

SPORT PARTICIPATION AND OLYMPIC LEGACIES: 1996 ATLANTA GAMES

Peter Smolianov, PhD, Professor

Salem State University, Salem, MA, USA

Steven Dion

Salem State University, Salem, MA, USA

Spencer Harris

University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

Introduction

The “inspirational value” of the summer Olympic Games is frequently trumpeted as a vehicle to drive and grow mass sports participation (e.g., SGMA, 2012) predicated on the widely held belief that success in elite sport inspires individuals to become sport participants at the grassroots level—a process sometimes referred to as the “trickle-down” effect (Hindson, Gidlow, & Peebles, 1994), particularly because mass participation was one of the major anticipated effects of the Olympic Games in the mind of the founder of the modern Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin (Veal, Toohey & Frawley, 2012). While some estimates suggest that participation did increase following some Olympic Games, the failure of relevant organizations to maintain an adequate and consistent data collection regime makes this conclusion extremely speculative (Veal et.al, 2012). Participation legacies, however, are proving increasingly important in justifying the cost and value of major events. Indeed, the legacy ideas and potential of bidding cities now form an integral and important part of the candidature process (IOC, 2016), particularly after the Olympic Agenda 2020 was agreed by the International Olympic Committee in 2014 (IOC, 2014).

When citizens are allowed to have a say, and this is now a formal IOC requirement as part of the candidature process, they often say they don't want the Olympics, as the example of bidding for the 2022 Winter Games provided by Petchesky (2014): Krakow, Poland, withdrew its bid after a citywide referendum where 70 percent of voters came out against hosting the Olympics; Stockholm, Sweden's ruling political party declined to fund the games citing the pointlessness of paying hundreds of millions for facilities that would be used for two weeks and then rarely again, a story common to Olympic hosts; voters in Munich, Germany, rejected a proposed Olympic bid speaking against the non-transparency and focus on profit; a joint bid from Davos/St. Moritz, Switzerland, fell apart after being rejected by a public referendum (Petchesky, 2014). During the 2024 Summer Olympics The German city of Hamburg dropped out after citizens voted it down and Boston, USA bowed out amid money concerns (Marcin, 2015) after only 42 percent of Boston-area poll respondents said they supported the idea of hosting the games, with half against it and three out of four respondents saying they worried taxpayer funds would be required to stage the games (Malone & Tempera, 2015).

Community sport is growing in political salience, particularly due to increasing concern about health and wellness and, in particular, rising obesity as well as the ostensible legacy effect of sport mega events (SMEs). “Mass participation” is increasingly viewed as a critical component of city or country bids for SMEs as it provides the means by which a broader social benefit can be delivered, thereby providing (alongside other strategic legacy components) a justification for expenditure in excess of \$15 billion for what might otherwise be viewed as a three- or four-week sport event. However, while the profile of the community sport policy field may be growing, there remains very little academic attention to different models of community sport and the factors that facilitate or prevent the effective implementation of policy.

While mass participation outcomes were not as specific or explicit goal of the 1996 Atlanta Games as it has been in Beijing 2008 and London 2012, the use of the Olympic Games to increase mass participation is becoming more pronounced in the United States. Following the failed bids by New York and Chicago for the 2012 and 2016 Olympic Games, the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) sent letters to the mayors of thirty-four cities in 2013 asking whether they are interested in bidding to host the 2024 Olympic Games, stressing that now, more than ever, the power of the Olympic and Paralympic Games must be used to encourage U.S. youth to be more active and engage in sport. As the USOC supports Los Angeles in its Olympic bidding and the International Olympic Committee is to choose the 2024 host city in 2017, this study attempts to: 1) explore the relationship between the last U.S. summer Olympics, the 1996 Atlanta Games, and mass participation, particularly what has happened to sports participation levels in the USA since the Atlanta Games; as well as to 2) learn about the nature of the projects that the USOC and other organizations have developed to grow mass sports participation, and possible obstacles for getting off the ground and implementing such projects.

Method

Academic literature and organizational documents of the USOC and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) were analyzed to better understand the socio-economic and political context of the Olympic Games in the U.S., the evolution of sport policy in the U.S., the Olympic Games legacy, participation trends as well as good practice and positive influencers together with challenges and adverse effects in relation to increasing mass sports participation.

Sport participation trends before, during and after the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games were analyzed using the results of the “Historical Sports Participation: 2016 Edition” report compiled by the National Sporting Goods Association based on a survey of 35,000 individuals, projected to the U.S. population (NSGA, 2016). The report defined a participant as an individual seven years of age or older who participates in a sport/activity at least two days per year for all sports/activities except aerobic exercising, bicycle riding, exercise walking, exercising with equipment, running/jogging, swimming, weight lifting, and work out at club/gym/fitness studio. For these fitness activities, participation was defined as six days or more during the year (NSGA, 2016).

Changes in participation were measured pre and post the 1996 Games at different intervals. From 79 sports and activities tracked by NSGA (2016), 1984-2015 data were available and were analyzed for 19 activities: aerobic exercising, backpack/wilderness camping, baseball, basketball, bicycle riding, bowling, exercising with equipment, golf, hiking, hunting with firearms, running, skiing (alpine), skiing (cross country), soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, volleyball, water skiing. These data were graphed against the U.S. population numbers over 30 years, to compare possible influences on participation by the 1996 Atlanta and other Olympic Games. The 19-activity data were then compared with the same data reduced to sports that have definite connection with summer Olympic disciplines: NSGA (2016) provided continuous 1984-2015 data on seven summer Olympic sports including basketball, bicycle riding, running, soccer, swimming, tennis and volleyball.

Data on participation one year before and five years after the 1996 Atlanta available from NSGA (2016) for 53 activities were graphed and analyzed in comparison with the same data reduced to Olympic sports: NSGA (2016) provided continuous 1995-2001 data on 13 summer Olympic sports including archery, badminton, basketball, bicycle riding, canoeing, running, sailing, soccer, swimming, table tennis, target shooting, tennis and volleyball.

Despite the outlined limitations of the NSGA (2016) data, such as the age and the low participation frequency of respondents, and inconsistent coverage of sports, the NSGA provides the most complete and robust set of historical data of sport participation in the U.S. These data are more accurate than, for example, membership of NGBs as the latter simply states how many members the association has and does not necessarily measure their members' participation. For some sports this may give a reasonably accurate picture, but for others the picture may not be as accurate if many members act predominantly as volunteers and supporting parents. Also, NGB membership data captures organized sports, while the NSGA data include such activities as hiking and camping, providing a broader picture of mass sport participation. Additionally, U.S. Bureau of the Census (1994, 1997) data on sport and recreation club membership spending five years before and one year after the 1996 Atlanta Olympics were also analyzed and compared with NSGA data.

Results and discussion

Socio-economic and political context

Social challenges such as public health, equity, tolerance, and environmental sustainability call for a sensible response from both sport for all and elite sport, as declared at the World Sport for All Congress (2002). In line with this declaration, the U.S. National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP, 2010) recognized the need for better prevention of diseases through sport and recreation. The plan's authors called for Olympic and professional corporations and national sport governing bodies (NGBs), and event venue operators, to help increase active physical participation in the community by shifting the current American culture from watching sport to doing it, supported by sustained federal funding of \$100 million annually.

The tasks stressed in the NPAP (2010) are focused on developing and managing sport systematically and strategically at all levels - from competitive Olympic, professional and university sport to grass roots community sport and recreation programs. The NPAP (2010) reflected the lack of coordination, policies and resources for everyone's healthy sport participation in the United States stressed by many authors (e.g., Bowers, Chalip & Green, 2011; Green, Chalip & Bowers, 2013; Smolianov, Zakus & Gallo, 2014; Sparvero, Chalip & Green, 2008). The realization that the market-based, liberalist capitalist republic of the United States falls behind other developed nations in providing equal chances to succeed and prosper for its citizens is increasing together with calls to overhaul both the economic and political institutions of the American society: “Of all the costs imposed on our society by the

top one percent, perhaps the greatest is this: the erosion of our sense of identity, in which fair play, equality of opportunity, and a sense of community are so important” (Stiglitz, 2011).

