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Leading a Double Life—Times Two

Sitting in Wind Ensemble, listening to Mr. Russell talk about Marching Band, I begin a debate within myself. Am I accepted here? Do those fellow peers of mine think I am unworthy to be in Wind Ensemble because I don't participate in Marching Band? I then begin to contemplate why I don't do Marching Band, and the answer is clear—I play soccer! I can't do Marching Band! I am an athlete in a musical world. Around the so called "Band Geeks", I am an athlete, but around the self-proclaimed "Jocks", I am a band geek. For some reason unknown to man, a person cannot be part of two social groups. Unfortunately, for people like me, being not only an athlete and a member of the band but a Mormon and a good student, the stereotyping can negatively affect our lifestyle. We ask ourselves, what tensions arise with having two or more groups to be identified with? This question, I believe, can only be answered by experience. The difficulty with the situation is that it is uncommon. People are uncomfortable with a friend who is involved with their group and also involved with another. When a friend is uncomfortable with another person, stereotyping each other may occur. One may be seen as their other personality instead of the personality they usually have within the group. The problems are difficult to deal with, but it's possible.

Unfortunately, stereotyping has been a part of mankind's life since the beginning. It is all around us in history, news, and in school. In the Roman times there were gladiators, kings, jesters, and wise men. The gladiators were strong, good looking, indestructible men. As a talented writer said, "we are actually surprised when someone who is beautiful is also intelligent, talented, good" (Sontag 683). The wise men were educated, they had all the answers. No one would ever dream of being both a gladiator and a wise man. It just didn't seem logical. Through these hundreds of years since then, the same thoughts still occur. People are still surprised by an athlete being smart, or an athlete being musical. In the recent NCAA men's basketball tournament, there was news of an extremely rare player. Greg Oden of the Ohio State men's basketball team is said to be one of the greatest players to play the game. Despite his athletic skills being immaculate, Oden is also a superb student. He soared through all of his honor classes in high school easily, and now receives the top grades in his classes at Ohio State. Speaking from experience, there is no doubt through high school and college, Greg has not been given slack for being smart. His abilities are viewed as abnormal because they don't fit the typical stereotype of an athlete being a "stupid jock". Greg is one person who is helping change the stereotype of athletes around the world. Maybe it's time we all change the view we have of a person. Base our thoughts on someone by accepting them for their actions, not the group they are involved with.

It is difficult for anyone to be a part of two groups. Whether one is an athlete, who is a musician, or a black man, who is middle class, trials show up every day. Shelby Steele is a man faced with the trials of being black and middle class. He

gains no respect being both. He tries to become a successful businessman but also a representative of his race. The affect of this is that those within his class feel he is not worthy, and those of his race feel he is not a true black man because he is successful. Steele attempts to do all he can to combine the two groups he is part of. "There is no forward movement on either plane that does not constitute backward movement on the other" (Steele 697). There is no separating who someone truly is. No matter who someone is with, they can never hide a part of themselves that may not fit in with those in their presence. In "High School Musical", the recently popular Disney movie, this topic of trying to hide shines through. Troy, the athlete and singer, is faced with the decision between two activities he loves. He must keep his singing a secret from his fellow teammates, knowing they will never approve. He tries to hide that he is a singer, but can no longer do so when he starts missing practice for his rehearsals. In the end, there is no way Troy can hide his singing. Everything is out in the open and he is surprisingly accepted by his friends. Although this is not likely to happen to everyone who participates in both sports and music, it presents a scenario where everything works out for the person.

Moreover, being an athlete, a musician, a Mormon, and a good student, I know what it is like to participate in multiple social groups and be stereotyped. An athlete has been given the stereotype of being stuck up, more respected, more popular. A musician has the stereotype of being a band geek, or an orch. dork, or a choir nerd. A Mormon has the stereotype of being "perfect", a goody-two-shoe, or a do-gooder. And a good student has the stereotype of being a nerd, a geek, a grade-grubber. There have been times when I feel I am not welcome with my fellow

athletes only because I get good grades, or even just because I'm Mormon. One conversation I remember so clearly occurred during a basketball practice my freshman year in high school. We were discussing our grades, the time being the end of first semester. I mentioned my disappointment over an A-, having ended my chance of getting a 4.0 GPA. Having said this one girl said under her breath, "Stupid, over-achieving Mormon!" I was taken aback! "What does being Mormon have to do with it?" I questioned her promptly. With no reply the girl left the crowd. Never again in my life have I been so uncomfortable being a Mormon, a good student, and an athlete at the same time. In telling this story, I have tried to portray one of the trials that come with being part of multiple groups. There are often times when one is given no respect for having the guts to do more than one activity.

On the other hand, another factor must be mentioned. There are many great lessons that can be learned and cross-linked when involved in more than one group. On my soccer team I learn how to work as a team. If one player does not work one hundred percent, it may affect the entire team. We run as a team, we move the ball as a team, we cheer as a team, we win as a team, we lose— as a team. Teamwork is one of the greatest qualities any group of individuals can have. That includes a band. My skills in teamwork have converted over into the band room. I understand better how to produce a song as a band, not as an individual. Similar to the quality of teamwork in soccer, in Wind Ensemble I learn a great deal of leadership being a section leader. I am in charge of my trombone section. As section leader, it is my responsibility to be sure each player is able to play every note, every dynamic, even every rest. This skill I have obtained in Wind Ensemble has poured over into my

soccer qualities. Being a captain of my league team, I must know how to be a leader of a group of my peers. Clearly, there are skills that can be learned in one activity, and be transferred over to another. All one has to do is step back and look at the lessons they have learned, then figure out where else they can apply them, thereby improving each aspect of life. "The quality of your life will approximately reflect the quality of effort you put into it" (Steele 701).

In addition to outer conflicts and lessons learned, conflicts from being part of two groups arise within a person. It is difficult to deal with all the false opinions people have of a person, along with the pressure one gets from each group. But in the end, the person with multiple associations will come out on top. They will have learned lessons no other person can understand, they will have lived through trials no other person can imagine, but most importantly they will have friends who are all part of different social groups. They may be athletes, musicians, students, teachers, Mormons, Catholics, anyone. Just remember, when one is in the current situation of being a member of multiple groups, they must realize they can never fully separate themselves from whom they really are. As a scholar once said, "It is my equivalent of the cowbell that hikers wear when they are in bear country" (Staples 693). We are never safe from those who don't understand the great opportunities that are in the world for them.

Works Cited

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