

# Історичні, філософські, правові й кадрові проблеми фізичної культури та спорту

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## SPORT AND NATION BUILDING: A COMPARISON OF THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH AFRICA

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### Abstracts

**The Relevance of the Research.** This paper analyses the case of the USA and South Africa and its experiences in the sports sector since the period of apartheid, in an effort to explore the processes necessary to understand the potential sports may hold for peace building. By identifying initiatives of the USA in South Africa at the national, community and individual level of analysis, the paper outlines the possible effects of sports on reconciliation in divided states. Using a comparative historical approach, the connection between race as a cultural and political category rooted in the history of slavery and colonialism, and the development of the nation states was analyzed. It was characterized how each country's differing efforts to establish national unity and other institutional impediments have served, through the nation-building process and into their present systems of state power, to shape and often crystallize categories and divisions of race.

**The Purpose of the Research** is to experimentally verify the effectiveness of sports as an integral part of the country, influencing culture. **Methods of the Research.** The research methods used in the process of writing the paper involve the use of general scientific and empirical techniques of physical culture and educational sciences based on a systematic approach. In addition, in the process such general research methods as generalization and comparison analyses were used. **The Results of the Research.** As a result of the analysis, we have identified the main range of problems arising from globalization processes and a number of measures aimed at raising the level of sports and cultural image of the developed countries in the World society.

**Key words:** sport, physical education, polity, national game, racial segregation, blacks and whites, soccer, rugby, United States, South Africa.

**Геральд Р. Гемс. Спорт й становлення нації: порівняльний аналіз США та Південної Африки. Актуальність.** У статті проаналізовано досвід становлення спорту в США та в Південній Африці до й після апартеїду. Здійснено намагання дослідити процеси, необхідні для розвитку потенційних видів спорту, які можуть стати запорукою становлення миру та порозуміння між народами. Для визначення ініціативи США в регіоні Південної Африки на національному, суспільному й індивідуальному рівнях у статті окреслено можливий вплив спорту на примирення в розділених штатах та регіонах. Автор пов'язує побудову націй із побудовою расової ідентичності. Проаналізовано зв'язок між расою як культурною й політичною категорією, джерелом якої є історія рабства та колоніалізму й розвитком національних держав. На прикладі Південної Африки та Сполучених Штатів проілюстровано історичну динаміку та інституційні відносини, завдяки яким відбувалося ставновлення міждержавних інформаційних відносин. **Мета дослідження** – висвітлити роль спортивних змагань і спорту в цілому на процеси, пов'язані з побудовою національної ідентичності. **Методи дослідження.** У процесі дослідження використано загальнонаукові та емпіричні прийоми, засновані на системному підході, а також загальнонаукові методи, такі як узагальнення й порівняльний аналіз. **Результати дослідження** – визначено основне коло проблем, що виникають внаслідок глобалізаційних процесів, та низку заходів, спрямованих на підвищення рівня спортивного й культурного іміджу окремих країн у світовому суспільстві. **Висновки.** Сфокусувавши свою увагу на Південній Африці та Сполучених Штатах, автор проілюстрував історичну динаміку й інституційні відносини, а також становлення нації цих держав. У роки

апартеїду спорт відігравав роль головного інструменту опору проти системи расової сегрегації, а надалі допоміг набути країні світове визнання та позитивний імідж на міжнародній арені.

**Ключові слова:** спорт, фізична культура, політика, національна гра, расова сегрегація, чорно-білі, футбол, регбі, США, Південна Африка.

