The Influence of a Sport-for-Peace Event on Prejudice and Change Agent Self-Efficacy

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The purpose of this research project was to examine the impact of participating in a sport-for-peace event and one’s social dominance orientation on prejudice and change agent self-efficacy. In Study 1, participants \((n = 136)\) completed questionnaires both before and following their participation in a sport-for-peace event. The event was designed to ensure both high levels of and quality intergroup contact, with interactions confirmed through a manipulation check. Results from the doubly repeated measures analysis of variance indicate a significant decrease in prejudice and a significant increase in change agent self-efficacy. Social dominance orientation did not influence the nature of these changes. In Study 2, the authors conducted focus group interviews with 27 participants to better understand how the event impacted prejudice and change agent self-efficacy. Results indicate that the team-based sport environment and social opportunities were instrumental in prejudice reduction while the educational platform was important for increasing change agent self-efficacy.

Keywords: sport for development, intergroup relations, social change, sport events

Prejudice and discrimination are present in many areas of sport. This is seen, for instance, among coaches, where women, sexual minorities, and racial minorities are all underrepresented in leadership positions (see Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Zgonc, 2010), frequently report negative work experiences (Kamphoff, Armentrout, & Driska, 2010; Krane & Barber, 2005), and have limited opportunities for upward mobility (Norman, 2010; Sibson, 2010). A similar pattern exists among other professionals working in sport, including those who are overweight (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007) or who have disabilities (Heckman, 2007). Prejudice is also directed toward athletes and physical activity participants from underrepresented groups. As a result, they report limited access to be physically active (Lox, Martin Ginis, & Petruzzello, 2010), encounter hostile exercise and team environments (Adair, 2011; Singer, 2008; Thomas & Smith, 2009), and are less likely to persist in sport (Lox et al., 2010; Zipp, 2011). The pervasiveness of prejudice and discrimination has led some scholars to suggest that such practices are institutionalized within sport (Anderson, 2010; Cunningham, 2008). In other words, sport, in many ways, can be a setting where social injustices and disparities are reproduced and enforced over time.

While the aforementioned literature can paint a dismal picture of sport, there is also evidence that, under some circumstances, the opposite can occur. Sport can be a place where boundaries and stereotypes are overcome and persons from different backgrounds and cultures actually draw nearer to one another (Lyras, 2007, 2012a; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). Therein rests the promise of sport-for-development (SFD) activities, or “the use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youths, and adults, the social
inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution” (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011, p. 311). Within this definition, the concept of development is quite broad, addressing the potential of sport to foster economic and social development, as well as address health outcomes and peace-building and conflict-resolution efforts. Illustrative of SFD’s potential benefits in fostering greater inclusion, Sherry (2010) illuminated how, for people experiencing homelessness, participation in the Homeless World Cup street soccer tournament increased their social capital through enhancements in self-esteem and sense of belonging. In a similar way, Spaaij (2009) observed that disadvantaged youth’s participation in the Sport Steward Program in the Netherlands served to increase their cultural, social, and economic capital. SFD projects also reach other stakeholders, such as by enhancing volunteers’ awareness and understanding of social justice, as well as their willingness to actively advocate for such causes (Welty Peachey, Cohen, Borland, & Lyras, 2013).

Within the broader SFD platform, sport can be used as a vehicle to address issues related to intergroup acceptance, conflict resolution, and cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration (Lyras, 2007; Lyras, 2012a, 2012b; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011; Sugden, 2008). It is these initiatives that are collectively labeled sport-for-peace (SFP) programs (Lyras, 2007; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). For instance, Sugden’s (2008) work points to benefits among athletes, as Arab and Jewish children developed cross-cultural friendships in large part because of their participation in the Football for Peace project. Lyras (2007, 2012a, 2012b, 2014), through his research in Cyprus and other regions of conflict, provided theoretical foundations and program recommendations on how SFP interventions can be influential in fostering cross-cultural friendship, understanding, and change agent self-efficacy.

Collectively, this literature suggests SFP initiatives have the potential to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and contribute to peace-building efforts, although this emerging field remains undertheorized (Schnitzer, Stephenson, Zanotti, & Strivachtis, 2013). It is worth noting, however, that sport interventions should be packaged within a broader educational and cultural platform to have optimal effect (Binder, 2001; Coalter, 2007, 2010; Lyras, 2012a; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). It is not just sport that achieves positive outcomes, for according to the sport-plus model, sport is one pillar in an intervention and should be supplemented with other resources and social supports (Coalter, 2010; Lyras, 2007). In the sport-plus model, “sports are adapted and often augmented with parallel programs in order to maximize their potential to achieve developmental objectives” (Coalter, 2010, p. 1375). Thus, many SFP organizations and events, following the lines of Olympic Education (Binder, 2001), also include educational and cultural activities in their program repertoire to complement and enhance the sport platform (Lyras, 2014; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). For instance, with the Doves Olympic Movement project in Cyprus, in addition to an integrated sport platform, participants took part in educational workshops and discussed salient local and global issues, developed civic engagement action plans to work for change in their home communities, and took part in global citizenship educational programs and cultural festivities such as concerts and performing arts (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). It is this constellation of programming, more so than any individual element, that positively affects stereotype reduction, change agent self-efficacy, cultural understanding, social perspective taking, and active citizenship (Lyras, 2014).

In this study, we sought to build from this base to examine how such activities might influence intergroup relations, subsequent athlete activism, and the underlying mechanisms for such changes at a global SFP event employing a sport-plus model (Coalter, 2010, Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). Specifically, we drew from the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) and SFD theory (Lyras, 2007, 2012a, 2012b; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011) to examine how participation in SFP activities impacts participants’ prejudice and self-efficacy in serving as change agents over time. Both outcomes are important factors facilitating people’s involvement in social justice and change-focused activities (Cunningham & Sartore, 2010; Pearlman, Camberg, Wallace, Symons, & Finison, 2002) and their motivation to work at peace-building efforts (Lyras, 2012a; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). In pursuing this research agenda, we contribute to the extant SFP literature by engaging in a mixed methods analysis examining change over the course of one SFP event. We also considered the influence of a moderator—social dominance orientation—and as such, answer Pettigrew’s (2008) call for more attention to the processes facilitating prejudice reduction. In the following space, we provide an overview of the theoretical framework and present specific hypotheses.

