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The Utilization of Sport for Peace and Unity in Society

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Abstract

There are many ongoing conflicts in the world. Many methods to end these conflicts have been attempted with various levels of success. A United Nations study in 2003 determined that sports should be increasingly used as a method to bring about peace in the world. This finding can be supported when looking at the ways sports united divided nation and, at times, brought unity among nations. Along with this, sports have seen a dramatic rise in popularity due to the revolution of technology and the rise of media. As the media and technology continue to develop, sports will continue to grow alongside them as worldwide phenomena. Thus, sport should be used by nations and communities as a strong, reliable option to resolve conflicts and bring about peace and unity.

Keywords: Sports, Peace, Global, Nations

The Utilization of Sport for Peace and Unity in Society

In the present age, peace becomes more celebrated as it declines in commonness. Studies indicate that the world may be less peaceful than at any time in history. Worldwide peace has decreased by around 2.5% in the past 10 years (Institute, 2018). In addition, the economic impact of violence from a lack of peace in the world has increased by over 15% since 2012 (Institute, 2018). Many of these conflicts are a result of a lack of peace between people in the same country, but there are multiple conflicts currently between nations as well (Komatsu, 2017).

News is filled with the problems of the day and highlighted with maybe a 30-second clip about something positive that occurred. Many things have been done in an attempt to counteract the rise of violence with varying degrees of success. Some fail to succeed in bringing peace at all, while others bring peace for a limited amount of time. In order to find peace, it's important to find a common point of understanding that serves as a foundation to help sides to understand one another. The common point among nations is sports. Through competition, divided people are able to find common ground and join together in support of individuals or teams. Through the common ground of sport, feuding nations can stop, play a game, and realize they can find common ground as members of the human race. Sports can unify different people in different ways—their potential impact on the world is profound. Sports have the ability to unify communities, countries, societies, and people groups.

A United Nations task force studied the current and future effects of sports on global peace and unity. Immediately, they noticed and suggested that “sport should be incorporated as a useful tool...for development and peace” (Sport, 2003, p. ii). Often, people can see sports as merely a tool for owners of teams to make money or a leisurely way for people to pass some time. However, sports go way beyond a “luxury or form of entertainment” (Sport, 2003, p. 1). They can provide economic strength to a nation or community, and they can bring many different types of people together—aiding in “bridging cultural or ethnic divides” (Sport, 2003, p. i). They show people that they have more in common than they may think and help break down preconceived notions people may have about others. Sports can help sustain long-term peace rather than simply creating a short break from reality. Put simply, the sports “playing field” is “a simple and often apolitical site for initiating contact between antagonistic groups” (Sport, 2003, p. 3).

Unity in a Divided Nation

Syrian president Bashar al-Assad and the government backed by Russia and Iran have been fighting against Syrian rebels and citizens since early 2011 (Tillerson, 2018). The nation has been brutally divided by this war as families have fled or been split apart (Graham, 2018). The civil war has shown no sign of ending due to the fact that the rebels continue to fight and gain international aid (Tillerson, 2018) while al-Assad uses chemicals such as chlorine and sarin gas against his citizens (Graham, 2018). In addition, many Syrian children have died due to the ongoing conflict. While the exact number of fatalities is not known, the number continues to rise. All that is known certainly is that a lot of children and people have died due to the war (Çelikel, 2015).

Despite all of this, sports continue to be played in Syria. The main sport that people are holding on to is soccer, and primarily the national Syrian team. Thousands of Syrians watched as their team, who was not able to play in Syria due to the unrest within the nation, defeated Iran to make it to a play-in game for the World Cup (Australian Associated Press, 2017). Both rebels and backers of the government celebrated in their cities as the team gave them all something to hold on to. While there has been controversy about whether al-Assad is trying to twist teams into propaganda tools for himself (Australian Associated Press, 2017), one thing became clear through this game—sports united the Syrian people and gave them peace for a few hours. While the fighting continued the next day, this shows that there is hope that sports can be used for long-term peace in the nation.

