

SOCIOLOGY / POLITICAL ISSUES

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Exchange Punches, Not Bullets: Reconciliation through Combat Sports

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Abstract

Background. While sport is often considered a vehicle for peace, the evidence for this notion is weak. There is also a vast difference in the way in which sports have been studied.

Problem and aim. In light of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, the current study investigated reconciliatory attitudes among Ukrainian athletes when facing Russian and non-Russian opponents. The aim was to explore whether sport and competition can unite combat sports athletes despite them coming from countries in conflict.

Method. One hundred and fifty-six Ukrainian athletes in several different types of combat sports were recruited and divided into two groups according to whether or not they faced a Russian opponent. The groups then answered questions in regard to reconciliatory attitudes, sociopolitical hostility and aggression. Their answers were analyzed in an ANOVA and with subsequent moderation analysis with the PROCESS macro v3.1.

Results and conclusions. We found that, in general, competition influenced reconciliatory attitudes in a positive way. Moreover, the effect was predicted by physical aggression, verbal aggression and anger. Additionally, hostility moderated the relationship between pre- and post-reconciliatory attitudes. However, neither nationality nor sociopolitical perception of Russia influenced reconciliatory attitudes. These findings might have implications for future research on combat sports, such as identifying individuals suitable to reconcile and the fostering of positive attitudes (peace) despite political conflict.

Ukraine and Russia have had a tumultuous relationship since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. This relationship was further damaged by incidents such as the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent advancements of Russian troops, and most recently by the capture of two Ukrainian frigates in late 2018 and Ukraine's retaliatory reinforcement of troops on the Russian border. The aforementioned events have exacerbated the political climate as well as imposed various sanctions on both countries, such as the banning of Russian men from entering Ukraine [BBC News, 2018] and the prohibition of Ukrainian athletes from competing in Russia [ESPN, 2018]. These sanctions have since been removed, but may be readily imposed again.

Despite the low-intensity conflict, these two countries have several commonalities. One such commonality is that they produce numerous high-quality martial art athletes. Moreover, in spite of the conflict, these athletes frequently face each other in local and international com-

petitions, which generates numerous questions relevant to *sport diplomacy*.

Sport diplomacy is held in high regard by powerful institutions, such as the United Nations [Beutler 2008; United Nations, 2014] as well as the International Olympic Committee, which promotes the concept as one of its core goals: in other words, to utilize sport for building peace and overcoming hostile attitudes. These efforts echo the words of Nelson Mandela, who said “... *sport has the power to inspire, change the world and unite people...*” [Carlin 2008]. The International Olympic Committee's goal has historically been viewed as partially achieved, with an example being the female hockey team comprising players from North and South Korea at the 2018 Winter Olympics [Lewis 2018]. This unification of Korean athletes symbolizes the definition of sport diplomacy and the concept of reconciliation, as it represented a friendly reunion between former foes [Aureli, Cords, Shaik 2002]. Sport and competition have been

argued as means of establishing respect and friendship between opponents [Jones 2001], uniting divided countries [Beutler 2008; Podoler, 2017; Stevenson, Alaug 2008; Ubaidulloev 2018], and generating positive effects when implemented as interventions for former foes [Baker *et al.* 2017; Nam *et al.* 2018]. That is, sport is perceived as a legitimate vehicle for social change, development, and peace-building [Reid, 2006].

However, George Orwell once famously stated that sport is “*war minus the shooting*” [Orwell 1970: 63]. Indeed, the evidence for the peace-building function of sport diplomacy is feeble and disputed. Sport has been shown to be ineffective for initiating cross-race friendships [Jones *et al.* 2016] and uniting divided countries [Kartakoullis, Loizou 2009; Lekakis 2015], and may spread negative awareness of life-quality gaps [Nygard, Gates, 2013]. Additionally, athletes may experience increased aggressiveness when faced with opponents of other nationalities [Caruso, Di Domizio 2013; Caruso, Di Domizio, Savage 2015, 2017], and sport and competition have been reported to enhance conflict [Jackson 2013; Kapuscinski 1991; Norman 2009]. Researchers have even connected a nation’s history of civil war with an increased propensity towards violent behavior in sporting contexts [Miguel, Saeigh, Satyanath 2008]. However, violent behavior in sporting contexts may not depend on a history of violence, but rather on the characteristics of the game and its situational features [Cuesta, Bohorquez 2011]; thus, it remains unclear how international conflict influences violent behavior and non-reconciliatory attitudes in sport.

