

Original Research

A follow-up qualitative study: The lived experiences & perceptions of SDP trained youth sport coaches and teachers from Jordan and Tajikistan with using sports to foster a culture for peace

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ABSTRACT

Researchers interviewed 27 youth sport coaches and physical education teachers from Jordan and Tajikistan who previously participated in a sport for development and peace (SDP) train-the-trainer program. The purpose was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of participants and how they used sports activities in their positions of leadership to foster conditions that conceptually correspond to a culture of positive peace. Using an inductive-coding analysis, researchers identified two main dimensions discussed in this paper: (a) Changes in Everyday Lived Realities and (b) Practical Strategies for Fostering Nonviolence. Participants mentioned changes in their attitudes and behaviors as well as in youth athletes' attitudes and behaviors on and off the field. New strategies involved peace education, conflict resolution skills, and lessons learned on the field. Findings from this study provide a better understanding of some of the lived experiences of sport coaches and physical education teachers as stakeholders promoting a positive peace years after being trained in SDP work. Implications of the present findings call for supporting SDP stakeholders' vital involvement in social initiatives that work to address both observable and unobservable factors which threaten to divide youth.

A FOLLOW-UP QUALITATIVE STUDY: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES & PERCEPTIONS OF SDP TRAINED YOUTH SPORT COACHES AND

TEACHERS FROM JORDAN AND TAJIKISTAN WITH USING SPORTS TO FOSTER A CULTURE FOR PEACE

Positive peace is a term coined by Galtung (1996) to refer to a desired social state between people in a relationship in which there is not only an absence of direct violence, but also the presence of conditions of justice, fairness, and equity in which integral human development can occur. A central notion of positive peace, as proposed by Galtung (1996), is the pursuit and promotion of peace by peaceful means. This aphorism primarily emphasizes the importance of cultivating nonviolent attitudes and building mutual relations through a radical respect for equal human rights (Grewel, 2003). By contrast, when there is an absence of overt or direct violence, but a persistence of structural or cultural violence, this can be called "negative peace". Negative peace involves actors who indirectly employ processes such as multilateralism, arms control, and war. Such processes may be effective in the short term, but in the long run only reproduce cultural and structural forms of violence (Levitt, 2014). To reduce structural, cultural, and direct forms of violence, and increase justice and peace in relationships, requires more than addressing an isolated incident of conflict through quick solutions or fixes. Instead actors involved in conflicts must become increasingly sensitive and motivated to look at what lies behind these relational issues to clearly see the underlying patterns and causes (Lederach, 2015).

Keywords: qualitative research; sport coaches and teachers; sports for development and peace activities; nonviolence; building relationships

Other concepts can add to the richness of meaning and nuance of peace. Conflict resolution as a peace construct views peace as a static end-state, while conflict transformation views peace as a continuously evolving and developing quality of relationships (Lederach, 2015). Conflict transformation is the process of changing or redirecting an existing conflict amongst parties in a positive direction; a direction that satisfies the needs, interests, and goals of both parties (Lederach, 2015). It differs from conflict resolution in that the key to transformation is holding a bias toward envisioning and engaging conflict as not the enemy, but a gift, an opportunity, a potential catalyst for growth and learning about the deeper underlying relational and structural patterns that prevents conflict from improving (Lederach, 2015). Peace work, therefore, is transformational in that it is embedded in justice, cooperation, and equitable change processes occurring at all levels of relationships (Lederach, 2015). There must be intentional efforts to address the natural ebb and flow of human conflict in relationships through nonviolent approaches, like open dialogue designed for greater mutual understanding, fairness and equality, and respect for differences in relationships. In general, it is difficult to say which of these concepts should be considered central components of contemporary peace, and which may be better accounted for by other constructs or as separate constructs entirely. Therefore, these concepts will be used interchangeably to ground the study.

To effectively understand and intervene in a violent conflict situation, Lederach (1997) places importance on identifying key stakeholders. This identification process is stressed in one of Lederach's approaches to peacebuilding known as web-making. This approach views grassroots level leaders (e.g., teachers, coaches, parents) as placed in a strategic position to connect the ground of society with middle level leaders (e.g., community agents and local leaders like SDP (Sport for Development and Peace) programs and non-government organizations) to tackle particular social problems and promote positive social change (Lederach, 1997). Understood from the context of SDP, scholars and practitioners will often form and sustain cooperative partnerships with local stakeholders (Schulenkorf, 2012). These partnerships include individuals such as grassroots coaches and teachers who are experienced in conflict resolution or can act as mediators to facilitate cooperation amongst at-risk youth groups (Blom et al., 2015; Spacey & Sugden, 2016; Stidder & Haasner, 2007). Previous findings have indicated that coaches and teachers who are charismatic, inspired, and committed to understanding and addressing micro-level issues, can influence positive social change (Whitley et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the impact that SDP youth leaders (stakeholders) have in intentionally or

unintentionally and directly or indirectly fostering positive peace through sports remains unclear, particularly with youth from underrepresented geographical-political regions (Gilbert & Bennet, 2012; Giulianotti, 2011; Svensson & Woods, 2017).

