fact my guess is that this is in part what attracts a lot of incoming sport management students. This was reinforced by a conversation I had in London [at the 2011 NASSM Conference] with a current director of a program that is literally swamped by numbers of students. She commented that when she first meets with students she asks, "Why do you want to come into this program?" The overwhelming number of students respond that they envision a rather glamorous position in professional sport. To her credit she honestly replies, "Well the

jobs you are most likely to find are low level jobs such as selling tickets, etc., not as GM's or other high profile positions." I admired her honesty. I tend to think that we have too often forgotten people in the schools, in recreation management positions, fitness businesses, etc.

The second panelist took a more hardline stance that "dropping of the ball" may speak to issues endemic to the broader society within which NASSM is embedded:

The "business interests" of sport have taken over . . . Why? Because society really doesn't understand and appreciate what exercise, play, and dance involvement could mean to the future of humankind. And I don't think NASSM "has a mind to change society's mind." [My concern is] that the field is simply turning out a lot of young people with "stars in their eyes" at both the undergraduate and graduate levels who will either become university instructors or second-level people in a sport industry promoting crass professionalism and "spectatoritis" as "sport heroes" are developed for the presumed adulation of the masses.

Another panelist also felt strongly that NASSM needs to take a more active responsibility for its role (and the roles of its members/students) in shaping society, rather than simply being shaped by society:

The profession of sport and physical activity management needs to develop a sound body of knowledge based on scholarly effort to determine exactly what it is that organized sport is accomplishing in the world. Sport needs a developing theory desperately! It is for this reason that I have asked [then-] President James Zhang and his executive [board] to consider recommending to the membership of the North American Society for Sport Management that the Society begin the development of an ongoing, online body of knowledge in the form of ordered generalizations about the professional efforts of our practitioners. Our practicing professionals need to know (1) what they are doing, (2) what its effects are, and (3) how they can improve their efforts so that they are certain that as management's practitioners in sport and physical activity they are making a positive contribution to the future of world society. In conclusion, I am forced to ask again: "Exactly what is it that we are promoting, and why are we doing it?" Frankly, I greatly fear the answer . . . I am arguing here today that this plight has developed because we haven't created a theory of sport and related physical activity that permits us to assess whether sport, for example, is fulfilling its presumed function of promoting good in a society. In addition, I must ask: "Why do most sport philosophy and social-science scholars assiduously avoid scholarly consideration of exercise and dance as part of their domain?"

The tension expressed within the preceding quotes about the narrowing scope of NASSM over the years has catalyzed an existential crisis for at least one panelist. A distinct lamentation over the perception that profit-orientation has emerged as the overriding value of the sport industry has led this panelist to express great concern about the ethics of this pursuit:

I have become dismayed by the arms race in intercollegiate athletics, specifically football and basketball . . . It has also led to unethical practices, unsportsmanlike conduct, and a demeaning of the true value of sport. In my opinion, there is a need for a much greater emphasis on sound philosophy, values, and ethics. Cheating has often been justified by reactions such as “everyone does it” and “two wrongs must make a right.” This is unfortunate in my opinion. In my view, Vince Lombardi did no one a favor when he reputedly commented, “Winning is not the only thing, it is everything!”

Taking a more optimistic perspective, some panelists expressed hope for the potential for participant sport to grow as a larger research emphasis for sport managers through collaborations (e.g., “We should look to collaborating with NIRSA and European ‘Sport for All’ Associations. The need to ‘manage well’ in these organizations is just as accurate as the Div. 1 and pro sport forums”) and shifting values:

The response here may be obvious given the economic status and perceived “glamorous” role and value of entertainment sport. Perhaps sport management needs to take a greater role in participant sport. The market for participant sport is there, it is just not supported by sport management researchers.

