

Relationship between sport and society sociology essay



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\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

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1. [Modern Day Development of Sport](#) \n \t
2. [Political Impact upon Sport](#) \n \t
3. [Social Effects & Sport](#) \n \t
4. [Environmental Impact upon Sport](#) \n \t
5. [Conclusion](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Sport is now regarded as an International phenomenon developing from past perceptions as a recreational activity to now being regarded an essential part of societies make up. Jarvie (2006) reiterates that sport is part of the social and cultural fabric and contributes to a variety of areas including targeting social problems and generating economic benefits. The development of sport has resulted in a variety of factors including political movement of nations and globalisation enhancing sport and the changing perceptions of the modern world. Contemporary changes are highlighted by Boyle (2006) as developing sport through advanced sports broadcasting of major competitions resulting in intensified interest and greater emphasis on the sporting sector.

The following report will analyse in depth the contribution sport development has made with regards to society and intrinsic factors. Focusing specifically on areas such as social, political and environmental factors will aim to distinguish how these areas have developed sport within the modern world and influenced the impact sport can have upon society. Reviewing sport

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policies published by the modern day government will provide discussion on how sport is seen within society as the vehicle to create change not only as a health intervention but using sport to tackle a variety of social constraints. Analysis of sport through political movements will aim to show the impact sport can create on a nation and therefore how this develops the area of sport itself. With major sporting events being delivered in Britain such as the Commonwealth Games of Glasgow 2014 discussion will show how sport contributes to the economy, globalisation as well as integrating social benefits to society. Critical research will be focused upon to discuss sport related theories and how they contribute in understanding modern sport and society.

Modern Day Development of Sport

Sport has gone through radical changes throughout the course of its development. Changes with regards to social, economic and political transformation have altered sport from past centuries to the present day. As sport has developed and evolved as has the audience it now captures. Now a global phenomenon the sporting industry is one of the richest and highest potential developments of modern era. The Executive Vice President of the Beijing Organising Committee Xiaoyu (2009) stated that the Beijing Games 2008 made a profit of at least \$16 million USD. Major events such as the Olympic Games and FIFA Football World Cup showcase the phenomenon that sport creates across the world as well as the economical and environmental impact upon the host nation. There was an estimated 25, 000 media representatives present at the Beijing Games 2008, representing 159 countries (Olympics, 2009). The mass media circus which large sporting

events attract showcases sport to a worldwide audience introducing them to top athletes, new sports and overall an interest in what sport can offer.

Political Impact upon Sport

Political Ideology is referred to by Jones et al (2007) as philosophical ideas whereby human society can be understood and hence provide a framework of principles from which policy can be developed. In 2003 the Labour Party of Scotland introduced Sport 21 (Sport Scotland, 2003), a policy which focused around areas of social inclusion and sporting development where by sport would be the vehicle used to create change. At the heart of these policies was 'Social Inclusion', this ideology would cement sport at the heart of social reform. Of recent times Scotland published a national policy which also adopted sport as the foundation to target social issues, Reaching Higher (2007) concentrates on sporting objectives in relation to improving social inclusion by means of health, participation and performance with a clearer focus in achieving success towards 2020 including Glasgow Commonwealth Games, 2014. Labour politician and author Hattersley (1989) reinforced the importance of political ideology stating that ideas and values of politicians have a permanent importance, policies may change with time but ideology abides. Social inclusion activities the government have liaised in include football specific schemes aimed at targeting minority and hard to reach groups. Tacon (2007) stresses that researching the theory of social exclusion results in both positive and conflicting views of sport enhancing this area; sport can improve health however conflicting views suggest that some sports including football initiate violent tendencies to occur in individuals.

