

Sports and Peace Building

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***Overview:** Cárdenas traces the history of sport for the purpose of building peace. He discusses this intersection at the individual, community, national, and international levels and uses Colombia as a case study to further illustrate a dynamic sport-for-peace movement. Cárdenas concludes with suggestions for the future of research on sport and peace building.*

The use of sports for peace-building purposes has gained unprecedented attention since the first decade of the twenty-first century. Identifying in sports a set of arguably unique characteristics that facilitate the advancement of development and peace work, a wide array of peace-promoting institutions, sports federations, civil society, transnational organizations, and governmental agencies have enthusiastically (and sometimes uncritically) advocated the benefits of sports as a vehicle for social transformation. In the developing world, a growing number of social interventions are aimed at fulfilling specific peace goals via sports, while at the same time, an upsurge of academic literature has examined the role, limitations, and opportunities of sports as a peace tool.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the role of sports in peace building both conceptually and practically. The peace theorist John Paul Lederach's definition of peace building is used in this chapter, understood here as "a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relations" (1997, 19). Peace building in this sense entails an institutional, collective, and individual transformation aimed at rebuilding long-term relations between conflicting sides, while addressing structural issues and creating opportunities for all members of society in order to guarantee justice and sustain peace.

This chapter is split into three sections. The first part puts forward a framework to identify the main areas of knowledge development of the study of sports, conflict resolution, and peace building, highlighting relevant academic work in this field. The second section introduces a case study on Colombia, where sports have gained wide recognition as a viable tool to promote reconciliation and peace in this

KEY CONCEPTS

Galtung's 3Rs approach to peace building
Lederach's web-making approach to peace building
Sport for peace in Colombia
Sports and social change
Sports, conflict resolution, and peace building
Sports for personal development

nation affected by division and war. The chapter concludes with final ideas on the role of sports in culture and peace building, along with some recommendations for future research.

MAIN AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT IN THE STUDY OF SPORTS, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, AND PEACE BUILDING

The focus of this section is to outline the main areas of knowledge development of the study of sports, conflict resolution, and peace building that emerge from three sources: (1) peace research; (2) the exploration of the role of sports as a tool for advancing peace at various levels, from the individual up through the community,

national, and international levels; and (3) case studies (such as geographical regions, themes, and organizations).

PEACE RESEARCH AND SPORTS

An important source of knowledge development in the study of sports and peace stems from the application of existing peace-building and conflict-resolution approaches to the sports arena. This is of critical importance given that, in spite of the upsurge in studies evaluating sports' role as an element of peace in divided societies, only a few of these investigations are grounded in peace-building theories, as John Sugden and Adrian Haasner point out (2009). The limited available research in this area has applied models of conflict transformation and peace building to the sports field, including Johan Galtung's 3Rs (reconstruction, reconciliation, resolution) approach to conflict transformation (see Figure 1), Lederach's (2005) web-making approach to peace building, and Lisa Schirch's (2005) use of rituals. In addition, the role of culture in peace building has provided an important framework for interpreting the potential of sports to serve as a vehicle for peace in societies experiencing division.

Identifying in popular cultural expressions such as music, arts, poetry, and sports a unifying factor and a point of commonality between peoples and cultures, peace work is being enhanced by the incorporation of these expressions into formalized political and informal grassroots processes of peace building. Peace theorists point out that building peace should not be an exclusive concern of political elites and military institutions (Woodhouse 2010), but rather, as expressed by Elise Boulding, Clóvis Brigagão, and Kevin Clements (1991), it must incorporate the voices of those at the margins of society and integrate innovative ways to understand, perceive, and tackle conflict. Along these lines, cultural expressions such as the arts and sports have emerged as tools to engage community members to "liberate their mind" and encourage their "imaginative power" in order to fruitfully deal with situations of conflict and foster peace

(Lederach 1997; Woodhouse 2010). In this framework, sports are not just physical activity regulated by norms and rules, but rather, they are understood as a wider cultural expression that may bring people together by serving as a common denominator between communities who can, in the best case, actively mobilize in the name of peace.

Introducing this definition of sports as a cultural expression and its place within peace-building work also requires recognizing that sports have in many instances been the source of violence and unrest (e.g., soccer hooliganism in Europe and Latin America) and have often ignited social frictions between communities in highly tense environments. This has been the case in Northern Ireland, a society divided by sectarian loyalties, where Gaelic games (on the one hand) and sports such as rugby and cricket (on the other) have served as mediums to consolidate pro-Nationalist and pro-British identities, respectively (Bairner 2001), hence furthering the divide between Catholics and Protestants. Furthermore, as stated by peace theorists Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall, sports can also “breed nationalistic and competitive sentiment and behavior” (2011, 352), which collides with the principles embedded in peace building and conflict resolution. Despite this, however, sports have the potential to fulfill a moderate peace-building function, as this chapter examines.

