

Sport Advocacy: The Art of Persuasion and Its By-Products

Cecilia Stenling
Umeå University

Michael Sam
University of Otago

Despite an increase of advocacy by established nongovernmental sport organizations, little is known about how advocacy is enacted and with what effects. Building conceptually on frame alignment theory and empirically on interview data from 19 Swedish Regional Sport Federations, this article investigates how advocates politicize sport to gain “insider status” and analyses the by-products of such efforts. This research demonstrates that the architecture of advocacy claims perpetuates a separation between organizations that “sell” sport from those that “produce” it. Framing also impels centralized authority because advocates safeguard their credibility as political actors by taking up a “leadership-position” vis-à-vis clubs. Advocacy frame alignment has further by-products insofar as they narrow advocates’ room for maneuver and become institutionalized over time.

Seippel et al. (2016) and Seippel, Dalen, Sandvik, and Solstad (2018) (see also Harvey, Home, Safai, Darnell, & Courchesne-O’Neill, 2013) recently asked how sport is transformed into a contentious issue that eventually enters formal political processes. Based on a social movement perspective (Benford & Snow, 2000), they showed that one prerequisite for sport’s politicization is actors be willing to engage in politics more overtly, that is, to “move from the balcony to the barricades” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 615). Attention to the relation between sport and collective action is, however, not new in the sociology of sport. An early contribution is Sage’s (1999) study of the actions undertaken by the *Nike Transactional Advocacy Framework*, and this has been followed by studies documenting collective action to counter social inequality (e.g., Harvey, Home, & Safai, 2009; Scherer, 2016; Wilson, 2007), environmental threats (Wheaton, 2007), and historical injustice (Davids-Delano, 2007). However, as the rich body of work outside of sport studies demonstrates, collective actions and advocacy are not inherently “good.” Berbier’s (1998) study of new White racist separatists is an apt illustration of the fact that mobilization and advocacy may be undertaken with any aim.

We seem furthermore to live in a time when sport-related political mobilization emanates both from outside existing structures (e.g., Voices for Democracy; Scherer, 2016) and from within. An example of the latter is *F.C. United Manchester*—a group of fans that mobilized in response to an American businessman taking ownership control of “their” team (Millward & Poulton, 2014). The present study examines yet another contemporary form of political

mobilization and advocacy that is carried out by established nongovernmental sport organizations such as Hockey Canada, New Zealand Rugby, and U.K. Athletics. Although these organizations speak on sport’s behalf (c.f., Seippel et al., 2016, 2018), their advocacy rarely moves toward “the barricades.” Their advocacy activities—defined as attempts to influence political decisions and public policy on behalf of a collective interest (Jenkins, 2006)—lack “revolutionary potential” (Wilson, 2007, p. 457) and are often far from confrontational.¹ With the hope of securing funding, policies, and administrative processes beneficial for voluntary organized sport, advocating organizations instead seek to achieve “insider status” in established governmental structures at central, regional, and national levels—the targets of their advocacy (Dowling & Washington, 2017; Stenling & Sam, 2019).

Advocacy is fundamentally about politicizing an issue to induce actions. This is perhaps why many studies of sport-related collective action (e.g., Sage, 1999; Scherer, 2016; Seippel et al., 2016, 2018) draw on framing theory (Benford & Snow, 2000). Following Benford and Snow (2000), framing denotes intentional and strategic meaning making. It is intentional in the sense that actors deliberately convey accounts to achieve a specific purpose and strategic in that claims are rhetorically tailored to persuade the target to act in a particular way by shaping their understanding of “what it is that is going on.” Because framing is an interpretive process at the level of reality construction, framers are engaged in “the politics of signification” (Hall, 1982 in Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 613) with respect to the construction of problems, causes, solutions, actors, events, etc.² At a general level, the ongoing accomplishment of such interpretive work is thus a narrative of how the world works, why, and with what consequences.

This study provides an analysis of the framing that sport organizations carry out as they conduct advocacy in formal political systems. The empirical context for our study is the Swedish sports movement—a system of sport delivery based solely on voluntary organizations that are autonomous from, but dependent on the national, regional, and local governmental authorities in the Swedish political system. From an advocacy perspective, Swedish Regional Sport Federations (RSFs)—the regional extensions of the national umbrella organization the Swedish Sports Confederation (SSC)—are pertinent because they are charged with representing federated clubs vis-à-vis public authorities, particularly regional and local

© 2020 The Authors. Published by Human Kinetics, Inc. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License, CC BY-NC 4.0, which permits the copy and redistribution in any medium or format, provided it is not used for commercial purposes, the original work is properly cited, the new use includes a link to the license, and any changes are indicated. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>. This license does not cover any third-party material that may appear with permission in the article. For commercial use, permission should be requested from Human Kinetics, Inc., through the Copyright Clearance Center (<http://www.copyright.com>).

Stenling is with the Department of Education, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden. Sam is with the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. Stenling (cecilia.stenling@umu.se) is corresponding author.

governments. Our empirical base is, therefore, data collected through interviews with elected and staff representatives of all 19 RSFs.

The aim of our analysis is twofold. The first, linked to Seippel et al.'s (2016, 2018) call for a more fine-grained treatment of sport's politicization processes, is to build knowledge on the framing carried out by established sport organizations vis-à-vis public actors. In pursuit of this aim, we address the following research question (RQ). From the perspective of RSFs, what constitutes "effective" advocacy claims in the context of Swedish voluntary sport? To be clear, our interest is not in whether RSFs succeed in "getting their way," that is, in whether claims are, in fact, effective. Rather, it is in the "architecture" of claims that the RSFs perceive to be effective in impelling the targets of their framing (i.e., actors in the formal political system) to act favorably toward RSFs and the clubs in their district. To unveil the architecture of claims, the analysis linked with this RQ explores some of the concepts within framing theory that have analytical purchase with regard to the politicization of sport but that remain largely untapped in the sociology of sport literature.

Our second aim responds to an emerging recognition in framing research of the transformative effects *within* a framing organization that may follow from the architecture of claims (Björnehed & Eriksson, 2018; Eriksson, 2011). Such transformative effects stem from the irrevocability of claims, and the way in which proffered claims affect actors' perceived appropriate future framings, roles, and courses of action. Our interest in the by-products of the architecture of claims is reflected in the second RQ, which asks what sport-internal transformative effects may be generated from the architecture of purportedly effective claims?