Theoretical Framework

Contact and Prejudice

As Lyras and Welty Peachey (2011) noted, one key outcome of SFP activities is improved intergroup relations. The foundation of successful sport for social change and peace-building initiatives should cultivate human development frameworks and intergroup contact conditions before, during, and after implementing the programs (Lyras 2012a, 2012b, 2014). The social categorization framework (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) informs our understanding of how this might occur. From this perspective, people categorize themselves and others into social groups using a variety of indicators, such as demographics, beliefs, or other group memberships. Stemming from a host of mechanisms, in-group members, or those people similar to the self, are generally viewed positively and trusted, while out-group members, or people who differ from the self, are not afforded these sentiments. As a result,
intergroup bias can exist, whereby people express more positive attitudes toward in-group members than they do toward out-group members. As an example, a Jewish athlete might consider other Jewish athletes as in-group members and Arab athletes as out-group members, with the potential for intergroup bias following.

While there are a number of strategies to reduce intergroup bias (for a review, see Paluck & Green, 2009), research suggests the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) is a particularly effective method. From this approach, personal interactions among in-group and out-group members should result in reduced intergroup bias. Subsequent research from Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) shows that bias is reduced because contact (a) allows for people to learn more about the out-group, (b) reduces their anxiety when around out-group members, and (c) serves to enhance their empathy and perspective taking toward the out-group. Note, too, that these are also important elements of facilitating peace-building activities through sport-plus programs (Lyras, 2012a, 2012b; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). There is impressive evidence to support the benefits of contact. Pettigrew and Tropp’s (2006) meta-analysis of 515 studies showed that contact holds a reliable, negative association with prejudice toward out-group members. Their analyses also demonstrated the benefits of intergroup contact even absent the conditions of contact Allport specified (i.e., institutional support, possible intimate contact, equal status, and cooperation). Though comparatively limited, cross-sectional research in sport provides similar findings (Cunningham, Bopp, & Sagas, 2010; Cunningham & Melton, 2012, 2013). In addition, to facilitate reconciliation and peace-building, relationships must begin with an encounter, and these relationships should be forward looking, build trust, and enhance sustainable, consistent interconnections between various parties (Lederach, 1997). Contact can thus provide this encounter and establish the foundation for sustainable relationships between disparate individuals (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011).

While prejudice and discrimination are institutionalized in many areas of sport (Anderson, 2010; Cunningham, 2008), some have suggested that sport is still an arena that could be important in prejudice reduction for athletes in particular, as it is perceived to be a “sociological space where athletes of different races are freed from the constraints of racial conflict and division” (Brown et al., 2003, p. 162). In fact, athletes highly identified with sport may be “raceless” (Fordham, 1988) because their connectedness to a racial or ethnic group may diminish when they engage in organized and integrated team sports (Brown et al., 2003). Sport teams can be highly goal oriented, and this goal orientation, where individuals compete and interact together in pursuit of winning, can lead to the reduction of racial distinctiveness and the downplaying of racial division (Brown et al., 2003; Jefferson, 1998). In addition, the team aspect of sport may socialize individuals to see others as either teammates or opponents rather than as people who may be different than themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, or culture (Carron, 1982). Teams may become the in-group (Brown et al., 2003), blurring other lines of identity. These aspects of pursuit of common goals and social inclusiveness can be facilitating factors for prejudice reduction (Pettigrew, 1998). Thus, integrated team sports could be an intervention to reduce prejudice (Brown et al., 2003; Lyras, 2007).

SFP programs, such as the one examined here, frequently allow for these important interactions to take place through sport, educational, cultural, and social activities (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011), thereby making prejudice reduction possible. For instance, the program in Sugden’s (2008) analysis allowed for Arab and Jewish youth to play soccer with one another, thereby engaging in the intergroup contact necessary for better cross-cultural relationships. It must be noted, however, that the long-term efficacy of such programs in fostering prejudice reduction or other outcomes remains in question. Within the context of the current study, program organizers also sought to capitalize on the benefits of intergroup contact. Specifically, the event did not employ the nation-versus-nation competition format that is the norm for most international sporting events; rather, participants from different countries and cultures played on the same team or took part in the same fine arts activity group. In addition, organizers strategically placed individuals from countries and cultures historically experiencing conflict on the same teams or in the same activity groups. Finally, participants stayed in dorm rooms with individuals from other countries, and numerous social events were planned to encourage cross-cultural interaction. Given this approach and the known benefits of intergroup contact, we hypothesized as follows:

**Hypothesis 1:** Participants’ postevent prejudice will be significantly less than their pre-event prejudice.

### Change Agent Self-Efficacy

A second, related outcome of many SFP activities is to empower participants to take more active stances in creating social change at the local level and to engage in peace-building activities (Lyras, 2012a; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). Change agents, sometimes referred to as champions (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002), are important because they actively support transformation, are willing to make personal sacrifices to do so, and work to persuade others as to the worth of the change efforts. Participants’ belief that they possess the competencies and skills to be effective change agents represents a key element of engaging in such advocacy and peace-building efforts (Lyras, 2012a; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011; Pearlman et al., 2002). Indeed, this represents a central tenet of social cognitive theory and the concept of self-efficacy, or “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Illustrative of these effects, Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam, and Laub (2009) observed that self-efficacy was a key element in feelings of empowerment of leaders of high school
gay–straight alliances. Berg, Coman, and Schensul (2009) observed similar effects in their intervention study aimed at increasing self-efficacy and empowerment among urban youth. Recognizing the importance of self-efficacy in engaging in subsequent behaviors (Bandura, 1986), we focused on change agent self-efficacy, or the participants’ judgments that they have the ability to effectively execute the actions required to be change agents (Lyras, 2007).

