

Research Note

Youth Sport in New Zealand and Hungary Globalisation versus Local Resistance¹

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Abstract

Cross-cultural analyses of sport indicate that there are many similarities to be found, and increasing globalisation is occurring in western industrialised countries. Whether this process is quite so evident in the former eastern bloc countries is a matter of some interest, however. This study examines adolescent attitudes toward sport in New Zealand and Hungary, and attempts to identify both the effects of globalisation and historical national differences within the adolescent sporting context in the two countries. Clear evidence of the cultural and historical roots can be found in the sporting preferences of adolescents in the two countries, although the popularity of basketball may be some indication of the impact of globalisation. Nevertheless, there are quite striking cross-cultural differences to be found, particularly with regard to gender attitudes. It seems that sport remains a site of resistance to globalisation, and the significance of specific local conditions still ensures a particular 'local flavour' for sport.

Introduction

Cross-cultural analyses of sport today indicate that there are many similarities to be found. Indeed, Hans-Peter Brandl-Bredenbeck and Wolf-Dietrich Brettschneider (1997: 357) have suggested that 'increasing globalization is a major feature in the development of sport culture(s) among adolescents in western industrial societies'. Some critics would have it that sport has been a key element in the process of globalisation that has threatened distinctive national identities, and as Barry Houlihan has observed, 'there have been a number of developments in sport that indicate that a global sporting culture is emerging or has already emerged (1993: 1).

Roland Robertson (1992: 5) has defined the process of globalisation as 'the compression of the world into a single space'. As Jim McKay, Geoff Lawrence, Toby Miller and David Rowe (1993: 12) put it, 'in the new, tightly intermeshed global economic system, not only is it harder for nation-states to implement self-determining policies, but assertions of a distinctive cultural foundation to the nation become increasingly implausible'. Sport is seen as a useful contributor to the process of globalisation because of 'its ability to cross national frontiers and transcend different cultures' (Rees, Brettschneider & Brandl-Bredenbeck, 1998: 217).

The cultural impact of globalisation has been much debated. Alan Bairner (1994: 1) claims that 'not only does sport provide opportunities for the expression of national solidarity, it may also represent one of the clearest and most tangible indications of a nation's very existence'. Joseph Maguire (1994) suggests that globalisation is a two-way process and people do not passively accept sport forms but interpret sport for themselves.² Consequently he maintains that there will be local or national differences in the way sport is practised. As Steve Jackson and David Andrews (1999: 33) suggest, 'caution is required in both overstating and understanding the effects of globalization'.

This study examines the place of sport in New Zealand and Hungary, and identifies the effects of globalisation and historical national differences within the adolescent sporting context in the two countries. These sites were chosen for analysis because they both place considerable importance on the value of sport (Eisen, 1974: Graham, 2001), have successful records at the Olympic Games when measured on a per capita basis, and there are also significant similarities with regard to historical sporting values and traditions. Globalisation is clearly significant in much of modern sport, but specific local development patterns and cultural traditions must also be taken into account, As Rex Thomson (1998, p. 3) has suggested, 'it is the interplay of personal, social and cultural factors that is perhaps most helpful in explaining adolescent interest and involvement in sport'.

Sport in New Zealand had its foundations in the British Empire. The country was settled principally by English and Scottish immigrants, and sport and games were important in the process of cultural transfer from Britain (or more particularly, England) to her colonial empire. Brian Stoddart (1998: 651) maintains that 'through sport were transferred dominant British beliefs as to social behaviour, standards, relations, and confirmity'. However, while cricket seems to have been particularly potent as an instrument of cultural imperialism, colonial modifications in the style of play in rugby football broke away from the imperial mould.

In New Zealand sport, there has been a strong historical emphasis on 'masculinity'. J.O.C. (1980: 218) Phillips suggests that the social segregation of the sexes in New Zealand has been unusually strong, and can only be understood 'in terms of this country's distinctive male experience'. He suggests that sport has been a key ingredient in the forging of New Zealand's national character, and that the male stereotype came about through 'the interaction of two powerful traditions: the desire to keep alive the muscular virtues of the pioneer heritage, and the concern to contain that masculine spirit within respectable boundaries' (Phillips, 1987: 86). It was rugby football, New Zealand's national game, which provided the best expression of this male stereotype.