**Геральд Р. Гемс. Спорт и становление нации: сравнительный анализ США и Южной Африки.**

**Актуальность.** Анализируется опыт становления спорта в США и Южной Африке до и после апартеида. Осуществляются попытки исследовать процессы, необходимые для развития потенциальных видов спорта, которые могут стать залогом становления мира и взаимопонимания между народами. Определяя инициативы США в регионе Южной Африки на национальном, общественном и индивидуальном уровнях, обозначается возможное влияние спорта на примирение в разделенных штатах и регионах. Автор связывает построение наций с формированием расовой идентичности. Анализируются связи между расой как культурной и политической категорией, источником которой является история рабства и колониализма и развитием национальных государств. На примере Южной Африки и Соединенных Штатов иллюстрируются историческая динамика и институциональные отношения, благодаря которым происходило становление межгосударственных информационных отношений. **Цель исследования** – раскрыть роль спортивных соревнований и спорта в целом на процессы, связанные с построением национальной идентичности. **Методы исследования.** В процессе исследования используются общенаучные и эмпирические приемы, основанные на системном подходе, а также общенаучные методы, такие как обобщение и сравнительный анализ. **Результаты исследования.** Определяется основной круг проблем, возникающих в результате глобализационных процессов, и ряд мероприятий, направленных на повышение уровня спортивного и культурного имиджа отдельных стран в мировом сообществе. **Выводы.** Сфокусировав свое внимание на Южной Африке и Соединенных Штатах, мы проиллюстрировали историческую динамику и институциональные отношения, а также становление нации этих государств. В годы апартеида спорт играл роль главного инструмента сопротивления против системы расовой сегрегации, а в будущем помог приобрести мировое признание и положительней имидж на международной арене.

**Ключевые слова:** спорт, физическая культура, политика, национальная игра, расовая сегрегация, черно-белые, футбол, регби, США, Южная Африка.

**Introduction.** The United States of America and the Republic of South Africa are the only two countries which employed legal segregation at some point in their histories. The way that segregation came about in each of these countries is vastly different; however, the effects that we are seeing today are interestingly similar.

Both the United States and South Africa are nations composed largely of immigrants. Both were colonized by imperial powers, and both became arenas of struggle against outsiders who rose to positions of dominance. In both cases the colonizing power, the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) of the British Empire, ultimately defeated or absorbed the native populations as well as other colonial forces. This inquiry looks at one facet of that struggle, where subordinate groups exerted their own agency and managed to adapt the dictates of the governing group to their own cultures through leisure and educational practices that incorporated sport.

**Materials and Research Methods** are theoretical analysis of scientific-methodological literature and the Internet – Global Information Network.

**Results of the Research. Discussion.** The process of migration to the United States started soon after European explorers landed on the North American continent in the fifteenth century. Superior weaponry, aggressive expansionism, and diseases decimated the native population as the colonizers secured the entirety of the continent under their domain over the course of the next three centuries, establishing a less than inclusive democracy sparked by a capitalist economy and guided by a set of Protestant religious values. That migratory evolution became an internal concern when millions in search of greater opportunity flooded American shores in the nineteenth century. Anglo nativists, descendants of the original WASPs, perceived the arrival of non-Anglos as a threat to their dominance of the economy. The white Americans assumed Social Darwinian perceptions of racial superiority, and judged newcomers by their failure to adhere to the WASPs' standards of Protestant religious morality.

By the latter nineteenth century, unable to deter the continuing masses of immigrants, WASP reformers, known as Progressives, embarked upon a campaign to acculturate, assimilate, and Americanize the newcomers. Social scientists and other scholars studied the vast array of itinerant groups, and the reformers organized a systematic framework for the transformation of the diverse cultures. They intended education to become a wholesale means of transformation. Sport and physical education, in particular, served as key ingredients in effecting the transition in cultural practices and national identities. By 1911 a government commission had concluded a three year study of the largely European peasant arrivals and concluded that at least 45 different

ances populated the various regions of the United States, many of them residing in overpopulated urban ghettos, where they refashioned their European lifestyles. By the 1930s sociologists at the University of Chicago had, to some degree, invalidated the concept of race in favor of the notion of ethnicity. The gradual adoption of ethnic classifications somewhat assuaged the negative connotations associated with racial categorization. The new designation allowed for the eventual acceptance of many ethnics within the mainstream white society. Historian Marcus Lee Hansen, however, determined that full acculturation would take three generations; but such inclusion might be hastened by the adoption of the norms, values, and standards of the WASP middle class that constituted «whiteness» [8].