As U.S. republicanism demands there is little government support for and oversight of sport in the country, a more private sector approach shapes the way sport is delivered and structured. This leads to economic and ideological domination by a small number of revenue generating sports such as baseball, football, basketball, and hockey that are sold as entertainment by elite teams. Rather than being active participants, too many U.S. citizens support a few most popular sports in the form of paid spectators, consuming the products and services of corporate sponsors, and subsidizing the rent-seeking construction of stadiums through tax dollars (Smolianov et al., 2014).

Connection between sport and health, particularly physical exercise as preventive intervention that can reduce healthcare costs for society is still to be fully utilized in the U.S. Despite spending more on healthcare than other developed countries, the USA lags behind European nations such as France and the United Kingdom in both human longevity and health outcomes (Luzi, 2012). One important reason for President Obama’s 2010 reform of the U.S. health system was the lack of healthcare for all citizens (Cutler, 2009). The importance of a universal healthcare has been acknowledged in 2016 by republican and democratic presidential nominees—both Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton promised to advance Obama’s achievements closer to a universal healthcare (Pianin, 2016; Pearoct, 2015). As the U.S. federal government is assuming greater responsibility for the healthcare of its citizens, it might also establish a missing government agency for sport and physical activity (Bowers et al., 2011) and follow many examples of governments across the world mobilizing and coordinating resources from different partners for increased community sport participation (Nicholson, Hoye, & Houlihan, 2011).

As citizens of the United States and increasingly the rest of the world are enjoying convenient, physically easy, entertaining, consumerist life which makes most of the population weak and unhealthy, the demand for nurturing gradual sport training methodologies and conditions which integrate medically proven rehabilitation programs is increasing (Smolianov, 2016; Smolianov et al., 2014). Despite this, laws and policies which regulate businesses, education, medicine and sport favor the minority who are on the top of social ladder and promote passive entertainment instead of healthy participation (Smolianov et al., 2014). Most importantly for sport participation, this trend applies to the USOC policies.

Brief evolution of sport policy in ‘country’

Under pressure of increasing international competition and lack of funding and influenced by the mentioned earlier American traditions of sport as commercial entertainment, the USOC moved away from focusing on mass participation toward rewarding medal-winning performances. This emphasis began in 1989 with the release of the Olympic Overview Report which stated that elite performance must be the USOC’s primary goal (see Janofsky, 1989). Consistent with this emphasis the USOC developed a “venture capital” model in 1994 requiring member NGBs to present specific plans detailing how they intend to use financial resources from the USOC to increase their chances of winning Olympic medals (Piore, 2004). Later, the USOC also announced it would eliminate \$250,000 in guaranteed funding to each NGB beginning in 2006 (Borzilleri, 2005a). While the USOC expanded organizational structures and financing to provide a footing for sport development, some smaller NGBs had received up to 70 percent of their budget from the USOC (AP, 2000; Dittmore, Mahony & Andrew, 2008). According to Kathy Zimmerman, former USA Badminton vice president and a retired elite player, the elimination of minimum fixed funding made the big sports stronger, while the smaller sports might drop off or disappear (Borzilleri, 2005b; Dittmore et al., 2008). According to executive directors and presidents of each of the thirty-nine NGBs governed by the USOC, financial assistance is necessary to maintain competitive success in their respective sports. Smaller NGBs preferred needs-based distribution to address an advantage that larger NGBs have in acquiring resources. Larger NGBs, with more members paying membership fees, are logically also more marketable to potential sponsors than smaller NGBs. Non-medal winning NGBs also fear being excluded from television programming and funding in favor of NGBs with greater medal winning success.

In a model that distributes resources based on actual medals won, the bigger sports will again receive the lion’s share of financial resources, while community participation goals will be secondary if they are considered at all. Though it is possible that the USOC is reflecting what the organization’s stakeholders want (i.e., medal-winning athletes), it can be claimed that the other goals of sport are also important to a society. In response, Dittmore et al. (2008) proposed that if the goal stated in the 1978 Amateur Sports Act (“to promote and encourage physical fitness and public participation in amateur athletic activities,” 36 U.S.C. § 220503) is still essential, ensuring it is adequately resourced and receiving sufficient focus and attention is also important.

Struggling without public and lottery funding available to sport organizations in other advanced nations, the USOC and many of its partners are financed mostly through donations. Though funding based on tax incentives makes the public feel good when they directly support their athletes, the accountability for these contributions is

questionable because it rewards giving rather than an improved performance or increased participation. Also, donated amounts depend on economic conditions and require significant resources and special skills for soliciting funds. This leads to unstable and insufficient funding of sport, which is one of the reasons the USOC has focused less on mass participation and more on winning medals since 1994 (Janofsky, 1989). To help rectify this shift, the USOC created the CODP.

The Olympic Games Legacy

The chairman of Atlanta's bid committee, lawyer William Porter Payne, said he expected the privately financed organizing committee to have a US\$1-billion budget and to finish with a US\$200-million profit, which would be contributed to the IOC (Harvey, 1990). In 1999, "the Salt Lake City scandal" surfaced, leading to U.S. Congressional Hearings on corruption charges against the IOC with regard to allegations of bribery in the Atlanta and Salt Lake City Olympic bid processes. Payne admitted to participating in "excessive actions, and even thought processes that today seem inappropriate." The bid team's "southern hospitality" toward IOC members included luxury hotel stays, expensive goods university scholarships to their children (Turner, 1999; Lacoss, 2010).

The Atlanta Games exploited the opportunity of profiting seen within the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics' example and was rewarded by the IOC for the amount of private support garnered (Barney, 2002). The legacy included the Georgia Dome which was under construction to become the home of the National Football League's Atlanta Falcons, as well as a larger outdoor stadium to be built as the venue for the opening and closing ceremonies and the track and field competition, and to serve as the new home of baseball's Atlanta Braves (Harvey, 1990). Other planned legacy outcomes were to revitalize Atlanta economically and promote the city as a tourist and business center. However, Lacoss (2010) discussed that the Atlanta Housing Authority demolished homes without finding housing for those who were displaced, therefore transplanting the poverty to the southern suburbs. Also, the competition for financial rewards was not well managed, which was criticized by the IOC president and media: ACOG promised sponsors exclusivity without having the necessary control over city properties; the city offered American Express to be the official credit card of Atlanta, while ACOG offered Visa premier sponsorship of the Games (Lacoss, 2010).

More than 30 analyzed U.S. media and academic articles on the results of Atlanta Olympics legacy were about the economic impact of the Games and have not mentioned sport participation, but stressed that the Games were privately financed, followed the Los Angeles' efficient model of using existing facilities, revitalized and advertised the city of Atlanta and provided new facilities which "served the community" by hosting professional sports teams. The lasting image of the 1996 Atlanta Centennial Games among many academics and journalists predominately refers to over-commercialism and the process of victimization of the poor for the sake of profits (Lacoss, 2010). This approach to the role of Olympics emphasizing business and entertainment not community wellbeing is indicative of the American notion of sport explained earlier. Perhaps the most significant legacy of the 1996 Olympics to mass sport participation across the U.S. was unplanned and occurred in a form of the Community Olympic Development Program (CODP).

Community Olympic Development Program

This program created in 1998 by the USOC had initially partnered with 14 NGBs and seven Community Sports Groups (CODP, 2011), growing to 21 NGBs and 15 Community Sports Groups in 2016 (CODP, 2016). By 2011, there were 217 CODPs servicing 250,000 participants in a network of programs and facilities across the country (CODP, 2011). Sportspeople beginning to train and compete could progress through intermediate programs toward high performance opportunities in Olympic and Paralympic sports. Assisted by the USOC, the CODP builds partnerships with potential supporting organizations in local communities to establish high-quality programs, particularly at the intermediate level of sport participation.

The national network of CODPs that is being built by the USOC plays a vital role in the systematic implementation of long term athlete development methods, with relatively small impact on national healthy community participation given the country's large population. In 1997-2014 CODP Community Sport Groups produced 24 Olympians and 7 Paralympians, supported the achievement of 112 National Titles and 173 Senior National Team Members, hosted 97 events for 6,939 participants, serviced 10,764 athletes, achieving total outreach of 525,279 including 18,744 youth through clinics, all adding to community financial impact of only \$21 million (CODP, 2016).