In Hungary, too, there has been a strong tradition of gender stereotyping in sport (Foldesi, Louveau & Metoudi, 1991). Soccer has been the predominant sport for boys and men (Foldesi, Irlinger, Louveau & Metoudi, 1994), artistic gymnastics has been an important sport for girls (Foldesi *et al*, 1991), and while basketball and team handball are popular

sports for both boys and girls, they are not played as co-educational activities at a competitive level. These sports are also amongst the most popular in terms of overall participation levels and spectator appeal.³

Method

From 1996-1999, the School of Physical Education, University of Otago, New Zealand and the Institute for Physical Education and Sports Science, Janus Pannonius University of Pecs, Hungary, pursued a cross-cultural study among 10-18 year old secondary school students. A Sport Attitude Survey, originally designed by Wolf-Dietrich Brettschneider, formerly of the Free University, Berlin and C. Roger Rees, Adelphi University, New York (Rees & Brettschneider, 1994), was utilised in this study. The questionnaire was adapted at the University of Otago, and then translated into Hungarian. The survey examined the importance and meaning of sport to the participants; gender, ethnic and cross-cultural differences; patterns of drug use in the two countries; and sport preferences.

The sample size was 1095 (boys 592 = 54%, girls 503 = 46%) in New Zealand and 1031 (boys 478 = 46%, girls 553 = 54%) in Hungary. The surveys were nationwide in both countries, with 23 schools involved in New Zealand and 53 schools in Hungary. Data were analysed by SPSS for Windows 8.0 Software Package by factor analysis.

Results

In both Hungary and New Zealand, sport is considered very important by youth. Both boys and girls in Hungary rated sport at 78 (on a scale of 100), while New Zealand adolescents rated it at 74.6 (boys 77.5, girls 71.4). There are some similarities but also some differences with regard to the meanings attached to the word 'sport'. Hungarian youth rate 'team sports' as the most dominant meaning followed by 'health and fitness' and 'enjoyment'. New Zealand adolescents rated 'enjoyment' most highly, followed by 'team sports' and 'health and fitness', while adolescents in both cultures gave a very low rating to 'victory'.

Sporting preferences clearly differed in the two countries, with rugby, basketball, cricket and soccer for boys, and netball, basketball and touch rugby for girls being the most favoured sports in New Zealand (see Table 1).

Table 1: Favoured Sporting Activities: New Zealand

ACTIVITY	TOTAL %	MALE	FEMALE
Rugby Football	32	43	11
Basketball	30	32	28
Cricket	19	26	4
Soccer	16	20	4
Touch Rugby	15	13	22
Netball	10	0	37

For Hungarian youth, the interests are markedly different. Soccer, basketball and team handball are the most popular sports for boys, while for girls, team handball, basketball and swimming were the most popular activities (see Table 2).

Table 2: Favoured Sporting Activities: Hungary

ACTIVITY	TOTAL %	MALE	FEMALE
Soccer	24	39	7
Basketball	15	18	11
Team Handball	13	12	13
Tennis	6	6	7
Swimming	6	4	8

There are differences in the use of drugs (including alcohol) between students in the two countries, although trends in Hungary suggest that it is becoming similar to other western nations. In both the consumption of alcohol and the use of marijuana, New Zealand boys usage is considerably higher than Hungarian boys, although for both New Zealand and Hungarian girls, drug usage in any form is low. A surprising 74 per cent of Hungarian students do not drink alcohol at all or seldom do, the comparable figure for New Zealand students being 46 per cent.

Physically passive hobbies such as hanging out with friends, listening to music, going to movies, relaxing or day dreaming by themselves, watching television, and going to parties and dances were all seen as important, while informal sports such as rollerblading and skateboarding or going to the pool still rate very highly with young people from both countries.

There were some interesting reasons given by Hungarian youngsters for participating in sport. In Hungary, sport is seen as being good for the body, while many participate for the enjoyment of exercise and the excitement of sport, because they want to be physically fit, and because they want to be with their friends. In New Zealand, the reasons are similar, although there is a much greater emphasis on fitness and competition and far less importance placed on being with friends (see Table 3).

Table 3: Reasons for Participating in Sport (in per cent)

REASON	NEW ZEALAND	HUNGARY
Good for Body	85	84
Physical Fitness	84	68
Excitement	83	69
Enjoyment of Competition	74	56
Enjoyment of Exercise	71	80
To be with friends	35	60

School sports participation was considerably higher for New Zealand males, with boys averaging 5.2 hours per week in comparison to Hungarian boys (3.5 hours per week), while girls' participation figures were similar (3.7 hours per week in New Zealand in comparison to 3.4 hours per week for Hungarian girls). Outside of school time, Hungarian and New Zealand youngsters are involved in similar amounts of sport (New Zealand and Hungarian boys 6.3 hours; New Zealand girls 4.9 hours, Hungarian girls 4.3 hours per week).