This work finds its significance in the context of a phenomenon of increasing importance: "politicking" by actors representing organized voluntary sport. Much of the current sport policy literature views such actors' role on the input-side in policy processes through broad theoretical frameworks such as corporatism, pluralism, or policy communities and, therefore, seeks to unveil the extent to which sport actors impact and are impacted by public policy (e.g., Bergsgard, Mangset, Houlihan, Nørdland, & Rommetvedt, 2009). The present work is, therefore, distinct in its primary focus on the substantive structure of sport actors' externally directed and strategic meaning making, and the effects that the particularities of claims may have *on the framers themselves*.

There are two reasons why Swedish voluntary sport is particularly suitable as a context to examine the RQs under consideration. The first concerns the SSC and RSFs' changing roles in relation to government. Although these organizations could previously operate as "passive custodians" (due the institutionalized beliefs around sport's value to the state), they have increasingly become "active advocates," perceiving the need to make "sport's case" to government authorities (Stenling & Sam, 2017, 2019). The second reason why the present context is salient relates to the federated nature of Swedish voluntary sport, where all organizations are interlinked via a representative/democratic structure (Fahlén & Stenling, 2016). Insofar as this typifies the Scandinavian sport model (Bergsgaard & Norberg, 2010), its significance lies in allowing advocates to coordinate their messaging and to claim to speak on behalf of federated clubs, while also increasing the propensity for transformative effects of advocacy downward in the system.

Theory and Literature Review

Frame Alignment

Framing, as a signifying activity, is carried out by actors who are skilled and active users of the extant social stocks of meaning

that are available at a particular point in time (Swidler, 1986). As Benford and Snow (2000, p. 629) note, this means that framers are both "consumers of existing cultural meanings and producers of new meanings." At the most general level, framing accounts that do not build on available cultural material will not resonate with any audience, simply because the meaning of the message cannot be comprehended. However, all available cultural meanings are not equally potent. Framers are not "able to construct and impose on their intended targets any version of reality they would like" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 625). The persuasive potential of frames instead depends on the extent to which they build on material that is culturally (and politically) relevant *for the target of framing activities* (in this case elected public officials and nonelected administrators in government agencies). This deliberate tailoring of messages is termed *frame alignment* (Benford & Snow, 2000), which implies an accommodation of the target's understandings, experiences, values, and interests in the crafting of advocacy accounts (e.g., Creed, Scully, & Austin, 2002). In that sense, frame alignment is comparable with Suchman's (1995) strategies for securing legitimacy, identified as important in the politics of stadia development (Sant & Mason, 2018), and key to policy actors' success in getting sport into the EU funding streams (Garcia, de Wolff, & Yilmaz, 2018). Although building on other theoretical frameworks, these studies support the contention that strategic representation matters when it is intended for political persuasion in the context of sport (see also Sam, 2003).

Frame Salience: Cultural Resonance, Centrality and Experiential Commensurability

As will become clear in the analysis, out of the alignment strategies usually identified within frame theory and research, the rhetorical mechanisms associated with *frame extension* bear the most relevance for the present study. Frame extension involves expanding the boundaries of the claims-makers' primary interests to include issues and concerns of presumed importance to targets (Benford & Snow, 2000). Recent studies provide several examples of how this may play out in the politics of public sport policy. In particular, Seippel et al. (2016), Sant and Mason (2018), and Garcia et al. (2018) show that justifications for public funding to sport tend to build on arguments around the external—not intrinsic—values of sport. The societal value of sport thus seems to be an often used and viable cultural material for actors in this context. Because influential claims hinge on accounts having such *cultural resonance* (Benford & Snow, 2000), this is perhaps unsurprising. In addition to cultural resonance (sometimes termed narrative fidelity), framing theory posits that the effectiveness of a strategic fit depends on a proffered account's salience with regard to how *central* or essential the values and ideas of the claims are to targets, and on the extent to which claims have *experiential commensurability*, that is, whether they are congruent with the everyday experiences of targets (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Frame Credibility: Empirical Credibility, Frame Consistency, and Credibility of the Claims-Maker

The effectiveness of a claim also varies with its credibility. Credibility for a message builds on, first, a claim's *empirical credibility*, achieved when the empirical referents are perceived by targets to be indicators of "real-life" broader trends or problems. Advocates thus have to find ways to convince government officials that there is a "fit between the framings and events in the world" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 620). Scientific knowledge, statistics, and stories are

examples of rhetorical tools that lend themselves to advocates in their attempts to enhance claims' empirical credibility (e.g., [Fahlén, 2017](#); [Mosley & Gibson, 2017](#); [Österlind & Fahlén, 2015](#); [Sam & Scherer, 2008](#)). Credibility is also achieved through a congruence between accounts and the actions of claims-makers, so-called *frame consistency* ([Benford & Snow, 2000](#)). To maintain consistency, claims may, therefore, be adjusted to reflect actions ([Zuo & Benford, 1995](#)). As in any social system, not all actors have the same status as representatives for interests and their issues (i.e., as political actors). Actors therefore have to, third, build their *credibility as claims-makers* (c.f., [Scherer, 2016](#); [Stenling & Sam 2017, 2019](#)).

Transformative Effects of Framing

With respect to generating such credibility, an important and closely related consideration in framing is the mutually constitutive relationship between claims-makers and their environment over time. Indeed, while crafting salient and credible claims may well succeed in persuading targets, frames may also generate unforeseeable and uncontrollable effects as they become institutionalized ([Björnehed & Eriksson, 2018](#)). In part, this is because once a strategic message has been conveyed, it cannot be retracted, and the particular architecture of an account, therefore, affects actors' "perceived maneuverability" ([Björnehed & Eriksson, 2018](#), p. 120)—what are viewed as appropriate future framings and courses of action ([Eriksson, 2011](#)). If a claim, for example, promises quantifiable growth in participation, future narratives may become circumscribed toward numerical storylines ([Sam & Scherer, 2008](#)) that include statistics and targets.