To evaluate the impact of SDP programs, researchers have employed qualitative research methods to evaluate grassroots SDP programs. For example, SDP studies have explored stakeholders' personal experiences with the programs during and immediately following program implementation (Cárdenas, 2016; Cooper et al., 2016; Gannet et al., 2014; Lecrom & Dwyer, 2013). Some of this work has solely focused on collecting data from stakeholders within a single country or program, or the data is collected immediately post-program (Cooper et al., 2016; Lecrom & Dwyer, 2013). Other research studies have made use of qualitative methods to serve alternative research agendas, such as developing an understanding of implicit or explicit learning and transfer of peace values and skills through sport, as perceived by SDP stakeholders (cf. Cárdenas, 2016; Lecrom & Dwyer, 2013; Whitley et al., 2013).

SDP literature supports the utility of seeking out the voices and perspectives of local leaders for informing future best practices, program planning, and program implementation (Gannet et al., 2014). Furthermore, the existing qualitative literature appears to lack sufficient discussion of the types of personal experiences coaches and teachers are having in facilitating positive peace several years after participating in SDP programs (Schulenkorf et al., 2016; Whitley et al., 2019). Many studies primarily follow participants during or at the end of training, while few research outcomes after participants have had the opportunity to spend at least a year practicing the knowledge they have acquired. Thus, it is necessary to study SDP coaches and teachers years after their training to explore the ways in which such training may still be impacting their work with youth. Furthermore, incorporating data from multiple countries within the same study could add a unique perspective to the SDP literature that has been seldomly observed, while also addressing the often-siloed perspective that single context studies offer (Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Additionally, examining participants' experiences in SDP training across two countries allows for SDP researchers to explore general program components as well context-specific components. To that end, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the day-to-day, lived experiences of Tajik and Jordan grassroots youth football coaches and physical education teachers who had previously received SDP training related to fostering a culture for positive peace with their youth.

The Two SDP Coach Education Programs and Cultural Context

Participants within the present study consisted of Jordanian and Tajik youth sport coaches and physical education teachers who had received SDP coach education and training delivered internationally by U.S.-based faculty and sport experts. These programs were selected based upon the accessibility of follow-up with participants post-program, as this was more readily available to the 2nd and 3rd authors. Both programs were developed by the same U.S. faculty and had similar aims, activities, training philosophy, workshop design, football focus, and funding sources (Blom et al., 2014; 2015).

Both programs were designed to equip coaches and physical education teachers with the technical knowledge surrounding citizenship, leadership, and peaceful living theory, through activities and skill acquisition via a “train the trainer” approach. Facilitators led workshops and seminars covering topics on peaceful living, conflict resolution, leadership, and citizenship behaviors, integrating them into football (known in the U.S. as soccer) activities. In-country programs included 2-day workshops where U.S. staff traveled to different regions of each country to work with 15-25 coaches and teachers. A selected representative group of 8-10 coaches from each country also participated in an exchange program in the U.S. Throughout the training, coaches practiced how to integrate teachable moments and purpose-oriented activities with the diverse youth athletes who attended practice sessions. Coaches were encouraged to apply intergroup relational skills (e.g., conflict resolution, active listening, and open communication skills) in working with youth.

METHOD

Participants

The final study sample consisted of 27 participants (see Table 1). To be included, participants needed to: (a) meet residential status in the countries of Jordan or Tajikistan; (b) have participated/received training in at least one workshop from either the Jordan or Tajikistan SDP programs; and (c) currently, or have a history of, coaching/teaching youth sport for a minimum of one year after receiving SDP education and training. Researchers attempted to contact all members who participated in these original programs who met the inclusion criteria. Originally, 16 participants from each targeted country agreed to partake in the study; however, five participants were excluded from the study for not meeting the inclusion criteria.

Table 1. Descriptions of Jordan and Tajik Participants

ID	Age	Gender	Location	SDP Program [^]
1	45	Female	Tajikistan	full program
2	44	Male	Tajikistan	in-country workshop only
3	47	Female	Tajikistan	in-country workshop only
4	55	Male	Tajikistan	full program
5	68	Male	Tajikistan	full program
6	49	Female	Tajikistan	in-country workshop only
7	43	Male	Tajikistan	full program
8	60	Female	Tajikistan	full program
9	48	Female	Tajikistan	full program
10	56	Male	Tajikistan	in-country workshop only
*12	41	Male	Tajikistan	in-country workshop only
17	32	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
18	54	Male	Jordan	full program
19	56	Male	Jordan	full program
20	52	Male	Jordan	full program
21	30	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
22	52	Male	Jordan	in-country workshop only
23	25	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
24	34	Male	Jordan	full program
25	40	Female	Jordan	full program
26	43	Male	Jordan	full program
27	42	Female	Jordan	full program
28	48	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
29	41	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
30	43	Male	Jordan	in-country workshop only
31	37	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
32	53	Male	Jordan	in-country workshop only

* Sixteen coach and teacher participants from each targeted country agreed to partake in the study. Five of the participants (ID # 11 and #13-16) were excluded from the study for insufficiently meeting the inclusion criteria.

[^] ‘In-country workshop only’ includes involvement in an in-country 2-3 day training workshop. ‘Full program’ includes involvement in an in-country 2-3 day training workshop and a 10-12 day exchange trip to the U.S.