The academic exploration of sport diplomacy remains in its infancy. Currently, empirical research on this topic is said to be a) underexplored, anecdotal, and insufficient [Cha 2009; Giulianotti 2011; Murray 2012; Ubaidulloev 2018]; b) lacking in solid theory [Murray 2012; Murray, Pigman 2014]; c) oversimplified and perceived with an uncritical mind [Min, Choi 2018; Roefe 2016]; and d) positively exaggerated [Keech, Houlihan 1999]. The primary criticism is directed at the uncritical portrayal of sport diplomacy as a noble and unpolitical peace-building instrument [Stevenson, Agul 2008]. Many researchers argue that sport and politics cannot be separated, and that sport diplomacy is a multifaceted issue, with many possible confounders [Deos 2014; Gift, Miner 2017; Nygard, Gates 2014; Keech, Houlihan 1999]. Other authors even argue that sport provides an opportunity to achieve political agendas, such as when Germany tried (but failed) to display the athletic superiority of people of Caucasian descent in the 1936 Olympics [Mandell 1971].

Taken together, the outcomes and philosophies of sport diplomacy are contradictory [Jackson 2013]. However, recent research suggests that sport combatants develop pro-social behavior [Blomqvist Mickelsson 2019] and might be more willing to befriend an opponent who has previously defeated them [Barbaro *et al.*

2018]. Additionally, combatants have been found to display post-fight respect to their opponents, depending on the formidability and fighting tactics of their opponents [Pham *et al.* 2017]. Furthermore, elevated levels of testosterone have been used as a predictor of pro-social behavior towards an opponent after a competition [Casto, Edwards 2016]. Indeed, testosterone has been reported to increase post-competition [for a review, see Geniole, Bird, Ruddick, Carre 2017].

Testosterone has also been linked to increased aggressiveness [Archer 1991], which is associated with deviant behavior among athletes [for reviews, see Murnen, Kohlman 2007; Sonderlund *et al.* 2014]. Furthermore, the (scarce) research on political hostility and sports has not yet examined *competition*; instead, researchers have focused on joint participation in various sport programs to foster positive in-group contact [Ditlamnn, Samii 2016; Leitner, Galily, Shimon 2014; Litvak-Hirsch, Galily, Leitner 2016]. Peace-building organizations have developed programs intended to reduce hostile attitudes, and while this objective is honorable, these programs have rarely focused on sport and competition. In reality, while sports might be played in grand contexts such as the Olympics, they are much more often away from media scrutiny and the influence of peace-promoting organizations. Research shows that athletes under media scrutiny or similar supervision are less inclined to display their true intentions and emotions towards an opponent [Rowe 2018].

In sum, most contemporary research on sport diplomacy does not account for or explain individual behaviors and individual-level reconciliations after competitions, and the little research that has considered these points has lacked consideration of political hostility [Barbaro *et al.* 2018; Casto, Edwards 2016; Pham *et al.* 2017]. The absence of research in this interdisciplinary area is also evident in terms of methodological issues; there is, to our knowledge, but *one* instrument designed to investigate athletes’ attitudes toward opponents [Casto, Edwards 2016].

In an effort to bring together sport diplomacy, political hostility, and individual behaviors and reconciliatory attitudes, we explored whether sport and competition can unite Ukrainian and Russian combat sports athletes. Attempts at sports diplomacy have already been made in a Ukrainian war-torn region called Donbas, where mixed martial arts (MMA) competitions have been arranged as an attempt to unite Russian and Ukrainian communities [Zidan 2017]. Whether this political goal has been achieved remains unclear, although Ukrainian military and pro-Russian separatist forces continue to clash sporadically in Donbas.

Three hypotheses were created on the basis of the findings of Caruso and Di Domizio [2013] and Caruso *et al.* [2015, 2017]: 1) Ukrainian athletes will display less desire to reconcile after a competition with Russian opponents compared to non-Russian opponents;

2) high levels of aggression will predict and moderate the negative relationship between competition and reconciliatory attitudes; and 3) high levels of sociopolitical hostility towards Russia will moderate a negative relationship between competition and reconciliatory attitudes.