Perhaps the most striking contrast between the two groups was with regard to gender differences. Attitudes of New Zealand youth differ markedly from Hungarian with regard to women's involvement in sport. In New Zealand, support for the involvement of girls and women in sport is strong, and there is every indication that most adolescents reject the notion of gender-specific sports. A clear majority of both boys and girls felt that all sports were suitable for male participation, while the figures were even higher for female sport participation. In contrast in Hungary, most students felt that a number of sports were quite unsuitable for male participation, while girls suffered even greater pressure to take part in 'appropriate' activities (see Table 4). The less positive attitude in Hungary may well be responsible for the high dropout rate of female students from sport after they finish secondary school.

Table 4: Attitudes towards Sports Participation

	New Zealand		Hungary	
	Males %	Females %	Males %	Females %
For Males				
All sports are suitable	64	81	43	45
For Females				
All sports are suitable	70	82	25	34

It seems that the KiwiSport programme⁴, which promotes sports participation and also works towards breaking down gender differences, has been effective in New Zealand (Thomson, 1996), and similar efforts by a number of other New Zealand sporting associations has led to a weakening of New Zealand's 'gendered culture' and the historical ties between masculinity and sport. A similar programme to KiwiSport could be particularly valuable in Hungary, and could well encourage more active participation by Hungarian women in a wider range of sports.

Discussion

It is obvious that the role of culture in explaining variability in sport is highly significant, and clear cross-cultural differences can be found in spite of the effects of globalisation. With regard to the importance of sport in adolescent culture, Hungarian adolescents rate sport most highly (78), with New Zealand youth rating it at 74.6. Both of these groups are higher than the scores of 72.9

for New York adolescents and 69.3 for Berlin youth reported by Brandl-Bredenbeck and Rees in 1996, supporting the earlier contention that both New Zealand and Hungary place a high value on sport. It is perhaps in the meanings that youngsters attach to the word sport, however, that even more significant cross-cultural differences become apparent (see Table 5).

Table 5: Meaning of Sport: Cross-Cultural Differences

	New Zealand %	Hungary %	Germany* %	USA* %
Enjoyment	21	13	15	17
Team sports	18	19	15	35
Health & fitness	10	17	8	4
Individual Sports	8	8	15	5
Victory	1	2	1	8

The table above indicates that there are quite striking cross-cultural differences. There are highly significant differences between the New Zealand and the Hungarian and German adolescents' ranking of 'enjoyment', a factor seen as much more significant by the New Zealand adolescents (chi square $p < .01$). 'Victory', which is highly rated by American youth is rated significantly lower (chi square $p < .01$) by youth in the other three countries. Health and fitness, very highly rated by Hungarian adolescents and to a lesser extent by New Zealand and German youth, has far less significance for American youngsters.

Clear evidence of the different cultural and historical roots can be found in the sporting preferences of adolescents, and this is to be expected. However, in both Hungary and New Zealand as well as in Germany and the United States (Brandl-Bredenbeck, 1994), basketball has very considerable popularity, an indication of the impact of globalisation and of the emergence of figures such as Michael Jordan as global popular cultural icons (Andrews, Carrington, Jackson & Mazur, 1996).

It would seem fair to suggest that while the full effects of globalisation have perhaps yet to be felt in either Hungary or New Zealand, the process is one where the momentum is likely to increase. Formal sports participation itself will come under increasing pressure as youngsters find more attractive leisure alternatives. In spite of this, however, the significance of specific local conditions is likely to ensure a particular 'local flavour' for sport. Paradoxically, sport may well be seen as a site of resistance to, as well as supporting the process of globalisation. Certainly, it seems that the 'universal language' of sport still has some clearly defined 'accents', and this is readily apparent in this and other recent studies (see e.g. Rees & Brandl-Bredenbeck, 1995; Soós, 1995, 1997; Thomson, 1998; Rees, Brettschneider & Brandl-Bredenbeck, 1998; Waser & Passavant, 1997).

NOTES:

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2. More recent work by Maguire (1999) and other authors, correctly identified by the reviewers, which would have further informed this analysis are not available in Hungarian libraries. Few relevant English-language journals are held in these libraries.
3. This analysis of Hungarian sport indicates some of the difficulties of cross-cultural comparative research which attempts to cross language boundaries. The second author is Hungarian, and was responsible for collecting all of the Hungarian data for this paper. However, the first author, who has been responsible for writing this paper, while currently resident in Hungary does not speak or read Hungarian, and has had to rely on the limited amount of information on the history and characteristics of Hungarian sport published in English.
4. KiwiSport is a programme of modified sports for New Zealand primary school children in which all sports are played by mixed teams of boys and girls.

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