Integration of all levels of participant under expert coaches in partnership with local public schools occurred through the CODPs. Increased investment in these programs allowed local communities to create opportunities for all talented U.S. youths to develop to their highest potential. However, the CODP is still very small given the size of this country as it introduced only 484,000 youths to sport in fourteen kinds of sport in the year of 2010 (CODP, 2011). It is evident that the USOC has been efficient with its CODP partnerships, but it requires greater public

funding for mass sport in order to achieve its mission and advance both international performance and community participation. Another important connective tissue between Olympic Games and mass sport participation that demands greater public attention and funding and better supporting policies are national games supported by regional and local selection competitions.

Olympic Sports Festivals and current State Games of America

The National Olympics were organized by the USOC every year from 1978 to 1995, except those years when the Summer Olympic Games took place. Participation numbers had been growing, and the 1995 National Olympics held in Colorado featured 3,500 athletes competing in thirty-seven sports over a ten-day period. Lacking corporate and government support, the USOC first considered reducing the number of sports or to invite only international athletes or to hold this sport festival only once or twice in a four-year period. In the end, the USOC chose to discontinue the National Olympics (Longman, 1995; Rhoden, 1987).

The National Olympics program helped to develop the U.S. Olympic team that achieved first place in both total and gold medal counts at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. More importantly, the national celebration attracted people to a broad spectrum of sports. Why did the festival come to an end? One possible reason was the end of the Cold War and the sporting arms race between the United States and USSR in 1992. The new Russia was elated at the prospect of a free market economy, prioritizing profit from sport over national fitness and international performance. The United States could now be number one with limited effort at developing mass participation and less need for Cold War investments supporting physical education at the state level, applying scientific research to physical education, fitness and sport, as well as promoting national fitness testing and programming as a presidential priority (Smolianov et al., 2014). However, China started to replace the Soviet Union as the United States' challenger, and the need for national Olympics was realized at the end of the four-year Olympic preparation cycle following the 1996 Atlanta Games. To resume the role of the national U.S. Olympics, the National Congress of State Games was established as a not-for-profit organization and a community-based USOC member. State Games were held biennially from 1999, serving as finals for state level Olympics (NCSG, 2011). As for the State Games, the role of public agencies promoting fitness has been important in supporting mass sport participation, particularly as part of preparing military personnel for wars and for Olympic Games.

The structure, policy, governance and funding of community sport

Indirect governmental support of sport through U.S. Armed and Police Forces

The military has driven fitness and sport in the USA from colonial times, and its role in 40 years leading to the 1996 Olympics was particularly significant as part of the "Cold War" between the USA and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and efforts to expand both mass participation and high performance sport to prepare for a possible war and to show ideological supremacy in global competitions. In 1955, Congress authorized the Armed Forces to release military personnel from service to prepare for international competitions and provided \$800,000 every Olympiad (U.S. GAO, 1955). Then President Kennedy requested that the military concentrate on less-developed Olympic sports to produce more potential medal winners (Cocanour, 2007). In 1978 the USOC was made responsible for both Olympic preparation and mass fitness (USOC, 2011) and moved its headquarters from New York City to Colorado Springs, where a former Air Force base was made available for a nominal \$1 per year rent. A national multi-sport altitude training and administrative hub was developed on this site. NGBs moved into offices that still had, ironically, maps of the Soviet Union on their walls with missile targets on them (Badger, 2012). The U.S. military has continued to increase its support to high performance sport, most importantly through the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program (WCAP, 2005-2016) which was officially established in 1997 to employ more Olympic and Paralympic hopefuls and release them from service for training and competition.

The military could also provide greater support for mass participation sport in every community addressing the 2010 "Message from America's Retired Generals, Admirals and Civilian Military Leaders": An alarming 75 percent of all young Americans 17 to 24 years of age are unable to join the military because they failed to graduate from high school, have criminal records, or are physically unfit; overweight or obese being the leading medical reason why applicants fail to qualify for military service... Over the past 30 years, while adult rates of obesity have doubled, childhood obesity rates have tripled (Mission: Readiness, 2010). Military athletes and veterans could contribute more to the wellness of the community as leaders of programs such as Army Cadets, Civil Air Patrol, and Naval Sea Cadet Corps, which develop U.S. youths through military preparation with a strong emphasis on the physical fitness component.

The military could also better help organizers of events, particularly Olympic Games who need to spend in excess of \$US1 billion on security. The Los Angeles 2024 Games organizers, if the city wins the Olympic bid, would seek help in regards to security from the federal government (Wharton & Jamison, 2015). It is hard to estimate how

much the terrorist bombing during the 1996 Atlanta Games impacted mass participation, but the bombing ‘still haunts the city’ (Browne, 2014), and psychological effects on local residents were negative as it was in Boston where a year after the 2013 Boston Marathon the emotional impact of the attack continued to be felt, with many local citizens describing themselves as being more fearful (Arsenault & Ryan, 2014). Better security related communication systems and staff competence at the 1996 Atlanta Games could help prevent the tragic deaths and injuries associated with the bombing at Centennial Park and could improve the legacy of the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta (Browne, 2014; Spaaij & Hamm, 2015); the security could be better managed at future U.S. Olympics by relevant U.S. federal departments.

To make communities more secure and healthy at the same time, the various police forces across the U.S. could be a more important mass sport partner, particularly through the Police Athletic Leagues (PAL, 2012) which service over 700 cities and 1,700 facilities throughout the USA. PAL programs also solicit funds, equipment, and volunteer help from members of the community so that the cost to taxpayers is minimized. The majority of PAL contests are with other youths in the same city, and there are also regularly-scheduled national contests between teams in different parts of the country. PAL has partnered with the American Sport Education Program to provide online training and certification to PAL coaches, which is required for participation in certain NPAL tournaments. The distinctive and key advantage of PALs is the close personal connection between police personnel and community members through sport participation. PAL (2012) believes that their participants are less likely to engage in crime and more likely to both praise the character of the police force and to discourage their friends from committing crimes or covering up criminal activity. Integration of PAL sporting events into school, club, and military cadet competition systems would make PAL more relevant in its contribution to sport and community wellbeing. It is important to integrate the fitness related efforts by army and police with broader support from federal agencies promoting fitness for health, particularly those bodies providing guidance in lifelong fitness testing and training, as attempted by the President’s Council on Fitness, Sport and Nutrition (PCFSN).

Role and limitations of President’s Council on Fitness, Sport and Nutrition

Attempts to stimulate national sport participation have been taken by the federal government, particularly through the PCFSN set in 1956 to raise fitness standards in schools across the country after the U.S. military in the Korean War again fell short of expectations, the Krause-Weber report compared fitness of U.S. and European children, and the USSR started to dominate the Olympic Games medal counts. Each president since Eisenhower has tried to advance the structure and programs of this Council. However, it is still very much a promotion-based program (similar to 1970s programs in Canada [ParticipAction] and Australia [“life be in it”]). One of the latest legislations for this Council was signed in 2010. This Congressional law states that “The Foundation is a charitable and non-profit corporation and is not an agency or establishment of the United States” and that it “may not accept any Federal funds” (National Foundation on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition Establishment Act, 2010).

The PCFSN has been promoting physical activity through research, education, the development of fitness tests and awards, and the encouragement of fitness, endorsed by celebrity sport figures. The reasons for these efforts have included military readiness, elite athletic performance, the reduction of health risks, commitment to developing a higher quality of life, and motivation to live a healthier lifestyle (Franks & Safrit, 1999). The Council also disseminates information on grants available in the field to a variety of organizations such as the U.S. Soccer Foundation, Bikes Belong (which pays U.S. organizations and agencies that are committed to putting more people on bicycles), and General Mills Community Action (which sponsors low socioeconomic-status schools to receive Presidential Active Lifestyle Awards). The Council also includes a scientific board comprising scholars (16 members in 2001 and 13 in 2016) who made significant contributions to the research and science of physical activity, health, sports, or nutrition (PCFSN, 2011).

The PCFSN intensified its partnership efforts in 2012 in recognition that the President’s Challenge Physical Activity and Fitness Awards program achieved little in encouraging a more active lifestyle. Opinions differed around the relationship between actual physical activity and fitness testing and awards. This often led to confused and fragmented programs rather than achieving consensus and a comprehensive approach for the future. Despite this, there have been many examples of cooperation through a variety of government interventions that have significantly impacted the exercise habits of the U.S. public (Franks & Safrit, 1999).