Sport was seen as a means to benefit social issues such as crime, employment, education and health. Coakley (2007) discussed the connections both sport and politics share and the importance sport contributes to the government. Connections include health promotion, identifying power between nations and engaging communities and citizens through sport involvement. Social benefits are a significant reason why the government liaise with sporting initiatives but also the economical impact and support politicians gain from the public can be enhanced by adopting sport into national plans. Modern society has seen negative issues within the world highlighted increasingly through the use of interventions such as the media and politics. Factors including violence, differentiation between classes, poverty and gender issues are just some examples which have catapulted in recent times. One method used to combat and try and eradicate these hindrances was through positive models such as sport. Houlihan (1997) states that modern governments see sport as an opportunity to tackling political objectives. The use of sport to enhance society's problems is a method which highlights the issue and can directly target millions of people. According to a recent document published by Sport Scotland they state that sport was unique and could contribute to a healthier, smarter and wealthier Scotland, (Sport Scotland: 2008). In Scotland alone there are several issues which require immediate action and according to the local government liaising with key governing bodies and sport is essential in helping combat these issues.

Sport has been targeted by the government for a variety of reasons and can be used to highlight a countries wealth or power thus distinguishing them

from rival countries. The Olympic Games is one way in which this ideology has been conveyed and is an extremely powerful tool in showing nations prowess on a global scale. For a number of years the Soviet Union and United States of America were locked in a bitter rivalry regarding differentiation between political and economical ideologies. Riordan J and Kruger A (1999) discuss the development sport has impacted on with regards to society; they state that sport had a revolutionary role of being an agent of social change whereby the nation would adopt sport in order to create change and generate impact. Both countries integrated with sport and the idea that success on a global scale such as the Olympics would show their domination and power over rival countries. Hazan (1982) emphasises the Soviet Union's ideology in the use of Sport during the Olympic Games; for the Soviet Union the agenda was to beat the Americans and show that American sport was inferior and corrupt just like the entire US social system.

The Soviet Union were so engaged in using sport to reinforce and highlight to the world their dominance, power and political stature in comparison to other dominant nations including the USA that they developed drastic measures to achieve success. Extensive training of young athletes and the message of winning at all costs was the main priority of the Soviet ideology. Winning medals was the main goal and it didn't matter if this involved steroids or performing enhancing drugs, winning was everything to this nation and often athletes suffered from this harsh reality, (Riordan, 1993). Although sport was the driving force during this period to show dominance and success the real reason was based on political movement and sport would act as the vehicle to create world domination as part of the government's strategy. The Soviets

achieving more gold medals than that of rivals US would show their strength and supremacy on a global magnitude.

Sport however does not just benefit political involvement but examples such as the Soviet Union and Olympics enhances the development of sport itself. The idea that the Olympic Games are a global event attaches several benefits for sport to develop extensively. Mass media attention and interest in participation results in Sport becoming a major focus point for the world to not only watch but to become active in resulting in social and personal benefits. Globalisation is a modern concept which has expanded extensively, “ it denotes a broad process in which markets, trade, labour relations and culture itself have attained global dimensions” Horne et al (1999 p. 276). Events such as the Olympics and FIFA World Cup develop globalisation in terms of the audience it captures and the marketing it promotes. The impact of globalisation can be seen through the use of role models in sport and how they can encourage and impact on others to follow them. Veseth (2005) provides an example of globalization through football star David Beckham: the “ Bend it Like Beckham” movie captures globalization as Beckham’s global stature can therefore tackle issues of prejudice and cultural constraints. Beckham sporting the Adidas brand through worldwide media photography highlights the globalisation factor and effectiveness it can encompass. David Beckham is a universal star with millions of admirers, what he wears and does acts as role for others to copy because they want to be like him thus highlighting the globalisation factor in impacting individuals worldwide.

The idea that society can watch new sports and understand how they are played can impact upon increased and or new sports being introduced across the world. The sociologist Elias discussed the figuration theory and how people interact as a result of those around us. Figuration relationships involve individuals who are bound together to form a structure based on power which can be conveyed to areas such as sport (Best, 2003). For society and communities to be active in sport this will lead to trends of individuals copying the pattern with regards to social structures and individuals they are bound to. Society follows patterns to those we trust and are intrinsically influenced upon, a community who adopts sport regularly will find that individuals are more open to the idea of sport and what is involved. This theory also links with Bourdieu's views of 'habitus' where perception is how an individual views and does things based on what they know and has impacted as a result of their childhood, (Hillier & Rooksby, 2005).