The revival of the Olympic truce, originally established in ancient Greece to stop violent confrontation and war during the celebration of the Olympic Games, provides an example and offers useful inspiration on the capacity of sports to symbolically and practically support and encourage initiatives in favor of peace, conflict resolution, and reconciliation. While it would be too idealistic to expect that violent conflicts and wars could end because of sports alone, the Olympic truce calls for a cessation of violence during the Olympic Games and for the mobilization of youth in the name of peace, while at the same time aiming at the creation of policy frameworks to address these needs—altogether, in Woodhouse’s view “strengthening the culture of peace philosophy” (2010, 494). Modern observances of the truce—including during the 2000 Sydney Games, where African leaders pledged to stop hostilities for two weeks (Burlison 2013)—exemplify the practical application of the truce and the potential of the Olympic ideal to support peace-building efforts.

Galtung’s 3Rs approach (see Figure 1) to peace building offers another useful framework to examine knowledge development on the role of sports in peace work. For Galtung, who is regarded as the founder of the discipline of peace and conflict studies, the holistic process of peace building incorporates three *Rs*, or key processes: (1) reconstruction of peoples and places after violence, (2) reconciliation of the parties in conflict, and (3) resolution of animosities (Galtung 1996). The first process, reconstruction, is in turn divided into four categories: rehabilitation, rebuilding, restructuration, and reculturation (1996).

Sports-based interventions can support rehabilitation and healing through psychosocial support and treatment. This has been the case in communities experiencing armed conflict—such as Liberia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone—where sports have been incorporated into social programs as well as refugee camps as a method to treat the physical and psychological wounds of victims of war. In rebuilding, construction and upgrading of physical structures damaged

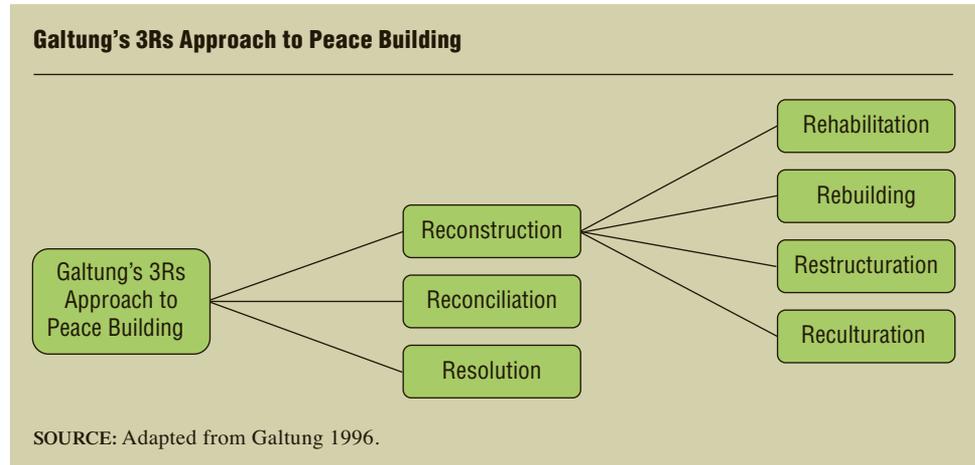


Figure 1. This diagram illustrates Johan Galtung's 3Rs approach to peace building, which incorporates three key processes: reconstruction of peoples and places after violence, reconciliation of the parties in conflict, and resolution of animosities. Reconstruction is then divided into four subcategories: rehabilitation, rebuilding, restructuring, and reculturation. GALE.

during conflict provides citizens with a sense of normalcy and security. In Afghanistan, for instance, as Jonathan Lea-Howarth (2006) reports, the national stadium, a former site of executions during the Taliban's rule, was rapidly repaired and reopened to the public after the American intervention in that country.