Likewise, rugby had a profound impact in breaking down the cultural walls of apartheid in South Africa (Nydailynews, 2013). Nelson Mandela knew the immense power that sports have and he used them to unite a nation that had been divided along racial lines for half a century (Nydailynews, 2013). While the rugby team was primarily followed by white supporters, Mandela publicly showed them his support during the 1995 Rugby World Cup and the black South Africans followed suit (Nydailynews, 2013). The nation was united during this international sporting spectacle; but the unity of the nation did not stop once the Rugby World Cup ended. The people of South Africa learned that they had much more in common with each other than had previously considered. This would not have happened if the people did not come together in support of this team thanks to Mandela (Nydailynews, 2013). Because of Mandela's decision and the

consequent united support, the nation that was “fractured and badly damaged by racism and hatred” slowly grew back together until it became a democracy of all the people (para. 9).

Unity Between Nations

Just like sports can unite a divided nation or community, it can also bring peace and unity between many nations throughout the world. This that can be seen in modern sporting such as events like the World Cup, Olympics, and the World Baseball Classic. For these brief periods of times, nations from all around the world come together to focus on sports and competition rather than the issues that divide them outside of the stadium. But inside of these events—inside of these arenas—is a potential safe haven from the strife and global conflict present today.

An example of this from the early 20th century can be seen in the “Christmas Truce” of World War I (Dash, 2011). In 1914 on Christmas Day, English and German soldiers decided to come out of their trenches and have a day of unity and peace (Dash, 2011). When they came together, they realized they did not have many things to talk about because of the language barrier, political and cultural differences. But because “sport is an international language” (Sport, 2003, p. 14) they all shared one thing in common: the game of soccer. Soccer had been a professional sport for almost 25 years in both Germany and Great Britain (Dash, 2011). Across the lines throughout Europe, soccer games sprung up that day. While the men were fighting each other in bloody battle the day before and the day after, these things did not matter as the men came together to

play a game of soccer. Because of all this, ““deadly enemies briefly came together as friends”” (Kuper, 2015, para. 1).

The 2018 Winter Olympics were an integral component to the growing peace movement on the Korean Peninsula. In April 2018, North and South Korea came to a peace agreement that put an official end to the Korean War that began in 1950 (Rich, 2018). Due to the war, Korea was split into the two separate countries and families were torn apart. A huge step in reaching toward peace was the Winter Olympics held in South Korea. The two nations decided to unite for the event, and each nation’s marched into the ceremonies together. Korean citizens united to cheer together for them. In addition, North and South Koreans joined together to form a women’s hockey team (Rich, 2018). All of these things brought the people together and reminded leaders that there was more that united the nations than divided them. These actions ““offered hope of a breakthrough,”” (Rich, 2018, para. 1), and the peace deal came two months after the Olympics. While it is speculation if this new peace agreement would have occurred if the proceedings at the Olympics did not happen, it can be stated for certain that the unity from the Olympics helped guide and expedite the process. They were ““a catalyst for previously closed diplomatic channels reopening”” (Garofalo, 2018, para. 13).

As seen, one of the powerful aspects of sport is that it gives humans a common experience that we can’t get anywhere else. Often times, humans are placed into similar situations. We are in community with one another and thus, experience the events of life and the world together and simultaneously. However, humans normally experience these concurrent event different and react differently to them. This is because our perspective is

not only shaped by where we are at a point in time, but also by our emotions and previous experiences.

While this is the case in almost every aspect of life, it is not necessarily always the case in sports. Sports have the power to unite people with the same experience in a way that no other event or occurrence in the world can do. For one, sports completely unify the thoughts and emotions of people supporting the same team or nation, as shown previously. But in addition, sports have the incredible power to completely unify the supporters of competing teams. What this means is that even if a team loses, sports have the power to create the same joy in that team's supporters that they supporters of the winning team have as well. Thus, they all experience the same positive emotions and feelings through the sport despite coming from different backgrounds and experiences.

One example of this came in the 2014 FIFA World Cup Final. This game was played between Germany and Argentina, and the winner would be the winners of the World Cup. The game was tied at the end of regulation time, and went into extra time. With just a few minutes left, Germany scored the only goal of the game and proceeded to win the World Cup. The German fans were absolutely exuberant about their team winning. But in addition, the Argentinian fans celebrated as well (Quinones, 2014). Their team had fought an incredible fight in that game. They also had amazing success in the tournament (Quinones, 2014). There was no reason for the fans to be sad, despite the loss. So, the fans and people of both nations were able to be united together in celebrating the successes of both of their nations in the World Cup.