Method

Participants

All participants were of Ukrainian nationality and active competitors in combat sports. In addition, to be eligible for participation, they had to be a citizen of Ukraine, participate in at least one competition during the study's timeframe, be over 15 years of age, and know their opponents' nationality prior to the competition. The participants were then divided into two groups: 1) athletes who faced a Russian opponent ($n = 58$, 41 males and 17 females), and 2) athletes who faced a non-Russian opponent ($n = 98$, 79 males and 19 females). Ineligible individuals were those who stated that they would be competing in an inter-club competition (e.g., a "friendly" competition between teammates arranged by their own club). We also excluded Russians with Ukrainian citizenship to ensure national homogeneity among the groups. The participants practiced a variety of combat sports: Brazilian jiu-jitsu ($n = 26$, 16.7%), MMA ($n = 15$, 9.6%), kickboxing ($n = 19$, 12.2%), sambo ($n = 22$, 14.1%), karate ($n = 14$, 9%), hortling ($n = 35$, 22.4%), boxing ($n = 22$, 14.1%), and kung-fu ($n = 3$, 1.9%). The sports practiced did not differ significantly between the two groups ($p = .78$). The full demographic characteristics of the entire sample are displayed in Table 1.

Measurements

The demographic questions included age, gender, nationality, type of combat sport, highest education, number of fights, hours of training per week, years trained in combat sports, competitive weight class, belt or grade (if any), competitive level, and whether the participant had faced a Russian opponent before. In addition, participants were asked to report whether they had won or lost against an opponent they faced in the current study.

Reconciliation. The *willingness to reconcile* was measured through the Attitude Towards Opponents [ATO; Casto, Edwards 2016] questionnaire which was translated by a native Ukrainian psychotherapist, now residing in Sweden, and back-translated at a Ukrainian university. The ATO is, to our knowledge, the only questionnaire developed with the purpose of measuring athletes' attitudes towards an opponent in a sport environment. The questionnaire comprises 11 items measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Examples items included in the ATO are "I think the other team should be congratulated for their effort"

and "I have no hard feelings towards the other team." In the original article, the internal consistency for the total scale was high (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$). Lower scores represent a lower willingness to reconcile with opponents, whereas higher scores represent a greater willingness to reconcile.

Table 1. Demographic Data of Ukrainian Athletes

	Russian opponent ($n = 58$)		Non-Russian opponent ($n = 98$)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	27.06	8.15	26.63	8.6
Education ^a	2.43	.56	2.32	.49
Completed fights	38.74	42.63	44.93	50.23
Hours of training per week	8.46	4.62	8.38	3.03
Years trained	9.24	6.34	8.36	6.77
Competitive weight class (kg)	73.61	12.75	72.59	8.39
Competitive level ^b	2.17	.77	2.14	.78

Note. ^aEducational level was coded as 1 = elementary school, 2 = high school, 3 = university. ^bCompetitive level was coded as 1 = beginner, 2 = average, 3 = elite

Sociopolitical hostility. We hypothesized that the willingness to reconcile with Russian opponents after a competition was moderated by the Ukrainian athletes' sociopolitical perception of Russia. The only pre-existing questionnaire for exclusively investigating this matter is the Survey of Opinions and Beliefs about Russia [SOBP; Helfant 1952], translated into Russian as well as Ukrainian. The SOBP items are rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Example items are "I think that trying to get along with Russia is a waste of time" and "It is my belief that the Russian way of doing things is as good as ours." The scale has two distinct subscales: display of a friendly or a hostile attitude towards Russia. As the questionnaire was developed in the 1950s, a number of items were deemed irrelevant to the modern context (e.g., "I like more things about Stalin than I dislike"). For this reason, four items were removed, reducing the number of items from 16 to 11. A principal component analysis was performed to ensure that the questionnaire remained reliable. Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated no problems with low correlations, $X^2(55) = 2068.59$, $p < .001$. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure indicated adequate stability among correlations ($KMO = .89$), further suggesting the data was fit for factor analysis. The factor analysis revealed one distinct dimension with an eigenvalue above 1.0, which explained 72.31% of the total data variance. The Cronbach's α was .93, ($n = 6$) for the friendly scale and .92 ($n = 5$) for the hostile scale.