After the Surgeon General recommended in 1996 that everyone in the United States complete at least thirty minutes of exercise a day, the number of fitness club memberships increased by 8 percent between 1996 and 1997 (Merriman Curhan Ford, 2008). However, unhealthy behaviors leading to obesity have not lessened because partnerships among the health, education, and sport sectors are still lacking. One reason for this is that there are serious problems in the U.S. systems of education and healthcare. If President Obama’s successors continue to reform these social goods, an integrated sport development “system” might happen sooner. Improved mass fitness

will give public health and education a boost when all schools provide children with a daily hour of physical education (PE) and sport as recommended by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 2012) NASPE and the PCFSN (2016). Similarly, when some form of universal healthcare develops in the United States, communities would benefit from an increase in public attention and resources relating to illness prevention through sport and recreation.

However, the Council's mission of engaging, educating, and empowering all U.S. citizens across their lifespan to adopt a healthy lifestyle has not been fully supported by the necessary authority and resources (Bowers et al., 2011; Smolianov et al., 2014). The federal government provided only about \$1.2 million annually to the PCFSN within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS, 2013). This is an insufficient amount to promote alternatives to a physically inactive lifestyle and unhealthy food. At the same time the fast food industry spent more than \$5 million every day for marketing and advertising unhealthy foods to children (Kovacic, 2008) and the advertising spent on interactive video games was projected to reach \$1 billion in 2014 (Chester, 2009).

The PCFSN, operating within the federal health department, is well positioned to promote its goals through partnerships with all possible state, profit, and nonprofit organizations toward mobilizing financial and other resources for the common goal of improving national health and fitness. In 2010, President Obama and first lady Michelle Obama intensified the activities and broadened the scope of the Council. This included the promotion of good nutrition and the launching of the "Let's Move!" campaign. The "Let's Move!" campaign is a partnership that the PCFSN started in 2010 to mobilize public and private resources to combat the epidemic of obesity. To support "Let's Move!" and to facilitate and coordinate partnerships between states, communities, and nonprofit and for-profit private sectors, the nation's leading children's health foundations have come together to create the Partnership for a Healthier America foundation. This foundation aims to solve childhood obesity within a generation so that children born in 2010 reach adulthood at a healthy weight. Showing leadership in public-private sector cooperation, the PCFSN and the Entertainment Software Association launched the Active Play PALA+ Challenge to highlight active video games. The PCFSN does not have sufficient resources to make a significant difference in national fitness and health without support from medical organizations of federally empowered executives and professional experts.

Private and nonprofit resources mobilized by governments for fitness and sport

After the U.S. federal government estimated that the total healthcare costs related to being overweight and obese could reach \$956.9 billion by 2030 (Merriman Curhan Ford, 2008), both the public and private sectors have launched health initiatives contributing to mass sport participation. The percentage of major U.S. corporations using financial incentives to promote employer-sponsored health and wellness programs rose from 62 percent in 2007 to 71 percent in 2008 (Merriman Curhan Ford, 2008). Fifty-five percent of U.S. organizations with at least fifty employees in the public and private sectors surveyed in 2012 had a fitness program, while gym discounts and cash incentives were common ways to reward participants (Mattke, Liu, Caloyeras, Huang, Van Busum, Khodyakov, & Shier, 2013). Some employers' health insurance plans offer \$150 per year for fitness club memberships, discounts for gym club memberships, and a \$20 monthly gym membership credit (Harvard Pilgrim, 2014; United Healthcare, 2014). Corporations are expected to expand wellness services and incentives for participating in fitness programs (Mattke et al., 2013).

So far, as Bowers et al. (2011) stressed, government policy agendas have done little to promote mass participation. Even such physical activity campaigns as NFL Play 60; NBA Fit and iHoops; MLS Active Bodies, Active Minds promote the professional leagues' brands rather than sport participation across the United States (Bowers et al., 2011). Therefore, most promising initiatives are those aimed at permanent policies ensuring systematic support and coordination of all possible sport industry players for provision of material resources and delivery of programs to specific participants. Examples of such initiatives are the U.S. National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP, 2010) mentioned earlier and the Aspen Institute's Project Play.

The Aspen Institute's Project Play (2016), launched in 2013 to improve access to quality sport opportunities for children ages 12 and under, convenes thought leaders from the realms of sports, medicine, media, business innovation, government and philanthropy at roundtables, televised town halls and other events where dialogue is advanced and breakthrough strategies are identified, shaped and scaled. Project Play addressed the key obstacle in the U.S. sport development mentioned earlier, lack of cooperation, and guided by its 2015 report "Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game", helped achieve the following:

- 20+ organizations have initiated new commitments to action
- ESPN has launched a new corporate citizenship strategy focused on Access to Sport
- Major League Baseball and other professional leagues have launched symbiotic initiatives
- The USOC has advanced efforts to implement the American Development Model anchored in the principles of developmentally appropriate play

- The National Physical Activity Plan carving out a distinct section for sports in its revised Project Play recommendations (due 2016)
- Community recreation groups have committed to revising their programs, informed by Project Play strategies
- City-wide coalitions of youth-serving organizations in New Orleans and Houston have begun to use the Project Play report to adjust their programs
- Major media outlets (NPR, Washington Post, BloombergBusiness, CBS This Morning, SportsBusiness Journal and others) have raised awareness of the challenges in youth sports
- Wall Street experts have begun to conceptualize a tool to innovate around local facilities finance, guided by the insights provided at a Project Play roundtable
- A team of student coders won the SAP Innojam in Palo Alto, California, with a mobile app to connect kids with local programs, one of the 40+ activation ideas encouraged in the Project Play report
- 42+ national sport governing bodies, professional leagues and other influential bodies "endorsed" multi-sport play in response to the trend toward early sport specialization Project Play (2016).

These steps are in the right direction—towards opportunities for all to enjoy sports after watching them advertised, particularly during Olympic Games. However, mass participation which contributes to national health is going to be possible when the above mentioned efforts result in policies legislating sport as a right of everyone together with education and healthcare, as provided to citizens of many developed countries. Smolianov et al. (2014) agreed with Green et al. (2013) that sport in the United States lacks systematic national level governance which in turn implies a lack of aligned structures and organizations for sport and coherence of purpose and funding of sport. Paradoxically for such a wealthy and proud sport nation, the most consistent message from surveys of coaches and administrators in U.S. soccer, tennis and rugby (Smolianov et al., 2014) as well as U.S. swimming (Smolianov et al., 2016), U.S. ice hockey (Schoen et al., 2016) and U.S. volleyball (Hopkinson et al., 2016) was that the coaches' education is insufficient for healthy nurturing of participants according to the American Development Model and that public resources have not been available for mass participation. Again, this is the overall national status quo. There are plenty of communities across the United States with exemplary coaches and conditions for everyone to make first steps in several sports and progress to competitive level for free. Public funds and governmental provision of sport exist in many parts of the U.S. and can be implemented across the nation, as done in the New York City (NYC Parks, 2013 & 2014, Smolianov et al., 2014). Hopefully other municipal governments will follow the New York's lead and use the taxes collected from businesses to create conditions for all to enjoy healthy sport participation.

For those wealthy individuals who pay significant taxes, deductions are also necessary. The Personal Health Investment Today (PHIT) Act received support from 100 Members of Congress in 2016. Expenses eligible for reimbursement under the PHIT Act include sports and fitness equipment solely used to participate in a physical activity, gym memberships, fitness & exercise classes, sport/activity camps & clinics, youth & adult sports' registration fees, lessons & clinics, running & fitness event registration fees, yoga and other physical activity expenses (SFIA, 2016). If the personal income incentives are more substantial than those offered in Canada, then, together with the New York-style subsidization by municipal and non-profit organizations and daily school PE, these tax deductions will help physical activity to become affordable and relevant for all Americans. Only then this country will have material foundation for healthy mass participation that could be inspired by major sporting events and Olympic Games in particular.