Unity in Tragedies

Sports also have the incredible power to bring unity, peace, and hope to people in the wake of tragedies. When disasters or extraordinary events happen, people look for diversions or things to give life meaning. Sports are a force to help people monetarily escape their pain and grief, and to corporately heal. Sports have the power to bring communities together, “sometimes to celebrate and sometimes to mourn,” and sometimes to do both of these (September, 2002, p. 142).

One example of this is the United States after the attacks on September 11, 2001. These terrorist attacks left people throughout the entire country shocked, distraught, and fearful. Sporting events throughout the nation were cancelled for a few days after the event due to security concerns. But about one week after the attacks, sports started returning. They had a profound impact in helping the people of the nation, and especially in New York City, begin to recover. Clifford Chanin, the Executive Vice President of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, said that “sports are a collective venue for people to come together and express their emotions and share a love for something” (Fleischer, 2018, para. 3).

While games around the country helped make this impact, one of the biggest examples is the New York Mets’ first home game after the attacks. Before the game there were ceremonies to recognize and pay tribute to those who lost their lives and to the heroes who helped rescue people (Matthews, 2018). This game was a time for all Americans to focus on something other than if the country was about to go to war and what national security threats were (Matthews, 2018). A massive home run toward the

end of the game gave the Mets a win, but more importantly, it felt like a win for all of New York and even all of America (Junod, 2018). While that hit did not change any of the reality of the situation America was feeling, it gave everyone a reason to smile, to shout in joy, and to be united with many others through happiness rather than grief (Junod, 2018). Carol Gies, the wife of a first responder who died on September 11, 2001 said, “When that ball went over the wall, I saw my children smile for the very first time since they lost their dad” (McColister, 2018, para. 3).

One other example of the relationship sports has with helping heal nations after tragedies is what took place after the plane crash of the Brazilian soccer team Chapecoense in 2016 (Brazil’s Chapecoense, 2016). Chapecoense was a relatively small team playing in the top league in Brazil. The team was traveling to Colombia to play in the final of a major South American competition (Brazil, 2016). The game was seen as the most important game for the club and the city they represent (Brazil, 2016). However, on the flight to Colombia, the plane crashed and 71 of the 77 people on the plane died. Only three of the players who were on the flight survived (Brazil, 2016). Immediately following the news of the crash, people throughout the world mourned because of the tragedy. In Brazil, the president declared that there be “three days of national mourning” (Brazil, 2016, para. 17). At soccer stadiums throughout the world, there were moments of silence to honor the victims of the plane crash (Brazil, 2016). The team that they were going to play against in Colombia forfeited the match to give Chapecoense the title in a sign of solidarity (Grief-stricken, 2016). FC Barcelona invited the team, which began to rebuild with their youth players and players loaned to them from other Brazilian teams, to

play them in a friendly the next summer (Barcelona, 2017). In addition, a funeral was held in the team's home stadium for the players who died, and 120,000 people showed up—despite the fact 200,000 people live in the city— to mourn (120,000, 2016). Each one of these people were greatly touched because of sports and unity they bring through celebration; but in this moment, they were unified through this time of mourning. This reinforces the idea that sports bring communities together sometimes to celebrate but sometimes to mourn (September, 2002). Through this extreme tragedy, there were incredible displays of unity shown in the city of Chapecó, where the team was located, and in areas around the world that felt solidarity with them.

Unity Through Players

Another unifying force that is provided through sports is when communities unite around the stardom of an individual player. These players may not be extremely talented at their sport, but they may have a trait, such as their race, gender, or religion, that communities rally around. When players like these rise to stardom, these communities unite because of this player. The Executive Director of FARE (Football Against Racism in Europe), Paira Powar, said that “winning makes everybody feel good...so when a minority player does well it causes fans to be...more apt to accept [their] ethnic and religious background when they might not have before” (Bogage, 2018, para. 14).