Sport has also developed extensively through the input the government has had in relation to rules and regulations regarding sports and determining what sports are classified as legal or illegal. Such input has provided Sport with frameworks and safeguarding of human rights where measures are taken to stamp out inhumane sporting activities and assist all sport governing bodies with the correct safety content and rules for participants. The need for law in sport is as imperative as law in society, without it in sports, chaos exists, (Gardner, 2006). Disclosure checking is one way in which participants and sport are safeguarded against potential threats. All coaches and individuals must be disclosure checked to ascertain criminal

convictions and determine if individuals are suitable to work with others hence making sure those delivering sport are not only qualified but pose no threats to participants.

Social Effects & Sport

Sport is a form of activity which can be participated by several classes depending on the type of sport played and its position within class and cultural communities. An interesting theory is that of Bourdieu who paid particular emphasis on a variety of theories and society. Significant focuses of his beliefs were symbolic violence, Habitus and a close emphasis on class distinction and the theory of power and practice. Bourdieu argues that physical capital acquired through involvement in activities such as sport can be converted into cultural, social, or economic capital. However, he argues that the ability to convert this capital “ is not as great for the working classes as it is for the bourgeoisie” (cited in Gilroy in Clare & Humberstone, 1997). Class distinction contributes widely to the idea that certain sports are class related i. e. football for lower class and polo for the upper class individuals. This perception discriminates against individuals to try new sports due to a lack of facilitation, opportunities and class boundaries. A study undertaken by Stempel (2005) suggests that those who have more cultural capital participate in sports aimed at improving the body which emphasise wealth and dominance and refrain from sports where violent tendencies prevail. Lower class citizens have limited sources, expenditure and opportunities to participate in wealthier sports and are therefore prone to play traditional sports which are easy to access and more team orientated. To develop sport and for sport to develop in society a variety of sports, opportunities and

facilities must be available to the wider communities. Class distinction highlights differences within society and unequal consideration for all individuals, sport initiatives must vary activities and encourage different classes to attempt new sports refraining from the perception of particular sports for certain individuals.

Ideology focusing around sport is often concerned with idea of masculinity and gender confrontation. Scraton et al (1999) stated that top level female athletes participating in sport meant opposing or rejecting their femininity at some point. Barriers have developed through sport for female participation as a result of male dominance over a prolonged period of time. Although modern society aims to break down these barriers female participation is still behind that of males. Females are underrepresented in many areas of sport through involvement, coaching and management roles. Almost a half of adult women (43%) within Scotland have low levels of participation in sport with majority participating in no sport at all, (Sport Scotland, 2008). One theory which played particular emphasis on females and sport was the feminist theory. Houllihan (2008) discusses Marxist feminist traditions with the belief that men control the ideology of dominance through capitalism and exploitation, women cannot engage in sport due to less earnings and time due to family commitments. This focus concentrates on the traditional views of women and a lesser focus on the contemporary female. Kay & Jeanes cited in Houllihan (2008) that certain sports provide barriers for both genders, dance and sports involving flexibility and balance are often deemed as female orientated with traditional sports such as football and rugby, male orientated. Sport although focused as presenting gender differences can

develop these ideologies and break down barriers by displaying to society that females can adopt male perceived sports. A significant sport development and gender barrier was recently broken through the sport of tennis where female tennis players achieved the same competition pay as the male athletes. The All England Lawn Tennis Chairman Phillip (2007) stated that the time was right to bring this subject to a logical conclusion and eliminate the difference.