Aggression. Aggression was measured with the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire [BPAQ; Buss, Perry

1992]. The questionnaire contains 29 items in four subscales: a) physical aggression (9 items, e.g., "If somebody hits me, I hit back"), b) verbal aggression (5 items, e.g., "I often find myself disagreeing with people"), c) anger (7 items, e.g., "I have trouble controlling my temper"), and d) hostility (8 items, e.g., "I am suspicious of overly friendly strangers"). The BPAQ employs a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*extremely uncharacteristic of me*) to 5 (*extremely characteristic of me*). Cronbach's α was .85 for total aggression, .83 for physical aggression, .81 for verbal aggression, .84 for anger and .80 for hostility.

Procedure

All data were collected in the cities of Kyiv, Lviv, and Irpin, in nine combat sports gyms and seventeen competitions. Potential participants were approached at the gyms and competitions. Upon granting their consent, we administered the questionnaires on demographic information, self-reported baseline levels of aggression, and sociopolitical perception of Russia. Participants also completed the ATO, for which they were asked to estimate their willingness to reconcile with their opponent after a competition. After completing a competition, the participants once again completed the ATO to indicate their actual willingness to reconcile with their current opponent. For logistical reasons, the participants completed the baseline measurements between three days and two hours before a competition. The posttest ATO was completed between 15 minutes and 24 hours post-competition.

Statistical Analyses

All statistical analyses were conducted with IBM SPSS Statistics 23. To compare the levels of change in the willingness to reconcile between the group who faced a Russian and the control group who did not, a mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed. In addition, a moderation analysis was conducted with the PROCESS macro v3.1 (for a detailed account about PROCESS, see Hayes, 2013).

Ethics

The study followed the general Swedish ethical guidelines [Swedish Scientific Council, 2002]. Participants were informed of the option to terminate participation whenever they wished and were given full anonymity during and after the study. Moreover, they were informed of the study's purpose and assured that all results would be used for the current thesis. We then obtained participants' consent to participate. The current dean of the deputy on

science of the Faculty of Psychology (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine), Professor Svitlana Paschenko, approved the study protocol prior to the study began and made sure it followed local guidelines and laws. A copy of the official letter of approval is available on request.

Results

A series of t-tests revealed various differences between the groups. The full data are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Data for Aggression and Sociopolitical Hostility in the Two Groups

	Russian opponent (n = 58)		Non-Russian opponent (n=98)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Physical aggression	25.6	6.1	24.16	5.77
Verbal aggression	14.46	3.51	13.74	3.11
Anger	18.55	4.44	16.31	4.58
Hostility	21.79	6.83	19.17	6.61
Total aggression	80.41	14.97	73.69	15.05
Sociopolitical hostility	32.06	8.13	30.42	7.01

Table 3. Correlations Between Different Forms of Aggression, Anger, Hostility, and Reconciliatory Attitudes Pre- and Post-competition

	PA	VA	Anger	Hostility	TA	SPH
Physical Aggression (PA)	1					
Verbal Aggression (VA)	.21**	1				
Anger	.53**	.49**	1			
Hostility	.35**	.27**	.56**	1		
Total Aggression (TA)	.73**	.57**	.83**	.78**	1	
Sociopolitical Hostility (SPH)	.02	.22**	.18**	-.1	.06	1
Pre-Competition						
Reconciliation (PCR)	-.35**	.1	.02	-.07	-.14	.27*
Post-Competition						
Reconciliation (PoCR)	-.48**	-.09	-.21**	-.39**	-.43**	.13

Note. Statistics displayed for the correlations between SPH and PCR/PoCR are reported only for individuals who faced a Russian opponent due to its relevance.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Table 3 shows the correlations between different forms of aggression, anger, hostility, and reconciliatory attitudes pre- and post- competition. Aggression was negatively correlated with both pre- and post-competition attitudes towards reconciliation; however, sociopolitical

hostility was *positively* associated with pre-competition reconciliatory attitudes.

