

## Role of Sports in streamlining the Social Life of the student at the College Level: A Review

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to determine the role of sports in social life of college Students. Although other literature has centered on why students chose to leave an institution for the academic purposes or the importance of student involvement and engagement in the sports, this study focused on who is most influential in encouraging the college students to work toward their degree attainment, sports participation and a mindset of feelings in a social life. To develop social awareness and social consciousness of factors and issues that affect sports. Be familiar of the consequences of various forms of social institutions and be able to critically examine their life experiences in relation to their own sports participation. The present work explores how sports, in whatever form, can be used to provide opportunities for those who lack access, power and opportunity. It also examines how social justice and social change can be achieved in sports settings. To explore the relationship between sports and social life like family, education, politics, economy, the media and religion. How sports and physical activity may impart knowledge regarding the body, gender, sexuality, social class, race and ethnicity and disability.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

At the college level, the life of the student changes altogether. The students are in their teen age which is full of enthusiasm, zeal and energy. They start perceiving about their future life and in the due course they become passionate to achieve their goals. This is the prime time where the students' needs guidance through which their social and academic life to make them a significant citizen of the society. At this stage the role of the both parents and the teachers become prominent to streamline the energies of the student. The role of sport for social development is a manner of bringing about social change through the use of sports. "The programs use sport to help college students learn lifelong skills and as incentive for the students to improve their scholarship. Far-reaching and ever-present, sport is a common denominator for people across the globe". Since the advent of modern Olympics, athletes have shown that sports enable people to come together in an effort to bring about global peace and to share a desire for self-improvement (Sage et al, 1979). Non-profit sports programs aiming to educate through similar means are part of an up and coming movement, however through sport, students learn sportsmanship and other social life skills. "They gain confidence in themselves and their involvement with a group, being surrounded by a supportive group of people with similar goals, as in playing a sport, can alleviate the negative effects of poverty" (Gautam, 1988).

In the present digital world, the individualism is overwhelming the society and the students are drifting away from any such activity in which they have to perform as a group. Team sports increase social interaction between students. Through the participation of sports students will learn to build social skills and lifelong skills. As students became part of a team they have to engage with their coach and teammates. "Here they will build the social skills needed in life. They will learn to become part of a team and build good character. This allows for the development of long-lasting friendships and mutual respect for others. They will learn to become part of a team and build good character". Social skills learned by playing sports include, how to accept negative outcomes and good sportsmanship (Shulman, & Bowen, 2001).

### 2. ROLE OF SPORTS IN SOCIAL LIFE

In the present scenario, the extra-curriculum activities, like sports inculcate collectivism among the youngsters especially at the college level. Although sports sociology is a sub discipline of exercise science, it is also a part of the parent discipline of sociology, which is the study of human behavior and social interactions within particular contexts. "The sports sociology examines sports as a part of cultural and social life and adds a different dimension and perspective to the study of sports and exercise" (Sage et al, 1979). More specifically, sports sociology examines the relationship between sports and society and seeks answers to many issues and questions regarding sports and culture. "Sports are a pervasive part of culture and are considered to be social constructions within society created by groups of individuals and based on values, interests, needs and resources". The sports forms are created by groups of individuals. Each culture creates and uses sports for its own purposes; therefore, sports take different forms from culture to culture (Shiina, Brewer, Petitpas & Cornelius, 2003).

Because of various factors, such as religion, politics and economics, certain groups of individuals may have limited access or be restricted or forbidden to take part in sports and/or exercise activities. “Thus the value of sports takes on different meanings in different cultures. Other factors, such as which controls sports, what rewards (intrinsic or extrinsic) are received from sports participation and the status of the athlete/participant, have some effect on the value and place of sports in a particular society”. The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize the student with the social issues that permeate society and thus permeate sports (Bacon & Russell, 2004).