In addition to enabling/constraining what can be said, framing can unintentionally "define[s] the social arena, including the players and interests" ([Creed et al., 2002](#), pp. 480–481). Framing thus transforms social identities and roles as well as their interrelation and relative status ([Creed et al., 2002](#); [Stenling & Sam, 2019](#)). If proffered claims lack support within parts of a movement, frame extension might, therefore, be aimed at widening the pool of interested parties, but this risks spawning internal tensions ([Benford, 1993](#)). Advocating organizations that are built on membership structures, like those under study here, may be particularly vulnerable to such internal effects, as such organizations need to navigate between two competing logics: a logic of influence and a logic of membership. While the first prescribes crafting claims that align with political understandings and interests (i.e., frame alignment), the second dictates that advocacy accounts should reflect the membership's needs and wishes ([Klüver, Mahoney, & Opper, 2015](#)). Although not necessarily incommensurable, research indicates that advocacy claims tend to reflect the "upward accountability" (toward government authorities) that is associated with the logic of influence over the "downward accountability" (toward members) that is inherent in the logic of membership ([Knutsen, 2017](#)).

Methods

Context

This study builds on data collected within a larger project that explores the emergence, characteristics, and sport-internal consequences of advocacy activities carried out by Swedish RSFs. RSFs are governed by a board of volunteers that is elected by the membership in their district, but they are professional organizations with an increasingly large number of employees—a development that can be partially explained by their increasing advocacy role. Although RSFs are separate legal entities, they exist to facilitate the

implementation of decisions taken by the SSC general assembly—Swedish sports' highest democratically elected decision-making body. This is done primarily through the execution of one of the RSFs' main tasks, which is to support the development of the approximately 20,000 sport clubs that are all federated under one of the 19 RSFs. The RSFs' second main task is to represent sport vis-à-vis non-sport actors, primarily the Swedish regional and local governments, key actors in terms of facility planning, construction and maintenance, block and project funding, etc.

From an international public sport policy perspective, Swedish voluntary sport is typical of a Scandinavian model. Sport in some countries is fragmented across schools, private clubs, and city/town recreation departments, whereas the club-based, highly coordinated, federated structure that characterizes Sweden's and many other European sport systems have been key to Swedish voluntary sport's acquisition of its position as a sole provider of competitive sport.

In lieu of a government agency, such as Sport Canada, U.K. Sport, or Sport New Zealand, the SSC is granted authority and autonomy to act on behalf of the government in the distribution of the national-level government grant, which is determined annually in the government's budget proposition. As regional arms of the SSC, RSFs administer the national government grant to clubs, but advocacy toward the central government regarding the form and level of funding is conducted primarily by the SSC.

Historically, Swedish sport has benefitted considerably from its monopolistic position, which has included a combination of significant public funding with far-reaching autonomy vis-à-vis government agencies ([Fahlén & Stenling, 2016](#)). The past decades have thus seen an increase in central government funding, which now exceeds EUR 200 million per annum, compared with EUR 66 million per annum in 2000. At the same time, however, such increases have come with subtle reforms. For example, over the past two decades, the targeting of national-level funds and the evaluation of their effects have come to be increasingly emphasized.

The historical and contemporary relationship between regional/local governments and voluntary sport (i.e., RSFs and their federated clubs) parallels between the central government and the SSC, including the increasing instrumental use of sport and other non-profit actors for the achievement of sport-external aims (e.g., social integration, public health, and crime prevention). However, regional and local government support to voluntary sport exceeds the national-level contributions, the former estimated at EUR 500 per annum ([Fahlén & Stenling, 2016](#)). Support from regional and municipal sources may take the form of block- and earmarked project funding to RSFs and clubs, facility maintenance, planning and development support, event marketing and promotions, etc.

As regional and local governments are both RSFs' main resource providers and their advocacy targets, these governmental levels require some further explanation. Sweden is a unitary state with a parliamentary democracy, but the 20 regional and 290 local governments have a strong mandate to adjust policies for services that are generated locally. This mandate is further strengthened by regional and local governments' fiscal power; they can decide on taxation levels without consulting the other levels of government ([Lidström, 2016](#); [Montin, 2016](#)). Furthermore, regional and local governments have overlapping territories, but their areas of responsibility differ. Whereas regional governments are responsible primarily for health and medical care, local governments are in charge of practically all remaining public welfare services (including sport and recreation, culture, education, and elderly care).

Regional and local governments are governed by elected officials (i.e., politicians, who may take the role of chair in a local

governments' sport and recreation committee) whose policies are to be implemented by nonelected public administrators at varying levels (e.g., the head manager of the municipal sport and recreation office). Whereas public officials for national, regional, and local governments are (re)elected every fourth year, the term of employment for public administrators has no fixed endpoint (Lidström, 2016; Montin, 2016). These elected officials and public administrators constitute the main targets of RSFs' advocacy efforts. The decentralized character of the overarching political system means that public policies and funding levels impacting voluntary sport vary between regions and municipalities. Although advocacy is certainly not the only determinant of policy and funding priorities, the regional and local government mandate provides an incentive for RSFs to advocate on behalf of their federated clubs.

Data Collection

Due to knowledge gaps on the current topic (i.e., advocacy by established voluntary sport organizations) and Swedish sport organizations' sparse and unevenly distributed production of documents (Stenling, 2015), this project used semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) as a data collection method. A snowball sampling strategy, with the head managers of all 19 RSFs as first points of contact, resulted in 46 staff members and elected officials being interviewed (see Table 1).³

The interview guide used in the larger project (explained briefly in the beginning of the context description) contains questions under themes drawn from the advocacy literature (e.g., content, interest representation, tactics/strategies, venues/targets, purposes/

Table 1 Respondents According to Organizational Affiliation, Position, and Gender

RSF	Position (gender)
1	Board chair (M) and head manager (M)
2	Board chair (M) and head manager (M)
3	Board chair (M) and head manager (F)
4	Board chair (M), head manager (M), and line manager (F)
5	Board representative (M) and head manager (F)
6	Board representative (F), head manager (M), and line manager (M)
7	Head manager (M) and line manager (F)
8	Board chair (M), head manager (F), and line manager (M)
9	Board chair (F) and head manager (M)
10	Head manager (F) and line manager (M)
11	Board representative (M), head manager (M), and former head manager (M)
12	Head manager (F)
13	Board chair (M), head manager (M), and line manager (M)
14	Board chair (M), head manager (M), and line manager (F)
15	Board chair (M) and head manager (M)
16	Board representative (M), head manager (M), and line manager (F)
17	Head manager (M)
18	Board representative (F), head manager (M), and marketing and communications director (M)
19	Board chair (M), head manager (F), line manager (F), and marketing and communications director (F)

Note. M = male, F = female; RSFs = regional sport federations.

antecedents, and effects/consequences). Sample questions that directly informed this study were: "At a general level, what is advocacy and how do you perform it?" "Do advocacy activities relate to your RSF's other activities?" "What is your 'pitch' in advocacy conversations?" and "How would you characterize 'bad' and 'good' advocacy respectively?" All interviews were conducted face-to-face, except for two that for practical reasons were carried out over the phone. The interviews ranged from 30 to 90 min, with an average length of 68 min.