An example of this is what soccer player Mohamed Salah has done for the communities of Liverpool, where he currently plays, and Egypt, where he is from. Salah is a practicing Muslim, but he has played professional soccer in Switzerland, Italy, and, now, England. He did not reach stardom in his playing ability until he reached England,

where he signed for Liverpool in the summer of 2017 (Roma, 2017). Especially since the terrorist events of 9/11, Muslims have struggled with being seen as a threat by many throughout the Western world. In the 2011 UK census, it was recorded that about 4% of the population of the United Kingdom was Muslim (2011 Census, 2012). In the city of Liverpool, this number was about 3% (Liverpool, n.d.).

Salah has completely changed the way the city of Liverpool looks at Muslims. Salah has taken the Premier League by storm, and he set the single-season goal-scoring record in 2018 (Oludare, 2018). Now, whenever Salah takes the pitch, the Liverpool supporters sing about his name—and paired right next to it to—his religion. This has happened despite numerous events of racism and other inappropriate comments and chants from fans throughout England toward players of different races or religions (Bogage, 2018). The fans of Liverpool call Salah the “Egyptian King” and sing about wanting to become a Muslim or join him going to a service at a mosque (Bogage, 2018). Powar also said that this is the biggest display he’s ever seen of an “...overt, positive appreciation that includes [a player’s] religion” (Bogage, 2018, para. 9). Because of Salah’s performance on the football pitch has allowed English Muslims to feel freer or and more accepted in the community of Liverpool.

Salah has also been a unifying force in Egypt through his play because he shares the same ethnic and religious background as most other Egyptians. After Hosni Mubarak was forced from power as Egyptian president in 2011, there has been a great amount of disunity and turmoil in the nation of Egypt (Islam, 2018). Salah’s skill has led to a rise in popularity and fame in England; in Egypt, “he represents a rare figure” that everyone

from the country can unite behind, despite differences in class or politics (Islam, 2018, para. 5). While Salah is seen as an icon in Egypt due to his play in England, he reached legendary status in the country for his play for their national team. In the end of 2017, Salah scored both goals in the game that qualified Egypt for the 2018 World Cup.

According to the head of Egypt's parliamentary youth and sports committee, Mohamed Farag Amer, this moment caused Salah to be seen as a symbol for Egyptians as big as the pyramids (Islam, 2018). Farag Amer said, "I think our qualification for the World Cup was the only moment all Egyptians were happy since the uprising" (Islam, 2018, para. 8).

The Rise of Media

The rise of sport as a world influence coincides with the rise of media. Media technology used to be limited by geography. But with the diffusion of satellites and the internet, media and entertainment now spreads across the world, where many millions of people can watch the same events in real time.

This has ingrained sport as a part of almost every culture in society throughout the world. Baseball, followed later by basketball, and American football have become integral parts of American culture. Stadiums and arenas such as the old Yankee Stadium and Madison Square Garden, among others, were built in the early 1900s to host sports teams and events (GCSE, n.d.). Hockey was created in Canada and took off there, where it spread to colder-weather countries throughout the world. And in Asia, Africa, and Europe, soccer, rugby and cricket rose to prominence. Now, sports like these are a worldwide phenomenon. Sporting events can have as many as 100,000 people attend.

And worldwide events like the Olympics or the World Cup have had over 3.5 billion people watch them, approximately half of the population of the earth (London, 2012).

At the same time that organized sports began become a part of society throughout the world, technology began to develop and become a part of people's everyday lives. At the 1876 World's Fair in Philadelphia, the first telephone was introduced (De Anelle, 2015). This came just a few short years after Major League Baseball was formed (Legend, n.d.). The use of radio was fully developed around the turn of the 1900s, and television was created in 1927 (Stephens, n.d.). Today, somebody can contact another person on the other end of the world with a press of a button.

The latest development in the rise of media has been the growth of social media. The more social media has developed into the entity that it is today, the more the world has felt like it is becoming smaller and smaller. Economies have turned from national entities into a global ones. Approximately 69% of all adults in the United States use some form of social media, and about 88% of adults aged 18 to 29 use social media (Smith, 2018). Worldwide, approximately 2.5 billion people use social media in some form (Number, 2018). While not necessarily correlated, these numbers fit some of the statistics about sports. This is in part due to the intersection of sports and media.

Sports and media are linked in modern culture in many ways. This can be seen in how quick many forms of media were to adopt broadcasting sports, the financial growth both have seen as one makes the other more visible in society, and the rise of e-sports in the past decade.