## **2.1 Cultural values and Sports**

To understand the importance of sports, values within culture must be understood. The values are based on a number of traditions that emanate from religion, race, ethnicity and geographic location. “The foundation of our values is the ideas and concepts about what is good, bad, right and wrong and what is desired. Because our culture is diverse, incorporating numerous racial and ethnic groups, it is difficult to reach agreement on some factors”. For example, in some cultures being thin is not valued, whereas in other cultures being thin is very important (Joperd, 2004). Some cultures emphasize sports to a greater degree than others. “The concepts of beauty and excellence also differ from culture to culture; therefore, finding a consensus on the issue is difficult”. Whereas some of the core values may be contrary to those identified by specific cultural groups in our society, they nonetheless should be noted.

The core values include activity and work, achievement and success, moral orientation, efficiency and practicality, material comfort, humanitarianism, progress, equality, freedom, external conformity, nationalism and patriotism, science and rationality, democracy, individual personality and group superiority themes. “The values extend to sports and exercise as well and include: discipline, hard work and striving to meet a goal are valued; measured by monetary or material possessions, power, and status; considered to be a look to the future, improvement of technology and a means to make things better; ingrained into culture; overcoming adversity to rise above oppression; the controlling factor within society; maintaining stability and abiding by societal expectations and established rituals” (Coakley, 2007).

## **2.2 Social Institutions and Sports**

The social institutions of our society to which sports are closely linked are the family, education, the media, politics, religion, and the economy. Because sports are social phenomena, it is important to study them as they relate to other forms of social life.

### **2.2.1 Family**

Organized youth sports play an important role in the life of the family. They serve as a unifying agent, because they may bring the family closer together; parents and siblings support the athlete, taking him or her to practices and attending games. “The family may unite as spectators, watching televised or live events and discussing the processes and outcomes. Today, the daily routine and weekend schedules of many families are geared around the children's involvement in sports”. The social institution of the family, depending on the degree of support and encouragement offered, has the potential to be a socializing agent for children's participation in sports as athletes or spectators (Sage et al, 1979).

### **2.2.2 The Media**

There has been phenomenal growth in all forms of the media in its relationship to sports. Television has virtually grown before our eyes as we have witnessed the addition of cable and satellite channels, sports programming and the coverage of sports in general. Many millions of dollars have been paid for television rights for championship games, specific tournaments and special events. “The future direction and success of college and professional sports have been paved by the broadcast media. However, the manner in which all forms of the media inform, interpret, create drama and establish particular ideas about sports and society must be realized. For example, the media provide considerable knowledge about sports, and the ways in which the media choose to characterize or emphasize certain aspects of sports contribute to the mind-set of individuals in society” (Shiina et al., 2003).

The media define the important sports as well as the importance of sports; interpret concepts such as the athletic body, femininity and masculinity; and create sports heroes and antiheroes. For some, sports have become a form of entertainment and spectacle for the audience and for the purpose of extrinsic reward instead of being an activity characterized by intrinsic reward, enjoyment, fun and challenge for the participant. The media have promoted sports as a product and the athlete as entertainer. “There is no doubt that sports provide much enjoyment for the participants and spectators; however, the value of sports, how that value affects our culture

and what role power plays in the representation of sports by the media cannot be overlooked” (Bacon & Russell, 2004).

### **2.2.3 Politics**

Politics is another institution in our society that is linked to sports. The related literature revealed that how sports and politics use each other. Although countries use sports to enhance their image and power or that of their leaders, sports have also been used as peacemakers. “The sports served this purpose and world leaders have used sports participants to engage in friendly challenges with athletes from other countries as a means of communication in the process of negotiation. The display of flags and the playing of national anthems have raised controversy and other international competitions, because of the interpretation that such displays promote political ideologies”. Sports do offer a setting for national pride and unity in our society but at the same time raise questions regarding issues of power, particularly in regard to the selection of athletes for international competition and the control of sports events (Coakley, 2007).

