Research Issues and Methodological Advances

- What keeps people engaged in the development of their talent over time?
- What are the life-span consequences of developing one’s talent?
- Use of mixed-methods in research-combining quantitative and qualitative methods.
- Development of the Scanlan Collaborative Interview Method (SCIM)-a methodology using interview data to develop, test, and expand any psychological theory.

The International Center for Talent Development (ICTD)

Mission
The International Center for Talent Development envisions a multidisciplinary approach for understanding talent, and for developing and encouraging talent at all levels, across a wide range of domains.

- Talent development includes considerations related to motivation and emotion, learning and the development of expertise, significant individuals in a person’s life (such as family members, mentors, and peers), and sociological, economic and cultural factors that influence a person’s life choices.
- Skill levels range from novice through expert, extending from youth sport participants through world-class athletes in sport, from beginning instrumental students through concert-hall performers in music, from school children studying science through members of the elite corps of astronauts in space exploration.
- Talent domains are diverse, encompassing the visual arts, business, dance, education, music, space exploration, sport, and writing, to name a few.

To fulfill its mission, the International Center for Talent Development produces seminal research; provides educational experiences for undergraduate, graduate, and post graduate students; and engages in outreach to disseminate findings and inform public policy.

Research Issues
While the Center scope incorporates a broader range of interests, my primary research focuses on two issues. What keeps people engaged in the development of their talent over time? What are the consequences of talent development?

Methodology Development
A major signature of the International Center is the use of mixed-methods research (combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies) and the development of new methodologies to facilitate this process. Accordingly, I have created the Scanlan Collaborative Interview Method (SCIM) and its accompanying analytic procedures. This is a methodological breakthrough in that SCIM provides a completely new way to use interview data for theory construction purposes. In so doing, it provides an alternative to the well-established Grounded Theory approach. Two versions have been developed and used for the projects presented below. Version 1 is a prospective SCIM to test and expand any psychological theory. It can also be used retrospectively with some minor modifications. Version 2 is a retrospective SCIM used for the earlier stages of theory development. These interviews have been integrated into the two lines of research presented below.
Lines of Research

What keeps people engaged in the development of their talent over time?

Our ongoing research on enjoyment/passion and commitment with youth and world-class athletes has focused on this issue. We define commitment as a psychological variable reflecting the desire and determination to persist in an endeavor over time. We are developing a Theory of Sport Commitment that, in the future, will be tested in other talent domains to assess how well it generalizes to diverse arenas.

The Project on Elite Athlete Commitment (PEAK), involved the development and use of SCIM Version 1 to test, expand, and then assess the external validity of the Theory of Sport Commitment. Combining this method with our prior quantitative survey data involving well over a 1,000 youth athletes, brings a strong mixed-methods approach to our research on commitment. We have collected three extensive and separate sets of interview data with New Zealand’s most elite athletes—a male and female amateur team and a male professional team. The data are presented as an integrated series of articles; the first three articles are published and the fourth is in preparation.

The next phase of theory development involves returning to quantitative methods and working on the Sport Commitment International Scale Development Project (SCISDP). My lab team and I incorporated what we learned through the PEAK interviews and prior survey research to create more sophisticated assessment tools to examine the predictors and consequences of commitment. Specifically, we developed an expanded and more refined commitment scale for adolescent athletes, and a similar but new scale for elite, world-class performers. In so doing, we employed state of the art techniques to make the scale items appropriate for international translation. For example, we used a method called de-centering that considers the linguistic and cultural nuances of each item with respect to English and other target languages. We were able to experiment with and employ this method because one of my recent Postdoctoral Fellows (Dr. Catarina Sousa) speaks Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, and English; and is very familiar with the Spanish and Portuguese cultures. Including this international aspect made the item development process even more difficult and laborious, but the outcomes in terms of scale translation and cross-cultural research are tremendous. As will be seen below, the international community is already interested in the SCISDP.

Under the direction of Dr. Graig Chow (Postdoctoral Fellow), we currently are in the process of data collection to test the new adolescent scale. We need to survey well over a 1,500 athletes (we have now completed data collection on 800 athletes) from various types of sports at their practice sites all over CA. We will use these data to also refine and shorten the elite athlete scale, and then begin data collection to specifically assess that instrument. The finalized English versions of the adolescent and elite scales will be sent to Dr. Sousa to test in Spain, Portugal, and Brazil (adapted to Brazilian Portuguese). Greece, Italy, and several other countries are waiting to be included in this process.

What are the consequences of talent development?

The (New Jersey) Project on Life-span Consequences of Adolescent Talent Development: The Role of Extracurricular Activities (Involves the development and use of SCIM Version 2).

There is considerable national interest on the consequences of activity participation and “how youth spend their time” to foster positive development and to counter the drug, pregnancy, and gang problems of “latch key” and at risk youth. To date, the consequences examined are typically short term (e.g., high school grades and graduation rates), mainly survey methods are
used, and the data are largely descriptive. In contrast, what we call the “New Jersey Project” uses SCIM Version 2 for theory development purposes and focuses on the consequences of talent development over the life-span. The project studies the influence of high school extracurricular activity participation on the life course of women who were in their fifties. Moreover, while we are interested in a wide range of extracurricular activities (e.g., music, drama, government, sport), our New Jersey sample was specifically selected because it represents a rare group of women who were able to participate in interscholastic, varsity sports at the high school level before Title IX. There were only 300,000 girls throughout the country who had this type of opportunity in the 1960s. Hence, this group is more representative of current adolescents than most of their cohorts at that time. This is key to the results generalizing to the youth of today. We have competed all interviewing (involving travel to eight different states) and data analysis, and the resulting manuscript is in preparation.

Selected Publications


Scanlan, T.K. (In press). Personal turning points on the road from laboratory experimentalist to mixed methodologist. Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise, and Health. (Invited article for special journal issue).

Scanlan, T.K., Russell, D.G., Scanlan, L.A., Klunchoo, T.J. (Ms. in progress). Conclusion to the Project on Elite Athlete Commitment (PEAK IV): An examination of the external validity across professional status, and newly identified constructs to expand the Sport Commitment Model.

Selected Invited Presentations


Scanlan, T.K. (1997, April). *Commitment to sport and beyond.* Distinguished Alumni Award address presented for the Kinesiology Centennial Lecture Series, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois.


*Presentations as the Australian Distinguished International Scholar in Sport Psychology, August 1999*
Scanlan, T.K. (1999, August). *An interview to capture athletes’ commitment*. Live interview demonstration with Olympic male bobsledder conducted at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.


Scanlan, T.K. (1999, August). *An interview to capture athletes’ commitment*. Live interview demonstration with pre-Olympic level male rower conducted at the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Australia.


Scanlan, T.K. (1999, August). *A new interview design to test and expand the Sport Commitment Model*. Lecture presented for the Australian Institute of Sport & University of Canberra, Canberra, Australia.


Scanlan, T.K. (1999, August). *A new interview design to test and expand the Sport Commitment Model.* Lecture presented at the University of Western Sydney, Sydney, Australia.

Scanlan, T.K. (1999, August). *An interview to capture athletes’ commitment.* Live interview demonstration with pre-Olympic level male runner conducted at the University of Western Sydney, Sydney, Australia.

**Invited Presentations (Cont.)**


Burton, D., Gould, D., Scanlan, T., and Williams, J. (2010, September). *Proposed Future Directions of AASP.* Presentation by the Future Directions Committee at the Association for Applied Sport Psychology, Providence, RI.