One of the panelists also alluded that perhaps some of the same market forces that may have narrowed the organization’s purview might also enable it to shift to meet the evolving demand for the study of participant-centered sport:

Once again, participant sport is 60% of the industry. But it consists of nearly 350 million people spending a few dollars here and there. That is why we had not paid much attention to it. But with societal emphasis on health, fitness, and reduction of obesity, we would have to focus more on this area.

Collectively, these different ideas and perspectives coalesce in a manner that helps to explain the narrowing of sport management from its *laissez faire*, broadly defined initial scope to its relative emphasis on commercialized, entertainment sport. The efforts of the founders sought to establish a legitimate organization and a unique discipline by letting the interests of the membership guide NASSM’s proverbial compass, even if those interests led the organization away from the initial vision some panelists shared as founding members of the society.

Discussion

Legitimacy, at its core, depends on the degree of cultural support for the organization (Johnson et al., 2006). Thus, the fact that the founders were faced with a distinct need to appeal to a broad range of scholars to garner the requisite cultural support for NASSM as a professional society lends credence to the initial decision to define the boundaries and foci of the organization in broad terms. Moreover, the founders’ willingness to “let the marketplace be the judge” reflected the importance of building and promoting consensus in establishing legitimacy. The founders seemed to be particularly cognizant that their individual interests and values should not (could not) solely define the field by setting exclusionary boundaries and practices. Instead, they explicitly chose to allow the interests of members, potential members, and students to shape the scope of the organization. The subtle ambivalence expressed by many of the panelists—the very founders of NASSM—about the place of dance and play, for example, suggests that the token acknowledgment of the management prospects of these other forms of physical activity throughout the organization’s history may not have necessarily been a mandate to investigate those domains. Instead, the founders’ path to legitimacy appears to have staked out as broad a claim to the management of sport and physical activity as possible to provide the organization with ample space to pursue the predilections and interests of its member base. The information provided by the panelists, however, appears to only scratch the surface of the complex mixture of environmental forces enveloping the birth and growth of NASSM as a scholarly vehicle. Again, although the responses of the panelists indicate that the development of this organization passed through a number of important phases, driven by factors both extrinsic and intrinsic to the founders themselves, they do not—perhaps cannot—fully provide explanation for other types of institutional pressures.

At first, the organization sought to create an inclusive home for the growing number of scholars concerned with the management of physical activity in its many sectors. However, inclusivity emerged through needs to establish the uniqueness and legitimacy of the organization and the broader field of sport management. To showcase what NASSM wanted to be, the founders sought to help the burgeoning organization differentiate itself from other sport-related societies such as AAHPERD, CAHPER, SMARTS, USSA, and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (the process of which could itself merit a separate article). With the preexistence of so many overlapping organizations, NASSM’s metaphorical slice of the sport and physical activity “pie” started out much smaller than its constitution envisioned. As evidenced within the concerns expressed by Zeigler about excluding the term “physical activity” from the title of the new organization, the emphasis on the sport domain within the organization was seen by the founders as a means for NASSM to position itself competitively within the market

of related organizations. In this sense, the disregard for developing the nonsport and/or noncommercial realms of the field derived, at least in part, from the need to cultivate a sustainable niche in an academic landscape already composed of more established societies concerned with physical education, recreation, dance, and leisure.

As Washington and Patterson (2011) contend, an organization is subject to the “institutional context” that shapes the market conditions within which it operates (p. 3). Not coincidentally, a similar institutional context produced SMARTS, an organization that served as an antithesis catalyzing the perceived need for NASSM, and also created an isomorphic pull toward a similar legitimizing market position. An understanding of how these market forces helped to drive the positioning of NASSM at both its onset and over the decades can be informed, at least indirectly, by Hotelling’s (1929) location game as illustrated through the struggles of a modified youth sport program attempting to avoid conforming to adopt elements of traditional youth sport programs. In their assessment of the challenges associated with establishing and maintaining modified youth sport programs, Chalip and Green (1998) found that the biggest obstacle to sustaining a modified youth sport program was that it was so different from traditional sport programs—but not that it was ineffective in delivering positive outcomes and experiences for its child participants. Using Hotelling’s (1929) location game, Chalip and Green described how the cultural space exerted pressure from opposite sides of the sport spectrum (i.e., hypercompetitive on one side and playful, noncompetitive on the other) to conform to a more traditional, centrist sport program. Rather than establish themselves at various points along the programming spectrum to cultivate particular market niches, youth sport programs often cluster toward the center of the spectrum to, in theory, draw from the broadest market.