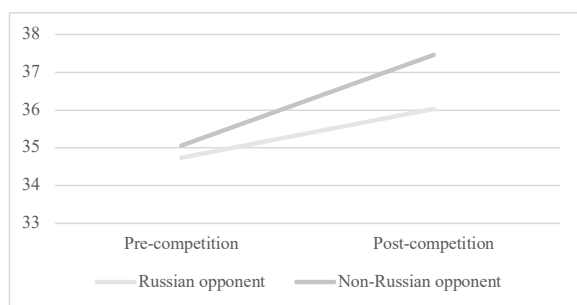


Figure 1. Reconciliatory attitudes pre- and post-competition, measured with the attitude towards opponents' scale.

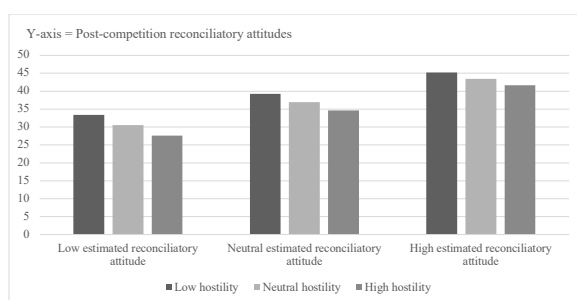


Figure 2. The interaction between low, neutral and high hostility with estimated reconciliatory attitudes when predicting post-competition attitudes.

There was a significant main effect on reconciliatory attitudes as a result of competition, $F(1, 154) = 34.82, p < .001, \eta^2 = .184$. However, there was no significant interaction effect between reconciliatory attitudes and opponent, $F(1, 154) = 3.12, p = .08, \eta^2 = .02$. That is, reconciliatory attitudes did increase post-competition; however, the nationality of the opponent did not seem to influence the change in reconciliatory attitudes [see Figure 1].

To explore whether aggression and sociopolitical hostility influenced the relationship between reconciliatory attitudes pre- and post-competition, a series of analyses were performed. In these analyses, aggression was analyzed both as a total score and as individual subscales (physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility). All variables were mean-centered before the analysis. All total models were significant and total aggression ($R^2 = .85, p < .001$) physical aggression ($R^2 = .78, p < .001$), verbal aggression ($R^2 = .77, p < .001$), as well as anger ($R^2 = .77, p < .001$), separately predicted post-reconciliatory attitudes. However, no interaction effects were found. As for hostility, the total model also was statistically significant and hostility did predict post-reconciliatory attitudes ($R^2 = .86, p < .001$). Furthermore, as can be seen in Figure 2, all levels of hostility interacted with all levels of estimated pre-reconciliatory attitude ($p < .001$). Low levels of hostility and high lev-

els of pre-reconciliatory attitudes generated the highest post-reconciliatory attitudes and vice versa (i.e., high hostility and low pre-reconciliatory attitudes generated lower post-reconciliatory attitudes). In addition; whereas the total model was significant, sociopolitical hostility did not reach significance as a moderator variable.

Discussion

We explored whether sport and competition could unite combat sports athletes in a war-torn region. The first hypothesis—Ukrainian athletes will display a lower willingness to reconcile with Russian opponents compared to non-Russian components—was refuted overall: athletes in both groups displayed an increased willingness to reconcile post-competition. The second hypothesis—high levels of aggression moderate the negative relationship between reconciliatory attitudes pre- and post-competition—was only partially supported in that total, physical, verbal aggression, and anger showed a predicting effect on post-reconciliatory attitudes, whereas hostility showed an interaction (i.e., moderating) effect of the pre- and post-reconciliatory attitude relationship. The third hypothesis—high levels of sociopolitical hostility towards Russia moderate the negative relationship in reconciliatory attitudes between pre- and post-competition—was not supported, as a Russian opponent was not found to influence the reconciliation. Similarly, sociopolitical perception did not moderate or predict the relationship either.

In spite of the refuted first and third hypotheses, exploration of the relations between sport diplomacy, political hostility, reconciliatory attitudes, and individual behavior and reconciliation remains highly relevant. In this study, while we found no evidence that it was harder for Ukrainians to reconcile with Russian opponents, we did observe an overall effect of reconciliation among all athletes. We should also highlight how the change in reconciliatory attitudes towards Russians was smaller in comparison to those toward non-Russians (albeit non-significant), so it might be beneficial to test the effect again in a larger sample. Overall, however, the general change was positive. In addition, athletes' pre-reconciliatory attitudes were already relatively positive, regardless of the opponent's nationality.