From a social cognitive theory perspective, social persuasion represents one effective way of engendering greater self-efficacy to perform a task (Bandura, 1986). For instance, leaders will frequently persuade sport and exercise participants that they have the ability and skills necessary to complete different tasks (Lox et al., 2010). Consistent with this literature, organizers of the current SFP program sought to influence the participants’ change agent self-efficacy by having them engage in a broad set of programmed activities. Following a sport-plus model (Coalter, 2010), in addition to participating in formal athletic events and consistent with the tenets of Olympic education (Binder, 2001) and SFD theory (Lyras, 2007, 2012a, 2012b; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011), participants engaged in various small-group discussions and attended seminars. Keynote speakers also highlighted the importance of the athletes’ being active in their home communities and advocating for social justice. Speakers and event organizers worked with participants to develop action plans for change centered upon a particular issue and/or peace-building initiatives, which they were to take back to their home communities and use as a guide for engaging with local organizations, programs, and leaders. Enhanced self-efficacy and empowerment to work as change agents could translate into engagement in peace-building efforts back home over time, in support of the mission of a SFP event (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). In addition, it is not sport in and of itself that influences change agent self-efficacy but rather the broader set of educational and cultural activities that supplement the sport activity (Binder, 2001; Coalter, 2007, 2010; Lyras, 2012a; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). Given this approach, we hypothesized as follows:

**Hypothesis 2**: Participants’ postevent change agent self-efficacy will be significantly higher than their pre-event change agent self-efficacy.

### Social Dominance Orientation

In addition to examining the role of contact in reducing prejudice and increasing change agent self-efficacy, we were also interested in investigating the potential moderating effects of social dominance orientation. Moderators provide indications of when and under what conditions phenomena occur and, as such, have the potential to advance theoretical understandings (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). This is certainly the case when it comes to contact hypothesis scholarship, where understanding when and how the benefits of contact materialize represents “two prominent and debated issues” (Binder et al., 2009, p. 845; see also Pettigrew, 2008).

Social dominance orientation refers to the “degree to which individuals desire and support group-based hierarchy and the domination of ‘inferior’ groups by ‘superior’ groups” (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 48). This psychological construct represents a key component of Sidanius and Pratto’s social dominance theory—a framework focusing on social hierarchies, power, and subjugation, and the manner in which these elements interact to produce and reproduce power differences and discrimination within various social contexts. People with a high social dominance orientation prefer to maintain current social structures and generally do not advocate for social change or justice. Illustrative of these patterns, Danso, Sedlovskaya, and Suanda (2007) observed that social dominance orientation was predictive of people’s support, or lack thereof, for social inequalities. Other researchers have observed a significant association between social dominance orientation and women’s rights; equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons; and social justice initiatives (Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Whitley & Lee, 2000).

Such an orientation might also influence people’s attitudes toward out-group members when participating in sport. Agyemang and DeLorme (2010) provided similar arguments in their theoretical paper, suggesting that people’s desire to maintain social hierarchies helped explain the underrepresentation of African Americans in coaching and leadership positions. Melton and Cunningham’s (2012) work also sheds light on these dynamics. Participants in their study were generally attracted to organizations with inclusive policies; however, people with a high social dominance orientation were actually more attracted to workplaces with noninclusive policies in place. Collectively, this literature suggests that one’s social dominance orientation might influence the efficacy of initiatives aimed at improving intergroup relations, such as SFP events. As a result, one might also be less receptive to interacting with dissimilar others, or the effects of those interactions might not result in the subsequent anxiety reduction seen among others. In addition, one might not be interested in or care about effecting change. Thus, we hypothesized as follows:

**Hypothesis 3**: The reduction in prejudice (from pre-event to postevent) will be moderated by participant social dominance orientation, such that the reduction will be less for those with a high social dominance orientation.

**Hypothesis 4**: The increase in change agent self-efficacy (from pre-event to postevent) will be moderated by social dominance orientation, such that the increase will be less for those with a high social dominance orientation.

In summary, we predict that participation in the SFP event will serve to reduce prejudice (H1) and increase
change agent self-efficacy (H2). We further expect these relationships to be moderated by participant social dominance orientation (H3 and H4, respectively). An illustrative summary is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 — Summary of conceptual relationships and hypotheses.

Study Overview and Research Context

In this article, we report on two studies designed to address these issues. As described in the following section, Study 1 was quantitative in nature and was designed to specifically test Hypotheses 1–4. As a way of further unpacking the findings, we also report on data collected from focus group interviews (Study 2).

The 2011 World Scholar-Athlete Games (WSAG), a 10-day SFP event held in Hartford, Connecticut, employing a sport-plus model, served as the data collection site for both studies. The event is designed to bring together young people from around the world to promote understanding, peace, and social change. Held every 4 or 5 years since 1993, the 2011 WSAG attracted 525 participants, ages 14–20, from 40 countries. To participate in the WSAG, the youth had to be nominated by an educator or coach and meet several criteria: (a) be academically gifted (such as honor roll status); (b) be talented in a specific sport or fine arts activity (i.e., all-conference or all-state status; awards of excellence); (c) demonstrate leadership ability in school or the community; and (d) be engaged in community service activities. At the event, the young people took part in a wide range of sports, fine arts, educational, cultural, and social activities. The sport offerings included baseball, basketball, fencing, field hockey, golf, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track and field, and volleyball, while the fine arts programming consisted of choir, creative writing, dance, digital photography, symphony, theater, and the visual arts. Within the sport platform, participants played only one sport throughout the WSAG and learned skills as well as took part in competitive tournaments. Coaches also led both formal and informal team-building activities with their teams or sports. Fine arts participants worked independently on projects but also worked together in groups or in one large group on culminating projects, and instructors guided formal and informal group bonding activities. The WSAG provided direction to the coaches/instructors for the team-building and bonding activities so that sport and fine arts participants experienced the same activities in this regard. Aside from engaging in their focal activity (i.e., a sport or fine arts offering), all WSAG participants received the exact same programming. They attended keynote speeches from international experts on salient topics of worldwide concern (e.g., global environment, human rights, and ethics and sportsmanship), took part in smaller workshops and seminars, participated in small-group break-out sessions to discuss these issues and develop action plans facilitated by adult volunteers, and engaged in cultural and social activities (e.g., drum circles, learning nontraditional sports such as Gaelic football, concerts, dances, talent shows). The social change action plans developed by participants were supposed to center upon engaging in small-scale, community-based projects back home designed to benefit the local community and contribute to peace-building and cross-cultural understanding.