Participation trends – before, during and after

Physically active sport participation in the U.S. has been declining in at least the past 30 years—the number of participants in 2015 was about the same as in 1984 despite the population growth (NSGA, 2016). For the wealthy, growing in the U.S. are events at all levels of competitiveness, such as marathons (RunningUSA.com, 2011) and multi-sport events. Summer and Winter Olympics Games continue to add new disciplines to their programs, and so do such events as the youth Olympics organized for athletes under 17 years of age since 1998, X-Games held from 1995, and CrossFit Games offered since 2007. Local, regional and national selection events leading to these global competitions involve growing number of participants. Media and corporations together with sporting organizations are expected to further invest into mass participation in realization that people who practice or have practiced a sport watch more sport on television, attend more sporting events, and read more about sport, therefore, increasing media audiences and consumption of sponsors' products (Smolianov et al., 2014; Van Bottenburg, 2002). Chasing dollars of the shrinking middle class, producers of sporting goods are not just sponsoring, they are now creating their events and programs such as Nike's national seven-on-seven American football league and Speedo USA's vertical pool workouts being launched in 2016.

On the one hand, opportunities for recreational and competitive sport are growing and guided pathways from local through state and national to global competitions by age and other participant characteristics are emerging

in the United States and around the world for more and more sports. In Massachusetts, for example, multi-sport competitions have been organized since 1982. The Massachusetts Amateur Sports Foundation (MASF, 2016) hosts the Bay State Games as part of the State Games system described earlier, with more than 65,000 people of different ages from 300 cities and towns participating in its programs for over 40 summer and winter sports each year.

On the other hand, seamless enticing multi-step paths to excellence are also provided by video/online games which are becoming professional for elite players and are competing for time and money of the masses. Major League Gaming hosted its 2015 world finals tournament in New Orleans, where some of the world's best gaming teams competed for more than \$500,000 in two major video games, "Dota 2" and "Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare" (Larino, 2015). Like pro sports teams, Major League Gaming teams have corporate sponsors and play matches across North America. Started in 2002, Major League Gaming is one of the longest-running professional eSports leagues in the world. The league has more than 10 million registered users on its online competitive platform and streams video of competitive gaming events to 27 million viewers online (Larino, 2015).

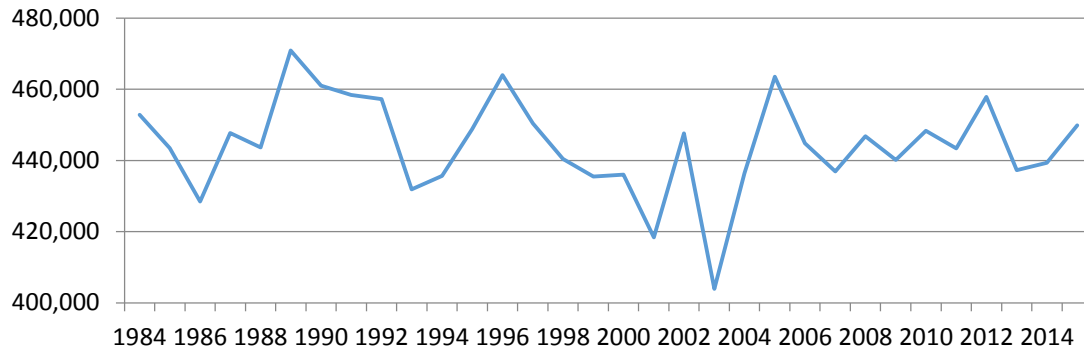
Because of poor physical activity and eating habits, majority of the U.S. adults have become overweight and one-third are obese (CDC, 2015). Levels of inactivity have reached 28% among Americans age six and older (PAC, 2016). Little has changed for better about the sedentary "couch potato culture" of America since the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games when the U.S. Public Health Service indicated that 60% of Americans were reporting little or no physical activity, 25% reported having totally inactive lifestyle, and about one in three were overweight (Jones-Palm, 2002). A sense of urgency has been reached in 2015 to prevent U.S. youth from becoming overweight and obese as the probability of attaining normal body weight after reaching an obese status was found to be one in 210 for men and one in 124 for women, and increasing ratio one in 1290 for men and one in 677 for women with morbid obesity (Fildes, Charlton, Rudisill, Littlejohns, Prevost & Guilford, 2015).

The example of swimming is indicative of other healthy mass participation sports in America. The USA Swimming (2015) team has been ranked number one in the world for more than 40 years, having captured the most medals at the Olympics (USA Swimming, 2015). However, such strong swimming nations as Australia and the Netherlands have won at least three times more medals per capita (databaseSports, 2011; Olympic.org, 2015). This is consistent with the analysis made by Sparvero et al. (2008), who pointed out that a large population and gross domestic product have contributed to overall Olympic medal production for the United States and other large, developed, wealthy countries. As the country's mass sport participation has not been keeping up with intensified international Olympic competition, the USA's share of total medals per Olympic Games declined over the 1952–2012 period (Smolianov et al., 2014).

Mass participation has great opportunities for growth in the United States: the USA Swimming (2015) membership of less than half a million is very small considering the U.S. population of 320 million. Swimming Canada (2015) membership of 75,000 is a quarter greater proportionally to the country's population of 36 million. The Royal Dutch Swimming Federation (2015) membership of 133,000 is five times greater relative to 17 million living in the Netherlands, and even that is only 0.8% of Dutch population. Millions more could be attracted to regular swimming if one believes the Physical Activity Council (2015) that 14% of Americans age six and older participate in water sports and that most non-participants want to try swimming. Swimming Australia (2015) aims to increase the swimming rate of over 20% in the country of only 23 million where five million people actively swim and over one million kids are taught to swim every year. Given that children under five who have swimming lessons develop better language, literacy and numeracy skills (Topsfield, 2013), that during 2005-2009, there were more than 3,500 fatal unintentional drownings per average year in the U.S, and that among children aged 1-14, fatal drowning remained the second-leading cause of unintentional injury-related death (CDC, 2014), U.S. governments at state and federal levels could be more socially inclusive to provide all citizens with equal swimming opportunities, as done by the New York City (NYC Parks, 2013 & 2014, Smolianov et al., 2014). This type of municipal public support and funding necessary for systematic development of community sport participation is lacking in most of the United States.

In the 19 sports tracked by the NSGA (2016) since 1984, as shown in Table 1, participation had been increasing three years prior to 1996 Atlanta Olympics and decreasing three years after. While participation increased in a small number of tracked activities less attributable to the Games (exercise walking, aerobics, calisthenics and camping), most of the monitored sports, particularly important community recreation activities that could be stimulated by Olympic Games such as bike riding, tennis, table tennis, basketball, soccer and swimming decreased in three years after the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

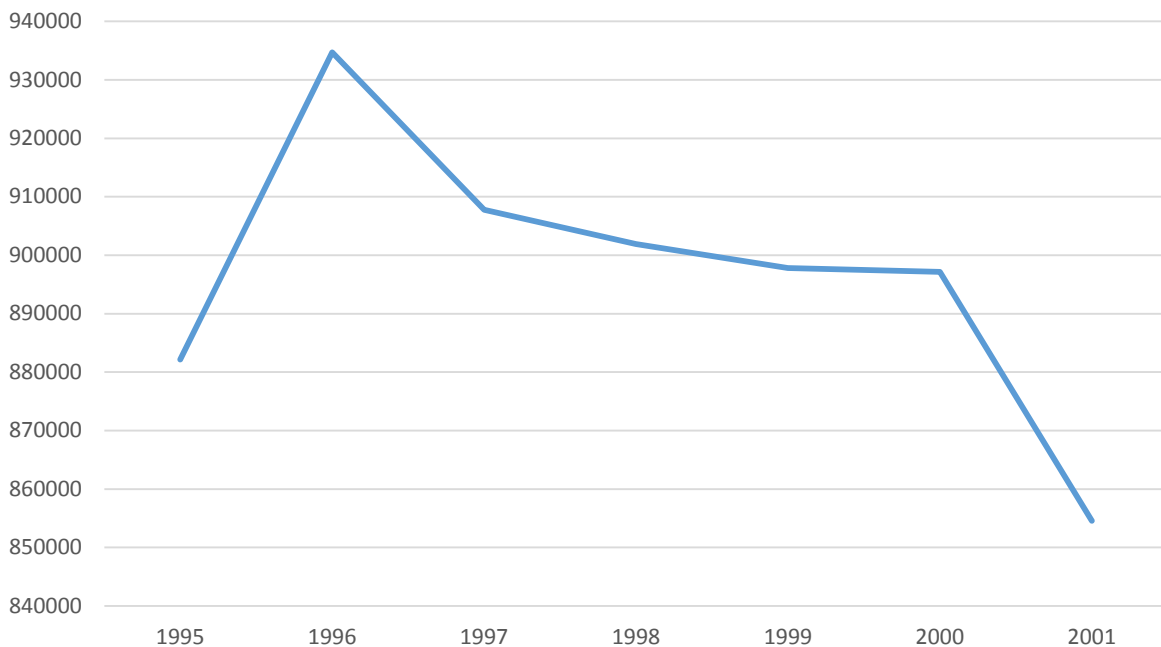
Table 1: Participation in 19 U.S. sports monitored by NSGA (2016)



Participation in the 19 analyzed sports also declined after 1984, 1992, 2000, 2008 and 2012 Summer Games, but increased after 1988 and 2004 Games. Sport participation in the U.S. has not increased from 1996 to 2015: the Olympic spectacle might have some positive influence in the year of the Games, but not longer. The same trend was evident after reducing the analyzed sample from 19 to 7 sports with definite connection to broadcast Olympic competitions.

