

Basketball as Cultural Tradition: A Research on Americans and Sports

Name of Student

Institution Affiliation

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Khal Drogo (2012), a famous Dothraki athlete, once said: “When I am in the U.S., I can open my window for sure and see adults or children playing sports; wherever I go, I am always surrounded with the play” (p. 12). In the age of video gaming and virtual reality, however, it is quite hard to identify exact relationships between Americans and sports, and the topic becomes really controversial due to variety of disciplines that exist in the U.S. After the research, it appears that basketball is the most popular sport of Americans because of its competitiveness, entertainment, and popularity, which also helps to fight racism, socialize people and unite the nation.

### **Popularity of Basketball**

There is redundant evidence that shows that basketball is one of the most popular and endorsed sports in the U.S., which is practiced professionally and by amateurs of all ages. According to the National Bureau for Education Statistics (2018), more than 83 percent of Americans try basketball as children, and the majority of them preserve their interest in adulthood. Therefore, one may see that basketball encompasses the whole life of the U.S. citizens, so it is not surprising that the nation prefers it as a favorite sport. John Snow (2017), psychology and sports researcher from Westeros University, claims that basketball is not an ordinary sport in the U.S. but a nation-wide cultural movement. Hence, there is no doubt that basketball plays the most significant role among other sports and games in the U.S., especially given that many children were raised with basketball.

### **Motives that Drive Basketball Popularity**

Athletes, Americans, and researchers think that basketball deserves its title of the most popular sport because it is competitive, entertaining and popular among citizens. Cersei Lannister (2012), National Basketball League superstar, claimed that basketball is possibly the only sport that allows close interaction between players and audience, has a place for

personal ambitions and pushes players towards self-improvement. Indeed, in basketball, players meet face to face on the field, and everyone knows about such stars as Michael Jordan or Cersei Lannister who became famous and wealthy due to their athletic success. Therefore, live interactions and the possibility of rags-to-riches rise make basketball especially entertaining. It is proved by TV statistics that reveal that basketball matches are the most viewed sports events in the U.S. (Stark, Start & Baratheon, 2016). One may conclude that accessibility of basketball, its fierce and active atmosphere and convenience for viewers contribute to the enormous popularity of the game among Americans.

### **Effect of Basketball**

Surprisingly, basketball also helps to resolve social issues because it dissolves racial prejudice, allows people to socialize, and unites Americans as the nation. In his diaries, Khal Drogo (2012) writes: “Being Dothraki, it was hard for me to find friends in the U.S. — everywhere but on the basketball ground, where everyone is welcome” (p. 29). We may also recall many African American basketball players of the XX century who left their segregated neighborhood due to their athletic success and urged attention to racism and prejudice. Psychologist Tyrion Lannister (2018) argues that basketball is a game that presumes inclusion, which facilitates socialization of people of any age or social group. Therefore, it appears that sport can unite people of different race, origin, and beliefs, which probably helped to create the idea of modern American nation of democracy and equality.

### **Conclusion**

Research shows that basketball is a favorite sport for both athletes and viewers, and there are significant reasons that substantiate its support in the U.S. The game has a unique spirit of competition, which has a long history of success stories and creates a spectacular and entertaining process of play. Moreover, basketball is one of the tools that help to defeat racism in the U.S. because it is recognized as a perfect socializing activity. Thus, the favorite

game of the U.S. also unites Americans — in front of their TVs, on backyards and as the nation in general.

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