As mentioned previously, one of the distinguishing features of the WSAG is that the young people do not take part in nation-versus-nation competition, which is typically the norm for most international sporting events. Instead, organizers formed mixed-nation teams and fine arts activity groups, strategically placing young people from areas of the world in conflict on the same team or in the same fine arts activity group. For example, young
people from Ireland and the Republic of Ireland might be placed on the same basketball team, or Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the same writing group. The purpose here is to use the team-based format as a vehicle to work at prejudice and stereotype reduction and as a mediator for conflict resolution. However, organizers gave little thought to placing U.S. participants from different social classes in the same groups—the focus appeared to be entirely on mixing countries and cultures.

Study 1

Method

Participants. Participants included 136 youth who participated in the 2011 WSAG. The sample included 86 females (63.7%) and 49 males (36.2%), with one person not providing the information. The mean age was 16.50 years (SD = 1.20), with a range from 14 to 20 years of age. Most of the participants (n = 100, 74.1%) were from the United States, while 35 (25.9%) were from outside the United States, and one person did not provide the country of origin. International participants in the study represented Ireland (10), Sri-Lanka (5), Canada (4), Australia (2), Thailand (2), New Zealand (2), and one participant from each of the following countries: Albania, Argentina, Bolivia, Cape Verde, China, Dominican Republic, Georgia, Guatemala, Kosovo, and Peru.

Measures. Participants responded to questionnaires in which they provided their demographic information (gender, age, country of origin) and responded to items measuring their social dominance orientation, intergroup contact, prejudice, and change agent self-efficacy. For the multi-item measures, we took the item mean to represent that variable. Before we distributed the questionnaire, we asked a panel of experts (n = 3) to review the items for evidence of content validity. While the panel members offered suggestions for minor revisions, the general theme remained the same.

We measured social dominance orientation with the eight-item version of Sidanius and Pratto’s (1999) scale (see also Weber & Federico, 2007, who also used an eight-item version). Sample items include “I think it is probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom” and “I think equality should be our ideal” (reverse scored). A 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) anchored the items. The reliability (α = .79) was acceptable.

We used Binder et al.’s (2009) scale to measure prejudice. The stem read, “in general, what are your feelings toward people from different cultures?” Sample items include “do you feel irritated by them?” and “do you admire them?” (reverse scored). A 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much) anchored each item. The reliability at Time 1 (α = .82) and Time 2 (α = .81) was acceptable.

We measured change agent self-efficacy with seven items developed for the study and based upon the work of Lyras (2007, 2012a, 2014) and other extant literature (Bandura, 1986), which were then reviewed by SFD practitioners for face validity evidence. The items included “I believe I can serve as an agent of positive change in my community,” “I believe I can make a positive difference in my community,” “I believe I can help people from other countries/cultures solve their problems,” “I believe I can positively influence people in my community regarding negative perceptions of people from other countries/cultures,” “I believe I can live as an active citizen,” “I believe I can influence decision makers on issues affecting my community,” and “I believe I can influence decision makers on issues affecting my country.” The reliability at Time 1 (α = .93) and Time 2 (α = .92) was acceptable.

We included several items to assess the intergroup contact that took place during the event. Participants responded to items measuring both quantitative contact, or the amount of intergroup contact they experienced, and qualitative contact, or the nature of that contact (Islam & Hewstone, 1993). Drawing from Islam and Hewstone (1993), we measured quantitative contact with the following item: “how much contact did you have with people from different cultures during the WSAG?” A 7-point scale ranging from 1 (none) to 7 (many) anchored the item. We also drew from Islam and Hewstone to measure qualitative contact with a single item: “when interacting with people from different cultures during the WSAG, was the contact pleasant?” Participants responded using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (definitely not) to 7 (definitely yes).

Procedures. We first obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the study. Data collection then took place in two phases. As part of the preregistration process, all 525 WSAG participants had received a form that outlined the purpose of the study and provided a space for parental or guardian signature. When the participants arrived at the event, they then handed in this form, collected and completed the registration materials, and voluntarily filled out the questionnaire. Out of the 525 WSAG attendees, a total of 223 persons completed a questionnaire during this phase of the study. Following the WSAG, participants had to officially check out of the event, and it was during this time that they were requested to complete the postevent questionnaire. Of those who completed the first-round questionnaire, 136 completed the postevent questionnaire.

In both cases, all WSAG participants received a cover letter documenting the overall purpose of the study and stressing that participation in the study was completely voluntary. Nonparticipation did not affect their standing at the event. This language was used in the letter to the parents as well. As all event participants were required to speak and understand English, the questionnaires and consenting materials were provided in English.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation check. As previously noted, this SFP activity was developed to facilitate intergroup contact.
Thus, we first sought to examine whether participants actually interacted with people from different cultures (i.e., quantitative contact) and the nature of that contact (i.e., qualitative contact; Islam & Hewstone, 1993). The mean scores for both quantitative contact ($M = 6.21, SD = 1.08$) and qualitative contact ($M = 6.58, SD = 0.77$) were high and significantly greater than the midpoint of the scale (4): $t(135) = 23.76, p < .001$, and $t(134) = 39.02, p < .001$, respectively. These results confirm that the design and implementation of the SFP event allowed for meaningful intergroup contact.

**Hypothesis testing.** We present means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations in Table 1. Results indicate that participants, as a whole, had low levels of social dominance orientation and prejudice before the event, as well as high levels of change agent self-efficacy. One-sample $t$ tests showed that all mean scores were significantly different from the midpoint of the scale (4). Second, as expected, both quantitative and qualitative forms of contact held significant, negative associations with prejudice following the event.

We predicted that, over the course of the SFP event, participants’ prejudice would decrease (H1), their change agent self-efficacy would increase (H2), the reduction in prejudice from pre-event to postevent would be moderated by social dominance orientation (H3), and the increase in change agent self-efficacy from pre-event to postevent would be moderated by social dominance orientation (H4). We tested these predictions through a doubly multivariate repeated measures analysis of variance. Prejudice and change agent self-efficacy served as the within-subjects factors, with changes examined over time, while social dominance orientation served as a between-subjects factor. To accomplish the latter, we categorized social dominance orientation into high (1 SD above the mean) and low (1 SD below the mean) responses—an approach that is conceptually similar to Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken’s (2003) suggestions for examining interactions in moderated regression. Figure 2 provides an illustrative summary of the findings. We also ran preliminary analyses to determine whether the event in which one participated (fine arts vs. sports) influenced the outcomes. It did not, so event was not included in the analysis as a between-subjects factor.