Poor peasants and the urban proletariat fled their European homelands to escape the evils of industrialization; but their search for greater opportunity in the United States offered only marginal improvement for many. Jobs proved plentiful, but the hours were long and the wages minimal. Workers exchanged their village hovels for crowded and unhealthy tenement houses, while their employers rested in mansions attended to by a staff of house servants. Such conditions reinforced European ideological beliefs in anarchism, socialism, and communism, at odds with nativist Americans' belief in the capitalist system. Workers formed labor unions and sought better working conditions, fair wages, and shorter working hours reinforced by walkouts and strikes. Immigrant coping strategies also included large families whose members were put to work at a young age to secure additional income. Children might also care for aging, injured, or unhealthy parents who could no longer work. Such communal efforts opposed the American nativists' emphasis on individualism.

Business owners often retaliated with intimidation, lockouts, and police enforcement. Sport, however, proved to be a more subtle means of social control. In 1882 George Pullman, owner of a railroad car manufactory, constructed a company town near Chicago complete with some of the best athletic facilities in the country. Pullman reasoned that sport would provide a more wholesome activity and keep his workers out of the saloons during their leisure time. Other business owners soon adopted Pullman's concept and by the early twentieth century industrial recreation programs and company leagues proliferated throughout the United States. Employers got the additional benefit of free marketing for their products as the newspapers reported game accounts; but workers also benefitted in ways unimagined by their bosses. Star players gained celebrity status and social capital within their communities, and even those not physically gifted could gamble their meager salaries on the outcomes of games and substantially increase their incomes [4; 18].

The reformers therefore placed greater emphasis on the immigrants' children, intending to teach them the values of the American capitalist system before they accepted their parents' European ideologies. The Progressive reformers, largely middle class, Anglo Protestants, devised and legally enacted a three step process to obtain their goals. First, child labor laws removed the children from the workplaces until the age of 16. When the released children loitered on the streets and became delinquents, they then passed mandatory education laws, which required children to attend school, where they served as a captive audience for teachers to deliver the prescribed lessons. When non-English speakers failed to grasp the lessons, schools established physical education programs in the school. Even for the vast numbers that did not speak English, sport and physical education reinforced the basic tenets of capitalism and democracy. All sports and many games taught competition, the basis for the economy. In team sports the students learned cooperation, teamwork, and self-sacrifice for the good of the whole, the basic elements of a democracy. The American national game of baseball even reconciled some of the incongruities of the political-economic system for immigrants, for the game required both the elements of their ancestral communal cultures and the individualism esteemed in America. When playing defense the baseball players learned that all team members had perform as a unit to contribute to the team success; not unlike the communal relationships of their families; but when on offense each was required to perform individually and greater production (marked by quantified results) resulted in personal reward, similar to the American economy. Those who protested, argued with officials, or did not show proper deference to authority might be removed from the game, a lesson cherished by the employers who had to reckon with their recalcitrant employees.

Cities built parks and playgrounds to attract children and youth during their non-school hours. Both male and female supervisors manned such facilities, where they taught boys and girls to play in the desired manner. The larger parks included field houses, large buildings that provided gyms, meeting spaces, and even swimming pools that attracted both children and adults on a year round basis. Such efforts by the dominant group did not always bring the desired results. In some cases youth gangs secured the public spaces for their own use as a base of operations, and transforming the facilities into their headquarters. Local communities, too, organized their own neighborhood athletic clubs to compete against ethnic, racial, and religious rivals, a

surrogate form of warfare that transferred animosities to sports fields rather than the street warfare of the cities. Blacks, too, were accorded the use of public facilities; but generally within the confined areas of their segregated communities. Jews and Catholics, who feared the perceptively Protestant influences of the public schools, the YMCA, and neighborhood social agencies known as settlement houses, established their own associations to provide a wide range of athletic expression to their children as sport proved to be a common interest that crossed gender, racial, and ethnic boundaries [7].