Football is also a sport that continues to attract female participation with regards to viewing but more importantly playing. A sport often adopted as male orientated only is now one of the fastest growing sports in the UK. The number of female players has increased by 88% since 1999 and there are now 55, 000 playing the game (Summers D, 2001). As female football continues to grow there are still issues with equality in the modern world. A recent example would be that of Maribel Domínguez Castelán, a female Mexican footballer. In 2004 she accepted a two-year contract from a second-division Mexican men's football club, Celaya. This was the first known case of a women signing for a professional men's team. This however did not last long and soon Fifa the governing body decided against the move. It was stressed that the gender-separation principle in football should be maintained (BBC News, 2004). Sport is attempting to change societies views by encouraging female participation through sport, changing the perceptions accumulated over centuries will however take time. If more sports can adopt similar principles to tennis, positive steps can be made for sport to tackle social issues of gender inequality.

Social inequalities out with gender also pose barriers to society; sport is used as a mechanism to tackle these areas. Cultural diversity and ethnic minority groups are a social issue with regards to integration within communities. Walseth (2008) & Adkins (2005) discuss Putnam's notion of social capital as connections with areas such as community well being, inter cultural knowledge and social networks, the idea that social capital acts as glue creating a collective "we" within society. With regards to cultural barriers Putnam refers to two ideas, bridging and bonding, bridging can relate to getting to know different people e. g. people belonging to a different minority group where bonding is the process of making relationships with people similar to oneself, (Walseth, 2008). Sport can act as glue between cultural communities and inequalities amongst society. Bringing individuals together through team incorporated activities can aim to tackle differentiations. Niessen (2000) stated that the use of sport can help in understanding and appreciating cultural differences and prejudices, sport can limit social exclusion of minority groups. Within Scotland a variety of localised initiatives aim to break down racial barriers and promote communitarianism. Glasgow based coaching company, Sidekix run in cooperation with Strathclyde Police tackling territorialism issues in young men. The concept of a football league integrating target groups aims to break down barriers and teach the youths to interact with one another. Using sport as an incentive encourages youths to participate without realising the wider concept of what they are actually doing. Sport has continued to develop in promoting and tackling social constraints.

Environmental Impact upon Sport

The use of sport to enhance a nation and contribute to its economy and structure are significant factors when considering using sporting events to enhance other areas. Mass tourist opportunities and global recognition from hosting such a superior sporting event were just some of the reasons why Glasgow chose to bid for the games in 2014, on the back of previous successes such as the Commonwealth Games of Manchester 2002. Purcell (2005) highlighted that the social and economical dividend of hosting the games could bring great benefits to Glasgow and hence provides a lasting legacy. Sport develops in governments ideologies when it can impact and benefit their agenda's and in turn sport therefore develops through the mass interest on show. Developing environmental factors such as attainment of new facilities and modernisation of communities can be achieved through sporting events.

Urban regeneration is a key focus of Glasgow 2014 and they aspire to update and improve upon existing areas of the city by modernising and developing infrastructures worthy of hosting such a superior occasion. Sport Urban Regeneration is a broader process than having merely an infrastructure in place for the Commonwealth Games, (BBC News, 2007). One of the major developments being undertaken is the construction of the athlete's village which will be based in Dalmarnock. As well as fresh, modern housing and a whole new regeneration of an area the positive effects of this build will result in the use of the village after the games when the houses are obtainable to the public. The former First Minister of Scotland, McConnell (2006) reiterated the importance of regeneration not only for the sustainment of the games

but for future legacies: he acknowledged that bringing the new village to Dalmarnock would aim to build better life's for its resident, ordinary Glaswegians and develop a sense of community spirit. An increased benefit of this infrastructure is the potential opportunities of housing Glasgow's communities following the games as well as allowing the people of Glasgow and Scotland to experience and benefit from the new facilities on offer following the Commonwealth Games of 2014. The importance of large investments in regeneration must continue after the event to benefit local and national societies.

The Glasgow 2014 Committee perceive new infrastructures and regeneration as a positive model however negative impacts of such a significant development is the change of what a large population already call home. Local residents who have grew up in specific areas all their life's are now seeing complete change and in some areas demolition of area's they once called home. Moving these people poses a serious question to whether Glasgow is improving in order to look good for two weeks or are the intentions of local residents the major priority. " I don't think I'm going to be here, the area will be regenerated and old shops like these will have to come down," (BBC NEWS, 2007), this was just one residents fear of the massive change going underway in the Parkhead Area. Moving people away from area's they have lived in all their lives is a huge risk and adaptation for those residents could lead to growing issues for local councils and the government.