Results indicate significant multivariate effects for time, $F(2, 47) = 8.06, p = .001$. Examination of the univariate effects indicate significant changes in prejudice from before the event ($M = 2.08, SD = 0.87$) to after the event ($M = 1.83, SD = 0.98$), $F(1, 48) = 9.63, p = .003$. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Results also indicate an increase in change agent self-efficacy over time (before: $M = 5.73, SD = 0.96$; after: $M = 6.17, SD = 0.88$), $F(1, 48) = 13.52, p = .001$. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was also supported.

The reduction in prejudice is consistent with our predictions derived from the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) and suggests that structuring the event in such a way as to facilitate high levels of cross-cultural contact can allow for improved intergroup relations. Indeed, as seen in Table 1, (a) participants expressed high levels of both quantitative and qualitative contact, and (b) both forms of contact were reliably associated with prejudice and change agent self-efficacy. That participants also expressed increases in change agent self-efficacy supports social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and the utility of social persuasion in engendering such evaluations. Thus, the use of speakers, small-group discussions, seminars, and workshops to develop action plans in a sport-plus model, as recommended by SFD theory (Lyras, 2007, 2012a, 2012b; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011) and Olympic education (Binder, 2001), all potentially served to increase the confidence participants had in engaging in change efforts.

The multivariate effects for the Time × Social Dominance Orientation interaction were not significant, $F(2, 47) = 0.95, p = .26$. As such, we did not observe support for Hypothesis 3 or Hypothesis 4. These findings run contrary to past research showing that people with a high social dominance orientation might be less likely to endorse social justice-related efforts (see Danso et al., 2007; Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Melton & Cunningham, 2012; Pratto et al., 1994; Whitley & Lee, 2000). We present two potential reasons for this. One possibility is that, from an experimental design perspective, the treatment (i.e., the SFP event) was so robust that it resulted in changes for all participants. In this case, the event’s design and processes were so effective that all participants, irrespective of their social dominance, experienced prejudice reduction and change agent self-efficacy increases. From a different perspective, it is possible that because a major component of the event was engaging in social justice activities, people with high social dominance orientation self-selected out of the event. As seen in Table 1, the mean score for social dominance orientation was low, lending some credence to this explanation. Given these two alternatives, future researchers should explore how people with a wide range of social dominance orientations respond to SFP activities.

**Implications and limitations.** There are a number of contributions and implications from this study. First, we extend the SFP and contact hypothesis literatures by considering the effects of intergroup contact over the course of an event—an extension called for by other scholars (e.g., Pettigrew, 2008). In doing so, we were

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1. Our approach of categorizing social dominance orientation reduced the sample size, as we only included those responses outside one standard deviation. To ensure this strategy did not alter the findings, we ran additional analyses categorizing social dominance orientation based on the median split and on the midpoint of the scale. In both cases, the pattern of findings remained the same, as we observed a significant decrease in prejudice and a significant increase in change agent self-efficacy over the course of the event, but no moderating effects of social dominance orientation.
Table 1  Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td>2. Qualitative contact (Time 2)</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td></td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Social dominance orientation (Time 1)</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Prejudice (Time 1)</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td></td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Change agent self-efficacy (Time 1)</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Prejudice (Time 2)</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Change agent self-efficacy (Time 2)</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.25</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>-.38</td>
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Note. $r > .20$, $p < .05$.

Figure 2 — Prejudice and change agent self-efficacy before and after the sport-for-peace (SFP) event. (A) Prejudice. (B) Change agent self-efficacy. SDO = social dominance orientation.
also able to empirically demonstrate the benefits of participating in SFP events following a sport-plus model. In a related way, the research context for our study was one in which organizers implemented simultaneously a number of factors aimed at promoting intergroup contact, prejudice reduction, and increases in change agent self-efficacy. There is theoretical and empirical interest, though, in teasing out which of these elements provided the strongest effects. It is possible, for instance, that the cross-cultural nature of the teams was more strongly related to prejudice reduction than was the housing structure. Likewise, increases in change agent self-efficacy might have been more a function of the small-group discussions than the seminars attended. Future research—grounded in SFD theory, the contact hypothesis, and social cognitive theory—is needed to examine these options more systematically.

While this research makes a number of contributions, there are also potential limitations. First, we witnessed an attrition rate from 223 participants at Time 1 to 136 at Time 2, a drop of 60%. This was due, at least partially, to difficulties in the check-out process (where volunteers inadvertently omitted the questionnaires in some packets), as well as some of the postevent questionnaires not being coded. Second, a majority of the participants were from the United States, which allows us to have confidence in the effects of SFP events on those persons. However, because comparatively few participants (25.7%) from outside the United States participated in the event or, consequently, took part in the study, the findings might be less generalizable to those persons.

Finally, our study design presents a potential limitation. Ours resembles a one-group pretest–posttest design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). We did not have a control group, nor did we randomize participants into particular groups. Given the purpose of the event, such activities would have been impossible, not to mention inadvisable. Nevertheless, because ours is a preexperimental design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963), there are also a number of rival hypotheses to the study conclusions, including issues related to history and maturation. For example, because we do not have a control group, it is possible—though very unlikely, we argue—that participants experienced changes in prejudice and change agent self-efficacy because of factors other than event participation. We address these limitations in Study 2.

Study 2

In seeking to expand on the findings from Study 1, the purpose of Study 2 was to conduct a qualitative examination of how participation in a SFP event with a sport-plus model impacted the participants’ prejudice and change agent self-efficacy. This approach has many benefits. First, it allows for triangulation of the results offered in Study 1, thereby potentially complementing and adding to our previous findings. Second, the results from Study 1 demonstrated that (a) postevent prejudice was negatively associated with both quantitative and qualitative forms of contact, (b) postevent change agent self-efficacy was positively associated with both forms of contact, and (c) prejudice and change agent self-efficacy changed over the course of the athletes’ participation in the WSAG. Thus, we surmised that the intergroup contact during the WSAG event was instrumental in these changes. What the findings do not offer, however, is how contact affected these changes. Was it contact during the team events, during the extracurricular activities, or some combination thereof? Our qualitative approach allows for this examination.