The excitement of sport, and the inherent gambling that accompanied it, attracted large numbers of fans to the contests, forging a local bond and a greater sense of community and civic pride. Even the local neighborhood contests attracted thousands of fans, and local heroes gained a recognition and celebrity unattainable in the workplace. The better players progressed to semi-pro or even professional status, where they might earn sums considerably greater than their factory wages. In 1915 one of the semi-pro baseball players in Chicago rejected four contract offers from professional teams because he was already making more money in the local league [7].

Sport performances allowed athletes to become heroes to the various ethnic, racial, and religious contingents as they symbolically demonstrated the potential of democracy and presented the perception of meritocracy in the United States. The physicality of sport allowed the working class to gain social capital by means of its own habitus, a reliance on physical prowess rather than the education and wealth of the upper classes. Boxing champions John L. Sullivan, the darling of Irish Americans, and Benny Leonard, who wore the Jewish Star of David on his trunks, thrilled their ethnic fans and delivered symbolic retribution for those who felt the sting of religious persecution. In 1908 the African American Jack Johnson captured the heavyweight championship and held it for seven years, destroying the myth of racial superiority and the series of «white hopes» that challenged his reign. His brash demeanor antagonized whites, and his liaisons with white women outraged white society; but his adventures promoted racial pride among black Americans. Babe Ruth, of working class German ancestry, abandoned to an orphanage by his parents, became the biggest hero of all as a baseball star earning more money than the president of the United States for his physical prowess [6; 12; 17; 19].

As the United States vied with Great Britain for world leadership at the turn of the twentieth century the composition of the American Olympic team presented a flawed but effective image of national harmony and inclusive identity. While early teams were comprised largely of wealthy young men from the best universities; the 1912 team featured a Hawaiian, a black, and two Native American Indians as representative of the inclusionary nature of the democracy, although none of the minorities enjoyed the full rights of citizenship. Italians, who had been considered to be non-whites, also won inclusion on the U.S. Olympic team, which fostered an evolving transition in their national identity and a greater degree of approval within the mainstream society. Sporting practices marked them as «American».

Sport thus served as a measuring stick for assimilation within the American society. Progress might be measured through baseball or boxing, where a succession of ethnic professional athletes demonstrated the transition to American sport forms. Second generation Germans neglected the turner gymnastic clubs and joined the Irish youth who had already adopted baseball and basketball. In boxing, the working class Irish was supplanted by poor Jews, who were displaced by the Italians, the blacks, and the Hispanics over the remainder of the twentieth century. A generation after Jack Johnson ruled the heavyweight ranks; the black Joe Louis carried the banner of democracy in symbolic boxing matches against the fascist states of Italy and Germany during the 1930s. In 1947 Jackie Robinson proved that blacks and whites could work and live together when he invaded the white bastion of Major League Baseball, seven years before the U.S. Supreme Court finally banned the racial segregation laws that had plagued the fractured nation for more than half a century. By the 1950s the national celebrity of baseball star Joe DiMaggio and boxer Rocky Marciano signaled that Italians had finally gained a full measure of whiteness and acceptance. By that time it behooved the white hierarchy to recognize Italians as white, for they had recaptured the boxing laurels from a succession of black champions [10].

In the 1960s and thereafter sport marked the nation's turmoil, grievances, and inequities as Muhammad Ali challenged Americans' claims to freedom of expression and freedom of religion; and black Olympians alerted a global audience to racial injustices by invoking their Black Power Salute in 1968. Feminists also marched for equal rights, which culminated in Title IX, part of a federal education act in 1972 that guaranteed equal opportunity for all Americans. The legislation fostered an explosion of girls' and women's sports teams in the schools and colleges throughout the country that is still reaping rewards. Only a year after the passage of

the law, female tennis star Billie Jean King defeated Bobby Riggs, a former male champion, in an internationally televised challenge match that empowered women beyond the American coastlines [9].

Throughout the remainder of the century sport increasingly became a spectacle of nationalism accompanied by greater displays of patriotism. Sport assumed even greater political importance as the Cold War intensified after World War II. International sporting events, particularly the Olympic Games, assumed the appearance of surrogate warfare between communist and capitalist ideologies. Within the United States American football superseded baseball as the American national game and the National Football League administrators increasingly linked the game to nationalism and patriotism with flag waving, honored appearances by military heroes, and exhibitions of martial spirit intended to unite all Americans against perceived foes [2].