When increasing the sample from 19 to 53 activities for which the data were available for five years after the 1996 Atlanta Games, the picture was similar, as shown in Table 2: the increase during the year of Atlanta Games was followed by a negative five-year trend. Results were the same after reducing the analyzed sample from 53 to 13 sports with definite connection to Olympic competitions.

Table 2: Participation in 53 U.S. sports monitored by NSGA (2016)



Additionally, the data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1994, 1997) indicated that the 1996 increase of recreation club membership spending was greater than the year before and year after, also suggesting that possible

excitement and increase in sport participation during the Atlanta Olympics was not capitalized on fully. All these results confirm that the Atlanta Olympics had limited participation legacy outcomes and that the opportunities to increase sport participation after the Games at national level were underutilized in the U.S. It is important to stress again that the mass participation legacy was not an explicit goal of the Atlanta 1996 Games in the same way that it was for the London 2012 Olympics and other more recent Games.

These results are less optimistic than the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA, 2012) research which claimed that the Olympics do impact sports participation indicating that there were 16 fitness and exercise activities which experienced a boost in participation from 2008 to 2009 after the Beijing Olympics broadcasts. They were high-impact aerobics, low-impact aerobics, step aerobics, cardio kickboxing, elliptical motion trainers, group stationary cycling, treadmills, rowing machines, stretching, yoga, barbells, dumbbells, hand weights, home gym exercise, resistance machines, and other exercise to music. Based on these results SGMA (2012) concluded that increased visibility from athletic events like the Olympics can “raise all boats”, and not just benefit the sports watched on TV. The NSGA (2016) data on 35 sports showed that the 2008 participation increase was followed by a three-year decline.

The NSGA (2016) data indicated that even if, as SGMA (2012) suggested, there is positive correlation between media coverage of the Olympics and people being more active and taking an interest that year or the next, on longer run sport participation levels tend to go to the same or lower levels in the U.S. Taking into account the population growth, sport participation in this country has declined from 1984 and from 1996 to 2015. In order to help future Olympic Games benefit community wellbeing, the remaining sections will try to summarize practices and answer: Why sport participation did not increase after the 1996 Atlanta Olympics? Which lessons could we learn? What was and was not but should be done in order to capitalize on the Olympic excitement and to retain those new attracted participants on national and local community levels?

Good practice and positive influencers

As mentioned, the CODP is the most vivid legacy of the 1996 Olympics. Details of creating this important infrastructure follow. The first CODP at the Georgia Amateur Athletic Foundation/Centennial Legacy Foundation was founded with proceeds from the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. It was then co-funded by the USOC in 1998. This program with all its assets was handed over to Atlanta’s Boys and Girls Clubs in 2002. Then in 2006, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta created an official contract with the USOC, giving them confirmed CODP status when they established a three-year business plan and many youth sports programs and gained further support from the community. Recommendations from NGBs were also provided. According to the contract with the USOC, a CODP must have in place high-level educated coaches with proper credentials; structures for the delivery of grassroots sports development; events and necessary facilities; a transport plan for moving young athletes to and from the facilities; and designation by the Internal Revenue Service as a nonprofit corporation (CODP, 2014).

The USOC’s director of athlete facilities and services oversees CODPs in developing partnerships with community organizations to access additional resources, services, and facilities that positively impact athlete performance. A local CODP must assign an administrator to manage and oversee all aspects of the CODP operation and to liaise with the USOC. The USOC provides CODPs with many things. These include: operational guidelines; program review processes with oversight in collaboration with an NGB; the use of CODP trademarks; annual staff meetings for all CODP managers; access to the USOC community based multi-sport organizations (i.e., YM/WCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, Armed Forces); access to USOC resources such as International Relations, Sports Science and Coaching, Sports Medicine, Athlete Services, and Public Relations, particularly athlete services and coaching education at a discounted price; acknowledgment on the USOC Website; and invitations to the CODP Coaches Conferences (USOC, 2013; Andrasko, 2013; McConnell, 2013).

The CODP training centers may host one sport (Moorestown Weightlifting Club, New Jersey) or more than ten sports (e.g., World Sport Chicago in Illinois) (USOC, 2011). Facilities also differ from the franchised private non-profit Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta, Georgia to the taxfunded Springfield Greene County Parks and Recreation, Missouri to San Antonio Sports, which develops sport and fitness programs and events on all levels in Texas (USOC, 2011). An important function of these centers is to build cooperation with multiple partners. World Sport Chicago is an independent nonprofit organization, founded as part of the Chicago 2016 Olympic and Paralympic bid, which works with eighteen organizations (USOC, 2011). The partner organizations included the Chicago Park District, Chicago Public Schools, hospitals, and nonprofits servicing various forms of recreation and sport, particularly for people with disabilities (USOC, 2011). Such partnerships pull together resources and create conditions for progression from recreational to high performance level in Olympic and Paralympic sports.

Increasingly around the world and in the United States particularly through Olympic Training Centers, CODP as well as schools, colleges and universities, elite level and Olympic programs and events are connected with

mass participation through growing community hubs where many sports share resources and provide all the necessary services to participants, from school and university education and medicine to culture and entertainment. Governments, non-profit and profit organizations learn to utilize sport for better health, education and crime control, and to better integrate public and private resources, from national and local taxes to corporate, philanthropic and lottery contributions in the U.S. Therefore, opportunities are growing for attracting everyone to sport by giving children the same standard of facilities and coaching used by elite athletes, and for elite athletes to share the facilities with recreational users, inspiring community participation while producing world records (Smolianov et al., 2014). A system of fun events enticing everyone to gradually progress towards high performance is needed for facilities and programs to be effective.

Olympic Festivals and State Games support CODP and other mass participation programs in attracting and retaining participants. More than 400,000 athletes compete annually in the State Games nationwide in various sports from the Olympic and Pan American Games programs to sports with regional popularity (NCSG, 2011). Medal winners from forty-five State Games earned the right to compete in the 2011 24-sport State Games of America in San Diego, California (NCSG, 2011). Again, lack of public funding has been a major limiting factor. The Empire State Games (2010) was a program of the New York State Council of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation held every year for New York residents (Dowd, 2013; New York State Council of Parks, 2010). These Games consisted of summer and winter events, games for the physically challenged, and competitions for seniors. After regional trials, participants from two divisions, scholastic and open, represented six regions (New York State Council of Parks, 2010; The Empire State Games, 2010). Some 6,000 winners participated in the finals. Due to New York State's fiscal crisis, The Empire State Summer Games programs were discontinued in 2010 (Dowd, 2013; The Empire State Games, 2010). The State Games of America provided communities with ownership of their sport events and freedom to develop disciplines with local popularity.

By matching the local budgets of State Games and of athlete preparation for these Games from the beginner level using world's best guidelines, U.S. tax dollars could mobilize resources of communities toward integrated mass and elite sport development (Smolianov et al., 2014). Also, greater numbers of participants and public funds could be attracted to State Games through new competition types, styles and techniques, new types and collections of relays that could improve muscle release, breathing therapies and other restorative and health enhancing functions of sport. New award rules and innovative sport challenges can make competitions more fun, attractive and inclusive, as done at Salem State University's multisport festival for over 200 participating students, faculty and staff: the departments with the highest percentage of students, faculty and staff who participated were awarded with prizes. First place won \$300, second place \$200 and third place earned \$100 at each of the events.