Although sport management encompasses much more than youth sport programming, the point in drawing the analog to Chalip and Green’s (1998) study is to consider the issues facing the founders of NASSM with respect to legitimizing the organization and the field within an established marketplace. Although Hotelling’s (1929) framework was initially related to the physical positioning of businesses, it functions as a heuristic to consider the psychological positioning of an organization within an institutional context. Given the preexistence of organizations such as AAHPERD and CAHPER, which already occupied places at the physical education, exercise, dance, and play locations along the spectrum, establishing a strong tie to commercial, spectator sport may have seemed (to the founders) to provide the optimal means of establishing the type of sustainable niche that could lead to long-term legitimacy for NASSM. The attractiveness of this niche was undoubtedly strengthened by the ubiquity of spectator sport both within the mass media and as iconic imagery for the cultural significance of sport on the whole. As Meyer and Scott (1983) argue, “the legitimacy of a given organization is negatively affected by the number of different authorities sovereign

over it and by the diversity or inconsistency of their accounts of how it is to function” (p. 202); hence, the willingness of the founders to allow the organization to move toward a less congested corner of the marketplace. Indisputably, as spectator sport has held a dominant place in the psychological positioning of NASSM both then and now, the early preferences of the founders intended to legitimize the organization and functioned to shape future research orientations and influence the behaviors of subsequent generations.

According to Deephouse and Suchman (2008) “legitimization is largely a question of ‘satisficing’ to an acceptable level, and the absence of negative ‘problems’ is more important than the presence of positive achievements” (p. 60). In this regard, NASSM’s march toward legitimacy could be considered as a political process that resulted from following a path of less resistance. Pursuant to this notion, Meyer and Rowan (1977) also noted that the pursuit of legitimacy is regularly preceded by the organization’s attempt to conform to myths they presuppose tie the group together. Further, it has been shown that some internal groups may attempt to promote aggressive tactics related to the perceived best-positioning strategy of the broader group/organization in their pursuit of legitimacy (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the panelists who voiced concern over the group’s almost-immediate narrowing in scope believed that NASSM’s preoccupation with entertainment-based sport was a form of “spectatoritis”—as one can infer from Ashforth and Gibbs (1990), aggressive tactics take on many forms.

Although at least one panelist blamed “spectatoritis” for NASSM’s early and continued narrow scope, the results indicated that other panelists offered a range of potential explanations for this phenomenon: the previously mentioned existence of other academic organizations for the study of more playful forms of physical activity, the perpetuation of the interest in professional and college sport by the majority of scholars entering sport management at its early stages, or the absence of a background in the theoretical conceptions of play and human movement for most graduate students studying sport management. Implicit in the treatment of the realms of dance and play throughout the organization’s history is the notion that through focusing on the management of professional and college sport instead of recreational sport, exercise, dance, and play, the field could be perceived as more legitimate by aligning its focus on the “serious” aspects of sport.

Although this approach to attain legitimacy makes intuitive sense when considering the initial motivations for establishing the organization, it does not necessarily reveal the reasons why the early positioning maintained itself over time. This phenomenon appears to stem more from the founders’ steadfast support of “letting the marketplace be the judge”; the panel continued to allude to a general lack of interest by both NASSM members and sport management students in most physical activity domains beyond commercial sport as a driving force

behind the narrowing of the field from its original vision. However, beyond that we should recognize that other notable works by Earle Zeigler, Stephen Hardy, and Guy Lewis used a variety of the case-study approaches that emphasized the usefulness of studying business and incorporating business-like courses into their programs; an approach not unlike those Wallace Donham, Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., and Joseph Schumpeter (of the Harvard Business School) used to address inadequacies present in professional preparation of students (de Wilde, Seifried, & Adelman, 2010).