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded in three main steps, all of which relied on the authors' interpretation. First, all data of relevance for the present purpose were sorted out from the approximately 1,000 pages of interview transcripts that were generated in the larger project. Second, the two RQs were used to further separate data that related to the constituent elements of purportedly effective claims (RQ1) and the transformative effects of conveying claims that were built on these constituent elements (RQ2). After this preparatory phase, the third step continued with a fine-grained inductive analysis that crystallized: (a) elements which sport advocates consider constitutive of effective advocacy claims and (b) effects which potentially arise from the proffering of claims with these particular elements. From the outset, the analysis was informed by the general concept of framing and its transformative effects; however, it was only in the third and final step that we considered the applicability and explanatory potential of the more specific concepts offered in the framing literature. The concepts that ultimately appear in this study were determined through this iterative movement between the themes that were inductively formed in the second analytical step and the broader framing literature. This means that several other framing concepts were considered as well, but found to be less relevant and, therefore, not described in the study. For example, four frame alignment strategies are well-established in the framing literature: frame extension, frame bridging, frame amplification, and frame transformation (c.f., Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow, Benford, McCammon, Hewitt & Fitzgerald, 2014). All these strategies were considered in the third analytical step, but since frame extension was found to explain the strategy adopted by sport advocates and the remaining three did not, our focus here is on frame extension.

Analysis

Perceived Effective Advocacy Claims (RQ1)

Resonating with frame alignment, sport advocates reported that the persuasive potential of their accounts hinges on the extent to which their claims are relevant for their advocacy targets. RSFs target different categories of public authorities (e.g., regional and local government); multiple organizations within each category (e.g., several municipalities in their jurisdiction); several units within the same organization (e.g., municipal sport and recreation committees and social services); holders of diverse roles and functions (e.g., public administrators and elected officials); and at times even specific individuals (e.g., someone with a personal interest and passion for a specific issue). At the most general level, advocates pursue the notion of "putting yourself in the target's shoes" when formulating claims. Because advocates acknowledge the discrepancy between each target's values and interests, they have lots of different shoes to put themselves in, so to speak. In that sense, even if it is "possible to start with some basic material and do pretty much the same everywhere, you really have to be a bit more

creative than that” (C3). This means that advocates expend significant effort on analyzing advocacy targets so as to tailor accounts that correspond with each target.

Frame salience. *Cultural resonance:* A pervasive theme in the data is the view that an effective advocacy claim elucidates sport’s external effects. Advocates thus appropriate the cultural and political potency of sport’s contribution to societal objectives. The interviews furthermore revealed that within the overarching framework of sport’s external values, advocates link sport to a diverse range of societal objectives (e.g., public health, academic achievement, productivity, immigrant integration, workforce upskilling, economic growth, crime prevention, democratic fostering, employment, and equality).

This not only reflects an appreciation of the varying cultural potency of these objectives, but it also variably emphasizes “legitimations” at different times to match what is currently high on the political agenda (Stenling & Sam, 2019). As an illustration, C8 stated that they have “of course taken advantage of the integration debate that’s ongoing, talking about what sport can do in relation to integration [of refugees]. We know that there’s an interest and we use that.”

Centrality: Advocates’ attempts to put themselves in their targets’ shoes also included a consideration of what is central to the targets’ decision-making roles. A first element of this consideration is decision makers’ responsibility for the efficient use of tax funds. Although the decisions that advocacy is meant to influence almost always includes public spending in some form (e.g., on facilities, grants, projects), advocates are careful not to construct claims that may be perceived as generating costs. Instead, messages are crafted so as to allow targets to feel like they are getting a win, that “sport isn’t out to collect money” (LM4). In the advocates’ claims, sport should be viewed as an investment opportunity, with public funds generating a sure return. In the Swedish public sport policy realm, the subject of “costs” often equates to subsidies of some sort (Fahlén & Stenling, 2016), but in line with framing sport as an investment opportunity, sport advocates seek to distance themselves from the image of being “on welfare.” In the words of AH9:

It’s fascinating how much difference choice of words can make. I’ve conveyed a wish that [decision makers] stop using the term “subsidy”. They shouldn’t allocate “subsidies” to sport. (. . .) Funding to sport is a type of investment—subsidies are given to someone that doesn’t have the ability to carry their own weight, and [decision makers] shouldn’t think about sport in those terms.

Advocates also consider the electoral mandate of decision makers to ensure their claims support the latter’s jurisdictional roles (e.g., municipalities and regions). In the crafting of messages, this consideration creates an imperative to provide a link between targets’ problems and sport’s solution to those problems. Advocates believe that “you can’t go around complaining about how bad everything is—you need to be a bearer of solutions” (C4). There is thus a perceived need to ask targets “‘What can we do for you?’ Not, ‘we want more, we want more’, but rather ‘What more can we do?’” (AH11). From advocates’ perspective then, crafting effective claims is not only about the content of justifications, but also about identifying and framing the appropriate electoral/jurisdictional problems and proposing solutions to these problems. Reflecting that neither problems nor solutions are politically neutral (Stone, 1997), advocates attest that the degree to which targets recognize that they are faced with a problem varies and that at times they may have to offer some help along the way by “indicating a problem,

before showing how we can solve it, or showing how we can solve it together. Politicians aren’t always aware of the problems they’re facing” (C9).