In restructuring, sports interventions can facilitate the building of relationships, fostering social inclusion and strengthening inter- and intracommunity ties (Kvalsund 2005). Sports programs can aid the process of reculturation through the establishment of sports tournaments and leagues based on accepted cultural regulations. In several African countries, such as Sierra Leone, soccer tournaments have been created featuring teams made up of players from different ethnic groups playing together, with the purpose of reducing intertribal conflict by fostering a sense of national identity as opposed to tribal rivalry. Though long-term research is needed in order to evaluate the impact of soccer competitions on perceptions of tribal and national identity in these cases (Lea-Howarth 2006), sports have facilitated a venue for the exploration of new relationships, norms, and cultural identities.

The process of reconciliation aims at (re)building positive relations between enemies who have formerly been both victims and perpetrators. Sports tournaments and festivals that integrate groups that have been in conflict can contribute to building a more positive environment by helping community members regain a sense of normalcy and security (Borsani 2009). This may take place, for instance, by using sports as a pedagogical tool to promote healing and intercultural understanding and by involving participants in talks, discussions, and trainings on peace education during or after games, as well as by fostering, via sports competitions, formal and informal relationships between antagonistic groups. Further,



Boys play football (soccer) in a village near the capital of Freetown, Sierra Leone, June 2013. Sports-based interventions can support rehabilitation and healing through psychosocial support and treatment. This has been the case in communities like Sierra Leone (West Africa), which experienced armed conflict during a lengthy Civil War (1991–2002). Sports here have been incorporated into social programs as well as refugee camps as a method to treat the physical and psychological wounds of victims of war. ROBERTONENCINI/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM.

research by Kristine Höglund and Ralph Sundberg (2008) concluded that sports have enabled reconciliation in South Africa at the national, community, and individual levels. At the national level, the 1992 Olympics (which was the first South African Olympic appearance since the 1960s, when international antiapartheid protest led to the nation's exclusion from international sports competitions) provided an opportunity for South Africa to showcase the progress made in tackling racial differences and promoting reconciliation by sending a team made up of black and white athletes. Reconciliation at the community level in South Africa has been nurtured through the strengthening of community ties that may take place during sports tournaments, whereas at the individual level, sports programs have provided life-skills training, hence creating a positive impact on the personal development of beneficiaries (Höglund and Sundberg 2008).

Sports training and competitions can benefit resolution as they provide a controlled environment where participants can be taught about resolving conflict. The program Football for Peace International, with operations in Northern Ireland, Israel, and Palestine, developed a values-based coaching methodology that incorporates the teaching of values into traditional soccer training sessions. This methodology uses conflict situations that arise during sports practices to introduce “teachable moments,” a pedagogical approach that teaches participants how to

apply values such as equity and inclusion, respect, trust, and responsibility in order to be able to resolve conflict in a constructive manner (Cárdenas 2014).

Lederach's (1997) web-making approach to peace building offers another practical way to examine the role of sports as a tool for peace and social transformation. The web-making process emphasizes the creation of strategic networks that are particularly relevant for community-based organizations and NGOs; in this model, middle-level leadership is placed in a privileged position that can connect the base of society (community leaders and developers) with top-level leadership (political decision-makers, military and religious leaders) in order to address particular social problems and promote positive transformation.

In the field of sports for peace, web-making among key stakeholders can potentially strengthen collaborative work between existing sports-based programs and initiatives and also increase awareness about the social role of sports among governmental agencies, policymakers, sports institutions, and community members. In his interpretation of the web-making process of peace building, Lea-Howarth (2006) points out that sports have been fundamental in forming social networks by providing a shared experience aimed at establishing and sustaining relationships. By linking sports clubs to a wider network formed by other teams, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and key individuals, relationships can be built with individuals and communities beyond the geographical areas where sports activities may take place. Moreover, Alexander Cárdenas (2015) found that the positive results achieved by a network of sports-based social programs in Colombia have expanded the government's perception of sports as a tool for national development while informing future policymaking on the role of sports within the postconflict setting of this nation.

Finally, Schirch (2005) has introduced the use of rituals as a way to transform relations among communities that may have been disrupted due to violent conflict. A ritual can take the form of a dance, a ceremony, a meal, or other communal activity, including games and sports. Blending peace-building approaches as proposed by Schirch, Galtung, and Lederach, sports sociologist John Sugden claims that the extent to which sports can contribute to peace building encompasses assisting people to “rehumanize each other through its ritual ceremonies and ethics of fair play and sportsmanship; rebuild relations in the organization and conduct of events and build web and relations at the sub-system level” (2010, 36).