### **2.2.4 Religion and Economy**

The institution of religion offers a strong setting for a relationship with sports in our society. The athletes themselves publicly profess and promote religious beliefs. “The sports organizations in particular have been established for such purposes. Just as family schedules have been altered by sports participation, religious services have been changed to accommodate practitioners so that the start of a contest is not missed. College and professional athletes often openly engage in religious practices or rituals before, during, or after a contest”. Such actions receive mixed reactions on the part of spectators. The sports sociologist raises numerous questions regarding the relationship between sports and religion and they use each other to promote their own purposes (Woodruff & Schallert, 2008).

The relationship between sports and the economy cannot be overlooked as we examine the other social institutions within society. “The money spent by the consumers on tickets, concessions, club fees, membership dues, sports equipment and clothing and gambling has a direct effect on the economy. The amount of money spent in any particular city on the weekend of a college or professional game, because spectators spend money on hotel rooms, food, travel expenses, souvenirs and other forms of entertainment”. Corporations seem to have ever-increasing budgets for advertising and sponsorship of sporting events and an advertiser may spend millions of dollars to have its name associated with such an event (Bailey, Armour, Kirk, Jess, Pickup & Sandford, 2009).

### **2.2.5 Education**

The relationship between sports and education creates many conflicts. Athletic programs are generally linked to educational institutions and are thought to offer valuable positive learning experiences and opportunities for students. “The controversy in this area is the reality of this statement for all students, high school and college students alike. The opportunity for professional success in sports is a dream and in some cases a reality, for boys and men in team sports. With this goal in mind, many pursue sports with a seriousness that causes neglect of other areas of education that may prepare them for security over a longer term. Girls and women, on the other hand, have not had this opportunity until recently and certainly not to the same extent”. Historically, women have been forced to play team sports abroad to have access to the professional level (Thompson & Sarah, 2010).

## **3. GENDER AND SPORT**

The concept of gender and sports invokes many thoughts and feelings regarding the ideas of patriarchy, maintaining feminine and masculine images and sexuality. “The topic of gender includes much more than equity. It is about history, socialization, humanness, opportunity, roles, expectations and the future definitions and intersections of sports and gender”. The social constructions or definitions of gender have controlled our thinking about these constructs. The female's position in society at large has been and still is in a transformational stage (Cabinet Office, 2002). “There are ideological struggles in efforts to improve the media coverage of female's sports and to change the cultural images regarding female and physical activity. The advances made by female, however, have been significant. Many more girls and women have the opportunity and choose to participate in sports and physical activity than ever before, and certain positions are now open to women that were not previously available”. The top levels of sports are still not open to women and remain extremely difficult to access. Positions such as managers of exercise and fitness clubs, ownership of sports franchises and political appointments within professional sports organizations are hard for women to attain (Bacon & Russell, 2004).

### 3.1 Race, Ethnicity and Sports

The negative mind-set of individuals regarding race and ethnicity is unfortunately prominent. “Opinions and biases regarding individuals from different cultures and races have been learned from our backgrounds as well as from the current media. For some, separating myth from reality regarding differences is difficult”. We live in a diverse society; and to learn about others, we must first learn about ourselves and explore our mind-sets about those who are different from us. “For example, the question of who we are in relation to race and ethnicity must be explored before any progress can be made in establishing cross-cultural understanding and relationships. Biases regarding the physical and mental abilities or inabilities have been at the center of debate for quite some time, thus creating even more tension between racial groups”. Life decisions made solely on the basis of skin color rather than on the personal knowledge of and about those who are different from us are at the heart of discrimination (Thompson & Sarah, 2010).