Despite ongoing and encompassing efforts to use sport in an attempt to unify the disparate groups within the American polity, some averted full inclusion, what scholars have termed segmented assimilation. They selectively choose to retain some past traditions, but accept parts of the American value system and its norms. Some ethnic groups maintain a taste for ancestral foods and lifestyles beyond three generations. Jews still cling to their ancestral religion despite increasing intermarriage rates; while many Italians maintain physicality as a source of social capital, as evidenced by the number of Italian boxers still prevalent in the ring. The pluralistic nature of American society has introduced a plethora of changes now common to the culture. Italian dishes, such as pizza and pasta are mainstays within the American culinary culture; while Japanese sushi, Mexican tacos, German beer, and myriad other ethnic foods have transformed American palates. A renewed emphasis on the disparate use of languages, clothing, foods, and religious practices accompany more recent immigrants as global migratory patterns continue to affect changes in national cultures. A century ago millions of Europeans boarded ships to the United States, while today Muslims from the Mideast and Turkey seek a better life in wealthier European countries. Asian workers travel to the oil rich countries of the Persian Gulf to fill the ranks of labor. The issues of migration absorption, acculturation, and assimilation faced by the United States a century ago continue in the postmodern world of a globalized economy.

One might draw comparisons between the United States and South Africa in the role of sport in the process of cultural transformation. Like the United States, the tribes of southern Africa, like the Native Americans, were displaced, conquered, and absorbed by foreign migrants to their land. The Dutch had established a colony as early as 1652, to be followed by French Protestants who sought relief from religious persecution, similar to the religious refugees who established Protestant beliefs in the American colonies. Before the start of the nineteenth century the British also established roots in South Africa; but the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire in 1807 led to the drafting of the local Hottentots tribe into servitude. Throughout the remainder of the century both British and Dutch settlers extended their territorial gains into the lands of the local inhabitants in a fashion quite similar to the usurpation of Native American territories by the white settlers in the United States during the same time period. As in the United States, such incursions led to war with the local inhabitants and between the white settlers, resulting in the genocide of native tribes and the segregation of survivors. By 1860 indentured servants were imported from India to fuel the depleted South African labor force, just as millions of European peasants stocked the industrial factories in the United States during the latter half of the century. The discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa, just like the discovery of gold in California, led to further animosities between contending nations as well as the local residents, resulting in furthering the white hegemony, solidified in the aftermath of the Boer War of 1899–1902 in an amalgamated British-Dutch union [15]. In the United States and South Africa the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants (WASPs) managed to establish their hegemony, dominating political and social life and enacting similar norms, standards, and values. The South African WASPs, however, chose to exclude and segregate the black locals and non-white immigrants rather than assimilate them, resulting in living and labor conditions even worse than the impoverished sectors of the United States.

In the wake of World War II a formal system of apartheid was enacted in South Africa that approximated the segregation policies in the United States that had been in effect since the late nineteenth century. Sport, at least in the northern United States remained one possibility for interracial activity. Over succeeding generations African Americans won gradual acceptance and even celebrity within the popular culture fields of sport and entertainment. The desegregation of Major League Baseball, then the national game of the United States, by Jackie Robinson in 1947 provided a lesson in race relations for all Americans. Today African American athletes dominate the National Football League and the National Basketball Association, representing a very public image of meritocracy, at least in professional sport [15].

For both the United States and South Africa the realms of sport, education, and leisure served as arenas for struggle between racial, ethnic, religious, and gender groups. Both countries debated the nature of leisure spaces with racial segregation enacted by edict or practice in public parks. Schools, too, educated the lower ranks for unequal levels within the economy. In the United States Native Indian children were taken from their parents and sent to residential schools where they learned vocational skills in order to become laborers for the capitalist industrial economy. Baseball and other «American» sports intended to teach them more «civilized» values. Likewise in South Africa, black labor proved a necessity for whites' industrial ventures, and cricket symbolized a higher form of civilization. Soccer, the poor man's game, offered greater social cohesion among the lower classes [16].