Method

Participants and procedures. We conducted focus groups on the last day of the WSAG with 27 participants. Focus groups are well suited to exploratory research such as this, as interactions among participants enhance data quality and allow checks and balances on each other’s assertions and perceptions (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The authors agreed that gathering of qualitative data was best performed at the conclusion of the event to allow for the participants to have the opportunity for a complete event experience. While individual interviews with participants would have also been worthwhile, these would have proven problematic because of time constraints. Thus, focus groups were deemed to be a more expeditious and effective data collection method for this event. The four focus groups consisted of 6 to 8 participants each, a number suggested by Krueger and Casey (2000) to allow each participant time to talk and interact with others. The authors conducted all focus groups, and we engaged in purposive sampling to select event participants from countries and activities that represented the diversity of the event (Creswell, 2012). Fourteen girls and 13 boys, ages 15 to 19, participated in the focus groups. Fifteen of the focus group participants had also participated in Study 1. Eleven were from the United States, two each were from the Dominican Republic, Ghana, and Ireland, with one participant each from Australia, Chile, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Myanmar, New Zealand, Nigeria, Puerto Rico, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Regarding the focal activity, 20 participants took part in one of the sport offerings, while the other 7 were involved in the fine arts, a distribution in the sample representing the distribution of sports to fine arts participants in the WSAG attendees. After written informed consent was received from each participant, focus groups lasting between 90 and 120 min were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim by the researchers. To protect confidentiality, all study participants were given a pseudonym.

Measures. The interview guide was semistructured and drawn from SFD theory (Lyras, 2007, 2012a, 2012b; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011), the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998), and literature on SFP and change agent self-efficacy (Lyras, 2007, 2012a, 2012b, 2014). The semistructured nature of the guide allowed us to ask a standard set of questions of all participants, but to also probe deeper for understanding when warranted. Sample interview questions included...
Data analysis. The data reduction process began by coding to a priori themes from SFD theory (Lyras, 2007, 2012a, 2012b; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011), the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998), the literature on SFP and change agent self-efficacy (Lyras, 2012a, 2012b, 2014), and the results of Study 1. Analysis beginning with codes grounded in the conceptual framework is often used in qualitative studies (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However, the authors also performed an open coding process to allow raw data to inform the analysis (Thomas, 2006). Two of the authors coded the data separately, while a third author reviewed all data and interpretations, commenting on the coding schemes and offering additional insight and critique. The two authors independently coded one transcript and then met to compare, validate, and cross-check codes, themes, and subthemes and to agree on the coding for the first transcript. Then, each coded a second transcript separately, with the codes more aligned than in the first transcript. Through an iterative process, if disagreements arose as to coding, discussion ensued among the authors until consensus was reached ( Creswell, 2012). Then, the two authors independently coded the remaining 25 transcripts, and the final coding was merged into NVivo 10. The codes were clustered into the primary themes of prejudice reduction and change agent self-efficacy. For example, codes of “became more open,” “stereotype reduction,” and “think differently about others” were collapsed into the theme of prejudice reduction, whereas “motivation to work for change,” “take action back home,” and “confidence I can make a difference” were collapsed into the change agent self-efficacy theme. The final step of data analysis involved selective coding, where quotations from the data were selected that represented the themes and subthemes ( Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To enhance dependability and credibility, member checks were conducted with study participants, where they had the opportunity to review their transcripts and study interpretations ( Creswell, 2012). All participants said the transcripts accurately reflected their comments and generally agreed with our interpretations. Triangulation of investigators was also employed to address issues of dependability and credibility ( Creswell, 2012).

Results and Discussion

In general, the findings from Study 2 support our Study 1 findings, in that participants spoke about how intergroup contact during the event helped to reduce prejudice and increase their change agent self-efficacy. However, as will be shown below, prejudice reduction was not nearly as prominent in Study 2 as it was in Study 1; most participants in Study 2 talked about the importance of the event in increasing their change agent self-efficacy. The data also revealed that it was primarily the team sport environment and informal and formal social opportunities that influenced prejudice reduction, with the keynote speakers, workshops, and small-group discussions impacting their change agent self-efficacy. Finally, there were no differences in prejudice reduction or change agent self-efficacy between sport and fine arts participants.

Prejudice reduction. Eleven of the 27 participants (7 sport and 4 fine arts) in Study 2 mentioned that intergroup contact during the WSAG helped to reduce their prejudice. This prejudice reduction held whether a young person was a sport or fine arts participant. Specifically, the participants attributed this prejudice reduction to the teamwork required in their sport activity, and to the opportunities to interact with and learn to know young people from different cultures and countries through the informal and formal social activities. For example, Alicia, a track athlete from the United States, mentioned how the interactions with dissimilar others in the track program reduced her prejudice: “I have to admit, I was a little prejudice before I came. . . . Through meeting my teammates, my views have changed. About different cultures and different people. I was pretty prejudice. I just had stereotypical views.” Similar to Alicia, Peter, a basketball athlete from Nigeria, talked about his interactions with young people from Ireland through the basketball component of the WSAG, and how these interactions changed his views:

If you had asked me about Ireland, I would have told you there were rainbows and leprechauns with pots of gold. . . . And you would never think an Irish kid is that good at basketball! . . . So it was gaining a different perspective. When you are actually around people and get to know them, you ask questions that you normally wouldn’t ask anybody. . . . and you actually just get more comfortable and get a different perspective on life.

Another basketball player from the United States, Jabar, commented on his contact with his teammates and how this overturned some of his stereotypes:

Before the WSAG, I thought if I was to go over to Ireland right now, they would just shoot me on the spot. But then you meet an Irish kid on the team, or a kid from another country, and they say you should come and have fun with us, you are welcome there. . . . You are thinking, wow, there really is cooperation between other countries. That is the message I got.