SPORTS AND PEACE AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

At the individual level, evaluative research on the effectiveness of sports for personal development has provided important insight into the opportunities and limitations of sports as a conduit for social transformation and peace. Sports-based interventions can contribute to peace at the individual level by empowering participants as they acquire specific knowledge and develop crucial skills, which may boost their self-esteem and confidence—in a way, supporting the idea that “one cannot make peace with others if you are not at peace with yourself” (quoted in Höglund and Sundberg 2008, 813).

To test the hypothesis that “sport contributes to personal development and well-being in disadvantaged children and young people,” a four-year study was conducted analyzing the effectiveness and impact of eight organizations from Africa and India employing sports. The study concluded that sports programs incorporating skills-building training had an impact on the self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy of participants, who reported an increase in confidence, communication skills, and the ability to work in teams. This outcome was based partly on the benefits associated with socializing with peers and coaches, participating in sports and training activities, and meeting people with diverse points of view and perspectives. Notably, the scores of those participants with the lowest self-esteem evaluations at the beginning of the research increased significantly by the end. Further, this research found that sports proved to be an effective medium for the dissemination of information about key health-related issues, and it concluded that participants had significantly boosted their confidence by developing leadership skills. Nevertheless, the study also asserts that, because sport-for-development programs usually incorporate a wide range of nonsports activities (seminars, workshops, talks, and other forms of social relationships and practices), it may be challenging to isolate sports and measure its specific effects on the personal development of program beneficiaries (Coalter and Taylor 2010).

SPORTS AND PEACE AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

At the community level, sports may support processes of peace building by bridging relationships across economic and cultural divides within society, as well as by building a sense of shared identity among groups and communities that might otherwise have the propensity to treat each other with hostility and distrust (Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group 2008). Research examining the contribution of sports in the reestablishment of relations at the community level in highly volatile contexts has provided a wealth of information on this front.

One of the first studies delving into the use of sports for peace building and reconciliation at the community level was conducted by Sugden (1991). Bringing together a group of young soccer players from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds from Northern Ireland to the United States on a soccer tour in 1989, the Belfast United project used this sport to promote the interaction of youngsters from both communities in a society divided by sectarian conflict. The project proved to be successful in fostering a sense of tolerance and peaceful coexistence between youth from clashing communities, as well as in demystifying entrenched perceptions and beliefs toward members of the other group. Aware of the limitations and opportunities offered by sports as a peace-building tool in deeply divided societies, and reflecting on the outcomes of this intervention, Sugden arrived at the conclusion that “under carefully qualified conditions, sports and related forms of recreation can help in the process of reconciliation” (1991, 79). Confirming Sugden’s findings, more recent research on Northern Ireland established that sports have promoted peace by “providing a platform to encourage contact between youth and adults from clashing communities, with the hope that meaningful relations can be created and sustained across the divide” (Cárdenas 2016).

SPORTS AND PEACE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Sports and sports events have often been used as a channel to promote extreme nationalistic ideologies (and even violence)—for example, at the 1936 Olympic Games of Berlin, the hosting Nazi regime orchestrated the competition as a propaganda event to advance its views of racial superiority and Aryan supremacy. But in many other instances, sports and sportspeople have worked in a conflict-resolving manner, providing an alternative to violence and destructive conflict (Woodhouse 2010). Two such examples, one involving the use of sports in peacekeeping operations and one demonstrating the role of celebrity athletes as peace advocates, illustrate the place of sports in the promotion of peace at the national level.

Advancing peacekeeping through sports as promoted by the military in conflict zones—though still an underexplored area—has generated interest among scholars, including Richard Giulianotti and Gary Armstrong (2011), whose work elaborates on the benefits of conducting sports-based peacemaking with a special focus on societies undergoing postconflict recovery. Their research in Bosnia, Liberia, and the Balkans concluded that sport-for-peace interventions present the military with a fresh means to engage more actively with civilians, NGOs, former combatants, and other individuals and institutions in a way that supports peace and reconciliation at the national level in deeply divided societies. In Bosnia, sports were fundamental in “breaking the ice” between clashing sides, whereas in Liberia, sports have assisted in the resocialization of combatants and those affected by warfare. On this trend within the peacekeeping field, Giulianotti and Armstrong argue that “as the function of the military moves towards establishing a sustainable peace, and winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of citizens, it makes sense to explore sport’s potential contribution to meeting these objectives” (384).