The first sports event to be broadcast was on the radio in 1921 (History, 2018). It was a boxing event that was broadcast in Pittsburgh with live announcing. In the same year, baseball and college football were both broadcast for the first time through the same radio station. Games in multiple sports started being broadcast on television in 1939. Broadcasting sports through television quickly expanded throughout the country and the world once this occurred. One of the most direct reasons that certain sports became more popular than others early on in America was the fact that certain sports like football and baseball were broadcast nationally on television quicker and with more regularity than other sports (History, 2018).

Now, sports are broadcast across many media platforms. Sports can be consumed on the radio, on the television, on mobile devices, directly streamed through social media, and more. This in turn brings money to sports and sports leagues and the media broadcasting these sports. Today, billions of dollars are put into sports and the media. The NFL makes around 40 billion dollars per year through television rights deals (Biggest, 2018). The NBA makes around 24 billion, the MLB makes around 12 billion, and the Premier League in England makes about 4.5 billion dollars per year (Biggest, 2018). Without the media and sports being so tied, these numbers would be nowhere near what they are. Along with sporting events broadcast, one can find around-the-clock sports news talk on television, the radio, or social media.

With this comes great influence and power for athletes in our culture. In turn, athletes can create platforms for themselves to speak up on various subjects through various media.

LeBron James is an athlete who has taken advantage of the modern media in this way. James has used his platform as one of the best basketball players of all time to speak up for social justice. He makes known his stances on issues and presents solutions through his various uses of media. This past year, James talked about politics and his life and “the challenges that come with being black and a public figure in America” (Sullivan, 2018, para. 4). After this, however, Fox News host Laura Ingraham said that James just needed to ‘shut up and dribble’ (para. 7). Despite this, James did not stop using his platform and access to media to share what he believes in. In fact, James made a documentary series that aired on television about athletes and the role they play in culture called “Shut Up and Dribble” (Bieler, 2018, para. 2).

Another example of this is what Didier Drogba did in 2005. Drogba is a soccer player from the Ivory Coast; and in 2005, Ivory Coast qualified for their first World Cup (Soriano, 2017). Drogba was the leader of that team and revered across the country. But at the same time as they qualified for the World Cup, the nation was also in the midst of a civil war (Soriano, 2017). Drogba decided to make the most of his platform that the nation had given him because of his soccer talent. He invited the national television media into the team’s locker room once the qualifying game finished. When they entered in, he knelt with his teammates and pleaded for the country to come together, lay down their weapons, and forgive one another (Soriano, 2017). After this message, the leaders of both sides of the war came together and reached an agreement to end the war (Soriano, 2017). With this, Drogba and his teammates used the influence and power of soccer in

their country to unify the nation. When he did this, he changed the path of his whole nation.

The Future

As media and sports both continue to grow, their convergence will continue to increase as well. This will be seen in two primary areas: the opportunities for fans to consume sports media and the opening for the creation of more professional leagues that involve the use of technology. Each one of these areas can be used to bring peace and unity throughout the world.

There will be opportunities for fans to consume any sports media they would like at a time and manner that is convenient for them. One of the most prominent ways this is happening is the streaming deals being made by the world's top sports leagues. While TV rights deals are still the main players in the market, streaming right deals or hybrids of the two are becoming increasingly common and popular. For example, the NFL has made deals with Twitter and Amazon to stream football games on Thursday nights on their platforms (Kafka, 2018). The NBA recently agreed to a deal with Twitter to stream a few games at the end of the 2018 season (Fischer, 2019). The Champions League made a deal with TNT and B/R Live, a streaming service that is an offset of Bleacher Report, to broadcast a few games on TV but most of them through the online streaming service (McMahon, 2017). And most recently, smaller college and professional leagues have made deals to broadcast their events on ESPN+, ESPN's new streaming subscription service.

The biggest bonus is that these platforms can be accessed anywhere, not just on a TV at home. Viewers have the ability to consume content on their phones, tablets, watches, or whatever else they may prefer. As this grows, more content will be put out through these services.