Taking this pattern a step further, the panelists appear to suggest that establishing the academic rigor and training characteristic of the management discipline was far more important to help develop the organization than pursuing work in broader domains, which is in line with Washington and Patterson's (2011) assessment of the influence that mimetic isomorphism can have in motivating organization's to pursue legitimacy through copying the approaches of peer organizations perceived as successful. In other words, rather than pursue breadth for NASSM, it was thought to be more legitimizing to emphasize developing depth in the management subdomains, rather than sport/physical activity subdomains. Furthermore, as many of the panelists alluded, embracing this tactic was collectively recognized as necessary to avoid the normative pressures (cf. Slack & Hinings, 1994) that could potentially draw NASSM toward the increasing stigma associated with physical education (and its associated academic organizations) during the Cold War era.

Finally, many scholars promote the resolution of organizational paradox and inconsistencies—which in this case relate to the disconnect between the domains outlined in NASSM's original purpose statement and the narrowness of the organization's actual scholarly purview—as possible through the examination of activities, events, and behaviors associated with the creation and maintenance of the organization (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009; Scott, 2008; Zilber, 2008). Through tracking the development of NASSM, it is possible that we can resolve some of the internal conflicts about how to grow the reputation of the field and address other deficiencies (e.g., preferences for particular methodologies over others; overemphasis on professional and college sport; lack of connection to dance, play, and exercise) that have been identified by NASSM leaders and Zeigler Award recipients over time (e.g., Amis & Silk, 2005; Slack, 1997, 1998; Zeigler, 2007). Chalip, Schwab, and Dustin (2010), for example, argued that the rejection of the interconnectedness between sport, recreation, and other domains of physical activity as a unifying element connecting the sport-related academic organizations and disciplines has only served to weaken the overall legitimacy of the study of sport. Instead of leveraging complementary bodies of research into a more comprehensive justification for an elevated role in academe, sport-related academic fields have cannibalized each other in the pursuit of which field can

outdistance itself furthest from play and “nonserious” forms of physical activity. In many ways, the devaluing of the more playful domains within the study of sport (and in broader society) undermines the very essence of what makes sport indispensable (Csikszentmihalyi, 1981). So, although NASSM largely has succeeded in securing a place as a reputable academic organization, by fostering legitimacy-seeking actions that differentiated the organization from some of the very domains identified within the founding constitution of the field, the path forward may require us to reembrace these otherwise forgotten original pillars of the field to adapt to or take advantage of the changing sport and physical activity marketplace.

Limitations

Irrespective of empirical rigor, the complex interactive and historical nature of this type of inquiry creates a research environment that is not without limitations. Although the Delphi method offered clear advantages in fostering critical reflection and discourse between our particular panel of experts (i.e., the NASSM founders), the approach—like any method—has certain drawbacks as well. For one, the Delphi technique tends to be oriented toward promoting consensus over dissent. This orientation can create what Rowe, Wright, and Bulger (1991) call “process loss,” wherein “the goal of reaching agreement supplants the goal of best possible judgment” (p. 236). Although, as the results indicate, dissent was not in short supply, there nevertheless remains the distinct possibility that the very structure of the inquiry mandated by the Delphi technique constrained the breadth of possible responses that could be generated. As with any limitation, however, we believe that the benefits outweighed the drawbacks on this point.

