

# U.S. sport diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean: A programme evaluation

Robert E. Baker<sup>1</sup>, Pamela H. Baker<sup>2</sup>, Christopher Atwater<sup>1</sup>, Craig Esherick<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>George Mason University, Sport Recreation and Tourism

<sup>2</sup>George Mason University, Special Education

Corresponding author email: rbaker2@gmu.edu

## ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is a specific SDP programme, entitled Sports Visitors, executed in partnership between George Mason University and the U.S. Department of State. The purpose of this programme evaluation was to examine a subset of Latin American and Caribbean groups to ascertain the immediate, short-term impact of an intervention programme on the attitudes of participants relative to programme objectives. Nine groups comprised of 150 sport visitors participated in this investigation over a five year period. After the data were cleaned, 143 valid responses remained for analysis. The findings are based upon descriptive and effect size outcomes of quantitative survey data supplemented by qualitative comments provided by participants. The overall total mean for all seven items combined yields a very large effect size of 1.43. The results indicate that a) positive change occurred among LAC participants across all objectives measured, and b) changes were consistently reflected across each type of LAC participant group based upon gender, role, and gender with role.

## INTRODUCTION

Sport is a universal language that can foster individual interface on a local level, as well as a social institution with structural power that allows it to influence broader cultural interaction.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> The United Nations<sup>4</sup> (para. 2) acknowledged that sport "...can represent an area to experience equality, freedom and a dignified means for empowerment." Further, Nelson Mandela<sup>5</sup> (para. 1) noted that, "Sport has the

power to change the world." He went on to acknowledge sport's "power to inspire," and to "unite people." He further noted that sports "create hope," and "decrease barriers."<sup>5</sup> (para. 1) Right to Play International<sup>6</sup> (p. 3) recognized that, "...the international use of sport, physical activity and play to attain specific development and peace objectives..." is an effective strategy.

Sport Diplomacy, as a component of Sport for Development and Peace (SDP), can enhance peace-building and development efforts; and these diplomatic initiatives have become not only more prevalent over the past decade, but also more closely investigated.<sup>1, 7, 8, 9, 10</sup> Giulianotti<sup>8</sup> identified four categories of SDP policy: a) neo-liberal social policies in the form of commercial corporate social responsibility (CSR); b) developmental interventionist policies of non-governmental agencies (NGO); c) social justice policies associated with social movements; and d) strategic developmentalist policies associated with governments and sport federations. Government involvement in SDP has increased as sports have demonstrated efficacy in developmental and diplomatic agendas.<sup>1, 7, 11, 12</sup>

## Theoretical Framework

### *Sport Diplomacy*

Sanders<sup>13</sup> (para. 1) observed that sport is "a gigantic and powerful medium for the international spread of information, reputations and relationships that are the essence of public diplomacy." Diplomatic efforts utilizing

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sport reflect established theoretical underpinnings. Effective diplomatic initiatives should comprise multiple arenas such as sport to address numerous societal levels.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, Sanders<sup>13</sup> (p. 1) further advised that, “A well-conceived public diplomacy strategy could capitalize on the opportunities that sport presents.”

Change is often a long-term process, particularly in diplomatic endeavors to facilitate intercultural change through local sport programmes.<sup>15</sup> Sports yield obligatory proximity and enables interaction among participants. Therefore, Sport Diplomacy aligns with Allport’s<sup>16</sup> contact hypothesis, which contends that facilitating contact among diverse participants can diminish hostility, negate stereotypes, and inspire more tolerant attitudes. Authentic engagement with dissimilar people or groups promotes fresh knowledge and diminishes apprehension. Mandatory contact must be meaningful in order to foster effective stakeholder exchanges. Sport programmes often emulate the aforementioned contact hypothesis mechanisms wherein cooperative interaction enriches programme efficacy.<sup>16</sup> Through engagement in interdependent sport experiences, diverse individuals with common interests may accept differences and increase mutual understanding, cooperation, and camaraderie. Kuriansky<sup>17</sup> contends that interpersonal engagement in intercultural interventions is critical in achieving diplomatic ends. Sport Diplomacy agendas are myriad, including peace-building, promoting intercultural understanding, and an array of community development; sport is a worthwhile mechanism in fostering intercultural relationships.<sup>1,7</sup>

Beer and Nohria<sup>18</sup> posit a premise for intercultural diplomatic change through Theory E and Theory O. Theory E bases its purpose in the creation of organizational value. It involves centrally planned programmatic change pursued through formal structures and systems that are driven from the top down. Theory O is guided by the development of the organization’s human capacity. Similar to the system’s thinking, the purpose is to implement strategy and learn from experience.<sup>18,19</sup> Theory O depends on a high level of member commitment and the expectation that change is continuous and occurs through a participative process. Theory E, or top-down change, yield more cost-effective and immediate results. Theory O, or bottom-up changes are more costly, yet may yield more sustainable results.

In alignment with Allport,<sup>16</sup> while Beer and Nohria’s<sup>18</sup> top-down Theory E endeavors are common and often supported, bottom-up Theory O practices are likely to humanize stakeholders and shape mutual understanding. Beer and Nohria<sup>18</sup> suggest that combining top-down and

bottom-up change is common. Effective intercultural change often involves both high-level diplomatic initiatives and programmes that engage individual participants.