Opportunities for attracting more community participants are great: having achieved seemingly impressive participation numbers, the Salem State festival drew less than five percent of the university's community. This turnout was similar to the 5K running events at Boston College, the University of New Hampshire and at Salem State University (Salem News, 2016). U.S. health researchers also stress that only five percent of people exercise as needed (Westcott, 2016).

Despite the lack of sport policies, there are a lot of isolated instances of successful attempts that should be further studied and implemented to positively influence mass participation and health across the United States. Corporations have been attracted and assisted by the governments to form partnerships similar to those, for example, described by Pennington (2009), practices in golf that could be used across different sports. In 2008 the New York City Parks Foundation opened its Junior Golf Center on what had been abandoned land. The center included a clubhouse with a classroom where the rudiments, rules, and etiquette of golf were taught; a twelve-stall, enclosed driving range; and a six-hole course. Use of the center and its training programs was free, and only adults accompanying their children are able to use the center (Pennington, 2009). The funding model for the \$8-million center was through resources and sponsorships from Callaway Golf, Top-Flite, and the U.S. Golf Association. With new Callaway junior golf clubs provided, equipment for participants' use was also free. The foundation started a program that turned open spaces in the city parks, such as the outfield of a baseball diamond, into mini-driving ranges. About 1,500 children signed up for free training in the first year and the numbers increased (Pennington, 2009).

Another junior golf initiative is the First Tee program, created by the World Golf Foundation in 1997 with several corporate and golf industry partners (Pennington, 2009). It introduced the sport to 2.9 million children and teenagers nationwide, with First Tee programs being implemented in more than 2,800 elementary schools (Pennington, 2011). The First Tee of Metropolitan New York was created young players at several sites. Interpersonal skills, career guidance, goal setting, and learning to appreciate diversity are also taught alongside the sport of golf (Pennington, 2011). Since 1994 the Metropolitan Golf Association Foundation has also conducted a student intern program called GolfWorks. This is a program that provides more than 220 high school-age students a

year with paid summer internships in the local golf clubs. These programs prove that even in places where golf may not be embedded in the neighborhood culture, the game can flourish, and golfers can be nurtured (Pennington, 2009).

The above programs provide examples of how governments and the private sector can work together to advance community sport for all in a market-driven American society. While golf is well positioned financially and socially to expand its participant base, most other sports need to source greater public and private subsidies for implementing such sport delivery initiatives. Governments should help form such partnerships by providing not only guidance but also tangible assistance be it tax, land or other benefits to attract more private and non-profit organizations to sport development. Even greater potential for the U.S. communities is in more effective direct governmental provision of sport and recreation, as done in New York City.

The New York City's Department of Parks and Recreation provided a variety of free aquatics programs for all ages and levels. This is a notable best mass sport practice because as normally swimming lessons can cost as much as \$1 a minute in the U.S.; so learning to swim properly can still be something of a "luxury" for most children and youth (Foderaro, 2013). The New York City's free Swim Team program involves an ongoing competition structure for children and youths (aged from six to 18). Participants then develop competitive swimming strokes, starts and turns, and team sportsmanship concepts. Teams train most of the year and compete in the Five Borough Championship during the outdoor and the Borough Cup Championship during the indoor swim seasons (NYC Parks, 2013). Municipal fitness centers are free or available at minimal cost in New York City. The city's Parks and Recreation Department maintains forty-nine recreation centers that offer indoor pools, weight rooms, basketball courts, dance and art studios, game rooms, and libraries (NYC Parks, 2014). Annual membership is free for youth under eighteen years of age, \$25 for those eighteen through twenty-four, \$150 for adults twenty-five through sixty-one years old, and only \$25 for seniors sixty-two and older (NYC Parks, 2014). These New York programs demonstrate the important role of government-managed and financially supported programs in providing affordable and integrated services for mass sport, fitness and health.

Key positive influence of Olympic Games is they intensify international competition, cooperation and exchange of best practices. An important lesson from leading sport nations and an important practice that started after the Atlanta 1996 Olympics was the use of sport and physical activity as medicine in the United States, through physicians' prescription of exercise. In 1998 Dr. Swinburn and colleagues (Swinburn, Walter, Arroll, Tilyard, & Russell, 1998) proposed that because physicians have access to a large and often diverse population, and are often respected source of information, they can play an important role in adherence to healthier lifestyles. In their article, Swinburn et al. (1998) reviewed the impact of exercise adherence and participation of patients who were provided verbal and/or written prescriptions for exercise or physical activity. Among those who were provided verbal and written advice, there was a greater increase in both the number of people exercising and the number of people who increased time spent performing physical activity. The conclusion from the study was that a written goal-oriented exercise prescription, in addition to verbal advice, is a useful tool for general practitioners in motivating their patients to increase physical activity.

Only recently, however, the American College of Sport Medicine (ACSM, 2016) has increased its efforts to work with the medical community and has created a credential as part of its certification process for exercise professionals, the ACSM Exercise Is Medicine® Credential. According to ACSM, ACSM Exercise is Medicine® (EIM) Credentials are held by certified or degreed exercise professionals who work closely with the health care community to promote collaboration between health care providers and exercise professionals. The outcome of this partnership is a closer relationship with clients who need fitness programming in order to change behaviors and reach stronger health outcomes. The ACSM EIM Credential provides the skills and knowledge necessary to safely and effectively develop, implement and lead exercise programs, and to know how to navigate the health care system in order to create and cultivate patient relationships. A Level 3 EIM Credential validates specialists' knowledge for working with patients who need or are undergoing clinical monitoring, while Levels 1 & 2 focus on patients who have already been cleared for exercise (ACSM, 2016).

The collaboration between exercise professionals and the medical community may be the next necessary evolution in medical exercise prevention and care that looks to promote physical activity at all ages, contributing to healthy mass sport participation. Resources of all possible individuals and organizations are brought together by governmental policies, particularly through subsidization and lower taxes for activities, programs and partnerships leading to healthy sport participation by all citizens.

Challenges and adverse effects

Jones-Palm (2002) highlighted the challenge faced during the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games that is indicative of fundamental problems in the U.S. sport system caused by the capitalistic ideology leading to lack of public funding

and coordination of the American sport system—the obstacles also indicated by such authors as Bowers et al., 2011; Green et al. 2013; Jones-Palm, 2002; Smolianov et al., 2014; Sparvero et al., 2008.

Well before the 1996 Games, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control with headquarters in Atlanta tried to link their physical activity promotion campaigns with other efforts to prepare communities and citizens for the Olympics (Jones-Palm, 2002). However, tax revenues needed for such health promotion and the ideal marriage of public health and commercial sports were not allowed due to the high commercialization stakes involved during the Atlanta Games, according to Jones-Palm (2002) who exemplified the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer as the perfect example of a nation fit for the Olympics. Smolianov et al. (2014) agreed with Jones-Palm (2002) that Norway provides exemplars for achieving success in both Olympic performance and healthy mass participation, but also suggested that the U.S. could learn to integrate public and private support of Olympic sports from many other countries with different socio-economic systems from Australia and Germany to China and Russia.

As overall sport development in this country, U.S. federal funding and support for previously hosted Olympic Games in the United States had been provided in an “ad hoc” manner: mostly through an agency by agency or on a project by project basis, often without the benefit of an overall federal policy and systematic monitoring. As many as 24 federal agencies reported providing or planning to provide a combined total of almost \$2 billion for Olympic-related projects and activities for the 1984 and 1996 Olympic Games and the 2002 Winter Olympic Games (U.S. GAO, 2000).

This study suggests that leaders of Olympic and other major events bid processes trumpet the mass participation benefits of their proposals, but in most cases it is just talk similar to politicians saying anything voters want to hear. Investments to demonstrate how effective the bidding campaign is for youth may increase participation before Olympic Games, but once the event is over, funding dries up and communities are left to try and fund programs themselves. They are often set up to fail, because there is rarely a plan in place to sustain these programs, particularly when capitalistic ventures are used as the main incentive and there is no public funding earmarked to keep the mass participation programs advancing. Olympic Games do not create mass participation opportunities, but they do invoke programs that prosper prior to the Games and need to be supported after the Games, at least in certain sports if funding and management capabilities for mass participation are limited, as was done in London after the 2012 Olympics. However, there is more than enough tax money for mass sport participation in the United States, particularly given the publically desired reduction of the U.S. government’s military spending that has been taking place since 2011 (Jacobson & Sherman, 2015).