Experiential commensurability: Interviewees furthermore reported that claims should take a point of departure in the everyday life of decision makers, reflecting the perceived importance of experiential commensurability. Since advocacy, from the perspective of interviewees, has many similarities with salesmanship, a key to successful advocacy (i.e., selling sport as a product) is “understanding the client’s everyday life and context,” their “needs and how they think,” and “their position and how they act” (C4). Because of the diversity of whom they wish to influence—and consequently of what constitutes their “every day life”—the same overarching justification is “pitched” differently toward different targets. LM6 illustrates this in relation to the use of ideas around how sport’s work with immigrants may be linked with different everyday experience:

Everyone knows that urbanisation negatively impacts rural areas, so the question then becomes: what role can a sport club play [in a rural community]? There might be an accommodation for newly arrived immigrants there, and then the line of argument might be “the immigrants can join the local club and rebuild it, start a new team, and maybe the gas station and dairy that closed down can reopen, and maybe the club can run those businesses? Or maybe the club could handle the mail deliveries in the area?” That’s the pitch I would use [in a rural municipality], whereas in an urban municipality the focus would be on how sport club participation contributes to immigrant integration.

Credibility. *Empirical credibility:* From the perspective of sport advocates, putting themselves in the targets’ shoes when crafting messages is a necessary but not sufficient element of the architecture of effective claims. Accounts also have to be credible in the eyes of targets. A key aspect of ensuring credibility is “being able to prove” (LM4) “real” (C11) effects that can be linked to decisions, thus specifying chains of cause and effect. The narration of evidence chains is built primarily on statistics and stories, which, in the interviewees’ views, together allow politicians to establish a causal link between sport activities, the effects that advocates suggest originate from them, and decision makers’ own role in providing beneficial conditions for those activities.

As a way of giving evidence of effects, interviewees suggest that statistics may be used in almost any area, and need to—per the principle of putting themselves in the recipient’s shoes—be as target-specific as possible. However, although the use of statistics is perceived as necessary, interviewees felt it is no longer sufficient as an evidentiary base. In their view, the numerical narration of evidence of effects needs to be supplemented with “stories” that allow targets to see the “real-life” impact that decisions have on sport participants. As an illustration, AH8 conveyed the view that providing statistics or simply stating that:

“sport is good for integration” is a bit flat. But if we portray Mohammed who came from Afghanistan last year, and has learnt Swedish, swims three times a week and has part-time employment in the swim club, then that’s a much more powerful message.

Frame consistency & credibility of the claims-maker: Because the external effects of sport activities are the key cultural material used in advocacy, advocates see the use of statistics and stories as a way to, in the parlance of framing theory, display frame consistency—a congruence between accounts and actions. By the same logic, storylines in sport that speak against these effects

(e.g., reports on 7 year olds being benched) or that indicate sport may generate negative external effects (e.g., hooliganism) are perceived as a threat to what is here conceptualized as empirical credibility and frame consistency. Expecting that these elements are bound to be brought to light, not least because of increasing media scrutiny around sport, RSF officials reported that they should display self-criticism and not “sit and wait for sport to be criticized and end up in a defense position” (AH13). Rather than allowing external parties to expose sport’s negative issues, advocates thus espouse the view that it is important to display an awareness of problems, coupled with a willingness and ability to redress wrongdoings. Taking the example of gender inequality in sport, AH13 says that:

We need to be proactive, because it’s issues like gender equality that decision makers ask critical questions about. If we’re not proactive, we end up in the back seat. So we need to signal to decision makers that we’ve got things under control, we’re aware of issues, and we’re working on it.

In addition to ensuring frame congruence, the sentiment that self-criticism “makes us more credible as a political actor” (LM16) indicates that what is perceived to be at stake in the construction of claims is RSF’s credibility *qua* advocates.

Effects of Purportedly Effective Claims (RQ2)

From an advocacy perspective, sport’s “mythopoeic status” (Coalter, 2007, p. 9) is a blessing that allows advocates to craft accounts that are aligned with a multitude of interests. However, it is clear from the data that empathizing with the multiple perspectives of officials/administrators bears the risk of “overselling” (C8) sport’s external value. As an illustration, advocates noted that sport had received public funds for migrant integration “because we say that we’re really good at integration” and they acknowledge that there is a risk that sport “bargains with [its] autonomy” (AH6), “turns [itself] into junkies constantly looking to get more money” (C4), and therefore “prostitute[s] itself” (AM11) in exchange for funding. In that sense, there is a propensity that sport “loses [itself] along the way (...) when someone rattles a bag of money in front us” (AH4).

If the effects of sport activities in clubs are the prime leverage RSFs use in advocacy, it is likewise clubs—not RSFs themselves—that are the vehicles through which commitments made in advocacy may be realized. Advocacy, as one official reported is, therefore, “a constant balancing act where we easily end up in a situation where we push too much down to the clubs” (AH5). Illustrating the danger of creating an increasing discrepancy between advocacy claims and sport club practice (i.e., reducing the actual basis for claim credibility), AH9 stated that:

[When we explain sport’s contributions in our advocacy] we may end up putting additional weight on [clubs] shoulders’ instead of explaining the value created [in clubs] and giving them fuel to continue. That’s the tricky part of [advocacy]. It’s really easy to display lots of numbers and so on, but afterwards you’re thinking “oh crap, now we’ve pushed them down even further, now they’ve got even more to live up to.”

Measures to Moderate Unintended Effects

Although interviewees reported displaying self-criticism to build credible claims—that is, “we’re aware of issues, and we’re working on it”—they recognized that this position might only be tolerated for so long by decision makers. Threats to frame congruence,

therefore, generate the view that if sport does not “gets its own house in order” (C15) then “the whole base of our arguments falls, and the funder might say, “No thanks, not now. Come back when you’ve done your homework” (AH1). In that sense, any discrepancy between the claims and actual sport activities creates an imperative for RSFs to compel clubs to develop so as to not undermine the credibility of their advocacy. There is thus a notion that “[RSFs] need to do a really good job out in the clubs’ (LM4) by exercising leadership with regards to clubs’ development. In the words of AH11:

[Sport] can’t lean back and say “we’re satisfied, we’re going to live off municipal grants and membership fees.” The RSFs are commissioned to lead, and they have to have the courage to lead change. (...) So the [rhetorical] question is whether being an advocate per definition means serving a prevailing system? Or is being an advocate trying to lead [club-level] change—to spearhead change?

It is clear from the data that although RSFs find clubs’ autonomy important, “spearheading change” sometimes implies taking measures to induce clubs to “adapt, develop, modify” (LM13) so as to align club activities with advocacy accounts. As an illustration, AH16 said that:

Our by-laws state that one part of our core mission is to “maintain sport’s order,” and from my interpretation, that means that clubs need to comply with what sport has collectively decided. Because I mean . . . a club that goes off the rails can do a really big harm. And what is it that politicians look at when I’m sitting with them? They’re looking at early specialization, benching, “is that what our funds go to?,” and so I have [to] defend sport. So from that perspective we are pretty determined to keep clubs within the box so to speak (AH16).