Another limitation of the study is the relatively small sample size. Even though the final sample ended up being defensible on multiple fronts (cf. Skulmoski et al., 2007), a truly proper recounting of the deliberations and debates surrounding the founding of NASSM would have required full participation from all living founders. Furthermore, the hybrid nature of the inquiry (i.e., using archival historical analysis as the basis for a mixed method Delphi study) may strike historians and social scientists alike as not fully doing justice to either approach. In defense of this hybrid framework, the intent was to use the archival history as a reasonably objective basis for formulating the content of the Delphi component while also drawing from the archives as a means through which to mitigate some of the natural decay in the founders' abilities to recollect what transpired decades ago. Neither component provided an infallible solution to the inherent vagaries of human memory, but together they offered an informal system of checks and balances designed to increase the trustworthiness of the data.

With respect to said data, another limitation of the study was the unavoidable “messiness” that accompanies the synthesizing and representing of archival, qualitative, and quantitative data generated from iterative, interactive

rounds of inquiry. First, the initial questions (derived from the archival analyses), as well as the subsequent rounds of questions, covered a broad swath of issues related to both the organization and the field, which created at times a blurring of the important distinction between the two. Although NASSM has been instrumental in the defining of sport management in North America, sport management clearly exists beyond the borders of the United States and Canada. Although the reporting of the results has been structured in manner designed to minimize any organization/field conflation emerging from the raw data, for many of the panelists, the two are inextricably linked historically and thus difficult to disentangle. Secondly, the higher order nature of attempting to distill decades-old deliberations about complex organizational issues rendered a reporting of the results that asked for certain liberties from the reader. For example, although not using identifiers (i.e., pseudonyms) to label experts in the reporting of results is in line with standard Delphi reporting protocol and is intended to support the identity of the group over individuals, this tactic can make deconstructing the results more difficult for the reader (cf. Jeste et al., 2010). Moreover, in an effort to preserve the specific words of the founders, the results included a higher percentage of intact block quotes than traditional reporting of qualitative data might call for, but we believe that the value of preserving the voices of those scholars who played such an instrumental role in the development of NASSM outweighed the drawbacks.

Although this study has its share of limitations, the decisions that led to these limitations derived from a calculated assessment of the benefits and the costs of the particular limitations themselves: the Delphi method offered a stronger empirical framework than the other methodologies we considered; the historical component, as ancillary as it may seem to some, offered a means to ground and triangulate the analysis; the reporting of results adhered to standard Delphi protocols while preserving the voices of the founders wherever possible. In essence, the limitations fell within an acceptable range given the complex nature of the subject matter.

Conclusion

NASSM has cultivated a place for itself within the academic study of sport that has positioned the field of sport management relatively far from the other forms of physical activity included in the organization's initial vision for itself (i.e., exercise, dance, and play). The disconnect from dance, exercise, and play throughout the organization's development is, at first glance, startling. However, on deeper inspection of the decisions made by the founders of the organization, the role of external forces behind the narrowing of NASSM becomes clear and recognizable. If the organization was to survive, let alone flourish, the founders' best course was to strive for legitimacy through the early establishment of respectable academic vehicles for the field and to provide a broad enough scope that the interests of the members could

shape the future direction of the organization. History has borne out the success of this strategy in facilitating the growth of the organization and the field of sport management into one of the most respected management societies within the study of sport—and as a unique contributor to the development of the broader canon of management theory (de Wilde, et al., 2010).

Despite NASSM's meteoric growth over the past 25 years and its vast progress in gaining legitimacy from a reputational perspective, there are many within the organization, including some of its founders, who express dismay at the overemphasis on such a narrow portion of the overall sport and physical activity spectrum. For these individuals, NASSM's emphasis on professional and major college sport is overshadowing the type of sport and physical activity management that is capable of improving the lives of all populations, as evidenced in this 2010 letter from Earle Zeigler to then-NASSM President James Zhang:

[S]ome of us who put together the original constitution and ethical orientation dreamed that NASSM would indeed be "two-headed" or "two-armed," so to speak. The one "head" (public-sector and commercialized sport management) is "proceeding like gangbusters" within NASSM (and in the real world!) with here and there, often futile efforts to rein it in because of excesses. NASSM's development that is being copied worldwide is good, and it is gathering potency gradually. The other "head" (i.e., management of sport and physical activity of all types for normal and special populations) seems barely recognizable within NASSM—and thus administrative theory and practice that was growing within physical education/kinesiology in educational circles seems to have vanished because the faculty "horsepower" has shifted to NASSM orientation and emphasis. Am I wrong? (E.F. Zeigler, Letter, December 14, 2010)

Zeigler is not wrong, *per se*. In many ways, the story told by the founders of NASSM in this article suggests that, at best, noncommercial sport and physical activity contexts have held an ambiguous place within the field, as the legitimacy that was so essential to the founders has seen the organization's proverbial wagons "hitched" to the higher profile spectator-sport sectors of the industry. The present study draws from the historical record and the perspectives of NASSM's founders to elucidate the pursuit of this legitimacy and to understand the causes for the emphasis on such a small portion of the scope initially envisioned for the organization. This work posits that the narrowing in scope from the initial vision for NASSM was both a market-driven and culturally based initiative toward the elite and commercial aspects of sport because these segments were viewed as a sustainable—and legitimate—niche along the fairly crowded sport and physical activity academic society continuum at the time. The impetus for this focus was further reinforced by the existing interests of many of the founding and early members in the areas of college and professional sport, thus creat-

ing a virtuous (or, perhaps, vicious) circle wherein this early emphasis was reinforced by future generations of NASSM members over time. The perceived prestige and cultural value derived from NASSM's historic emphasis on commercial sport contexts also presented a natural dissociation from the perceived lower-status of physical education and recreation contexts. In this regard, focusing efforts on more commercial sport contexts was perceived to offer both the organization and the field the legitimacy that the founders believed they needed to survive and grow within the academic study of sport.

Although the situational contingencies and institutional context faced by the founders may have necessitated a certain course of action if legitimacy were to be attained, "letting the market be the judge" ultimately has fostered a relatively homogenous interpretation of NASSM's purview throughout the years. If the misgivings of some of the founders of NASSM are to be heeded, and greater effort made to manage sport and physical activity to benefit nonelite, noncommercial contexts as well, then an understanding of the roots of the disconnect between the organization and these other domains is instructive. Like any social phenomena, gaining an understanding of the historical scope of NASSM (and the field of sport management) surely benefits those individuals charged with shaping its future course.

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Appendix A:

Study 1 Research Questions (Rounds 1 and 2)

Q1. Please describe your role and experiences during the formation of NASSM? How did you become involved and how do you feel you contributed to the process?

Q2. What were the domains (research and practical) identified as important to the developing field of sport management during the initial deliberations about NASSM?

During the early meetings related to the founding of NASSM, what was your opinion about the role of domains such as “dance” and “play” in the future of sport management? Has your opinion changed over time?

To what do you attribute the comparative lack of scholarly attention to these areas within contemporary sport management? Is there a place for “dance” and “play” in sport management?

Q3. What conflicts arose during the early discussions about the scope of NASSM? Did any areas of disputation yield the inclusion of areas of study that you felt should not be included or the exclusion of areas you felt should have been included?

How successful do you believe NASSM has been in navigating these concerns (gender/representativeness, balancing theory and practice, establishing sport management as a unique field) over the course of its development?

If you knew then what you know now, are there any areas of present concern that you would have worked harder to address during the formative stages?

How do you respond to the belief of at least one of you that sport management has “dropped the ball” with respect to managing sport and physical activity in the public and education sectors?

Q4. What did you see as the most important research foci in sport management originally? Has this changed over the years? Do you see it shifting in the future?

To what extent do you view the development of unique, “evolving” theory based on “rigorous research studies” as a concern of sport management researchers and educators?

During the initial deliberations about NASSM, was this an area of discussion for the group?

What would you identify as the negative repercussions of not having this type of theory guiding the field?