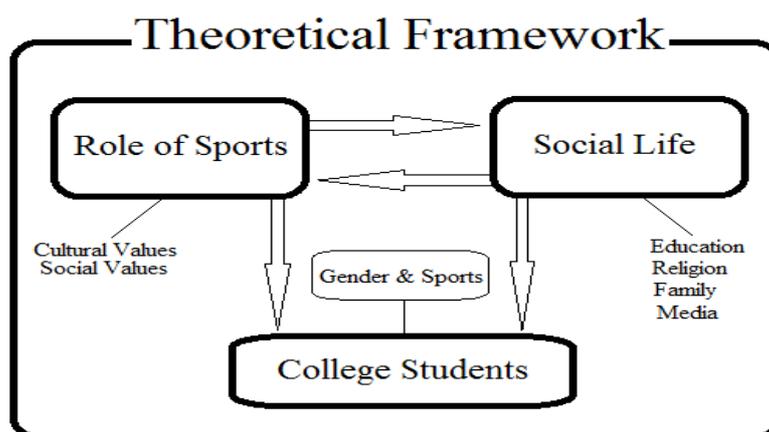
### 3.2 Politics and Sports

Because they do not exist in a cultural vacuum but rather are part of the social world, sports are influenced by many different societal and cultural forces. “One important force is that of politics. Politics deals with the concept of power, how it is obtained and how it is used. Whether we examine settings such as the local high school games, tournament and the Olympic Games politics are involved. At a local level, decisions regarding facility use by organizations and city sanctions and ordinances must be considered” (Cabinet Office, 2002). Some controversies involving politics and sport are in hat ways are sports effective or ineffective tools of political propaganda? How are the Olympic Games separated from concepts of politics? In what ways can sports be used as integrating and truly peaceful endeavors? How can international competitions be changed to be friendly rather than hostile encounters (Bacon & Russell, 2004).

### 3.3 Religion and Sports

Religion and sports might be considered an unusual combination, but the concept offers some interesting comparisons. “As individuals attempt to explain sports and religion as similar to or different from each other, the comparisons show that both institutions are cultural practices in our society; there may well exist the practice of religion in sports and/or the practice of sports within religion, but saying that they are the same sparks debate”. Similarities and differences between sports and religion need to be determined before any conclusion can be drawn (Cabinet Office, 2002). “It is agreed that both sports and religion have places for communal gathering; drama is linked to both settings; there is a hierarchical structure in both sports and religion; they both have special celebratory days, heroes and saints, choirs, hymns, chants, sermons, joining of hands and revered objects; and there are special ceremonies within both realms”. Both of these institutions emphasize self-sacrifice (Coakley, 2007).

Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework



## 4. DISCUSSIONS

Participating in sport can improve the quality of life of individuals and communities, promote social inclusion, improve health, counter anti-social behavior, raise individual self-esteem and confidence and widen horizons. It shows that, in partnership with a range of organizations and agencies, sport can assist in the achievement of their policy objectives (Coakley, 2007). In particular, in the context of local community planning, this document will demonstrate the extent to which sport may contribute to: Improvements in people’s physical and mental health and well-being; the promotion and enhancement of education and life-long learning; the promotion of active

citizenship; Programs aimed at combating crime and anti-social behavior; and Economic development (Woodruff & Schallert, 2008).

Sports are inextricably intertwined with the institution of education in our society. At all levels of education, but particularly high school and college, high-level sports or varsity sports competition are present. "Although the beginnings of interscholastic or intercollegiate sports are traced to physical education programs and recreational activities, sports have developed a solid foundation within educational systems. The value of sports within education raises numerous questions, because they have become so important that a school's worth is judged by the success or failure of its athletic teams" (Bailey et al., 2009). Students have even been known to choose a college or university based not on the academic program in which they will enroll but on the success of the athletic programs. There is no question that sports afford positive values and opportunities for all students; however, we must carefully examine the extent to which the value of sports is placed above the value of education. Educational institutions need to address why varsity sports has become a marketable product instead of an educational program (Thompson & Sarah, 2010).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The college life can be stressful, although it is undoubtedly one of the most memorable experiences in one's life. It represents a critical developmental period for both late adolescents and young adults. Social factors such as romantic relationships, organizations and clubs and sports activities have been found to have effects on students' academic performance. These social factors affect academic performance in terms of time demanded and the psychological state they may cause. A student may be influenced to be involved in any of the stated variables. The question is how one strikes a balance between the stressful academic attainment, sports and social activities.

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