The potential gap between what is conveyed in advocacy and what is actually delivered by sport clubs is thus moderated by RSFs intensifying their developmental work with clubs.

Discussion

Governments’ increasing resource allocation to sport means that the amount of public resources that sport may *potentially* gain access to is unprecedented. However, access to resources is no longer guaranteed. Rather, public support needs to be continually claimed, defended, and justified (Stenling & Sam, 2019). Advocacy is an activity strategically carried out for this specific purpose. Although there are many aspects to advocacy, this study focused on the framing that established sport organizations engage in as they conduct advocacy in the formal political system (RQ1) and the transformative effects that may arise from this framing (RQ2). As such, the study provides a theoretically and empirically fine-grained analysis of the meaning making and conveying that underpin the politicization of sport, as sought by Seippel et al. (2016, 2018). Table 2 displays the architecture that the sport advocates under study believe is a necessary underpinning of advocacy claims (RQ1).

The overarching strategy of “putting yourself in the target’s shoes” (i.e., frame extension, Benford & Snow, 2000), shows that Swedish sport advocates’ claims are intentionally constructed according to a logic of influence (Klüver et al., 2015). At a general level, the cultural material used in the construction of claims furthermore demonstrates that advocates exploit the contemporary political belief in the link between organized sport and broader

Table 2 Constituent Elements of Purportedly Effective Advocacy Claims (RQ1)

Sport advocates believe that an effective advocacy claim . . .	
Frame alignment through frame extension	Claim credibility
Cultural resonance Takes a point of departure in what is currently high on each target's political agenda and elucidates the external effects of sport that correspond to this.	Empirical credibility Builds on statistics and stories that allow decision makers to establish a link between sport activities, their effects, and decision makers' role in providing beneficial conditions for those activities.
Centrality Considers two central aspects of decision makers' roles: (a) a responsibility for the efficient use of tax funds and (b) an electoral mandate to work for the greater good of the people in their jurisdiction. Based on this portrays spending as an investment rather than a cost and bears solutions to decision makers' problems.	Frame consistency and credibility of the claims-maker Proactively demonstrates self-criticism and a willingness to improve
Experiential commensurability Connects sport to decision makers' varying everyday contexts—the same overarching justification (e.g., sport and immigrant integration) is “pitched” differently depending on the target.	

societal objectives (cf. [Coalter, 2007](#)). In that sense, the crafting of RSFs' advocacy accounts relies on a careful analysis of which cultural material around sport's societal benefit is particularly “in vogue” at any given time and for each specific target. However, the remaining constitutive elements of advocacy claims illustrate that advocates are arguably sophisticated users and producers of cultural and political meaning ([Benford & Snow, 2000](#); [Swidler, 1986](#)). By “sophisticated,” we mean that advocates hold an elaborate view of how claims need to be constructed and thus what the logic of influence may entail in a public sport policy context.

However, our analysis also shows that sport advocates who are diligent in their use of frame extension may simultaneously generate effects that are independent of their advocacy “success” (cf. [Björnehed & Eriksson, 2018](#); [Eriksson, 2011](#)). It was indeed the exact elements perceived as key components of effective claims (see [Table 2](#)) that simultaneously foreshadowed transformative effects (RQ2). One of these effects pertains to the irrevocability of claims and the way relations between sport and public authorities may ultimately be altered as a result. In particular, the claim architecture identified in this study harbors the risk that sport advocates—on their own accord—contribute to the increasing instrumentalization of sport (i.e., the view that sport contributes to public health, academic achievement, productivity, immigrant integration, workforce upskilling, economic growth, crime prevention, democratic fostering, equality, etc.). For member-based and democratically governed sport systems like Swedish sport ([Fahlén & Stenling, 2016](#)), framing may, therefore, promote the upward accountability associated with the logic of influence ([Knutsen, 2017](#)). Stated differently, advocacy may over time involve a (voluntary) surrendering of sport's autonomy vis-à-vis public authorities. Although autonomy is certainly ascribed an intrinsic value for sport systems such as Swedish voluntary sport ([Norberg, 2004](#)), a loss of autonomy is arguably less of a problem when sport's interests align with those of advocacy targets. Like the interviewees in Sant and Mason's (2018) study, the RSF representatives seemed genuinely convinced of both the truthfulness of their claims and the appropriateness of the club-level developmental direction marked out in them.

However, although RSFs advocate on behalf of clubs, their understanding of what is in clubs' interest may not necessarily align with clubs' own views. Nonetheless, as RSFs are not sport deliverers, the “content” of their claims inevitably builds and depends on sport clubs' activities. Because of this, RSFs' efforts to ensure claim credibility (see [Table 2](#)) may lead to a particular type of over commitment characterized by “overselling” the extent

to which clubs are ready, willing, and able to live up to the promises made in advocacy claims. Framing strategies thus narrow advocates' room for maneuver in terms of the structure of future claims ([Björnehed & Eriksson, 2018](#); [Eriksson, 2011](#)). The claims so carefully constructed by the sport advocates under study, therefore, have the propensity to become institutionalized over time, rendering them hard to retract or replace without losing credibility. This potentially “irreversible” nature of claims suggests that advocacy not only facilitates sport's entrance into formal political processes (c.f., [Seippel et al., 2016, 2018](#)), but also may create a path dependency that sustains the architecture of claims by which sport is politicized. Over the long term, this inertia may ultimately make it difficult for advocates to return to claims that, for example, highlight sport's autonomy and the value of “sport for sport's sake.”