Positionality

Crucial to the study were the primary researcher, interviewers, interpreters, and transcribers, whose collective thought, positionality, and skill were necessary to drive the study forward.

Primary Researcher (PR)

The first author is the primary researcher (PR) who conducted interviews and led the transcription process and analysis. He is a 25-year-old male graduate student who undertook this study as part of his sport psychology and clinical mental health counseling graduate programs at a mid-size university in the Midwest, U.S. The PR was born in Basra, Iraq. At the age of two, during the Iraq-Kuwait war, and at a time where Saddam Hussein’s despotic and violent rule made emancipating the country merely a

wishful fantasy, the PR and his immediate family would eventually safely and successfully flee the country of Iraq. He and his family, displaced in Jordan for two years, were eventually granted legal permission to permanently reside in the U.S. in 1999. The PR has 12 years of experience competing in youth football in both Western and Middle Eastern countries. He affirms organized youth sports can create a peaceful and positive outcome in the lives of youth facing disadvantaged conditions and living in conflict-affected communities.

Interviewers

The PR was joined by two professors, one female from sport psychology and one male from counseling psychology, to conduct the in-country interviews. The professors had conducted and researched several SDP projects over the past 10 years, specifically the two programs from which participants were recruited in this study, and they had traveled to Jordan and Tajikistan previously. Thus, they had existing relationships with some participants and some of the interpreters, as well as cultural and program contextual knowledge. The sport psychology professor also has youth coaching and football playing experience, and the counseling psychology professor has a varied sport playing experience and is an expert in conflict prevention and resolution.

Interpreters

Interpreters were hired by local community partners and had either been previously part of SDP training or were educators or students studying interpretation. Three female interpreters and two male interpreters served as part of the support team in the country of Jordan, and two male and two female interpreters in Tajikistan. To mitigate issues associated with translation accuracy, interviewer and interpreter met prior to each interview to practice reviewing the questions and to reinforce the expectation that the interpreters' role consisted of being a reflexive co-researcher (Kapborga & Berterö, 2002).

Transcribers

Three graduate students were selected to assist the PR with the transcription of the English portions of the interview data. Additionally, four bi-lingual English-competent translators were hired to double-check and confirm the quality, accuracy, and validity of the translations performed by the in-country interpreters.

Data Collection

Approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained prior to data collection. Participant recruitment involved posting study information through private social media program sites and sending information to the former in-country project directors and interpreters. Data were collected in the Spring of 2018 when the PR and two interviewers traveled to Jordan and Tajikistan to conduct the interviews.

Interviews with the participants followed similar guidelines outlined by McNamara (2009). To develop the interview guide, the researchers first extracted ideas from the existing literature on SDP coach education program evaluations (Blom et al., 2015; Cooper et al., 2016), SDP programming for community development (Lyras & Peachey, 2011), and previous literature on best coaching practices (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2006). This was in addition to non-SDP related research relating to peace, conflict, violence, peace education and peacebuilding processes (Bar-Tal, 2002; Cárdenas, 2013; Gawerc, 2006; Giulianotti, 2011; Navarro-Castro & Nario-Galace, 2008; Stura & Johnston, 2014). An initial list of questions was then shared with peers and faculty experts in the field of SDP and qualitative research, who provided expert feedback related to reducing the number of questions, adding probes, and maintaining an open-ended stance to strengthen the interview process. Approximately 12 revisions were completed over a 12-month period. This recursive process was necessary prior to the implementation of the study, as it established greater coherency in the interview guide with the study purpose (Kvale, 1996). The final semi-structured interview protocol included questions to uncover three topic areas, partly based on participants lived experiences in SDP programs: (a) how they view peace in relation to everyday conflicts with their youth in sport or physical education; (b) efforts to facilitate positive peace through sport-based activities based on what they learned in the SDP training; and (c) experiences in building relationships with youth through sport-based development using SDP techniques. Background and demographic information for each participant was also gathered at the onset of the interview.

Confidentiality and permission to audio-record the interview for transcription and data analysis were discussed during the process of obtaining informed consent. Interviews lasted 45-90 minutes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim then checked for accuracy by translators. To enhance the integrity of the English translation, a back-translation technique was used where translators listened to the audio-recording while concurrently following along with the English-portion typed transcriptions, then placing notations (e.g., inconsistent

interpretations) in the margins of the assigned transcriptions (Singal & Jeffrey, 2008). If a discrepancy was detected, translators were asked to construct personal interpretations of the participant's responses into English translations. Prior research suggests when translating from one language to another, achieving conceptual equivalence in meanings is often considered more essential than capturing participants' exact words (Singal & Jeffrey, 2008).

Design and Analysis

Given the exploratory and descriptive nature of the current study, we employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing basic qualitative data analysis techniques (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2002). Such approach is used to identify invariant patterns of lived realities as described by SDP youth leaders' subjective experiences. Although predominantly inductive, this process of analysis included deductive aspects.