Given the USA’s military spending, which was about \$700 billion a year in 2008–2011 according to Chantrill (2014a), Plumer (2013), and Walker (2013), sport and physical activity budgets similar to \$US2-3 billion spent by governments of the former USSR and current China and Russia to support their national sport systems (Smolianov et al., 2014; Tan & Green, 2008), would be affordable and reasonable in the U.S. Military spending was similar to the federal government spending on health care (Chantrill, 2014b). Public polls indicated support for defense cuts, especially when participants were informed about the size of other categories in the U.S. federal budget and significantly lower military expenses of all other countries (The Economist, 2012).

Opportunities for further redirection of military spending to benefit communities is still great: "It is an ironic fact that the president who won a Nobel Peace Prize for his soaring disarmament rhetoric is the same president who has laid out \$1 trillion plan to modernize every aspect of the U.S. nuclear arsenal over the next 30 years," said Matthew Bunn, an expert on nuclear proliferation and a professor at Harvard University (Jacobson & Sherman, 2015). An annual investment of \$1 billion into a systematic sport development could be returned through reduced costs of recruiting and training of military personnel and lower public spending on health care. Besides, an objective-driven budget could hold the USOC responsible for both mass and elite sport. The support by U.S. military to sport, particularly to the USOC has been significant, and closer cooperation between sport and the military will help both be more efficient and save public dollars (Smolianov et al., 2014).

An important missing income source of American sport is lottery funding. U.S. Authorities should consider practices of many developed sport nations from China to the Netherlands as possible options that could help promote fairer and healthier use of sport gambling profits. For example, mass sport community programs could benefit as much as elite sport from Massachusetts State Lottery, which paid Boston Red Sox baseball team \$10.5 million and Boston Celtics basketball team \$1.4 million in 2006-2014, and considered financing Boston Olympics (Cloutier, 2014). Utilizing the Dutch practices noted by Van Bottenburg (2011), American states could achieve better results in public health and education as well as in high sport performance per capita by directing public and lottery money (which has achieved success in other countries) to sport clubs, national sport governing bodies and local sport projects particularly to ensure affordable sport conditions and instructions for all.

To make the nation more active and save healthcare dollars, the USOC and its NGBs as well as State Games, PCFSN, NPAP, Project Play, municipalities and other sport industry organizations need greater public

support ensuring sufficient resources and conditions for healthy lifelong participation. Only with affordable participation opportunities for all the Olympic year excitement would support sustainable mass participation. Public and private resources for affordable sport participation across the U.S. should be mobilized more efficiently through transparent and objective-driven public funding as well as facilities at schools, colleges, universities, YM/WCAs, sport specific clubs, professional sport and other organizations. Successful international experiences could be exploited more, for example, the models provided at the University of Bath (UK) and at the Izmailovo sport hub (Russia) which exemplify the types of partnerships and practices at the facility and program levels (Smolianov et al., 2014).

One fundamental prerequisite of mass sport participation that is lacking in the United States is fun professionally instructed sufficient school physical education (PE). USOC sponsors can join an initiative by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA, 2014) aimed at increasing the PE budget nationally (which is only \$764 a year per average U.S. school). Corporate sponsors could also support SFIA's (2014) lobbying efforts to pass legislation that will allow Americans to use Pre-Tax Medical Accounts for physical activity expenses.

Another underlying factor that tampers sport development and lifelong healthy mass participation in this country is the shortage of educated sport professionals and affordable quality coaching degrees in most sports. Surveys of over 600 U.S. ice hockey, rugby, soccer, swimming, tennis, and volleyball coaches and administrators indicated that coaches are undereducated in their professional roles, demanding better and more affordable delivery of sport science, coaching and management education (Hopkinson, Smolianov, Dion & Schoen, 2016; Schoen, MarcAurele & Smolianov, 2016; Smolianov, Sheehan, Fritz, Cruz, Dion, Benton, Carl, & McMahon, 2016; Smolianov, Zakus & Gallo, 2014). The sport of swimming could provide an indicative example.

The survey of U.S. swimming coaches (Smolianov et al., 2016) showed that only 48% of 102 respondents reported having a coaching certification, compared with 68 % of 122 Dutch respondents from a similar study of swimming in the Netherlands (Zeeuw, Smolianov & Bohl, 2016). A significant 51% of the U.S. swimming coaches indicated that coach expertise is never or rarely high across all participant ages and levels. More than a third of the U.S. respondents were uncertain of or not familiar with talent identification and lifelong participant development practices. Majority of respondents (63%) perceived that research is being fostered on all important aspects of swimming development in the U.S., but less than half thought that research results are well communicated to coaches. The above mentioned studies of six U.S. sports had a consistent message that sufficient public resources have not been available for development of their sports in general and professional education at mass participation level in particular. As a result, there is lack of vision, leadership and ability to attract and retain sport participants across the United States, and as a result—communities duped to support a few elite teams for passive spectatorship rather than devote necessary resources to healthy mass participation. National competition systems in the U.S. are available in only a narrow spectrum of sports compared with the 50 disciplines in the both the 2012 London Olympic Games and 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games (Sparvero et al., 2008), twenty-four sports in the national summer State Games (NCSG, 2011), and the twenty-three sports in the NCAA (2014). As a result opportunities are limited for a broad number of participants in the United States (Sparvero et al., 2008).

Summary

Given the limitations of the available data, it is evident that participation in the analyzed U.S. sports had been decreasing for five years after the Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games. The inspirational value of Olympic Games and evidently all other major sporting events in the United States at least in the past 30 years has not been sufficient as a vehicle to drive mass participation and to fight obesity: greater sport development resources and their efficient systematic coordination are needed for affordable participation opportunities.

To prevent illnesses and improve education, governmental departments could ensure that programs such as CODP and NYC swimming together with State Games for all ages are provided in at least 100 most popular sports in all communities across the nation. This can be achieved by providing sufficient, transparent and objective-driven resources to the USOC, PCFSN, NPAP, Project Play in order to improve support of as well as communication and coordination among organizations that nurture sport and physical activity. Better coordination in the United States would benefit sport organizations, programs, and competitions across all elements of its sport development system. This would also help to introduce a fairer balance in the U.S. media, spectator, and sponsor markets that are currently dominated by a few commercial professional sports. Coordinating government involvement would increase opportunities for everyone to participate in a greater number of sports so that people could enjoy healthy activities they like without being duped to play the sports which make owners of commercial teams rich but make most professional players in these major sports poor and ill (Torre, 2009).

In summary, for Olympic Games to help increase and sustain mass participation in the United States, concepts by Bowers et al. (2011), Green et al. (2013), Jones-Palm, 2002; Smolianov et al. (2014) and Sparvero et al. (2008)

could be consolidated into the following actions focused on local and national partnerships for health-focused development of sport proven across the world:

- further advance the USOC as the central organizing body for sport in the United States, with clear objectives and transparent public support for mass participation and elite performance
- increase subsidization, reduce tax and publically recognize and reward organizations and individuals for achieving sport participation and performance objectives
- provide new income and promotion to sport through state and federal lotteries
- minimize barriers to sport participation related to cost, transportation, facilities close to home and school, and ability to enjoy facilities used for Olympic Games and other major events
- ensure that all coaches and PE teachers use guidelines for exciting lifelong sport participation
- stimulate maximum number of sports as part of pre-school, school, college and university supported by fun events that divert youth from passive entertainment and hobbies
- integrate sport competitions with other cultural and educational activities, particularly festivals leading to scholarships and professional opportunities
- develop athletes and coaches in each organization, provide conditions for all employees to prepare for, participate in and help organize and promote more sport events that are fun
- train retirees from military, security, police, correctional, and army/navy youth/cadet organizations to provide coaching integrated with counseling for prevention of unhealthy and antisocial behavior
- maximize cooperation between sport programs and organizations for peace-making and improvement of international relations, for tourism and socio-economic development.

These actions represent key starting points towards an efficient system of sport necessary for major events to benefit the society beyond entertainment. We can only expect significant participation legacies from elite sporting events such as Olympic Games when we create better conditions for everyone to participate in a sport of their choice.

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