In his investigation on the use of sports in peacekeeping operations in conflict zones including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ivory Coast, and Liberia, Woodhouse (2010) concludes that sports have proven to be instrumental in raising awareness among the general population on the multiple uses of sports and culture as conduits for peace, as well as in encouraging people to get involved in national crisis solving and conflict resolution through sports-related activities. Further development in this area of research is provided by Cárdenas and Lang (2018), who draw attention to the value of sports as a contributing factor to the success of peace support operations (PSOs) in transition countries. Identifying some of the challenges that modern PSOs may face, they introduce six key areas—positive encounters and trust-building; information; cross-cutting engagement; reconciliation; team building; construction; and rehabilitation—where sports can be valuable in supporting military peace missions to reach some of their primary goals.

The second example of the interplay between sports and peace at the national level involves the deeds of athletes themselves as role models (for better or worse) in peacemaking. In multiple cases, sport celebrities have used their fame and fortune in nonhumanitarian and even eccentric pursuits (Cárdenas 2012). Sometimes their actions (e.g., cheating to win, boastful displays of wealth, wasteful use of resources, aggressive behavior on and off the field) clash significantly with the

values embedded in humanitarian and peace-building efforts. However, in other exemplary cases, athletes have used their names and resources to support social causes and advocate for peace.

Didier Drogba, an international soccer player from Ivory Coast, exemplifies one prominent and well-documented case of a sports celebrity having an impact on a peace-building process in a war-torn country. Once acclaimed as a model of political stability and prosperity, his West African homeland has since 1999 faced an intense social crisis with political instability that resulted in the splitting of the country into two factions in 2002. Keen to contribute to a peaceful resolution of hostilities, Drogba made a public appearance pleading with combatants from both sides to lay down their arms following Ivory Coast's qualification for the 2006 World Cup in Germany (Sellström 2010).

In 2007, with the occasion of a qualifying game for the 2008 African Cup of Nations against Madagascar, Drogba supported the arrangement of a game in the then-rebel stronghold of Bouaké. The game ended with a score of 5–0 in favor of Ivory Coast and proved to be a stepping-stone to further peace and reconciliation initiatives between opposing sides. Drogba's efforts to consolidate a more peaceful Ivory Coast via soccer was at the time highlighted as a visible sign of hope and a momentous achievement in consolidating peace in this nation (Bombande and Takwa 2007). Although Drogba retired from international soccer in 2014 at the age of thirty-six, he remains a prominent figure in club soccer and continues to enthusiastically advocate for peace and reconciliation in highly divided societies. In a visit to Colombia in March 2018, the legendary African soccer player urged all sectors of Colombian society to support ongoing initiatives that are focused on promoting peace in the nation.

SPORTS AND PEACE AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Research on the intersection between sports and peace at the international level includes two areas of inquiry that are particularly worth mentioning. The first is concerned with the emergence of global civil society and the use of sports as a social intervention strategy by the nonprofit sector, whereas the second deals with the use of sports as a tool for international diplomacy.

The use of sports to bring about social change and peace has been endorsed by a variety of international actors, notably the United Nations, the International Olympic Committee, and numerous intergovernmental organizations, sports federations, and international development agencies. Working together with national stakeholders such as nongovernmental organizations, sports agencies, local governments, the private and educational institutions under a framework of intervention commonly referred to as SDP (sport for development and peace), these actors have become supportive of the idea that sports are indeed a valuable vehicle to address issues related to human justice and equality. The SDP sector is located within the framework of global civil society, which is commonly associated with the promotion of human justice by a wide array of groups operating across borders who fill a gap in supporting the development and welfare of underrepresented communities (Giulianotti 2011a).

Collaboration between transnational institutions, usually located in the Global North, and local national actors in the Global South, notably nongovernmental organizations, has accelerated since around the year 2000. On the rise of sports as a widespread social intervention strategy within the nonprofit sector, Sugden comments, “The use of sport in a wide variety of health and welfare as well as conflict-resolution and peace-building programs is one of the fastest growing practices in the voluntary and nongovernment development sectors” (ICSSPE 2011). It has always been difficult to produce an exact figure for the number of nonprofit organizations in the SDP field, but Peter Donnelly estimated that by 2007 approximately four hundred nonprofit organizations were in operation in this area. Furthermore, he reckoned that an average of ten more SDP NGOs were being created every month (cited in Giulianotti and Armstrong 2011).