The utility of sport as a mechanism to heighten mutual understanding makes it valuable in diplomatic programming. Grassroots sport diplomacy programmes based on the concepts of Allport<sup>16</sup> and Beer and Nohria<sup>18</sup> afford local individual interactions, which provide for broad impacts, such as cultural change, that emanate from individuals within the culture.<sup>16,18</sup> The universality of sport allow for the pursuit of both global and local diplomatic goals. While sport offers a mechanism by itself, Sport for Development Theory (SFDT) posits that cultural and educational activities complement sport programming in successfully addressing the objectives of intercultural SDP initiatives.<sup>10,20</sup> Acknowledging the global influence of sport, Sanders<sup>13</sup> (para. 1) noted that “the audience’s level of interest exceeds those of any other subject matter, including political news and the movies.”

Allport’s<sup>16</sup> contact hypothesis and Beer’s and Nohria’s<sup>18</sup> Theory O identify the benefits of direct participant interaction in maximizing the impacts of Sport Diplomacy experiences. While grassroots programming through authentic sport interaction improves intercultural understanding, the

*...effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom, or local atmosphere)... provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups.*<sup>16</sup> (p. 281)

Institutionally supported intercultural sport programming further promotes information exchanges in the development of qualified personnel with the capacity to effectively function in an internationalized sport environment.<sup>21</sup>

Chufrin and Saunders<sup>22</sup> (p. 158) concluded that, “While governments negotiate around interests and issues, citizens...” are essential in the success of diplomatic efforts. Sport Diplomacy often involves governments’ international agendas being pursued via local activities. Sport-based “glocal” tactics comprise both global and local interests and activities.<sup>23</sup> Glocalization merges the significance of the local in global interests and the global in local interests.<sup>24</sup> The sports industry has actively engaged in “glocal” sport opportunities and practices.<sup>25</sup> Sport Diplomacy endeavors are frequently an element of a global diplomatic agenda that is being implemented through local grassroots programming.

### *Globalization in Sport*

Globalization compresses the world via increased interconnectedness while simultaneously increasing awareness of the world as a single entity.<sup>24, 26</sup> Globalization is the facilitator of internationalization, wherein sport serves as a strategic stakeholder.<sup>27</sup> While many sport enterprises operate globally, most activities take place in the local environment.<sup>28</sup> In that context, globalization is based on the intersection of global and local influences.<sup>29</sup> Globalization is often framed via economic, political, and sociocultural interests. Advances in communication and transportation technologies encourage globalization in the sport enterprise. Sport crosses economics, education, government, religion, social politics, and technology on a broad scale, but serves as an arena for individual exchange on the local level.<sup>1, 30</sup> This ‘glocalized’ nature of sport makes it effective as a diplomatic tool.<sup>1, 31, 32</sup>

Sport has fostered globalization through international professional leagues and competitions, including mega events, through international player migration, both professional and amateur, and through not-for-profit endeavors, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and Sport Diplomacy.<sup>25</sup> Examples of sport’s role in globalization through international professional leagues and federations include Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), Fédération Internationale de Basketball Association (FIBA), and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is evident. Mega events, such as the Olympics, Paralympics, World Cup, and Pan American Games also facilitate globalization through sport. Globalization is also prominent in the English Premier League (EPL), India Premier League (IPL), Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB), Major League Baseball (MLB), National Basketball Association (NBA), and many other prominent sport leagues that utilize foreign talent.<sup>33</sup> Foreign ownership of clubs and franchises in professional leagues is also commonplace.

Sport enterprises are prominent in international corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, such as Basketball Without Borders, which aims to support the community beyond sport through community outreach initiatives addressing important social issues, including youth and community development, education, minority empowerment, conflict resolution, and health and wellness. There are numerous not-for-profit endeavors in the sport sector that contribute to globalization, such as Peace and Sport, Peace Players International, and the Fundacion Real Madrid.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations is engaged in global diplomatic efforts using sport through its own U. N. Office

of Sport for Development and Peace.

Sport is an integral part of globalization.<sup>34</sup> On a global scale, sport is connected to social institutions and interests and, on a local level, sport is the setting of personal engagement and exchange.<sup>1, 2, 25, 30</sup> Globalization in sport is based upon the linking of global and local cultural interests.<sup>29</sup> While many sport initiatives, including Sport Diplomacy, have global intentions, most are actually implemented in an internationalized local environment.<sup>28</sup>

Globalization through sport can generate both benefits and concerns.<sup>35</sup> Globalization in sport has been asymmetrical in various parts of the world for a variety of reasons.<sup>34</sup> This variation in sport globalization is likely related to its local implementation and may result in the supplanting of dominant sport norms over diverse local cultures.<sup>28, 35, 36</sup> Globalized sport is often dominated by the Western world and, as a result, has generally become highly Americanized or at minimum Westernized.<sup>34</sup> Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have been fully engaged in the globalization of sport.

### *Sport in Latin America*

The popularity of sport in LAC is undeniable. Fueled by trends as divergent as populism and imperialism, sport is ingrained in the cultures of the LAC region. Populism has proven to be a driving political and cultural force for over 100 years.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, the dissemination of specific Western sports beyond those native and traditional represents the cultural imperialism embedded in the sporting world.<sup>38</sup> From the turn of the nineteenth century until today, sport reflects a microcosm of local and national development in LAC, playing a role as a political and cultural force.<sup>39</sup>

Baseball is intensely popular in such LAC nations as Venezuela, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic, while cricket is the sport of choice in Guyana and the West Indies. Basketball, governed in accordance with the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), is very popular in many areas of LAC, in no small part due to the international successes, such as Argentina’s gold medal in the 2004 Olympic Games. Argentina hosted and became the first World Champion (1950) of the FIBA World Cup, and Brazil has won two World Championships in men’s basketball. The Brazilian women’s basketball team has also won the World Championship (1994). In addition, basketball is widely played in Venezuela and Uruguay, and is popular in most LAC nations. Volleyball is a popular sport in Brazil, where both male and female teams have

won Olympic gold medals, as well as Peru, Argentina, and Venezuela.