In this study, analysis of the data involved three coders. The coders consisted of the PR, the fifth author who also assisted with the transcriptions, and the sport psychology professor. The coders assisting the PR were each assigned with 20% of the transcripts to distribute the load and allow for depth of understanding. These coders read through their assigned transcripts thoroughly multiple times to establish familiarity. Coders were instructed to generate descriptive raw codes openly and directly from the data (open coding). Following the initial coding, the PR independently read and sorted through the initial list of descriptive raw codes, which were then coalesced into smaller categories. Relevant smaller categories were then organized to form larger conceptual categories. Finally, the larger conceptual categories were combined to form three dimensions. The PR and the two initial coders met and reviewed the dimensions, conceptual categories, sub-categories, and descriptive raw codes to ensure they were sufficiently and coherently categorized. Constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) was used to reach consensus when differences arose regarding the construction of the categories and sub-categories. Such phases of analysis were completed iteratively (Creswell, 2013) and independently by the primary researcher and second and fifth authors.

Trustworthiness of Data Collection, Analysis, and Findings

Several procedures were used by the PR to enhance accuracy in the procedures used for data collection, data analysis, and the formation of sound interpretations (Creswell, 2014; Shenton, 2004). Through the adoption of a relativist and constructivist approach and the rejection of

objective, universal criteria (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), the research team sought to capture an account of peace in sport through learning with others about how positive peace might be experienced in the participants' cultural context. This allowed for data to emerge naturally which helped address the study research question and overall aim of this study. The interdependency between the researcher-participant is inherent in certain qualitative methods (e.g., interviews; Ponterotto, 2005). Furthermore, such interdependency is advantageous in qualitative research, because it facilitates the co-creation of meanings and interpretations of the phenomena being studied (Ponterotto, 2005). However, qualitative researchers are often encouraged to engage in a constant process of reflexivity, which invited the primary researcher to reflect on his presuppositions, biases, personal experiences and expectations throughout the research process (Creswell, 2014). Reflexivity was also enhanced through a peer debriefing strategy termed interviewing the interviewer (Chenail, 2011; Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). This process involved having a peer conduct an interview with the researcher who is asked to respond to their own interview questions. Throughout the data analysis process, the coders regularly met to draw constant comparisons (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) amongst the identified categories. It was understood by all coders that when data analysis involves multiple researchers, often different patterns would be discovered in the codes at different points in time and are thus prone to construct different levels of interpretations for each category (Fernald & Duclos, 2005). In sum, employing multiple reviewers enhanced the objectivity of how the primary investigators arrived at the larger dimensions.

RESULTS AND SPECIFIC DISCUSSION

Overall, the coding analysis generated sub-categories, which were then grouped into conceptual categories, and then into three larger dimensions (i.e., Changes in Everyday Lived Realities, Practical Strategies for Fostering Nonviolence, and Beginning, Building, and Broadening Connections and Relationships; see Table 2). Due to the authors' focus on presenting new knowledge, detailed findings are only provided for the first two dimensions, as the third dimension has been well-documented in previous literature (Gilbert & Bennet, 2012; Hemphill et al., 2018; Stidder & Haasner, 2007).

Dimension 1: Changes in Everyday Lived Realities

This dimension incorporates some of the change processes, perceptions, and experiences documented by the coaches and teachers (Levitt, 2014) and consists of two categories of coded data: (a) changes in coaches and teachers' attitudes

Table 2. Youth sport coaches and teachers lived experiences with fostering a culture for positive peace

General Dimensions	Conceptual Categories	Sub-categories
Changes in Everyday Lived Realities	Change in Coaches/Teachers' Attitudes and Behaviors	Sports as A Vehicle for Fostering Peace and Social Change in Youth Social Responsibility, Leadership, and Citizenship Teaching Styles and Disciplinary Approaches
	Change in Youths' Attitudes and Behaviors	On the Field Off the Field
Practical Strategies for Fostering Nonviolence	Peace Education	Equality/Unity Respect & Appreciation Teamwork/Cooperation Empathetic Listening Tolerance
	Conflict Transformation	Shared Sense of Power Autonomy-Driven Open Dialogue Teachable Moments Deliberate Team Meetings Corrective Experiences
	SDP Lessons	Concepts and Activities Fun Recreational Games
*Beginning, Building, and Broadening Connections and Relationships	Coach-Athlete Relationships	Coaches/Teachers Perceived Roles Coaches/Teachers Perception of Youth Communication Styles Youth Perception of Coach/Teacher Coach-Athlete Relationships Off the Field Trust-Building
	Activities for Shaping Intergroup Contact	Food Gatherings Field Trips/Team Outings Social Media/Technology Inclusion Teambuilding

*not discussed in current article

and behaviors; and (b) changes in youth athletes' attitudes and behaviors (as reported by the coaches and teachers).

Changes in Coaches' and Teachers' Attitudes and Behaviors

Findings for this first dimension reflect the ways coaches and teachers reported dealing with the conflicts in their own lives through peaceful means, the impact of SDP training on their coaching/teaching, and their intentionality in their efforts to transform how others respond to conflict. Sub-categories identified in this general category include (a) sports as a vehicle for fostering peace and social change in youth; (b) social responsibility, leadership, and citizenship; and (c) teaching styles and disciplinary approaches.

Sports as a Vehicle for Fostering Peace and Social Change in Youth.