The significance of framing also lies in its capacity to (re)shape institutional roles and their interrelation (cf. [Creed et al., 2002](#)), particularly via the architecture of claims and construction of framers' appropriate—even necessary—future courses of action toward their constituency. In the context of this study, another transformative effect of the framing undertaken by RSFs is a perpetuation of a sector-level specialization of Swedish voluntary sport, characterized by (a) sport clubs doing sport and (b) representative organizations talking about the value/s created from sport clubs doing sport. But the framing associated with advocacy—an activity directed toward organizations external to sport—may also precipitate a sport-internal centralization. Indeed, sport advocates' recognition of the risk that clubs' activities might undermine the credibility of their claims and standing as political actors, contributed to advocates “assuming a leadership-position” vis-à-vis clubs. This affirms that attempts to maintain frame consistency may not only involve adjusting frames to reflect actions ([Zuo & Benford, 1995](#)) but that the architecture of claims may also provide an impetus to transform actions and ultimately engineer this consistency. In particular, the emergence of sport organizations whose task it is to “sell” clubs' activities implies that advocates are marketing something that is not really theirs to sell. This means that the upward accountability ushered in by the architecture of claims is channeled down the sport system (c.f., [Fahlén, Eliasson, & Wickman, 2015](#)), leaving clubs to pick up the “advocacy bill,” and advocates with the task of extracting payment. Although advocacy-driven transformations of institutional roles are significant in themselves, they thus also have important implications for divisions of responsibility and patterns of accountability and autonomy *within* sport systems.

Conclusion

Although the previous discussion is based on a solid empirical ground, this has been a study of sport actors' advocacy-related framing in a single country, where the member-based, federated structures and monopolistic position grant advocates' a particular role. Under these conditions, the architecture of advocacy claims (RQ1, see Table 2) potentially introduces two interrelated system-specific effects (RQ2). The first is that framing may result in an irreversible overselling of the extent to which clubs are ready, willing, and able to contribute to the promises embedded in claims. The second effect surrounding the architecture of claims concerns its capacity to transform relationships between actors in federated sport systems. For the system under study here, the structure of claims foreshadows a system level specialization and centralization, where umbrella organizations like RSFs assume the role of communicators of sport clubs' value creation. To avoid undermining the credibility of their future performance of this role, RSFs strengthen their leadership and authority vis-à-vis clubs.

Such transformations, while difficult to show empirically without a longitudinal study, is, nevertheless, significant in how it potentially alters the democratic relations that are so heavily valued in Scandinavian sport systems. Future studies will, therefore, have to examine the transferability of our findings to other national contexts. In this regard and building on the notion of contextual similarity (Larsson, 2009), advocacy in countries such as Norway (Skille & Säfvenbom, 2011) and the Netherlands (Waardenburg & van Bottenburg, 2013), which have sport systems that are very similar to Sweden's, may be most likely to exhibit empirical similarities to the system under study here. However, empirical generalizability aside, the so-called pattern matching perspective (Larsson, 2009) allows us to gauge our more immediate contribution to the wider sport policy and sociology literature. From this perspective, our contribution is valuable because it provides empirical operationalization of framing concepts in the context of advocacy carried out by established voluntary sport actors, as well as points to some of the transformative effects that may follow from strategic messaging in this context. In this way, we hope to facilitate and encourage future analyses of the structure of such actors' strategically tailored accounts and the sport-internal transformative effects of their advocacy.

Notes

1. The advocacy literature (c.f., Clear, Paull, & Holloway, 2018) generally distinguishes between confrontational outsider tactics (e.g., public protests and rallies) and co-operative insider tactics (e.g., lobbying, relationship building, and participation in public committees).
2. We acknowledge that narratives and storylines are a feature of work in sociology (Hall, 1983), policy studies (Stone, 1997), and political science (Schmidt, 2008). Benford and Snow's work is adopted here because of its individual level of analysis and its empirically accessible categorizations.
3. In the "Analysis" section, the number accompanying a quotation refers to the RSF's number in Table 1 and the letter/s to the interviewee's position, where C = board representative, HM = head manager, and LM = line manager. "C1" thus indicates a quotation from the interview with the board chair in RSF 1, "HM2" a quotation from the interview with the head manager of RSF 2, and so on.

References

- Benford, R.D. (1993). Frame disputes within the nuclear disarmament movement. *Social Forces*, 71(3), 677–701. doi:10.2307/2579890
- Benford, R.D., & Snow, D.A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Sociological Review*, 26, 611–639. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.611
- Berbier, M. (1998). "Half the Battle:" Cultural resonance, framing processes, and ethnic affectations in contemporary white separatist rhetoric. *Social Problems*, 45(4), 431–450. doi:10.2307/3097206
- Bergsgard, N.A., Mangset, P., Houlihan, B., Nødland, S.I., & Rommetvedt, H. (2009). *Sport policy*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Bergsgard, N.A., & Norberg, J. (2010). Sport policy and politics—The Scandinavian way. *Sport in Society*, 13(4), 567–582. doi:10.1080/17430431003616191
- Björnehed, E., & Eriksson, J. (2018). Making the most of the frame: Developing the analytical potential of frame analysis. *Policy Studies*, 39(2), 109–126. doi:10.1080/01442872.2018.1434874
- Clear, A., Paull, M., & Holloway, D. (2018). Nonprofit advocacy tactics: Thinking inside the box? *Voluntas*, 29(4), 857–869. doi:10.1007/s11266-017-9907-4
- Coalter, F. (2007). *A wider social role for sport. Who's keeping the score?* London, UK: Routledge.
- Creed, W.D., Scully, M.A., & Austin, J.R. (2002). Clothes make the person? The tailoring of legitimating accounts and the social construction of identity. *Organisation Science*, 13, 475–496. doi:10.1287/orsc.13.5.475.7814
- Davis-Delano, L.R. (2007). Eliminating native American mascots. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 31(4), 340–373. doi:10.1177/0193723507308251
- Dowling, M., & Washington, M. (2017). Epistemic communities and knowledge-based professional networks in sport policy and governance: A case study of the Canadian Sport for Life leadership team. *Journal of Sport Management*, 31(2), 133–147. doi:10.1123/jsm.2016-0071
- Eriksson, J. (2011). *Strider om mening. En dynamisk frameanalys av den svenska sexköpslagen* (Doctoral dissertation). Department of Political Science, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden.
- Fahlén, J. (2017). The trust-mistrust dynamic in the public governance of sport: Exploring the legitimacy of performance measurement systems through end-users' perceptions. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 9, 707–722. doi:10.1080/19406940.2017.1348965
- Fahlén, J., Eliasson, I., & Wickman, K. (2015). Resisting self-regulation: An analysis of sport policy programme making and implementation in Sweden. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 7(3), 391–406. doi:10.1080/19406940.2014.925954
- Fahlén, J., & Stenling, C. (2016). Sport policy in Sweden. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 8(3), 515–531.
- García, B., de Wolff, M., & Yilmaz, S. (2018). Issue framing and institutional constraints in EU agenda-setting: An analysis of European Union Sport Policy. *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 14(1), 23–39.
- Hall, S. (1982). The rediscovery of ideology: Return to the repressed in media studies. In M. Gurevitch, T. Bemelt, J. Curon, & J. Woolcott (Eds.), *Culture, society, and the media* (pp. 56–90). New York, NY: Methuen.
- Hall, S. (1983). The great moving right show. In S. Hall & M. Jacques (Eds.), *The politics of thatcherism* (pp. 19–39). London, UK: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Harvey, J., Horne, J., & Safai, P. (2009). Alterglobalization, global social movements, and the possibility of political transformation through

- Sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 26, 383–403. doi:10.1123/ssj.26.3.383
- Harvey, J., Horne, J., Safai, P., Darnell, S., & Courchesne-O'Neill, S. (2013). *Sport and social movements. From the local to the global*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Jenkins, J.G. (2006). Nonprofit organizations and political advocacy. In W.W. Powell & R.S. Steinberg (Eds.), *The nonprofit sector: A research handbook* (pp. 307–322). New Haven, CT: Yale.
- Klüver, H., Mahoney, C., & Opper, M. (2015). Framing in context: How interest groups employ framing to lobby the European Commission. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 22(4), 481–498. doi:10.1080/13501763.2015.1008550
- Knutsen, W.L. (2017). Retaining the benefits of government-nonprofit contracting relationships: Opposites attract or clash? *Voluntas*, 28, 1373–1398. doi:10.1007/s11266-017-9874-9
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative interviewing* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Sage.
- Larsson, S. (2009). A pluralist view of generalization in qualitative research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 32, 25–38. doi:10.1080/17437270902759931
- Lidström, A. (2016). Introduction: Subnational government. In J. Pierre (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of Swedish politics* (pp. 365–366). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Millward, P., & Poulton, G. (2014). Football fandom, mobilization and herbert blumer: A social movement analysis of F.C. united of Manchester. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 31, 1–22. doi:10.1123/ssj.2013-0132
- Montin, S. (2016). Municipalities, regions, and county councils. In J. Pierre (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of Swedish politics* (pp. 367–382). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Mosley, J.E., & Gibson, K. (2017). Strategic use of evidence in state-level policymaking: Matching evidence type to legislative stage. *Policy Sciences*, 50, 697–719. doi:10.1007/s11077-017-9289-x
- Norberg, J. (2004). *Idrottens väg till folkhemmet. Studier i statlig idrottspolitik 1913–1970* (Doctoral dissertation). Department of History, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Österlind, M., & Fahlén, J. (2015). Reconsidering the epistemology of the Swedish sports model through the lens of governmentality: Notes on the state-civil society relationship, government, power and social change. *Idrott, Historia & Samhälle: Svenska Idrottshistoriska Föreningens Årsskrift*, 2015, 148–170.
- Sage, G.H. (1999). Justice do it! The Nike transnational advocacy network: Organization, collective actions, and outcomes. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 16, 206–235. doi:10.1123/ssj.16.3.206
- Sam, M. (2003). What's the big idea? Reading the rhetoric of a national sport policy process. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 20, 189–213.
- Sam, M.P., & Scherer, J. (2008). Stand up and be counted. Numerical storylines in a stadium debate. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 31(1), 53–70.
- Sant, S.-L., & Mason, D. (2018). Rhetorical legitimation strategies and sport and entertainment facilities in smaller Canadian cities. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 19(2), 160–177. doi:10.1080/16184742.2018.1499789
- Scherer, J. (2016). Resisting the world-class city: Community opposition and the politics of a local arena development. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 33, 39–53. doi:10.1123/ssj.2015-0054
- Schmidt, V.A. (2008). Discursive institutionalism: The explanatory power of ideas and discourse. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, 303–326. doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060606.135342
- Seippel, Ø., Broch, T.B., Kristiansen, E., Skille, E., Wilhelmsen, T., Strandbu, Å., & Thorjussen, I.M. (2016). Political framing of sports: The mediated politicisation of Oslo's interest in bidding for the 2022 Winter Olympics. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 8(3), 439–453. doi:10.1080/19406940.2016.1182047
- Seippel, Ø., Dalen, H.B., Sandvik, M.R., & Solstad, G.M. (2018). From political sports to sports politics: On political mobilization of sports issues. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 10(4), 669–686. doi:10.1080/19406940.2018.1501404
- Skille, E.Å., & Säfvenbom, R. (2011). Sport policy in Norway. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 3(2), 289–299. doi:10.1080/19406940.2010.547867
- Snow, D.A., Benford, R.D., McCammon, H.J., Hewitt, L., & Fitzgerald, S. (2014). The emergence, development, and future of the framing perspective: 25+ years since "Frame Alignment." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 19(1), 23–45.
- Stenling, C. (2015). *The drive for change: Putting the means and ends of sport at stake in the organizing of voluntary sport* (Doctoral dissertation). Department of Education, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden.
- Stenling, C., & Sam, M. (2017). Tensions and contradictions in sport's quest for legitimacy as a political actor: The politics of Swedish public sport policy hearings. *International journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 9(4), 691–705.
- Stenling, C., & Sam, M. (2019). From 'passive custodian' to 'active advocate': Tracing the emergence and sport-internal transformative effects of sport policy advocacy. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 11(3), 447–463.
- Stone, D. (1997). *Policy paradox. The art of political decision making*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Suchman, M. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 571–610. doi:10.5465/amr.1995.9508080331
- Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review*, 51, 273–286. doi:10.2307/2095521
- Waardenburg, M., & van Bottenburg, M. (2013). Sport policy in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 5(3), 465–475. doi:10.1080/19406940.2013.796566
- Wheaton, B. (2007). Identity, politics, and the beach: Environmental activism in surfers against sewage. *Leisure Studies*, 26(3), 279–302. doi:10.1080/02614360601053533
- Wilson, B., (2007). New media, social movements, and global sport studies: A revolutionary moment and the sociology of sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 24, 457–477. doi:10.1123/ssj.24.4.457
- Zuo, J., & Benford, R.D. (1995). Mobilizing processes and the 1989 Chinese democracy movement. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 36(1), 131–156. doi:10.1111/j.1533-8525.1995.tb02324.x