Relying on the capacity of sports as a viable means to facilitate social development and promote peace in a variety of politically and socially tense environments, NGOs have been involved in sports-based social projects around the world. NGOs use sports and physical activity as a way to bring at-risk populations into sports-based programs to promote positive attitudes and behavioral patterns (Rookwood 2008) as well as to deliver a variety of social services that are oftentimes inaccessible to program beneficiaries due to corruption, poverty, and war (Girginov 2008). In the world of soccer, a significant partnership to advance the use of sports as a social development tool took place in 2005 when FIFA (the governing body of international soccer) began working with the Germany-based NGO Streetfootballworld to promote programs around the world aimed at using soccer for social purposes. Streetfootballworld operates projects in cooperation with more than one hundred local NGOs from across the world benefiting more than two million youth as of 2018 (Streetfootballworld 2018).

In addition to examining the particularities of sports-based social interventions as advanced by global civil society and the nonprofit sector, research in this area has also taken a critical stance in regard to both the overall use of sports as a social development and peace tool and the uneven power relations between actors of the Global North and the Global South involved in these endeavors. Jimoh Shehu (2010), for instance, warns us of the narrative used by some transnational actors that portray the intrinsic power of sports as a peace and social development facilitator, which may create unattainable expectations while suppressing social complexities and hegemonic interests. Furthermore, Shehu indicates that some sports-based programs may falsely convey the idea of development, an idea that is embedded and measured within neoliberal models of competitiveness and consumption. In the same vein, analysts have widely reported on the risk of using sports to advance development and support peace efforts, which brings actors from the developed world to the Global South as a conduit for neocolonial practices to be perpetuated (see Coalter 2010; Darnell 2007).

Sports diplomacy, which refers to the use of sports with the intention of affecting political and diplomatic relations, is an additional area of knowledge generation on the interplay between sports and peace at the international level. Sports events have frequently allowed a unique space for countries experiencing political tension to explore informal channels of communication as a possible

stepping-stone to normalize relations. For instance, Vladimir Stolyarov (2011) draws attention to the role of sports diplomacy in the early 1970s, when the United States restored diplomatic relations with China after decades in which the two nations had no official diplomatic contact; the thaw came partly thanks to a series of table tennis exchanges between the two nations.

CASE STUDIES ON SPORTS AND PEACE

The third and final area of analysis of the nexus between sports and peace takes the form of case studies. Marcy Schnitzer and colleagues (2012) argue that much of the research on sport for development and peace comprises case studies that formulate a wide array of variables for examination (such as specific sports, children, women, and so forth) and levels of analysis (such as local, regional, or national). In the best case, these studies contextualize the role of sports within the particular social, economic, and political dynamics of the geographical areas where these are conducted, while identifying lessons that may be applicable to other contexts and regions, therefore benefiting the SDP field by providing a more holistic view and understanding of the opportunities and limitations of sports in peace work.

Trends in research within case studies include the examination of both the role of sports as a vehicle to advance peace in war-torn regions and the benefits of using sports-based interventions to foster intercultural dialogue in multicultural conflict zones. Research by Anneke Van der Niet (2010) and Christopher Dyck (2011) on Sierra Leone and by Joel Rookwood and Clive Palmer (2011) on Liberia places stress on the advantages of using sports as a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration strategy, highlighting the ability of sports to assist former youth combatants in transitioning from military to civilian life. In research conducted among Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim populations of Sri Lanka, Nico Schuilenkorf (2010) concluded that sports events allowed people from diverse ethnic origins to develop interpersonal and intergroup contact, hence making a modest contribution to peace and reconciliation among these communities in conflict.

CASE STUDY ON COLOMBIA

One pertinent case study for analyzing the use of sports as a means to contribute to peace-building efforts is that of Colombia, a country affected by armed conflict that began in the 1960s and lasted for more than fifty years. In the late 1990s, a dynamic sport-for-peace movement began using sports to advance peace building in Colombia. Several decades of devastating war between government forces, guerrillas, and paramilitary groups claimed 220,000 lives and displaced more than 5 million people (National Center for Historical Memory 2013), but this longest-lasting conflict in the Western Hemisphere mostly came to an end with the signing of a peace deal between the FARC guerrilla and the Colombian government in 2016.

Given the upsurge of sport-for-peace activity in this country, Cárdenas (2015) looked into the Colombian case with the aim of (1) identifying the contributions that

sports have made to advancing peace within the conflict context of Colombia, (2) pinpointing factors that can facilitate or hinder peace building through sports, (3) exploring the reflections of SDP practitioners, and (4) extracting lessons that can guide future research and inform global SDP. The research was conducted with local and international NGOs, the national government, sports federations, the private sector, international organizations, and SDP practitioners, all of which incorporate recreational sports as a pillar of their social and peace-building interventions.