Many of the immigrants to the United States, like the Asians and Indians who traveled to South Africa, were deemed to be non-white and subject to deportation. For both, the status of «whiteness,» if not the actual skin color, had to be attained to win a level of acceptance in the dominant society. Schooling and sport clubs offered one possibility for greater inclusion. In the United States mandatory schooling and physical education introduced immigrant children to American sport forms and their inherent value systems, providing a sense of inclusion. Northern states, more liberal in its racial attitudes than the South, permitted interracial teams and contests.

South Africa also adopted mandatory education for whites, but marginalized its Asian, colored, and black children. Neville Alexander, a South African activist in the midst of the liberation movement, asserted that «Educational institutes help to entrench and strengthen the rules, ideas and values of the dominant class, because in any society the dominant ideas are the ideas of the dominant class» [1]. The racist WASPs of South Africa proved to be less pliant than the more liberal Progressive reformers of the United States. Sporting grounds, when granted, provided inferior facilities as non-whites were increasingly segregated from white residents after enactment of the Urban Areas Act of 1952. Over the ensuing decades of the century the anti-apartheid movement challenged such dictates and clamored for adequate recreational spaces with some success by the 1970s. Such groups formed alliances and united in labor strikes, school boycotts, and other acts of defiance that eventually managed to dismantle apartheid policies in the 1990s [1; 16].

Sport eventually proved to be a very visible symbol of greater national unity within the country. With the ascendance of Nelson Mandela to the presidency of South Africa in 1994 and that country's hosting of the Rugby World Cup the following year the athletic spectacle presented an opportunity to unite the fractious society divided by racial, tribal, religious and ideological differences. Mandela, a former amateur boxer and runner, imprisoned for 27 years for his opposition to the apartheid system, eschewed retaliation when he came to power in favor of a policy of reconciliation. He chose to use the national rugby team, the Springboks, previously a symbol of white supremacy, as the means to address the issue of divisiveness. Similar to the way in which American Olympic teams symbolized the inclusion of disparate groups, Mandela adopted the team, although it included only one black member. His symbolic gesture averted a potential civil war and terrorist acts by whites chagrined at their loss of power. It brought greater interest among blacks in what had been considered a whites only sport. The team made it to the final game where it miraculously defeated the heavily favored world champion New Zealand All Blacks to claim the World Cup, promoting a newfound nationalism and improving the social bonds between the multiethnic and multiracial residents of the new democracy. During his tenure as president (1994–1999) Mandela became a beloved leader and a global icon, not only for South Africans, but as «the president of humanity» [5].

In 2007 South Africa repeated its rugby championship, bringing a renewed pride to the country still experiencing turmoil within its ranks. In 2010 South Africa once again utilized sport to gain international recognition as host of the Soccer World Cup. While the global media generally accorded South Africa plaudits for its efforts, the spectacle proved a double edged sword as thousands of poor people were displaced to accommodate the construction of new stadiums for the matches with no trickle down economic effect to their benefit. The maintenance of such arenas over the next generation will be a continued drain on the nation's finances for years to come [3; 11].

In the United States too, private billionaire owners of professional teams, continually try to pass the cost of their stadium building binges onto the general public with mixed results. When taxpayers refuse to foot the bill the owners use their political capital to engender alternative means of procurement. For example, when Chicagoans refused to raise their taxes to remodel the local stadium for the professional football team, lawmakers enacted a hotel tax passed on to unsuspecting tourists that accomplished the same goal without infuriating the fan base.

**Conclusions and Perspective of Further Researches.** As seen in both the United States and South Africa, sport has the substantial power for good if used for the betterment of society; but it can also inhibit growth and equality when employed as a capitalist marketing tool that benefits the few rather than the whole. Let us hope that national leaders recognize the difference and make the best choices in the future.

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