Reflecting its global acceptance, football (Soccer) is the most popular sport in LAC. While emanating from Europe, its transnational nature has seen LAC, particularly Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, share supremacy with Europe in the sport by winning every Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup. Brazil has won more FIFA World Cup titles (five) than any other nation. Argentina and Uruguay each have two titles. Four LAC nations have hosted the FIFA World Cup. Uruguay hosted the first FIFA World Cup event (1930), while Brazil (1950, 2014), Chile (1962), and Argentina (1978) have also hosted. Beyond the World Cup, LAC developed the Copa America, a football event regularly held since 1916. Uruguay has won this longest continuously running competition 15 times and Argentina, 14 times.

Importantly, LAC has also produced many great athletes in numerous sports. The migration of talented athletes, such as Pelé and Renaldo in football, Manu Ginobili and Tim Duncan in basketball, and Roberto Clemente and Miguel Cabrera in baseball, has been a mainstay in the internationalization of sport. Talent migration is commonplace and significant element in the evolution of the global sport industry, which is often fueled by commercial interests.<sup>40</sup> The globalization of sport has manifested through many mechanisms, the migration of athletic talent among them. The international expansion of professional sport leagues and related businesses is also prevalent, leading to transnational ownership interests in sports.<sup>25</sup> It should also be noted that SDP entities are most often international, including those funded by commercial enterprises, such as the NBA Cares, Basketball Without Borders, or the Real Madrid Foundation. Not-for-profit SDP enterprises, such as Peace and Sport, Peace Players International, and the Sport Diplomacy Initiative, also facilitate the internationalization of sport, while governmental-based entities such as the United Nations Office of Sport for Development and Peace and the U. S. Department of State's Division of Sports Diplomacy provide international engagement and diplomatic influence.<sup>25</sup>

Murray and Pigman<sup>41</sup> described the governmental use of sport as a mechanism to serve diplomatic ends, which involves intercultural exchanges among non-elite sport participants and/or coaches or sport-related envoys traveling with diplomatic intentionality. Murray and Pigman further identified "international-sport-as-diplomacy," which involves diplomatic interactions between NGOs and non-state actors that facilitate international sport, such as the

International Olympic Committee (IOC) and FIFA.<sup>41</sup> The governance of sport through international federations is, by their definition, a reflection of globalized sporting interests. The IOC and FIFA are unrivaled in global influence in sport, surpassing national boundaries.<sup>34</sup> Through such influential organizations, the expansion of international competitions and mega-events impact global and local interests; although not necessarily yielding local prosperity.<sup>42</sup> Relentless globalization in sport has had extensive impacts throughout the world, including Latin American individuals, communities, and sport endeavors. Sport-based diplomatic efforts supported by governmental or intercultural interests have also impacted LAC localities. Identifying and measuring these impacts is essential to the sustainable success of SDP undertakings, including Sport Diplomacy programmes.<sup>7</sup> A common concern when evaluating such international SDP programmes, because they can be driven by diverse intentions, is assessing whether each is meeting its respective objectives.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of the nature of international sport programming, be it commercially, philanthropically, or government derived, its efficacy should be evaluated based upon its intended objectives.

#### *Empowerment Evaluation*

Stakeholders in international sport are seeking quantifiable data to demonstrate the efficacy of programming.<sup>9, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47</sup> As this study focuses on Sport Diplomacy, reliable programme evaluation is required to document the efficacy of such programmes. Skepticism abounds, stemming from exaggerated claims of programme benefits without corresponding evidence.<sup>9, 43, 47-48</sup> Levermore<sup>43</sup> (p. 340) noted, "The lack of convincing large-scale evaluation might contribute to the doubt that some development agencies have shown for the sport-for-development movement ..." It is crucial, therefore, to examine intended programme outcomes and build evidence of the level of programme effectiveness.<sup>7</sup>

Coalter<sup>48</sup> connected the dearth of programme evaluation with an absence of the requisite capital, resources and expertise. Stakeholders call for advances in the number and value of evaluations, with few recognizing the challenges and solutions in the evaluation process, particularly for developing locations and populations.<sup>47</sup> Sport Diplomacy programmes must document outcomes in order to demonstrate their effectiveness of achieving programme goals. This pursuit of efficacy yields improved evaluation measures and processes in order to assess the outcomes of Sport Diplomacy programmes.<sup>49</sup>

This study examines a specific Sport Diplomacy programme evaluation grounded in underlying theories in diplomacy, change, and evaluation. Specifically, this study determines the short-term efficacy of the Sport Diplomacy Initiative relative to its established programme goals. The utilization of goal-driven evaluation procedures also informs future programming and evaluations. Programme evaluation design that acknowledges participant interests in the pursuit of the sponsoring agency's goals can be an Empowerment Evaluation, which transfers evaluation power from the evaluator to programme participants and staff.<sup>50</sup>

Empowerment Evaluation is suitable for Sport Diplomacy programmes promoting development and social justice goals. Participant and staff acquisition of evaluation power encourages programme investment. Empowerment Evaluation serves as the framework for the evaluation process utilized in this study. Empowerment Evaluation concepts necessitate programme staff and participant involvement in the implementation and evaluation of the programme.<sup>7</sup> Programme managers, along with sponsoring agency officials and local in-country representatives, determine the sought-after goals. Participants selected in alignment with these goals engage with staff in implementing the evaluation process.