Jabar continued, “It was the activity that really opened you up to find out who people really are. . . . you are able to interact with people you don’t normally inter-
participants see those different from themselves in a new and quality of contact with dissimilar others, which helped these various elements of the WSAG facilitated quantity of informal social opportunities (a sport-plus model) that had integrated team environment coupled with formal and informal social opportunities for the participants and providing ample time and space for informal social gatherings were critically important to prejudice reduction. Thus, it was the packaging of sport more broadly in a sport-plus framework that produced optimal effect (Coalter, 2010; Lyras, 2014; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011).

Increased change agent self-efficacy. While prejudice reduction was an important finding qualitatively, the WSAG had an even more pronounced effect on increasing change agent self-efficacy among its participants, whether sport or fine arts. All 27 Study 2 participants mentioned how the educational component of the WSAG (keynote speakers, workshops, and small-group discussions) gave them confidence they could make a difference in the world and in their local communities, upon returning home, and inspired them to do so. For example, Becky discussed how the speakers helped her believe and see how she could make a difference:

It impacted me in a strong way. It’s hard for me to be dedicated to something. Whether it be school work or even art, I grew up with my parents being relaxed about stuff like that so I don’t have that much drive to do something . . . now that I’ve done this and seen how much of a difference I actually can make, I feel like I actually want to do something now.

In a similar vein, visual artist Nina, from Myanmar, mentioned that when she goes home she will “tell them how I went to the peace summit and it’s enjoyable . . . and when I see something that is unfair I will stand for it and fight for it.” Mark, a basketball player from the United States, related he learned through the discussions that “if you want something, if you have a good idea, don’t be scared to do it. Don’t live life from the sidelines, take action, take ownership in your life.” Lavinia, a basketball athlete from Australia, shared this:

The speeches on leadership helped me learn how to utilize resources and that you don’t have to be a wealthy person or person in power or famous to make a difference . . . If you want change, you have to be the change to make change.

Alicia also spoke about how the WSAG educational platform challenged her to be a leader back home:

They just taught us how to believe in ourselves. Be leaders. Nothing is just going to come to you, that’s one thing I really didn’t have a grasp on before. You have to work hard to achieve the change that you want.

As a visual artist from Thailand, Jade said that she learned an incredible amount from the speakers and workshops about leading change: “I have a lot more
knowledge to share back home. I want to help poor people . . . to encourage them and take care of them.” Cindy also drew life lessons from the speakers for enacting change:

I guess this whole thing kind of taught me a huge life lesson. . . . It taught me how to work as a team collective. This kind of helped me realize that in order to be that person who works for change, you have to be able to open your heart and help others. It’s something that I honestly never realized until I came here. It’s a great life lesson.

Cindy continued, “One of the things I learned here is to devote yourself 100% to something. . . . Once I find that one thing. . . . I want to use it for the community as well.” Mika also shared how she planned to make an impact in her local community back in the Dominican Republic: “Like the peace idea I learned here, I will hold youth summits to bring up the idea. I will make a Facebook page and hold it somewhere, so people can be aware of what’s going on.”

For many participants, a theme that emerged was heightened motivation and inspiration to work for social change upon returning to their home communities, to engage in small-scale, community-based projects designed to benefit the local community and/or marginalized or disenfranchised individuals. The keynote speeches, workshops, and small-group discussions all provided this motivation. In his succinct way, Phillip perhaps said it best: “Now that I have been here, I want to make a big difference, make the world a better place for kids.” Peter concurred: “Being here I feel like I have a new respect for my life . . . my ambition as a whole to make a difference changed from this program.” For Ingrid, a soccer player from the United States, the WSAG “made me think about what I can do. I’m more motivated to do something like that now.” Melinda, a theater arts participant from New Zealand, discussed the workshop aspect of the WSAG and how this inspired her to work for change:

The biggest thing is I’m really inspired. I think the workshops, the educational ones, were good. They helped develop you and your project and everything. . . . Here, it is like you are with people who are motivated because then you can bounce ideas off each other, you get more inspired and you motivate each other . . . for that reason meeting people was just as important as the learning process.

Becky also explained how the keynote speakers encouraged her to volunteer despite the hesitancy she had in doing so in the past:

For me, I was wondering if I could go to an organization for six months and volunteer. I’ve always been with my family and very tight and wasn’t sure if I could leave them for six months. . . . But now, I heard all these speeches, and now I’m like, go for it, you are doing something good. And now, I’m pretty sure I’m going to do it.

Another basketball player, Ronald, from the United States, related that working with other participants in the small-group discussion and workshops was influential in his aspirations to work for change back home: “I’ll definitely leave more motivated. . . . It changed my life. Now I really want to go home and work on my pathway to peace.” The Pathways to Peace were action projects for peace-building and change in local communities that the WSAG participants designed during the workshops. The intent of organizers was for these projects to be small-scale, community-based action plans that could be implemented by WSAG participants with small seed funds given by the organization.

Thus, consistent with SFD theory and Olympic education (Binder, 2001; Lyras 2007, 2012a, 2012b; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011), as well as the sport-plus model (Coalter, 2010), change agent self-efficacy for both sport and fine arts participants was influenced primarily by the nonsport programming, such as the educational workshops, small-group discussions, and keynote speakers. While the sport or fine arts activity was important in the program set, it was the educational platform that had the greatest impact on change agent self-efficacy, consistent with Lyras’s (2007, 2012a, 2012b, 2014) findings and the recommendations on the applicability of this framework in other SFP settings (Coalter, 2010; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011).

Implications and limitations. As a follow-up to Study 1, the purpose of Study 2 was to explore how the WSAG effected changes in prejudice and change agent self-efficacy—was it the team-based structures, fine arts activities, keynote speakers, workshops, small-group discussions, social opportunities, or some combination thereof that brought about changes in these outcomes? With regard to prejudice reduction, the findings revealed that it was primarily the team-based structure of the sport activities and informal and formal social opportunities that facilitated this outcome. These findings are important, as they highlight and support the efficacy of sport-based interventions, through close contact and interactions with others, to reduce prejudice (Brown et al., 2003; Pettigrew, 1998; Lyras, 2012a), provided that the sport interventions are designed to facilitate optimal quantity and quality of contact between dissimilar others. While there was no difference in prejudice reduction between sport and fine arts participants, it is noteworthy that participants spoke about sport being effective in reducing prejudice but that they did not indicate the same for the fine arts programming (fine arts participants indicated that the formal and informal social opportunities facilitated prejudice reduction for them). This is interesting, as it would seem that arts-based interventions would also facilitate both quantity and quality of contact. Perhaps, though, the nature of teamwork required in a sporting contest is different from arts projects where individuals generally work on individual projects, albeit in a group setting with some instruction. The close working relationship and interactions required on a sport
team could enhance the nature of the contact between teammates, thus facilitating prejudice reduction over the course of an event (Brown et al., 2003). Future research is needed to explore the differences between sport- and arts-based interventions in reducing prejudice.