This sub-theme complements the classic perceptions regarding sports programs, as a unique mechanism to shape positive developmental experiences and peaceful relational outcomes in youth from all social and cultural backgrounds. It particularly relates to those programs which use football as the main sport (Rookwood & Palmer, 2011; Rookwood, 2008). One coach from Jordan expressed that "football is the only language between the whole world. You can connect the world through football" (P17).

These findings are consistent with the discussion on positive youth development found in previous research

regarding youth involvement in organized or recreational, adult-supervised programs using sport and physical activities (Coakley, 2015; Holt et al., 2017). SDP programs work most commonly by targeting vulnerable young people, with the purpose of cultivating development and social inclusion through adult modeling, reinforcement, and life skills training (Danish, 2002; Holt et al., 2017; Koh & Camiré, 2015).

Social Responsibility, Leadership, and Citizenship.

Coaches and teachers play a crucial role in fostering positive social change in their youth. Usually their impact starts from how they view their role within the classroom or on the football field. In this study, coaches and teachers found themselves assuming leadership responsibilities, which extended into their personal lives. One coach shared that he felt moved to take some responsibility to support the future of youth coming up in the villages where he was born and currently works:

They know that they [youth] are the future. So, I assume that I am making (investing) my investments into (making the) country development through working with these kids, because these kids one day will become some maybe important people in the country. Some become important decision makers...and if they are healthy, and active, the country, the life will get better. (P2)

In this study, female and male coaches and teachers expressed having an increased awareness of and capacity to approach gender disparities observed in their own community. Moreover, several female coaches in the study pointed to their involvement in SDP programs as playing a role in their motivation to begin recognizing and using their leadership position to address complex social systemic challenges. These challenges have been historically, symbolically, politically, and moralistically imposed upon the identity and power of the female athletes or students they worked with. They have manifested as the lack of institutional support, equitable resource distribution, and fair opportunities in sport participation. A female Jordanian coach illustrated that challenging the status quo by directly engaging parents was one possible way for change:

I try to face parents that don't want their daughters to play. So, I try to convince, to let their girls play, because I talk to them about my own experience and how it affected me and when I played how I became more independent, self-confident. (P17)

Consistent with a positive peace and social change agenda, these findings demonstrate how SDP training has helped

transform teachers and coaches' role and responsibility to begin acting with and on behalf of female youths' future voice and human rights. Within this context, coaches and teachers use of communications and actions appears aimed at (a) promoting equal sport opportunities for girls and women, (b) confronting stereotypical gendered roles and norms, and (c) engaging with important stakeholders (e.g., parents) in their respective local communities. Findings suggest that female youth motivations to take up sport and physical activity may depend on the coaches and teachers' personal experiences with gender discrimination (or empowerment), as well as parents' belief in sports health, identity, and occupational benefits. This motivation may be impacted by having role models who are willing to advocate for sport or educational initiatives that aim to break down social barriers (Malnati et al., 2016; Meier, 2015; Moghadam, 2004).

Teaching Styles and Disciplinary Approaches.

In this study, participants reported changes to disciplining and limit-setting with youth who were experiencing conflicts, the adoption of growth-oriented teaching philosophies and a shift away from power-oriented or coercive techniques. For example, fewer coaches and teachers use physical punishment as their main disciplinary method following their involvement in an SDP education training program (Khateeb, 2015; Peter, 2010). To illustrate, one Tajik female coach revealed changes in herself, stating she had grown more patient with youths' misbehavior:

I have even beaten my students before. I could not stand the bad behavior and so I practiced the violence. But now after this program and new educational rules (Ministry of Education strictly prohibited any violence towards kids) I do not use physical violence. ...Now I try to explain them. (P1)

Male coaches and teachers also noted using less physical punishment as a method of disciplining young boys who were oftentimes stereotypically the main recipients of this form of discipline. For one Jordanian male teacher, this meant undertaking a personal and professional transformation:

In my first experience as a schoolteacher, if any student talks back at me shouting at me, maybe I use physical force. But after that I changed. After I did your [SDP] course, I changed myself. And my life. I know that in the past I wasn't so good. (P19)

As a result of their involvement with the SDP program,

participants in this study reported decreasing their use of physical punishment approaches to discipline and applying more positive and nonviolent coaching techniques. This supports existing research on training coaches and teachers guided by a philosophy of nonviolence (Rookwood & Palmer, 2011; Turnnidge et al., 2014).

Multiple participants highlighted a ‘humane-first, winning-second’ position as a salient feature to their practice as agents of positive social change. A male Tajik coach articulated his changed views on sports as an activity that was less about winning and more about fostering a team-first environment:

It's okay if we lose and if we lose, we are still one team. We don't have to make problems. He says that this isn't only something you do in sports, but from [my] point of view sports is one place to start solving these types of problems. (P20)

This did not imply that coaches rejected the value of winning or promoting active competition. Rather, the coaches demonstrated a greater focus in reinforcing more internal rewards, such as optimizing a youth's psychosocial development.