This study examines the use of Empowerment Evaluation in a Sport Diplomacy programme that yields participant input and shapes a distal follow-on evaluation. Self-determination of post-programme activities is important in the participants' experiences, which is consistent with Empowerment Evaluation concepts. Participant affiliation with, and investment in, the programme goals results from such involvement and seen as a long-term outcome of the programme. The Empowerment Evaluation model fosters stakeholder commitment to programme goals and enhances the sustainability of the programme.<sup>50</sup> While implemented over a five-year period, the current quantitative evaluation is contextually the precursor to longer-term follow-on evaluation procedures. This study examines the initial implementation of the Empowerment Evaluation model in the Sport Diplomacy Initiative, specifically focused on diplomatic and developmental efforts concentrated in the LAC region.

### Programme Description

The current study examines the Sport Diplomacy Initiative (SDI), a programme stemming from a cooperative agreement between the United States Department of State's (USDOS) Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

(ECA) and the Center for Sport Management (CSM) at George Mason University. This funded programme implements the USDOS Division of Sports Diplomacy's Sports Visitors Program, which it implements to engender cooperation and respect between the foreign visitors and their American counterparts. The SDI is grounded in the principles of the contact hypothesis in support of Theory O's bottom-up approach to effecting change.<sup>16, 18</sup> During the five-year scope of this study, the SDI Sports Visitors Program supported a total of 60 groups comprised of 937 foreign visitors from approximately 50 countries; however, this study focuses on the 9 groups and 150 participants from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Each LAC group engaged in a 12 to 14-day visit to the U. S., during which time participating athletes and/or coaches were exposed to educational, cultural, and sport experiences, with content addressing leadership, conflict resolution, psychology, and wellness. Described more fully by specific visiting group's programme, varied activities were implemented in order to facilitate intercultural understanding and tolerance.

The SDI Sports Visitors Program seeks to enable participants to: 1) learn more about U.S. society and culture; 2) improve leadership skills, team building, and respect for diversity; 3) facilitate productive and positive change in their local communities through sports; and 4) build partnerships to support these goals. More specific SDI outcome objectives allow participants to: 1) learn about American culture and its people, the American sport system, diversity and inclusive sport; 2) multiply the impact of the experience upon returning home; 3) value the programme experience as a measure of satisfaction; and 4) maintain contact as programme alumni. The SDI evaluation system has been developed and implemented to measure outcomes aligned with these objectives. These outcome objectives shape the evaluation process, which is based upon Empowerment Evaluation principles.<sup>50</sup> This framework for the SDI programme evaluation with its quantitative pre-programme and post-programme survey is designed to engage staff and participants as the foundation for distal follow-on procedures. The focus of this study, however, examines the more immediate outcomes of programme participants' visit to the United States. Given that programmes yield results based upon the inputs, throughputs, and outputs they generate, programme outcomes result from SDI programming and activities related to the aforementioned programme objectives.<sup>19</sup> While the broader evaluation system of the SDI includes quantitative and qualitative components, which are directed toward assessing both short-term and long-term programme efficacy, this study examines the short-term evaluation of programme outcomes. Each visiting group in this study

consisted of 14 to 24 participants, supported by interpreters provided by the USDOS, and U.S.-based Programme Coordinator, who escorts the group and facilitates their activities for roughly 12 to 14 days per visit. Approximately 16% of the total Sport Diplomacy Initiative participants have been from LAC. This study focuses on these groups.

#### *SDI Groups from LAC*

Each programme designed for the SDI Sports Visitors takes into account the overarching diplomatic goals outlined by the U. S. Department of State. Many of the goals remain the same with all of the groups that visit the United States but each *programme* is not exactly the same because each group of Sports Visitors arrives with a different focus. Examples of a few of the overarching programme goals that are consistent throughout would be to introduce the visitors to the American system of education, provide an opportunity to experience American culture, and develop an understanding of that part of the American sports industry that relates to their interests. The programmes are designed to expose the groups to ordinary Americans who are engaged in the same sport as the visiting participants. For example, LAC football coaches will meet American soccer coaches. LAC track and field athletes will meet American athletes of a similar age in their discipline, along with coaches who can expose them to American training techniques.

Participants in the SDI Sports Visitors programme are athletes, coaches, and/or sports administrators. For example, athletes comprised the two groups from Columbia (baseball and softball), and the groups from Jamaica (basketball) and Peru (girls basketball). A combined group from Ecuador, Panama, and Mexico was comprised of youth baseball participants visiting the Little League World Series. Baseball coaches visited from the countries of Venezuela and the Dominican Republic. The two groups from Brazil included youth basketball, and administrators and coaches of disability sport programmes. Venezuela also had a group of deaf sport educators. The athletes who participate in the programme are generally teenagers; therefore, two adults, who are often coaches, from their home country, usually accompany them.

A typical programme will start with the *programme opening* where the ground rules are established for the group and the programme schedule for the visit is released. This is also an opportunity for the members of each SDI Sports Visitors group to get to know each other, to meet the Program Coordinator, to ask questions, and to familiarize themselves with the interpreters who will be working with

them during their stay in the United States. Early in the programme schedule, there is usually a team building exercise, conducted by team building professionals with the intent of enhancing the working relationship of the visiting group. Many groups who have participated in the Sports Visitors programmes have never worked together and come from different parts of their country. The team building exercise is also an opportunity for coaches, athletes, and sports administrators to observe and participate with team building professionals, and to generate ideas they can take back with them when they return to their home country. The groups from Venezuela, Jamaica, Peru, Columbia, and Brazil all participated in a team building programming.