There is a sense that the research foci have broadened, and yet the contexts which sport managers study seem to have, at the same time, narrowed to concentrate predominantly on entertainment sport contexts. Do you perceive this to be the case? If so, is this a significant issue in your mind?

Q5. What did you see as the most critical areas for preparing students to work in the field of sport management originally? Has this changed over the years? Do you see it shifting in the future?

Has the “sport management student” changed over the years, in your opinion? Was the sport management student during the early years of NASSM different from the sport management student of today? If so, how has the field responded/adapted?

In your opinion, does the context or sector in which a student seeks employment change the types of skills and attributes he or she needs to be successful? Does a sport manager working in grassroots sport development with a non-profit organization need different training than a student planning on entering professional sport ticket sales? If so, how does the field negotiate these differences?

Q6. Rate or rank the importance of the following domains to the field of sport management: entertainment-based sport, organized sport, informal sport, play. Justify your rankings.

In your opinion, what criteria do you believe should be used to determine what is “important” to sport? Profit, personal growth, or another criteria altogether?

Has your view on the role of sport society changed since the early years of NASSM? If so, how? Why?

Q7. How has the development of sport management compared with your initial vision of NASSM and the field? Has anything surprised you? Disappointed you? Pleased you?

The three primary concerns expressed in response to this question each merit significant consideration. First, how do you see sport management, as a field, addressing the issue of quantity versus quality with regard to students?

Second, what was your initial vision for the intellectual climate of NASSM, and what would you like to see maintained, changed, or avoided over the coming years with respect to sport management scholarship?

Finally, what responsibility do you see for sport management to take a greater role in the management of participant sport? Given its profit-making potential and dominance of the sport market share, why has participant sport been so overlooked within sport management as opposed to, say, entertainment sport?

Appendix B: Statements of Consent and Descriptive Statistics (Round 3)

In this round, panelists were presented with some of the statements of consensus that emerged from the first two rounds. For each of the statements, panelists indicated their level of agreement using the following five-point Likert scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*.

In addition, panelists were provided with space beneath each item within which to supplement their rating with additional comments or clarifications.

Item	Mean (SD)
1. At the start of NASSM, it was important to ensure a broad range of domains for sport management scholars to study.	4.50 (.76)
2. At the start of NASSM, It was necessary to differentiate sport management (and NASSM) from other fields (e.g., physical education, recreation) and organizations.	4.25 (.71)
3. A key driving force in the founding of NASSM was the creation of a distinctive discipline.	4.63 (.74)
4. At the start of NASSM, there were few outlets for research about the management of professional and college sport.	4.88 (.35)
5. At the start of NASSM, there were few outlets for research on the management of participant sport.	4.75 (.46)
6. The emphasis on professional and college sport in the field of sport management has been driven by market demands, including student demand.	3.88 (.99)
7. The field of sport management is narrower in the types of sport contexts its scholars study than the original vision for the organization (viz., the NASSM constitution, and statement of purpose therein).	4.14 (.90)
8. The field of sport management has made significant strides in elaborating the nuances of different realms of study (e.g., marketing, finance, law, management) within the context of entertainment/spectator sport.	4.13 (1.36)
9. NASSM originally envisioned participant-based sport as a core domain of sport management.	3.43 (1.40)
10. Informal sport and play are not under the current purview of sport management scholarship.	4.25 (1.16)
11. NASSM founders were concerned with balancing theory and practice in the new organization.	4.88 (.35)
12. The field of sport management has done a good job of balancing theory and practice.	3.57 (.79)
13. The field of sport management has done a good job of developing unique theories.	2.50 (1.20)
14. The NASSM organization has benefited from the different "worldviews" of both its U.S. and Canadian members.	4.71 (.49)
15. Sport management students are entering the field with the requisite knowledge and skills to succeed.	3.33 (.52)
16. Sport management is proceeding down a path that is (in a general sense) adequately meeting the needs of society on the whole.	3.57 (.98)