Changes in Youths' Attitudes and Behaviors

Two sub-categories emerged from this conceptual category relating to changes personal and social coaches saw in their youth. These sub-categories relate to: (a) on the field and (b) off the field changes. Findings from this sub-category of codes were slightly less developed than other categories due to coaches' own limited and biased recounting of specific success stories; nonetheless, these findings serve to describe some of the transformations observed by the coaches and teachers following the employment of implicit and explicit strategies while working with disaffected or disconnected youth.

On the Field

Coach and teacher participants recognized some changes in their youth in their clubs/programs since last participating in the SDP coaching training program. Different sources of information (i.e., anecdotal, word-of-mouth, observed) served as markers for deducing changes in youth's attitudes, behaviors, and experiences. Participants shared examples of youth attitude/behavior changes included (a) increased openness to participate in sport activities intended to teach a transferable life skill; (b) approaching coaches and teachers to openly discuss social issues; (c) better regulating strong emotions that accompany competitive situations and

sensitive topics; (d) modifying how youth conduct themselves in relationship with adults; and (e) managing negativity by reframing game losses or lack of playing time as learning opportunities. Coaches attributed changes to several factors, including their own deliberate application of lessons, strategies, and practices learned both independently and via SDP programs on how to instill peace or foster social change through sports.

Another finding revealed a rise in the number of girls actively and openly willing to participate in unfamiliar activities led by the coach. Participants reported that more girls were willing to challenge stereotypical labels and roles imposed upon them relating to participation in “male dominated” sports. Excerpts were offered relating to Muslim girls' modifications on dress codes that had prevented them from participating in sports. In the words of one Tajik participant:

I am observing changes, the same thing though, you can't change the person all at once. The situations are changing, but it is changing slowly. For example, there are more people, especially more girls, interested in football and in sports in general... girls are open to wearing the uniform, they are not feeling shy at all, before two, three years ago, it was almost impossible for a girl to wear a uniform, now they don't feel as ashamed. (P11)

Increased female engagement in sport-specific activities has led coaches to observe how young girls approach the physical game differently, as previously young girls may have fixated on their own fragility or overlooked their own athletic competence. This approach contrasts with past approaches, as research generally indicates that gendered stereotypes concerning the expected physical style of play act as barriers to girls participating in male-dominated sports (Zipp & Nauright, 2018).

Off the Field

Only a few coaches elaborated with concrete and vivid examples of social changes in youth who had previously shown disaffected and disengaged attitudes and behaviors:

So, he [the boy] is living with his grandmother and he's a really poor kid like they don't have any money. So, he's in 6th grade, [I] tried to help him [the boy]. So, I talked to the principal, and the principal said that he could have whatever kind of food he likes from the school for free. Sometimes they also make him lead and that changed him. Like the groups or sometimes during class. Like you [the boy] are responsible for what we are about to do here—to show him that he is just as important as others. In our team,

I made him [the boy] the captain of the team. Sometimes I make him the one instead of [my] place [the coach]. They [the teammates] came and ask me their coach, and I would say no I am not your coach no longer, [the boy] is the coach. And that makes him fly in the clouds and feel so high and so by that his attitudes changed positively. (P22)

To become involved to this extent requires a highly attuned coach or teacher. This individual must be sensitive enough to register nonverbal signals communicated by a young person during an interaction. Beyond this, the coach or teacher then must choose to act compassionately within their capacity on these cues, with the hopes of conveying messages that can instill a sense of empowerment and belonging; this participant attributed his work with this student to his SDP training.

Dimension 2: Practical Strategies for Fostering Nonviolence

We found participants were still employing some of the methods learned in their SDP training. Participants reported the application of innovative practices to support their decision-making, in which they employed methods to prevent and transform conditions (e.g., power imbalances, rigid identities/positions, ideologies, fears, intolerance) that may precipitate, perpetuate, or transform interpersonal conflicts occurring amongst youth. Thus, researchers identified three sub-categories that were placed under Dimension 2: (a) peace education, (b) conflict transformation, and (c) SDP lessons.

Peace Education

When asked about which principles or skills from their SDP training they implemented with their youth, participants reflected on efforts to reduce and transform conflict through five identified sub-categories: equality/unity, respect and appreciation, teamwork/cooperation, empathetic listening, and tolerance. Each of these topics were addressed by their SDP curriculum. Because of the similarity of these concepts, they are discussed collectively instead of separately.

One coach from Jordan reflected on a moment with his youth where he acknowledged affirming young peoples' inherent right to experience a sense of equality. Consequently, such moment gave rise to teamwork and cooperative behaviors:

On the pitch, when they play against anyone else, [I] want them to be like one team and to move this forward for the bigger picture. (P17)

Another coach hinted at a perspective consistent with the value of fairness, when he ensured youth on the team had an equal chance to develop their athletic abilities and share playing time:

I promote the feeling that we are all one and equal, no superior or inferior. Everyone gets a chance to play. Even the players who aren't playing, they all get a chance to play. (P32)

Coaches also encouraged their youth to practice respect and appreciation for individual and collective differences. Coaches emphasized responding to individual differences with gratitude and appreciation to keep the peace and sustain focus on the matches and play. For example, one coach noted the regular use of thanking one's opponent after a loss or when emotional reactions to perceived conflict surfaced:

And when they have a conflict ... even if someone behaves towards you unfairly or badly say "thank you" to him. [I] advises [my] girls not to argue with them, just be calm peaceful, say 'Thank you, Thank you. It's okay, you're right.' The opposite side is shocked like 'Why if we are arguing are they peaceful?' This really works . . . My students win because [the youth] don't spend time and efforts on arguing and fighting, they just play. Kids appreciated this method and use it in their daily life too. (P9)

In this study, coaches emphasized encouraging youth to make conscious choices on how to best deal with adverse game outcomes or conditions. They did this by offering alternative methods to fighting such as cultivating the attitudes of patience and cooperation amongst peers. For example, participants' incorporation of equality and cooperation manifests in the form of granting youth equal opportunities to participate in sport activities. As such, coaches and teachers facilitating team sports and activities such as football are encouraged to give careful thought to the design of sport or physical activity programs for vulnerable, conflict-affected youth. This is not only important in relation to the goals and intervention strategies to be used (e.g., Blom et al., 2015; Svensson & Woods, 2017), but also in the skills the program aims for participants to develop (Danish, 2002).

Conflict Transformation

Participants described several ways of deliberately but also indirectly helping youth to better handle emotional states and task-related situations that may provoke conflict, both on the field and off the field. These ideas were

identified as: (a) shared sense of power, (b) autonomy-driven, (c) open dialogue, (d) teachable moments, (e) deliberate team meetings, and (f) corrective experiences. Multiple excerpts and quotes from both Jordanian and Tajik participants illustrate the formal and informal types of interactions coaches and teachers have within their team. These quotes also show the deliberative communicative team and individual meetings used to promote alternatives for minimizing the frequency, intensity, and impact of conflicts. In the words of one Tajik coach:

With preparation, how [we] avoid the conflicts is it starts before the match. [We] gather the team and talk to them, you [the youth] should behave fairly to your opponents. You shouldn't fight with anyone. That's why [we] don't have a lot of conflicts because before the match start, [we] conduct talks. (P2)

Coaches also considered using their direct interactions with youth as a mean for offering support. For instance, one coach noted, "I share ideas with him and I give him my advice, don't argue with someone, especially the teachers, and you have a problem, it's not the right way to settle roles or fight him." (P24)

Coaches also spoke about alerting youth of the consequences to instigating conflicts with teammates, opposing team members, or referees, as well as any conflict materializing off the field with parents, teachers, or other youth by setting and enforcing ground rules. In addition, coaches discussed the involvement of youth in improving the soccer practices. An example of this would involve a coach soliciting youth feedback on lessons learned during practice. This element is representative of an athlete-centered approach:

Like before the kids were not able to speak or voice their point of view. But after that we [the coaches] started to ask them questions "did you get any benefits from the training? What you got from this?" (P20)

These findings appear consistent with the literature on conflict resolution as one form of restorative practice, which often includes the value of holding formal or on-the-spot team and individual meetings (Hemphill et al., 2018). The basic premise behind team meetings held by coaches is that it provides individuals a space for formally addressing unacknowledged and unspoken tensions within the team (Hemphill et al., 2018). These findings point to the literature on open dialogue as an effective form of conflict resolution (Ungerleider, 2012; Yukelson, 1997).

SDP Lessons

Some participants within the study recounted their implementation of some of the conflict resolution activities and fun-recreational games, as learned from the SDP training they had participated in four years earlier. The most popular activities were the dentist game (a health game) and conflict resolution bench (Horrocks, 1978), as well as the conflict closed fist. Conflict resolution bench activity was cited as the most frequently used conflict resolution strategy. One coach noted:

One of the methods that I use is the conflict bench of making friendships. First, I call them and have them both sit over here and imagine a bench. And you solve this problem yourselves now. It depends on the situation, but about 5 minutes they sit and talk through it. They are both pretty aggressive usually back and forth, so about after 5 minutes they come to me? (P4)

Another participant drew from a group experience where he chose to implement the Closed Fist activity to experientially differentiate forms of communication used in peer or adult relationships:

Everyone, anyone who I used the exercise with did not know what I mean. Everyone tried to open the other persons hand (with force). And then I asked them/talked with them and say please can open your hands and everyone opened their hands, and everyone became happy. Then I said we can sit down to solve problems/conflict between each other not by using fighting but by talking about it. (P19)

For this coach, the Closed Fist activity helped to discern the effects of violent communication from nonviolent communication, and how the latter could be a more viable, alternative response that yields constructive relational outcomes. These results support SDP intervention studies that have been conducted to prepare and equip coaches and teachers with tools for conditioning young people with culture-specific skills; when carried out, they carry with them consequences increasing the probability that youth grow into equitable citizens and agents for positive social change within their communities (Blom et al., 2014, 2015; Spacey & Sudgen, 2016).