Another staple of every programme is an introduction to the sports industry in the United States. This introduction is usually conducted by an expert and is tailored to each group of participants. For example, the Jamaican and Peruvian basketball participants learned about youth basketball, high school basketball, college basketball, and the National Basketball Association (NBA) along with how athletes in the U.S. develop in their sport. Additional activities often include a sport psychology presentation tailored to the group and is based on their sport and role (coach, athlete, sports administrator). Programming usually includes a presentation on injury prevention and injury care, focusing on the specific sport, whether it is typical for the sport, alongside treatment and prevention techniques. Nutritional information is also included. Most groups also receive information focused on improving strength and conditioning in their respective sports. Leadership and management skills are also often presented, particularly to coaches and administrator groups.

A significant part of every programme is to facilitate participant engagement with as many Americans as possible over the length of their stay. Each programme usually has a home hospitality component where the Sports Visitors will have dinner at the home of someone involved in the sports industry or associated with the administration of the programme. This is an opportunity to meet an American family, experience a meal in a 'home' rather than at a hotel or public restaurant, and engage in social activity with each other in an informal and relaxed setting. Many of these social opportunities also provide Americans with a chance to learn about the participants, their families, their homeland, and a little about how sports are played, coached, and administered in their home country. For example, after engaging in a softball practice with a local U. S team, the participants from Columbia joined many parents and coaches at an outdoor picnic hosted by the local girls' softball association.

Most of the groups have multiple cultural experiences outside of sport, which often include touring the locality and visiting museums. For example, several of the LAC groups visited the Smithsonian museum and the monuments in the U.S. capitol of Washington, D.C. LAC groups visited varied locations in the U. S. For example, the deaf sport educators from Venezuela visited New York City, touring the United Nations, the Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island. The delegations from Venezuela and the Dominican Republic visited Phoenix, Arizona experiencing the metropolitan area's culture and attending pre-season training for Major League Baseball (MLB) teams like the San Diego Padres, the Kansas City Royals, the Cincinnati Reds and the San Francisco Giants. They also participated in baseball and softball clinics conducted by coaches from these MLB teams.

Because the American education and competitive sports systems are linked, most groups visit academic institutions and spend time with college and high school students. Participants engage with Americans student-athletes, meet teachers and coaches, tour classrooms, and visit school sports facilities. They interact with peer athletes as they are competing and practicing in their sport. Participants are exposed to American athlete and sport development through these school-based visits. For example, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic participants visited Arizona State University and also Desert Vista High School, while Jamaican participants visited the University of Maryland, Georgetown University and George Mason University. Venezuelan deaf sport coaches and educators visited the Lexington School for the Deaf (New York) and Gallaudet University (Washington, D.C.), a prominent college for deaf students.

Participants also attend athletic events; some are at the youth school, or are college-level, while others are at the professional level. Usually after attending a professional sports event, participants receive a tour of the venue. These professional sport events provide not only the opportunity to learn, but also to engage in a social activity with Americans who share this common interest. For example, the Brazilian participants attended the NBA's Washington Wizards game and toured the Verizon Center basketball arena, while the Columbian group toured the Camden Yards baseball stadium and watched the Baltimore Orioles (MLB) play. Jamaican basketball players participated in a clinic from a former WNBA player, attended the Washington Wizards' practice, and attended the Wizards game with the Atlanta Hawks. In addition to pre-season baseball contests, the Venezuelan and the Dominican Republic delegations attended a National Hockey League

game between the Phoenix Coyotes and the Calgary Flames.

Beyond the spectator experiences, cultural exposure and sport-specific developmental activities, an effort is made to introduce participants to a non-traditional or new sport. For example, the D.C. Breeze, a professional Ultimate Frisbee team, has conducted development clinics for many of the groups. Importantly, every group is exposed to, or participates in, an inclusive sport activity. Participants have observed and participated in wheelchair basketball games, wheelchair tennis, and numerous Special Olympics practices and competitions.

## METHODS

### Research Design

The purpose of this programme evaluation was to examine a subset of groups from Latin America and the Caribbean to ascertain the short-term impact of an intervention on the attitudes of participants relative to the programme objectives. Surveys can be useful for identifying beliefs and attitudes at specific points in time.<sup>51</sup> In this case, a pre-post survey design was used to assess participant perspectives at the start of the SDI programme and subsequently at the end of the experience. Specifically, this type of programme evaluation is considered a modified panel study since the same participants complete the assessment two or more times so changes in attitudes can be monitored over time.<sup>52</sup> Weirsmas and Jurs<sup>52</sup> suggests that the entire population in this type of programme evaluation is assessed rather than using random selection. In addition, while this current summary of the programme evaluation focuses on the immediate, short-term influence of the programme (i.e., two data collection points approximately 12 days apart), a more longitudinal element using follow-on surveys in partnership with the embassies is part of the overall evaluation plan.

### Participants

George Mason University's Center for Sport Management has managed the Sport Diplomacy Initiative (SDI) as one aspect of their mission since 2008. Currently, the SDI includes a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Division of Sports Diplomacy specifically to support the domestic programming experiences of international athletes and coaches in the Sports Visitors programme. During a five-year period of time supporting this partnership, 60 groups were served of which 15% were from Latin America and the Caribbean. It is from these nine groups that the

participants in this programme evaluation were selected via criterion-based sampling of the whole. Each participant during this 60-month period completed two questionnaires with a combination of structured and open-ended prompts. The surveys were given as a pretest during the opening orientation session and as a posttest as the closing session. The nine groups from Latin America and the Caribbean had a total number of 150 participants from nine countries including Brazil, Columbia, Dominican, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. Of the 150 possible respondents, seven did not complete essential elements required for independent variable groupings on either the pre- or post-programme questionnaires and were excluded from the analysis leaving an n of 143. Any missing values on the dependent variable items were replaced with an average of the individual respondent's other pretest or posttest values.