These results contradict a previous study reporting elevated aggressiveness amongst soccer players facing opponents during political conflicts [Caruso, Di Domizio 2013; Caruso *et al.* 2015, 2017]. However, in that previous study, reconciliatory attitudes were not measured explicitly, but may have been assumed as a residual of elevated aggressiveness. Following the authors operationalizations and possible assumptions, the preliminary differences between the groups in the current study may offer some insight; the group who faced Russian oppo-

nents displayed higher levels of total aggression, hostility and anger. It may be possible that these characteristics altered the trajectory of the reconciliation. However, interpreting this finding is more complex, as we must integrate these results in a wider context; aggressiveness is generally considered a deviant, undesirable trait, but elevated levels of testosterone—which are correlated with aggressiveness—have also been linked to increased *pro*-social behavior post-competition. That is, whereas the well-established associations between elevated testosterone, aggressiveness, and deviant behavior would suggest a *lower* inclination to reconciliation, this is not always the case. Instead, it has been argued that testosterone, and implicitly aggressiveness, might facilitate and maintain social cohesion and relationships, especially in a sporting context [Casto, Edwards 2016]. Casto and Edwards [2016] presents evidence showing how elevated levels of testosterone might facilitate social and status-preserving behavior instead of overt aggression, especially in the aftermath of a competition (when levels of testosterone are still elevated). The group who faced Russians display substantially higher levels of several types of aggression; this would rather indicate that the overt aggression measured in the current context isn't as important as other processes that may facilitate reconciliation, and that post-competition testosterone works in the favor of *pro*-social behavior rather than overt aggression. We also found that hostility is a moderator of the relationship between pre- and post-competition reconciliatory attitudes. Whereas physical and verbal aggression and anger draw on explicit aggressive actions, hostility is somewhat less explicit. Competitive sports have been argued to be an outlet for aggressive actions and fierce emotions. Athletes with high hostility might more easily feel humiliated after a competition or bitter towards their opponents, leading to a lower willingness to reconcile after a competition. The link between testosterone and hostility is unclear. While some scholars have found a positive relationship [e.g., Persky, Smith, Basu 1971], most have failed to establish a valid link between the two [e.g., Aljua, Torubia 2004; Archer 1991; King *et al.* 2005; Sluyter *et al.* 2000; Sisek-Sprem *et al.* 2015].

In light of the results, it seems as if neither sociopolitical perception nor nationality played a significant role in reconciliatory attitude; therefore, we might conclude that current political conflict and participants' sociopolitical standpoints matter little in the context of reconciliation. A hostile sociopolitical perception of an entire nation and specifically its government might not transfer well to individuals from that nation. Instead, psychological characteristics such as hostility might be of more (negative) relevance for individuals.

The current study substantiates the findings of Cuesta and Bohorques [2011], who reported that socioeconomic and political factors are irrelevant in sports but contradicts research showing that aggression and

anti-reconciliatory attitudes is elevated in a politically hostile environment [Caruso *et al.* 2015, 2017; Miguel *et al.* 2008]. There are several differences between this study and these previous contradictory studies, however, which makes them not quite comparable. Taking all this together, this specific field of research remains plagued by inconclusive findings and should be advanced through improved methodology.

In all, the findings of the current study support the original concept of sport diplomacy: that sports and competitions facilitate reconciliation even in the presence of aggressiveness, adversity or conflict. While much prior research has been done either in controlled environments or through case reports and media portrayals, the current study utilized explicit measurements to provide evidence that sport participation and competitions do work in favor of sport diplomacy, even when the people involved do not have an outspoken reconciliatory agenda or are scrutinized by the media.

Limitations and Further Research

The current study is not without its limitations. One of the most salient validity threats is from selection bias. Far from all athletes approached actually answered questions in regards to reconciliation with Russian athletes. Moreover, the western region of Ukraine, where the data were collected, is known to be more inclined to participate in the European Union and is largely critical of Russian involvement. This feature might have inflated the effect size between the two groups. While we took every measure to ensure a broad category of participants, the results ought to be cautiously interpreted due to the probable selection bias.