A key focus of the legacy of Glasgow 2014 is to use this mass event as a fostering vehicle to tackle issues within Scotland including health. Over the last decade the topic of Obesity has seen a surge in media attention and has <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-between-sport-and-society-sociology-essay/>

become a prolific problem within Scotland's culture. Although regarded as a worldwide issue Scotland for being such a small nation portrays some of the most worrying figures of all. Devlin (2007) communicates this shocking reality as only America has a higher rate of obesity within the developed world. The prospect of the Commonwealth Games has already raised the profile of sport in Scotland and has the potential for the nation to get involved in physical activity, (Glasgow 2014, 2008). In order to achieve this recent government policy must be adhered to and Glasgow 2014 should be used as a target to achieving such aims as well as attempting to obtain more youngsters getting involved in physical participation. In 2007 when Reaching Higher was published many seen this policy as the strategy to implement and deal with issues leading up to the Commonwealth Games 2014. In comparison the Commonwealth Games of Glasgow are also looked upon as a method of striving towards meeting national strategies. The focus of 2014 may seem like a lifetime away however with such social and health issues regarding sport in Scotland it is essential that plans are implemented immediately to move towards improving current standards.

The idea of added TV coverage impacts largely on how we can improve the nation's health, when children see certain sports being broadcasted it gives an incentive of going out and taking part in this sport. For Scotland to use the Commonwealth Games as a means of improving health the government must provide all communities with opportunities to become active. A key method already being used within schools is the active schools programme. In the lead up to the games clubs and sports should be increased whereby children have more than just one option of a sport to take part in.

Commonwealth Games clubs is an area which could be put in place whereby children are provided with multi sports clubs as a lead up to the games where local communities or larger cities hold mini commonwealth Games against each other to add competition incentive for the children participating. All of this can now be more achievable with the new development plans of local sports facilities and new infrastructures being prepared. The focus upon children must be of fun and sport as opposed to getting fit, children will get fitter if they take part in physical activity and therefore all schemes and projects in line with national policies must be fun and eye-catching for the children to want to play sport.

There are several Positive effects of hosting major events which can help with improving health issues in particular areas. When elite athletes and stars of sport participate they are watched by the younger generation and a mass audience. The significance being that children aspire towards role models who they feel they have a connection with often an athlete in the sport they love. These role models can then aim to help motivate or create new schemes which aim to use their sports as a means of improving the health of others. Sponsorship deals can be created whereby as part of the athletes deal they must cooperate with the local communities or national policies therefore providing greater motivation for people to use sport to combat health issues they may have.

Conclusion

Sport has developed extensively as a global phenomenon reaching out to a diversity of individuals worldwide. The impact sport can generate stems from area's such as social inclusion, health and economic benefits to societies.
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Sport has developed within itself, through new sports being introduced, media interest and coverage and role models catapulting through the globalisation concept. However the contribution and shifting of modern society has also helped shape sport today and how it is considered as an integral part of everyday living. Political input, environmental benefits and social benefits have helped shaped the dynamics of sport and the perceptions people once had. The fact that sport was often seen as a leisure activity used for individual enjoyment has now been broadened through the perception that sport can help change society and tackle a variety of social issues.

Mass research undertaken in relation to sport suggests there are two sides to each perception. Majority suggest that sport can tackle social issues whilst also recognising that sport can encourage issues to be sustained. Depending on how sport is delivered, the sports that are used and the professionals in charge of these areas contributes widely to how sport will be viewed. Violent tendencies, class differentiation and gender ideologies can still be identified through sport. However considering the entire positive benefits of sport, the idea that it can and has tackled health, crime and the economy steers it in an optimistic manner. If sport is delivered by the correct people in the correct location and adheres to political sporting laws put in place, negative issues around sport can be overcome to achieve its original purpose. Sport has and will continue to develop throughout the world through its political involvement and power to recognise that sport can change and help society move forward.