### Survey Instrument

The questionnaires each contain three demographic items (e.g., gender, role, and age) and seven Likert-type items asking respondents to report their attitudes and familiarity regarding specific aspects of the programme. The seven objective prompts on each survey are aligned with programme objectives. From the pre-programme measure to the post-programme measure, the semantics of some prompts are altered to address changes from the start of the programme (e.g., *I anticipate the value of the programme will be . . .*) to the end of the programme (e.g., *The value of the programme has been . . .*). The 6-point response scale is balanced between negative and positive options, with no neutral default offered. The higher number in each case is representative of the more positive response. Given the cultural, age, and language differences that are inherent in a programme such as this, the survey was designed to be concise with no response set variations embedded within the scale as each survey is subject to translation by interpreters as needed. The original surveys were piloted with four delegations and fine-tuned based upon the feedback from those 56 participants. In addition, two external evaluations have been conducted to offer expert review of both the collection and analysis methods. Cronbach's alphas indicate the reliability of the pretest to be .61 and the posttest to be .67, respectively (n = 520). An open-ended prompt asking for *Comments/Suggestions* is also included on each version of the survey.

It should be noted that many participants come to this programme evaluation process with little exposure to questionnaire-style assessments. Therefore, no identifying information is requested to ensure anonymity and

encourage accurate reporting of their perceptions. The processing of each questionnaire is completed by project personnel not directly involved with group interaction so as to prevent the linking of any individual with his or her survey responses. Each completed survey is visually checked and the pre-programme survey is aligned with a parallel post-programme survey based upon demographic responses and handwriting. The two surveys are then assigned an identification number for tracking purposes during data analysis. Under such circumstances, only independent rather than paired comparisons can be made during data analysis.

### Data Collection Procedures

As has been previously noted, each participant was given two opportunities to complete a questionnaire. The pre-programme survey was provided at the opening session before the initiation of programme experiences and the post-programme survey was provided at the end of the programme during the closing session. As the collection of this data is for ongoing programme evaluation purposes and is not intended for generalization to other programmes, this evaluation process has been given exempt status by IRB. As most participants do not speak English, each group was accompanied by trained interpreters who provided translation of both verbal instructions and written materials. The interpreters were guided by SDI programme staff to inform participants that completion of each survey is voluntary. Each participant was given a paper copy of the survey in English, which was subsequently translated into either Spanish or Portuguese as needed for the nine groups from Latin America and the Caribbean. Not only did the interpreters provide directions and read prompts with response options, they also offered clarifications as needed. Completion of each questionnaire took participants approximately fifteen minutes, depending upon how many questions interpreters needed to address and how many written comments respondents offered.

### Data Analysis

The primary purpose for this programme evaluation was to examine a subset of groups from Latin America and the Caribbean to ascertain the short-term impact of an intervention on the attitudes of participants relative to programme objectives. Given this purpose, pre-programme and post-programme survey responses were used to identify the collective attitudes of these specific groups by examining the range of perspectives provided at specific moments in time.<sup>51</sup> In addition to description elements such as means and standard deviations, Dunst, Hamby, and

Table 1 – Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	65	45.5%
	Female	78	54.5%
Role	Coach	52	36.4%
	Athlete	91	63.6%
Gender and Role	Male Coach	31	21.7%
	Female Coach	21	14.7%
	Male Athlete	34	23.8%
	Female Athlete	57	39.9%

and Trivette<sup>53</sup> suggest ways to calculate effect sizes when measuring pre/post responses for the same group of participants over time. Therefore, the quantitative data were examined at two distinct points in time, the very start of the programme experience and the very end of the programme experience, to ascertain changes that could be indicative of programme effectiveness.

Some qualitative data was collected on the surveys using a single, open-ended comment prompt on each requesting *comments/suggestions*. Participant comments were translated by professional translators and sorted for emergent themes. While the qualitative data adds context, it is not the focus of this analysis. Therefore, information generated from the post-programme qualitative prompt is utilized only to help explain any indications of change yielded from the quantitative analysis. Two demographic items (i.e., gender and role) and all seven Likert-type prompts that were aligned with programme objectives provide the essential data for this analysis.

## RESULTS

Nine groups representing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean participated in the SDI Sports Visitors programme over the course of five years. Of these participants, 143 individuals completed both a pretest and posttest survey consisting of seven items measuring core concepts associated with participation. The goal of this study was to:

1. Measure growth on each item comprising the questionnaire and demonstrate its value through effect size calculations

2. Measure the overall growth of participants using total mean scores for pretest and posttest items and demonstrate their value through effect size calculations

3. Determine whether the overall effect of the programme is received differently by individuals based on gender, role (coach/athlete), and gender/role combined

All individuals who completed both the pretest and posttest further identified their gender and specific role as either a coach or athlete. The demographic data of the final sample used for analysis is outlined in Table 1.