We found that change agent self-efficacy increased principally through the educational platform of the WSAG—the keynote speakers who challenged participants toward activism, and the smaller workshops and discussions where they could formulate action plans to take back to their local communities. It is notable that all of the participants in Study 2 mentioned that the event was instrumental in motivating them to work for change, but it is also important to highlight that none of the study participants attributed this self-efficacy and motivation to sport or the fine arts per se. The fundamental implication here, as noted earlier, is that SFP interventions should be packaged within a broader educational and cultural platform to have optimal effect (a sport-plus model), as suggested by SFD theory (Lytras, 2007, 2012a, 2012b; Lytras & Welty Peachey, 2011) and the principles of Olympic education (Binder, 2001). Particularly for change agent self-efficacy, it is this broader educational engagement that stimulates activism, more so than the sport or fine arts activity (Lytras, 2007).

While these findings are important and support our conclusions from Study 1, this study is not without its limitations. The possibility of socially desirable responses and bias (Creswell, 2012) existed. Interview and survey participants could have provided responses they believed the researchers wanted to hear. We attempted to address this concern by encouraging participants to speak honestly about their experience and by assigning pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. In addition, researcher bias also could have occurred in reporting the findings. However, we mitigated this concern by having two authors independently code the data, by having a third author review codes and interpretations, and by having study participants review their transcripts and study interpretations as a form of member checking. Finally, we conducted Study 2 as a way of complementing our findings from Study 1. We acknowledge that concerns about the lack of a control group or randomization persist. What the additional analyses provide, though, is support for the general conclusions drawn in Study 1, as well as a way of unpacking a deeper understanding of the underlying processes.

**General Discussion**

We began this article by noting that prejudice and discrimination were largely institutionalized within the sport context (Anderson, 2010; Cunningham, 2008); yet, in some cases, such as SFD events, sport was structured in such a way to specifically address and combat this condition. Specifically, these programs were designed to help facilitate better public health, positively influence the socialization of youth, increase access for the disadvan-

tagged, and encourage better intergroup relationships and peace (Lytras & Welty Peachey, 2011). While evidence for these benefits did exist (Lytras, 2012a, 2012b, 2014; Sherry, 2010; Spaaij, 2009; Sugden, 2008; Welty Peachey et al., 2013), we sought to expand the current research by considering how SFP events in particular, utilizing a sport-plus framework (Coalter, 2010), affected prejudice and change agent self-efficacy, as well as the potential underlying mechanisms for these effects.

Results from Study 1 show that both outcomes meaningfully and significantly changed over the course of the event; furthermore, the changes took place irrespective of the participants’ social dominance orientation. However, given the potential limitations with the design (the lack of a control group and randomization primarily), we were interested in further examining these effects while also investigating the impetus for these changes. As demonstrated in Study 2, our follow-up qualitative analyses achieved these goals, as participants indicated their prejudice and change agent self-efficacy were both affected by their participation, with a particular emphasis on the latter outcome. Further, in support of SFD theory (Lytras, 2007, 2012a, 2012b; Lytras & Welty Peachey, 2011), the athletes pointed to various aspects of the event, including their participation on the sport teams and the specific programming, as factors facilitating these changes. We must be mindful, however, that the WSAG targeted elite and talented youth who were conversant in English. Thus, the choice of participants, reinforced by the use of English during the research in surveys and focus groups, may have contributed to reducing the scope of participants and indirectly to reinforcing prejudice. This indicates a need for future research to be initiated with multiple events targeting participants from different social strata.

Collectively, our research points to a number of practical implications. SFP event organizers should consider employing mixed activity group strategies to facilitate both quantity and quality of intergroup contact for reducing prejudice. These mixed groups could revolve around national or cultural identities, or even along racial and gender divides. Organizers should also provide ample structured and unstructured social activities to enable quality interactions, and for residence style programs, consider housing together individuals from different cultures, nationalities, or ethnicities. To facilitate change agent self-efficacy, organizers of SFP events should include an educational platform that provides participants with tools and strategies for effecting change once they return to their home communities.

We see several areas for future research stemming from this investigation. Research should explore how participants use the information learned during the event once they return home. How and to what degree, for example, are the plans for engaging in change and peace-building activities implemented? How do reductions in prejudice influence the way participants interacted with dissimilar others 6 months after the event? Our results,
coupled with those from past research (e.g., Lytras 2012a, 2012b, 2014; Sugden, 2008), suggest SFP sport-plus events meaningfully affect the participants, but the lasting nature of that impact deserves additional attention. The role of prejudice reduction and change agent self-efficacy in peace-building activities should be investigated over time. As the sample generally had positive inclinations and openness to the event’s messaging, it would also be meaningful to examine the impact of SFP events on those who measure high in prejudice and low in self-efficacy. Finally, we observed participation benefits related to one’s prejudice and change agent self-efficacy while other researchers have focused on social capital gains (e.g., Skinner, Zakus, & Cowell, 2008; Welty Peachey et al., 2013). From a managerial perspective, however, there is a need to also focus on other stakeholders, particularly volunteers, as many volunteers would be required to participate in programmatic aspects as part of their duties. How does participation in SFP events impact these persons, their attitudes toward the event, and their motivation to participate in the future? Such analyses would potentially help improve the delivery and effectiveness of sport-plus SFP activities.

In conclusion, this research points to the efficacy of SFP events employing a sport-plus model in facilitating prejudice reduction and change agent self-efficacy among their participants, where the sport programming is packaged into a broader educational and cultural platform. Thoughtful and mindful program design is necessary to achieve positive effects. More research is certainly needed to aged into a broader educational and cultural platform.

References