The use of fun recreational games within the sporting context was endorsed by several participants as another desirable and viable avenue for maintaining wonder and fulfilling needs for stimulation common to most young people. Using the words from one Tajik coach, "The kids don't have free time to think about harming and conflict,

sport is filling in that space and time (P22).” Several studies support the utility of sport programs in redirecting and minimizing attitudes and acts of violence (Burnett, 2010; Waardenburg, 2006; Whitley et al., 2013).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present study contributes to the SDP field in several ways. First, it advances SDP researchers’ and practitioners’ knowledge on how grassroots coaches/teachers may be using sport-based interventions to build a culture for positive peace, particularly with youth exposed to systems affected by violent conflicts. This knowledge is consistent with potential social and cultural challenges found in previous research on coaches and teachers’ reported experiences as social change agents (Cárdenas, 2016; Cooper et al., 2016; Gannet et al., 2014; Lecrom & Dwyer, 2013; Whitley et al., 2013).

Second, the study aimed to address some of the limitations found in the Schulenkorf et al. (2016) review study related to the need for follow-up studies, qualitative methods, and cross-cultural considerations. For example, by extending the follow-up time on previously delivered SDP training programs, the authors were able to explore variable positive peace expressions and behaviors from the interest of youth sport leaders’ years after initial SDP training. This study further contributes to the SDP literature by offering a unique opportunity to explore the perspectives of positive peace and social change from multiple programs and countries. Furthermore, the accumulation of new data on experiences of participants in SDP programs targeting stakeholders working directly with youth on ground, supports previous reviews (Whitley et al., 2019).

Third, some participants in the study participated in a full SDP program, while others only went through a single workshop. Findings from this study revealed that following this type of program design could be a worthwhile training approach. Participants from the full program reported transferring more knowledge, tools, and lessons learned compared to those who had only participated in one workshop. This transfer was reflected in some of the coaches’ and teachers’ documented responses regarding the depth in recall of training lessons. Some also shared about the meaningful impact of the lessons on their own personal and professional worldview, which supports Cooper et al. (2016) findings. Participants who participated in U.S. coach exchange training had stronger and more specific examples of personal and professional change. Even after four to six years, SDP coaches could identify examples of program teachings that they have and can see themselves still applying in certain situations with their youth.

Data indicates that local participants are valuable sources of information when they are sought out; open about their problems, failures, hopes and aspirations as social agents; and are attending to the disparate voices of students, parents, and other coaches/teachers. In extension, these individuals are more likely to find ways of creating and achieving peace through peaceful means for young people, as they are open to receiving continued training to become better equipped with the skills required for transforming conflicts.

Study Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions

Findings from the study have several implications for SDP researchers and practitioners. One such implication is for the support that SDP train-the-trainer programs have a lasting impact on coaches and teachers, offering pedagogical and educational tools for working with young people (Blom et al., 2014, 2015; Spacey & Sudgen, 2016). Although SDP program studies often report challenges in identifying a clear and sustainable impact upon youth that can be attributed directly to the activities, this study reinforced sustainability of principles and practices learned through SDP training programs. The previous point is specifically applied to the implementation of social change and positive peace strategies which was achieved through the simple practice of asking participants periodically to reflect on how they are using or could use the training techniques in their daily lives or with their athletes and students.

This research may have important implications for both peace studies and the emerging interdisciplinary field of SDP, in terms of theory development and practice in the area of sport for peace. Participants from this study were keen on the convenient use of sport to assist young people in acquiring respect, empathy, understanding, perspective-taking, cooperation, equality, and responsibility—values and skills relatively reputed by peace researchers in tackling structural and cultural factors causing violent conflicts and dividing communities (Lea-Howarth, 2006). Namely, participants from both countries and programs appeared to view sports as one approach for cultivating harmonious and just cultural environments. These findings uphold previous findings that demonstrate that the evident peace-building benefits of SDP programs for young people come more from the social process facilitated by trained and caring leaders, and not necessarily by the activity type. These benefits extend to the accumulation of experiences and skills that will provide young people with social capital in a much wider range of situations.

Although the findings are impactful, several limitations

within the study must be addressed. Data collection was limited to participants from Jordan and Tajikistan, and therefore researchers and practitioners should approach carefully when attempting to generalize these findings to other cultural contexts. It should be noted, qualitative researchers collect individual narratives due to the value they place on idiographic content. Alternatively described, SDP youth leaders are encouraged to give precedence to the subjective nature of understanding human behavior in day-to-day contexts, and thus study findings should be understood in this context (Merriam, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Second, the researchers encountered challenges in ensuring consistent and complete translations. Using interpreters can at times inadvertently or intentionally infuse their own implicit or explicit biases when interpreting back to the researcher the participants' responses to the interview questions, which may have important epistemological implications (Singal & Jeffrey, 2008). Third, findings on changes to youth attitudes and behaviors are limited to coach and teacher participants' perspectives and memory. This limitation could be strengthened by having youth participants corroborate the documented reports along with their parents.

It is also evident that these findings are both situation and context-specific, and that the findings on how peace is emerging can be highly individualized. Researchers are encouraged to practice honoring personal, relational, and cultural descriptions over the macro understanding of peace that typically involves "top-down" post conflict reconstruction and state involvement (Galtung, 1996). Further, as done within this and previous SDP studies, researchers should follow suit in having the voices of stakeholders be involved in community development and social change (Kay, 2009).

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interests were found while writing and submitting this manuscript.

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APPENDICES

Appendices, documents and instrumental materials used to facilitate the research process across the different stages of the research project including data collection, data transcription, and data analysis is available upon request from the first author.

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