Each item comprising the questionnaire was measured during both the pretest and posttest. These items were based on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive. The mean scores for the entire sample of 143 valid participants are included in table 2 along with standard deviations. All items demonstrated gains from pretest to posttest. To determine how large or significant these gains were, effect size calculations were made on a per item basis as well as on the overall total mean scores using Cohen's *d* where the general accepted range of effects are:

1. Small = 0.20
2. Medium = 0.50
3. Large = 0.80

The range of effect size indicates that gains from pretests to posttests were small for items one, six and seven, medium for item two, large for items three, four and five and very large for overall total mean scores. These figures indicate that the programme is having a strong positive impact on

Table 2 – Pretest, Posttest and Effect Sizes for Likert Scale Questions and Overall Scores

Item	Pretest		Posttest		<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
(1) My opinion of the United States is	5.26	0.76	5.52	0.61	0.38
(2) My opinion of American people is	4.83	0.77	5.31	0.63	0.68
(3) My familiarity with American sport is	4.06	1.16	4.99	0.85	0.85
(4) My familiarity with American culture is	3.43	1.14	4.55	0.82	1.13
(5) My familiarity with including people with disabilities in sport is	3.70	1.46	5.07	0.86	1.14
(6) I anticipate the value of this programme will be/The value of this programme has been	5.66	0.57	5.81	0.43	0.28
(7) I anticipate my willingness to share my experience when I return is/My willingness to share my experience when I return is	5.69	0.48	5.83	0.40	0.32
Overall Scores and Effect Size	32.64	3.63	37.08	2.50	1.43

Range of overall total score is 7-42.

participants as a whole. Participant comments support these findings: “This programme was extremely valuable, well planned and it fulfilled all its objectives. All my expectations were met and I definitely took valuable pointers from the different sessions that will be of great importance.” The idea that change can occur in such a short time was also reflected, “The experience that you have given us has completely changed my life and my way of thinking” and “This programme has changed my perspective on sports and disability and I hope you continue to promote similar programmes.” Some objective-specific elements are affirmed, “My trip here has taught me a great amount about the people, the culture and has made me a better person” and “Participating in this programme was very valuable to me. I was able to reflect about my thoughts and attitudes at work, particularly towards people with disabilities.” Gratitude was a common theme in the comments, “Thank you for everything you did for us! The experience that you have given us has completely changed my life and my way of thinking. I am sure it changed my fellow participants’ life too! Thank you!” Several participants indicated the desire to return and many suggested the need to continue programmes such as this.

It appears that most participants could separate the intent of the objectives from the aspects of the visit they found challenging or in need of improvement. “I know that it is difficult to enjoy the food from different countries but I think that it’s the most difficult thing for kids to get used to. But I think that this is an excellent experience for kids of

this age for their personal and intellectual growth.” Others indicated the desire for more *down time* to rest or reflect; whereas others wanted to have more opportunities to shop.

Because of the very large overall programme effect size, it was important to determine whether gains were more significant for some participants than others. In this study, analyses based on gender, role (coach/athlete), and the combination of the two (gender/role) were used to generate a comparison of overall mean scores for pretests and posttests as well as gains for each independent variable analyzed.

Male participants reported mean gains of 4.42 points and female participants reported mean gains of 4.46 points. Based on the difference in mean gains by gender, an independent samples *t*-test was run. The results of the independent samples *t*-test were not significant when using gender as a factor with overall gains  $t(141) = -0.063, p = 0.951$

Individuals who participated in the programme as coaches reported mean gains of 4.31 points and individuals who participated in the programme as athletes reported mean gains of 4.52 points. Based on the difference in mean gains by role, an independent samples *t*-test was run. The results of the independent samples *t*-test were not significant when using role as a factor with overall gains  $t(141) = -0.309, p = 0.757$ .

Table 3 – Comparison of Overall Pretest and Posttest Scores by Gender

Gender	N	Pretest		Posttest		Gain
		M	SD	M	SD	
Male	65	32.75	3.83	37.17	2.47	+4.42
Female	78	32.54	3.48	37.00	2.53	+4.46

Table 4 – Comparison of Overall Pretest and Posttest Scores by Role

Role	N	Pretest		Posttest		Gain
		M	SD	M	SD	
Coach	52	33.30	3.61	37.61	2.53	+4.31
Athlete	91	32.25	3.60	36.77	2.44	+4.52

Table 5 – Comparison of Overall Pretest and Posttest Scores by Gender and Role

Gender and Role	N	Pretest		Posttest		Gain
		M	SD	M	SD	
Male Coach	31	33.16	3.72	37.44	2.85	+4.28
Female Coach	21	33.52	3.52	37.86	2.01	+4.34
Male Athlete	34	32.39	3.94	36.93	2.09	+4.54
Female Athlete	57	32.18	3.42	36.69	2.64	+4.51

Four groups who participated in the programme included male coaches, female coaches, male athletes and female athletes. Male coaches reported mean gains of 4.28 points and female coaches reported mean gains of 4.34 points. Male athletes reported mean gains of 4.54 points and female athletes reported mean gains of 4.51 points. Based on the difference in means in the gender/role category, a one-way ANOVA was run. The results of the analysis were not significant when using gender and role as a factor with overall reported mean gains  $F(3, 139) = 0.033, p = 0.992$ . The only quote from LAC participants that explicitly addressed different groups is as follows: “Thank you so much for the opportunity you’ve given us. You’ve helped us to know more about this country and to get better at this sport and to learn more. For both children and adults this experience is unforgettable. How wonderful that there is such an institution that deals with making these kind of events a reality.” As you can see, it affirms the finding that the programme impact is consistent for all.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this programme evaluation was to examine a subset of LAC groups in a specific SDP programme that has been a partnership between George Mason University’s SDI and the USDOD Sports Visitor programme to ascertain the immediate, short-term impact of an intervention

programme on the attitudes of participants relative to established programme objectives. The findings are based upon descriptive and effect size outcomes of quantitative survey data supplemented by qualitative comments provided by participants. The results indicate that a) positive change occurred among LAC participants across all objectives measured, and b) changes were consistently reflected across each type of LAC participant group based upon gender, role, and gender with role.