In addition, apps are being created for almost every single sports team and league. Through these, there is immediate access for all people from across the globe into the happenings of that team or league. Apps like these were not possible until the birth and growth of smart phones in the past decade. These allow people to access content quickly that creates a greater sense of connection. These apps, along with their website counterparts, also allow fans to connect with one another through message boards. Through these, people can chat with one another online either anonymously or not anonymously. Each message board is generally founded around one common theme or team, so that all of the people on it know that they have a common ground with each other. This allows for conversations between these people who may have never met before or never been able to. Yet, because of these message boards, they can relate to one another and become unified together through this form of media. People can plan events together or discuss games that occurred or anything else. They are able to join together in the celebration of victory or the frustration of defeat, but also can help encourage each other to move on to even bigger things in their support of a team.

It is also expected that fan use of virtual reality will see tremendous growth. It is already being experimented with placing fans into some of the closest views of the action. This is being attempted by companies like NextVR and leagues such as the NFL

and the NBA (Omnivert, 2018). Even greater, a couple of companies are beginning to experiment by placing small cameras on the bodies of players and using those as the viewing point for VR (Omnivert, 2018). Even Verizon tested this out for a select group of people during the 2018 Super Bowl (Prezepiorkowski, 2018).

VR creates a completely realistic environment for people watching from home. Fans will no longer have to feel distant and detached from games by watching on a screen, but they will be able to completely immerse themselves into the programming. And when this is paired with the future ability to connect through video with other fans throughout the globe during a service, the possibilities are endless. Fans could interact with studio analysts directly during shows and be a part of them.

One area that current professional leagues, especially in America, are doing this is through methods of fan voting for things such as their All-Star Games. Fan voting has always been a method leagues have used to allow fans to have interaction and input. It was not long ago that this took place solely through paper ballots in arenas and stadiums. Now, texting, voting online, and tweeting are examples of ways fans can vote for their favorite players. Teams and leagues are using many social media platforms to build connections with fans. One primary outlet for this is Twitter; this can come through posting game results, uploading videos or GIFs, responding to fan questions or comments, or tweeting at other teams and players. Teams also use Instagram and Snapchat to add short video stories to give fans an inside look at games or team operations. Leagues often do many of the same things on a broader scale. These will continue to be of great use for leagues and teams. All of this is done to engage technology

and the fans using them. Through all of these methods, the fans gain a closer sense of connection to not only the team, but also to all of the other fans of the team as well. As teams and leagues produce content, people become more and more on the same page—thus, they are more unified.

E-sports leagues continue to gain momentum as legitimate professional sports leagues. Brand-new video game leagues being created and current professional sport leagues creating their own e-sports leagues. Leagues are being created for almost any and every video game imaginable. Fortnite, League of Legends, and others all have well-established professional leagues now (League of Legends, n.d.). A number of professional soccer leagues have created their own FIFA e-leagues (MLS, 2018). Almost every NBA team now has an e-team that will compete in their basketball e-leagues (NBA, 2017). As these continue to grow in prominence and quality, they will continue to be recognized as legitimate professional sports leagues. This will be another form of sports that people will be able to unite around. The concept of e-sports also then spreads the same ideals of sports, such as peace and unity, to a whole new demographic of people who may not generally be fans of current sports. There are around 380 million people who are considered to be fans of e-sports (Gray, 2018), and many of these people consider themselves to not be a casual fan of most sports. Thus, the world of e-sports will not only bring peace and unity between a whole group of people, but it will also unite them with fans of current sports. Many of these groups of people would not interact with each other otherwise, but they then will be able to because of the connection of sports with e-sports.

E-sports players will also be able to gain more prominence as e-sports continue to grow in popularity. Gamers have been already to earn millions for competing in tournaments, and these numbers will only continue to grow as more revenue comes into e-sports (Gray, 2018). As technology becomes better and e-sports continue to grow, players will have the same amount of influence and popularity in these communities as athletes do in current sports. These players will then be able to use their platform to advance social justice causes or whatever they believe in. In turn, this will allow for the spread and growth of peace in gaming communities. Even the International Olympic Committee is starting to take a look at e-sports (Gray, 2018). If e-sports become a part of the Olympics, this would open up an even bigger opportunity for e-sports to be used as a method of peace and unity.

