

Negative Influences of Certain Sports on the Society

Posted on September 17, 2018

Sport, Entertainment, and the Historical Place of Competition

Sporting activities offer mass entertainment all over throughout the civilization of humankind. For example, the Ancient Greeks boast of the Olympic Games, the Mesoamericans are renowned for ball games while the Ancient Romans took part in chariot races and gladiatorial contests. Today, people find happiness in events such as soccer, athletics, boxing, and other forms of sporting activities. The intertwinement of sporting activities and culture generates social impacts. While most studies scrutinize the positive contributions of sporting events to the culture of a people, it cannot be denied that some games have negative influences on society. Most of the common games have been accused of promoting aggressive behavior and violence among fans in society.

Ancient and modern sports share one commonality which is the prevalence of violence and aggression during participation. For example, if the Roman chariot race is compared with contemporary car races such as the Formula One series, it is realized that the difference is only the changing technology. Violence and aggression are notable in the way the two activities are conducted. Jewell et al. (2011) quote George Orwell by citing that football is among the most violently conducted sports. While Orwell means 'soccer,' the National Football League (NFL) is equally aggressive, yet it is popular among fans in the United States. Boxing has millions of followers all over the world in spite of the nature of the sport, having two people involved in a fistfight. Little doubt can be expressed about the fact that violently and aggressively combative sports attract the most fans all over the planet. As a result, society has increasingly become aggressive and violent from the viewership of such games.

Importantly, ancient combat sports have been carried to the modern era. Events such as boxing, mixed martial arts (MMA), and professional wrestling borrow a lot from the early years. Regarding professional wrestling, such as World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), it is possible to note mock violence and well-scripted stories (Jewell et al., 2011). That notwithstanding, WWE boasts of an ardent fan base in most countries in the world. According to Smit (2009), the fans' demand for more boxing contests has increased. It appears that the fans are becoming psychologically violent as they watch these games and this a detriment to the society.

Violent Games, Fan Aggression, and Social Behaviour

Society has increasingly become aggressive as a result of the violent nature of sports that the fans love to watch. According to Meij et al. (2015), the level of fan aggression in soccer has become a societal vice that affects several countries across the globe. Some of the problems that communities incur as a result of fan aggression and violence include massive property destruction, scores of injuries, and, to the extreme, loss of lives. Arguably, most of the people who engage in aggressive behavior are fanatic or ardent fans. Italian fanatic football fans report that they take part in terrorizing activities more than their moderate fans (Meij et al., 2015). The study goes ahead to reveal the demographic profile of most of these fans, who are young men who have blue-collar jobs. When fanatics storm the streets before and after games, a lot of destruction is recorded.

Sport is a breeding ground for a negative construct of identity, which creates conflict in society. Spaaji (2008) argues that hooliganism bred in soccer pitches is one of the social vices and sources of rifts in the community. The formation of hooligans often creates their collective tenets of identities with regard to the preempted or assumed differences between the self and 'others' (Spaaji, 2008). The concept of 'others' entails the opposing hooligan group that supports a rival team in the stadium. Besides, non-hooligans and law enforcers are also included in the 'others.' While in the stadium, a defined framework that guides interactions is created. It stipulates the space for contact and distinctions that are enacted by threats of violence and aggression (Spaaji, 2008). The two groups share a commitment to engaging in confrontation based on the perceived differences between them. According to Spaaji (2008), the concept is referred to as Freudian narcissism of the minor difference. That is to say that when people have similarities in most aspects, the minor differences will serve as the rationale for citing the differences and otherness.

In the mindset of sports' hooligans, for example, in soccer, violence, aggression, and the willingness to form a compelling kind of social intercourse that breeds the social groups, sports hooliganism is therefore seen as an 'imagined community' (Spaaji, 2008) where a member does not know most of the members but in his or her mind lives the picture of a communion. During the European Football Championship in France, English and Russian soccer fans formed these communions. In the end, the two rival groups fought outside the stadium to defend the honor of their respective communities.

Technology, Hooliganism, and the Modern Culture of Sport

Sports culture has evolved alongside technology over time. Modern technological advancements are accused of facilitating violence and hooliganism within the sporting arenas and in society. In fact, technology has globalized the hooligan groups and also exacerbated the spread of sports violence

culture. According to Spaaji (2008), hooligan-related websites have cropped up on the internet. These websites enable the participants, who are self-proclaimed hooligans, to take part in a daily interaction that includes threats, provocations, exchange and dissemination of information, and violent plans ahead of the next games. The most recent example is where Liverpool FC hooligans in England circulated information about how they would scare Manchester City FC players and the fans prior to their UEFA Champions League quarter-final match (Pearce, 2018). According to Pearce (2018), the association urged fans to carry flares so that they could give Manchester City a hostile reception. Spaaji et al. (2008) describe this phenomenon as shared negative cultural practices by hardcore soccer fans. The limitation is that these shared beliefs are developed as behaviors that end up inflicting harm on society.

Society continues to manifest conflicts and the absence of fundamental values for respecting life. It is unfortunate that sports that are supposed to connect people in society instill rifts, aggression, and violence among the community members. By contrast, other scholars on sport and culture such as Wessels & Joseph (2013) have argued that sport has the potential of developing the human psyche and behaviour so that it can improve livelihood. The authors argue that sport has the ability to create an increased level of consciousness that facilitates peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and cooperation in society in spite of competition (Wessels & Joseph, 2013). In my opinion, this is the way forward for sports fanatics.

In summation, while most studies have focused on the positive contributions of sports in society, it has a negative bearing in some cases. The paper has argued that some of the sports, such as professional wrestling, boxing, and soccer, are aggressive and violent in nature. The history of the connection between sport and violence is as old as human civilization. The limitation is that the fans have inherited aggressiveness and use it inside and outside the stadium. Eventually, society is hurt by the destruction of property, loss of lives, and injuries sustained when hooligans extend sports rivalry to an extreme dimension in the community.

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