

Sport management & social justice: Access to and treatment in youth sports

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**Presentation (25-minute)
Abstract 259**

Implicit in the Constitution of the North American Society for Sport Management is an emphasis on social justice. As such, many scholars in the field have explored these issues, focusing on how race and/or gender impact access and opportunity to both participate in sport and manage its related institutions. For example, Acosta & Carpenter (2000) have examined gender, and more specifically the role of women within sport organizations and their rates of sport participation. Lapchick (2007), the Director for the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, and colleagues also have conducted research on gender and race, disseminating their findings in Racial and Gender Report Cards, which highlight the gross discrepancies in both the hiring practices of professional and collegiate sport organizations and the demographic composition of athletic teams. In addition, others in the field of sport management have explored whether there are discrepancies in treatment at the workplace that individuals might experience on the basis of race and gender (e.g. Sagas & Cunningham, 2004).

However, while the research related to social justice has been pronounced, few researchers within sport management explicitly have acknowledged that both access and treatment are two dimensions of social justice. Sartore (2006) is one of these exceptions; she specifically referenced the work of Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley (1990), and more specifically their distinction between access and treatment discrimination. Access discrimination has been defined as "prevent[ing] members of a subgroup of the population from entering a job or organization," while treatment discrimination has been described as "when subgroup members receive fewer rewards, resources, or opportunities on the job than they legitimately deserve on the bases of job-related criteria" (Greenhaus, et al., 1990). Nevertheless, while Sartore (2006) has acknowledged the dual forms of discrimination, the thrust of Sartore's (2006) conceptual model only focused on the dimension of treatment. Regardless, it is critical that research in sport management focus on the multi-dimensional nature of social justice and the integration of their exploration, as each are critical for positive outcomes, such as work performance (Sartore, 2006).

Additionally, while much of the work relative to social justice within sport has focused on issues regarding race and gender, another critical basis to explore with respect to social justice that often has been overlooked is social class. Research related to sport and social class is imperative, especially given the research evidence to suggest that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often have limited access and opportunity to participate in sport due to the constraints of the environment. For example, neighborhoods that are characterized by crime and poverty often lack adequate facilities and resources to provide sport opportunities (Ainsworth, Wilcox, Thompson, Richter, & Henderson, 2003; Fleury & Lee, 2006).

And, finally, one additional limitation within the current body of literature on sport and social justice is the lack of exploration of these issues within the context of youth sport. This is unfortunate given the current explosion of youth sport participation. The National Council on Youth Sports reported approximately 52 million youth participating in sport and other youth development, recreational activities, which is over a 6 million increase in youth since 1997 (National Council of Youth Sports, 2001). With this many youth participating in these opportunities, it is imperative that they have positive, developmental experiences while they are there. And, there is a plethora of research to suggest the myriad of both psychological and social well-being benefits from participation (e.g. Fredericks & Eccles, 2006; McHale, et al., 2005). As such, it is also vital to consider the populations of youth that do not have access and opportunity to enjoy this important medium.

Therefore, given the aforementioned current limitations within the existing literature, the purpose of this presentation is to extend others work by proposing a multi-dimensional model of social justice within the context of youth sport. More specifically, the presentation will focus on how social class influences both youths' opportunity to participate in sport and their treatment by coaches during participation. In addition, discussion will ensue regarding how these issues of social justice contribute to positive youth outcomes. And, finally, the presentation will highlight how the practices of sport managers might be altered to contribute to improved social justice outcomes with respect to sport participation by disadvantaged youth.

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