As they gain notoriety and recognition, the use of sports as a method of unity will connect with a whole new demographic of people. E-sports can be used just in the same way as any other sport across the world, and can connect with people who may not enjoy any other sports. Everything that is currently being done and will be done in the future to utilize sports will be able to be done exactly in the same manner with e-sports. Sports shows will be able to be created based on e-sports, events will continue to be streamed just like regular sporting events, and so on. In addition, there is a much smaller chance of injury in e-sports, a major concern right now throughout the sports world. All in all, e-sports add a whole new dimension to the sports world. They reach a completely new demographic of people in the world. At the same time, they will be able to provide the same benefits of peace and unity that we have seen in the past century in the sports world.

50 years from now, there will be stories about countries being united together, countries overcoming civil war, communities overcoming tragedies, and people uniting over players both in the sports world and also through the use of e-sports.

As more content from across the world becomes more accessible to more people across the world, shared experiences will increase. This provides the possibility of greater unity among nations and people groups. People will be able to communicate with fans and teams that they would have no way to communicate with before. These people will be able to then have a connection through this event, team, or player and be unified as they follow them. While they might not physically be together, there will be an emotional connection that sports engenders, making strangers feel like best friends through a common bond.

A reason there is often a sense of tension in society is that people do not have a connection to those that are not like them, and so they do not seek to understand where they may be coming from. New forms of communication through new methods of sports media allow people to grow together and, perhaps, understand people from throughout the world more than they ever have been able to before.

All of this new media and technology clearly creates a plethora of opportunities for people to access information in and out of sports. But not only this, technology and media have connected the world in ways that have never been seen or achieved before. In the past, people were limited by geography and proximity in their ability to quickly communicate with others. If communication was to take place with people across the world, or even just across a nation, it was either impossible or expensive and very slow.

Thus, society used to be based very much on the local rather than the global. However, technology is uniting people from around the world and revolutionizing the ways we are connected. Now, people across the world can quickly communicate through phone calls, video calls, texting, and so much more without massive fees being associated with the communication (Bernström, 2013). This has created a feeling of unity among people who had little to no way of being connected before. This could be between family members who live in different locations or it could even be between total strangers. Now, people can become friends with people they may have never met before. Ideas and thoughts can be exchanged between people who never would have been able to come into contact with ideas from other parts of the world without technology (Marks and Spencer, 2018). This can be related to political beliefs, religious beliefs, economic beliefs, and even more. Now that the world is connected through technology, and people can learn about each other more and understand one another better, peace is able to expand to even greater levels.

The same can be said about sports and media. As peace in the world continues to grow through the use of technology and media, sports will continue to have that same reach and effect. Sports by themselves inherently are able to be used as a method of peace, but this will only increase as technology bring supporters from across the world closer to each other. Families who follow teams together but are divided by geography are able to re-connect and grow closer bonds because of this new technology. Strangers who support different teams will be able to learn more about the experiences and backgrounds of one another, and will then be able to better relate and find common

ground, no matter who their favorite teams are. Sports have the power to radically create peace and unity through technology and media, even on a greater scale than technology and media are able to do on their own.

Conclusion

Sports have the power to unify people in ways unlike many other forms of reconciliation. Sports have been used as the stimulus to produce cultural change and to break down the walls of prejudice by normalizing peoples' cultural experience. When no other commonalities are shared between opposing groups of people, sports can be the spark to bring these people together. Sports are "an international language" (Sport, 2003, p. 14). Bonnie DeSimone wrote shortly after 9/11 that "sports are not detached from life. Sports, at their core, are life-affirming" (DeSimone, 2001, para. 12).

Sports reach out to every human in a way that few things can. Sports play into human skill and into human emotion. People are able to see the best in others as they find a common ground through the game they are a part of. Sports provide the "ideal forum for resuming social dialogue and bridging divides" (Sport, 2003, p. 4).

Sports have the power to solve conflicts from wars to minor family disputes. Sports have the power to unify the most-different of people. People from different backgrounds can be united through sports. People of different religions can be united through sports. People of different political beliefs can be united through sports. People who enjoy gaming and people who know nothing about video games can be united through sports. Sports is the international language of diplomacy. It speaks of excellence, accomplishment, overcoming obstacles, and the human desire to be tested.

Sports is an avenue to bring together people divided by geography, politics, religion, economics or history. It speaks to the human soul, and in doing this it opens the possibility of healing things in humanity that are broken.

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