THE ROLE OF SPORTS WITHIN THE CONFLICT CONTEXT

The study found that sports-based peace-building programs and interventions have made a modest yet valuable contribution to building peace in Colombia, specifically by welcoming those at the margins of society into a space where vulnerable populations can play safely, learn new skills, and (to some extent) develop a life plan. Moreover, sports were also found to be useful in (1) teaching children and youth skills that would allow them to make proper decisions if (or when) they face recruitment by illegal armed forces (or criminal networks), (2) creating job and related economic opportunities, (3) fostering peaceful coexistence and tackling urban violence, and (4) promoting social inclusion.

The perceived role of sports in peace work as presented above is strongly related to the conflict dynamics in Colombia, a struggle that is rooted in a long history of disparity and unequal access to resources. Escaping violence and poverty, internally displaced migrants have been forced to relocate in urban centers in search of opportunities. Places like Ciudad Bolívar (a locality in the capital city of Bogotá) and Soacha (a municipality adjacent to Bogotá) host thousands of displaced migrants. In impoverished areas such as these, where the presence of the state is relatively weak, young people are exposed to the influence of criminal networks and recruitment by illegal armed actors such as guerilla and paramilitary groups. In rural areas where the influence of guerillas and paramilitaries has even been stronger, youth who lack education and struggle to find jobs have joined these groups either due to pressure and threats or willingly, in order to escape poverty. Both Ciudad Bolívar and Soacha have experienced an intensification of peace-through-sports interventions intended to provide a safe environment that helps limit the illegal recruitment of children and youth while also helping them develop life skills through sports (e.g., conflict resolution or occupational skills training) and teaching them important information (e.g., related to drug abuse and health issues); in this way, they acquire additional competencies and can try to develop a life plan for themselves.

OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF USING SPORTS IN PEACE WORK

A number of factors facilitate peace work via sports in Colombia: Colombia has become a regional sports powerhouse where sports are a widely popular activity that generates attention across all sectors of society. Furthermore, sports do not have major political or identity connotations in Colombia (as opposed to the situation, for instance, in Northern Ireland, where certain sports possess strong community associations). At the same time, acknowledgment by the national government regarding the social role of sports has led to an intensification of

peace-through-sports activity, therefore benefiting existing programs and interventions and potentially accelerating the development of public policy on this front.

Nevertheless, the absence of proper sports venues and a lack of awareness about the peace-building and development dimension of sports among key stakeholders (predominantly the private sector, educational institutions, and sports agencies) may affect the development of this sector. Furthermore, the exaggerated confidence and belief in the “power of sport” to solve social problems among some supporters of SDP was found to affect the credibility of peace-through-sports in various ways—for example, by generating unrealistically high expectations among beneficiaries, supporters, and the general public on the role of sports as a social tool.

THE ROLE OF SDP PRACTITIONERS

The Colombia study found that the majority of SDP practitioners and officials showed active engagement with program beneficiaries and some degree of critical reflection regarding their own role and practices, particularly with respect to their function as drivers of community change. Data gathered through interviews and observations suggested that SDP officials in Colombia participating in this study perceived themselves as peacemakers, while the vast majority of them supported the idea that their interventions have a limited yet positive direct impact on the creation of a culture of peace in the nation.

These reflections point to the notion that these practitioners are not only highly aware of the connections between their work and the conflict context of Colombia but also that they possess the skills and training to deliver their peace work via sports. In some instances, SDP practitioners have developed valuable peace-building skills by being in close contact with communities affected by violence and conflict and by adapting sports to address some of those communities’ needs. This has been the case with the methodology Football for Peace, created in the streets of Medellín in the mid-1990s to tackle urban violence and promote social inclusion. This model introduced a series of innovative additions to traditional soccer games: for example, participants set the rules of the game, there are no referees but mediators, and teams are mixed teams. This approach and its multiple variations have been widely implemented by NGOs in Colombia with practitioners and coaches who are equipped with the training and focus to partially guide their peace work.

Lederach (1997) writes that networking among NGOs is crucial as these middle-level actors occupy a strategic position for connecting the base of society with top-level leadership in order to tackle particular social problems and promote positive change. In Colombia, SDP practitioners and NGOs created an SDP network called Red Gol y Paz (Goal and Peace Network, formerly called Red Fútbol y Paz), which has been fundamental in raising awareness about the benefits of using sports as a peace tool; in fostering unprecedented collaborative work across sectors (including health, education, security, and civil society) around the role of sports in development and peace; and in influencing the perception of sports as a tool for national development among governmental agencies.