While diplomatic changes are generally slow in evolving, the programme evaluation results indicate that interactive engagement through sport programming has been effectively employed to facilitate positive, short-term change.<sup>13, 15, 17</sup> Affording participants multifaceted experiences through the SDI Sports Visitors Program supports the principles of effective diplomacy recommended by Broome and Hatay<sup>14</sup> and supported by Sport for Development Theory.<sup>10, 20</sup>

In alignment with Allport’s<sup>16</sup> contact hypothesis and Beer’s and Norhia’s<sup>18</sup> Theory O, this programme evaluation supports the contention that direct interaction and bottom-up programming would result in positive change among participants in the SDI Sports Visitors Program. These results are consistent with the results of the programme evaluation of the broader SDI Sports Visitors Program,

revealing that participants from LAC regions, being afforded similar experiences, yield similar results to the larger SDI Sports Visitors Program participant group.

The composition of the participant groups involved in the SDI Sports Visitors Program reflects the citizenship essential in diplomatic success.<sup>22</sup> The non-elite sport participants and coaches embody grassroots use of sport for diplomacy.<sup>41</sup> The sports employed in SDI programming address the specific interests of LAC participants and were essential for programme efficacy by serving as an intercultural influence and connection.<sup>34, 39</sup> The sports of basketball and baseball, in particular, reflect the embedded cultural imperialism in international sport, a side effect of globalization that stimulates cross-cultural similarity.<sup>35, 38</sup> Yet, these sports have been popularized in the LAC region and, therefore, provide an effective vehicle for intercultural exchange.

The U. S. Department of State's support of the Sports Visitors Program explicitly uses sport to foster international engagement and generate diplomatic influence.<sup>41, 54</sup> The programme is organized around broad international diplomatic goals that are addressed at the local level. The 'glocal' foundations of the SDI Sports Visitors Program are evident, as its diplomatic agenda and global intentions are pursued through internationalized local sport activities.<sup>7, 23, 24, 28, 29</sup> Conducted at the interpersonal grassroots level, this programme provided opportunities to increase intercultural understanding, decrease suspicion, reduce stereotypes and humanize cross-cultural counterparts among the participants.

The study measured participants' perceptual changes affiliated with the established SDI Sports Visitors programme objectives through employing an empowerment evaluation model.<sup>50</sup> Through coordinated localized programming tailored to each group's demographics (i.e., participant age, country of origin, preferred sport, role as coach or athlete), the programme facilitated grassroots intercultural interaction grounded on the theoretical underpinnings, such as Allport,<sup>16</sup> Beer and Norhia,<sup>18</sup> and Broome and Natay,<sup>14</sup> upon which the programme was built. Regardless of age, gender, sport, role, or country of origin, programme participants reported growth in individual perceptions directed toward established programme goals. All measured outcomes yielded perceptual growth, including participants' overall opinion of the United States. Participant awareness of American culture, American people, American sport systems, and inclusive sport also strengthened during their visits. The actual value placed on this programme by participants exceeded their anticipated

value of the programme. Additionally, participants' willingness to share their experiences upon returning home increased. This study provided evidence that the SDI Sports Visitors programme was effective in achieving its diplomatic ends through supporting the intercultural awareness of participants from Latin America and the Caribbean.

### Limitations

As with any survey research, limitations exist regarding the accuracy of both input (how well a respondent understands the questions posed and response options offered) and output (the honesty and accuracy of self-reporting). The diversity of the groups can be a limitation as differences in experience, age, roles, and language can complicate the survey process. While steps have been taken to make the surveys accessible to all types of programme participants, the quality of input is still dependent upon the ability and willingness of interpreters translating the documents and responding to participant questions. Because of these input concerns, some typical output controls such as repeating questions different ways and providing reversed response scales have not been used. The reliability scores suggest only moderate consistency since no repetition of questions is used. Therefore, the simplicity of the instrument is a limitation. Another limitation rests in the variability of programming offered to attain consistent objectives. The sponsor maintained a great deal of control over content for most of the LAC groups included in this evaluation. While the results indicate positive outcomes, missed opportunities to apply evidence-based practices to the programme design was limited as was the opportunity to reflect upon experiences relative to follow-on efforts.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

While the surveys have provided useful information, greater infusion of qualitative information should be used to enhance the value of survey and offset the limitations created by this very succinct instrument. Expanding qualitative input to include existing video and photographic data could be used to provide greater insight into the specific elements of the programme that make the greatest impact on participants. For future programmes, the addition of video-based interview prompts, translated in real-time by interpreters, could also lend context to the quantitative programme data. Establishing a consistent method for harnessing unsolicited social media comments/postings could also provide additional information. While the programme staff is aware of some existing data in the social media realm, more information is needed to harvest that data

in a meaningful way.

Programme variability is not problematic as long as essential elements needed to address objectives are consistently infused. A document review of the logistics books that represent programme experiences provided to specific groups should be conducted, preferably by someone external to the SDI team. The goal of this analysis would be to align objectives with activities to make sure essential programme elements are consistently included to address objectives. Outcomes from such a review should drive future planning. Further examination of existing action planning documents would also enhance the potential for connectedness with participants once they return home so that the lasting impact of the programme could be explored.

Finally, this is the first time that the programme has been evaluated based upon regional groupings. In the future, an examination of the larger data set for additional subsets based upon language and/or regional groupings would help to identify areas of greatest impact that could then be targeted for explicit follow-on efforts. The establishment of greater connections with the embassies would also be desirable in order to enhance the likelihood of gathering longitudinal multiplier effect data. After all, the ultimate intent of sport diplomacy programmes is to create meaningful change in local communities. The greatest future research would be to identify the accomplishments of participants from these LAC programmes that they would attribute to their experiences through the programme, in order to add to the research base of SDP as a whole.

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