Second, the manipulation at hand (i.e., participation in a competition) is impossible to control, as it may be influenced by several unknown factors (confounding variables), such as manners during the competition, existing rivalries between teams, and former foes (in terms of competition). On the other hand, manners and practices during competition might also reflect participants' actual inclination and willingness to reconcile.

The academic exploration of sport diplomacy remains in its infancy. As such, there are a wide array of possible future paths to follow. We targeted the perceptions of athletes in this study. However, due to the novelty of the exploration, the results need to be substantiated by further research. Athletes might be said to be a core aspect of sport diplomacy, but they only represent a minority of the agents involved in a sporting context. The vast majority of those involved make up the audience. Whether it is a local tournament or an Olympic game, the audience always outnumbers the athletes; thus, the audiences' attitudes might have greater practical implications. Based on our current results, athletes do

seem to reconcile adequately as a result of competition; however, these athletes might share a psychological connection due to the actual competition, whereas sports fans have not actively engaged in the competition and therefore may not be as eligible for reconciliation. In addition, future research might benefit from exploring possible reconciliatory differences between team sports and individual sports, as teams might be more eligible to ethnocentrism, making reconciliation less likely than in individual sports.

Conclusions

The current study suggests that competitive sports have the potential to facilitate reconciliatory attitudes between athletes. This is also true when athletes are from two nations at war with each other. High levels of hostility seemed to influence the relationship between pre- and post-competition attitudes, physical and verbal aggression and anger predicted the post-competition attitudes. These findings indicate that athletes' reconciliatory attitudes are not as affected by their sociopolitical perception as by their personal characteristics. Furthermore, the study suggests that competitive sports facilitate reconciliation, even without the presence of peace-promoting organizations and/or media scrutiny. This latter finding has practical implications for sport diplomacy, in particular suggesting that competitions might facilitate more reconciliatory attitudes between opponents. In all, this novel research has offered a new and optimistic perspective on sport diplomacy in a politically hostile context.

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Wymiana ciosów, nie kul: Pojednanie poprzez sporty walki

Słowo kluczowe: dyplomacja sportowa, sporty walki, budowanie pokoju, postawy, sportowcy

Streszczenie

Tło. Chociaż sport jest często uważany za narzędzie wprowadzania pokoju, niewiele istnieje na to dowodów. Istnieje również ogromna różnica w sposobie badania sportu.

Problem i cel. W świetle konfliktu między Ukrainą a Rosją w niniejszym opracowaniu badano postawy pojednawcze ukraińskich sportowców wobec rosyjskich i nierosyjskich przeciwników. Celem pracy było zbadanie, czy sport i współzawodnictwo mogą łączyć rywalizujących sportowców pomimo pochodzenia z krajów będących w konflikcie.

Metoda. Zrekrutowano stu pięćdziesięciu sześciu ukraińskich sportowców uprawiających kilku różnych rodzajów sportów walki i podzielono ich na dwie grupy w zależności od tego, czy zmierzyli się z rosyjskim przeciwnikiem, czy nie. Następnie grupy te odpowiadały na pytania dotyczące postawy pojednawczej, wrogości społeczno-politycznej i agresji. Ich odpowiedzi były analizowane w systemie ANOVA z późniejszą analizą moderacyjną za pomocą systemu PROCESS macro v3.1

Wyniki i wnioski. Autorzy stwierdzili, że ogólnie rzecz biorąc, konkurencja wpłynęła pozytywnie na postawy pojednawcze. Co więcej, efekt ten był przewidywany w przypadku agresji fizycznej, agresji werbalnej i złości. Dodatkowo wrogość moderowała związek pomiędzy postawami przed- oraz po-pojednawczymi. Jednak ani narodowość, ani socjopolityczne postrzeganie Rosji nie wpłynęło na postawy pojednawcze. Wyniki te mogą mieć implikacje dla przyszłych badań nad sportami walki, takich jak identyfikacja osób odpowiednich do wspierania pozytywnych i pojednawczych postaw (pokoju) pomimo konfliktów politycznych.