LESSONS FROM PEACE BUILDING AND SPORTS IN COLOMBIA

A number of lessons from the Colombia case study can inform other societies where sport-for-peace activity takes place.

First, the formation of strategic webs of cooperation among SDP officials may strengthen peace building via sports: working under a common framework and developing a shared vision is essential. In the best case, strong advocacy among programs and implementers, in addition to evaluative research on sport-for-peace programs, can lead to greater support regarding sports for peace among political decision-makers, donors, and advocates.

Second, some SDP practitioners and sports coaches have developed useful peace-building skills through extensive work with underserved communities. These people represent a potential resource for advancing peace building in Colombia; consequently, expanding their competencies via formal training in the application of peace-building and conflict-resolution approaches to the sports arena could benefit peace work in this country.

Third, notwithstanding the role that sports have played in fostering a peace culture in Colombia, there is no indication that sports by themselves could address structural violence or the causes of the conflict. Therefore, sports should not be conceived as an integral peace-building strategy. Supporters, program beneficiaries, and implementers should be aware of the limitations of sports in peace work, and be reasonable and realistic as to the expected outcomes of interventions.

Finally, as Colombia enters its postconflict era, the social role of sports should acquire a renewed dimension with sports-based interventions framed within the postconflict context. Sports programs can be redesigned to meet the challenges that this particular phase implies—in particular, they need to be assisting combatants in reintegrating into civilian life by providing psychosocial and physical recovery. This reframing will not only infuse SDP programs with a new sense of purpose but also generate greater awareness of the role of sports in the building of a postconflict nation. Additionally, the international community's continued commitment is required in postconflict Colombia—in particular, by strengthening international cooperation schemes via sports and sports diplomacy; by extending technical support to local NGOs and governmental agencies; and by facilitating the exchange of experiences and knowledge between Colombia and the global sport-for-development sector.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the role of sports in peace building, presenting a framework to identify major areas of knowledge development and relevant academic work in this emerging field. Research highlighted here has shone light on some of the opportunities and limitations offered by sports to advance peace work. Because of their global appeal and popularity, sports can serve as a common denominator between cultures and provide a space to facilitate contact between clashing communities and groups. Sports are, by definition, an outstanding communication platform that can generate unparalleled enthusiasm

and potentially mobilize large numbers of people to act in favor of peace. In social interventions, sports serve a social inclusion and educational function as they provide a channel through which underserved beneficiaries can learn about constructive values, positive attitudes, and useful skills. Although sports have proved valuable in supporting peace efforts in a variety of contexts, sports' role in peace work is limited, and they should therefore not be conceived as a comprehensive peace-building strategy. In addition, because sports have also been an outlet for the expression of violence and harmful ideologies, it is important not to frame the function and role of sports in culture in terms of binary opposites (e.g., sports as essentially positive versus sports as intrinsically negative). Rather, sports should be thought of as a neutral vehicle that allows the promotion of specific practices, values, and ideals which can support the advancement of wider social processes—as has been the case with peace building and conflict resolution.

Research into sports and peace building is a relatively new field of endeavor and significant progress still needs to be made. This chapter has presented various peace-building and conflict-resolution approaches—for example, Galtung's 3Rs approach; the role of culture in peace building; web-making; the use of rituals—through which to examine the suitability of sports in processes of peace building. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and although they are useful as frameworks for analysis, the application of these approaches may be restricted to specific populations (e.g., NGOs and practitioners in the case of web-making) and phases within peace-building processes and cycles (e.g., the 3Rs approach conceivably more appropriate to interpret the place of sports in a postconflict setting as opposed to during confrontation). As a consequence, future studies should incorporate additional peace-building and conflict-resolution theories that allow for a broader understanding of the characteristics, attributes, and mechanisms embedded in sports that can facilitate peace work in situations that the approaches presented here may not be able to fully address.

Research may greatly benefit the sport-for-peace field by engaging more actively with rigorous evaluations on the impact of sports-based peace interventions, as well as by examining the long-term benefits of sports programs on processes of peace building in divided societies by means of longitudinal work. Finally, further studies should also aim at disseminating lessons and best practices on sport for peace that can inform not only the academic community but also peace-promoting institutions, implementers, and practitioners, and such studies should get more actively focused on regions where sport-for-peace activity continues to be underreported (e.g., Asia and Latin America).

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