



Sports in Society: Issues & Controversies

Chapter 1

**The Sociology of Sport:
*What Is It and Why Study It?***



Sports Are Social Phenomena

- ❑ **Sports** are related to the social and cultural contexts in which we live
- ❑ **Sports** provide stories & images used to explain & evaluate these contexts
- ❑ **Sports** provide a window into culture and society



SOCIOLOGY is a tool for studying sports in society

- **Sociology** provides useful
 - Concepts
 - Theories
 - Research methods

- These tools enable us to “see” behavior as it connected with history, politics, economics, and social life



CULTURE

Consists of the "ways of life" people create in a group or society

- These ways of life are created and changed as people interact with each other, as they come to terms with, and even struggle over how to
 - *Do things and organize their lives*
 - *Relate to each other*
 - *Make sense out of their experiences*



SOCIETY

A collection of people

- Living in a defined geographical territory
- United through
 - a political system
 - a shared sense of self-identification that distinguishes them from other people.

SOCIOLOGY Vs. **PSYCHOLOGY**

- **Psychologists** study behavior in terms of attributes & processes that exist inside individuals
- **Sociologists** study behavior in terms of the social conditions and cultural contexts in which people live their lives



Critical thinking about sports helps us

- Identify & understand social problems and social issues associated with sports
- Look beyond scores to see sports as social phenomena
- Make informed choices about sport participation and the place of sports in our lives
- Transform sports in progressive ways



SOCIOLOGY may lead to controversial recommendations

- **Sociological research** may produce findings that suggest changes in the organization of sports and the organization of social life
- Those who benefit from the status quo may be threatened by these research findings



Why study **sports** as *social phenomena*?

- **Sports** activities and images are part of people's lives
- **Sports** are connected with *ideologies* in society
 - i.e., the "viewpoints" that underlie people's feelings, thoughts, and actions
- **Sports** are connected with major spheres of social life such as:
 - family, economy, media, politics, education, & religion



Ideologies

The sets of interrelated ideas that people use

- To give meaning to the world
- To make sense of the world
- To identify what is important, right, and natural in that world



The characteristics of **Ideologies** are:

- They** are never established “once and for all time”
- They** emerge as people struggle over the meaning and organization of social life
- They** are complex and sometimes inconsistent
- They** change as power relationships change in society



“Dominant Ideology”

- Represents the perspectives and ideas favored by people who have power and influence in society
- **Dominant ideologies** serve the interests of people with power and influence





Gender Ideology

refers to

- A set of interrelated ideas about masculinity, femininity, and relationships between men and women
- ***Dominant Gender Ideology*** consists of prevailing notions of “common sense” about maleness and femaleness in a group or society



Racial Ideology

refers to

- A set of interrelated ideas that people use to give meaning to skin color and to evaluate people in terms of racial classifications
- ***Dominant Racial Ideology*** consists of prevailing ideas about the meanings of skin color and the characteristics of people classified in various racial categories



Why study **sports** *as social phenomena?*

- **Sports** are connected with major spheres of social life
 - Family
 - Economy
 - Media
 - Politics
 - Education
 - Religion



Major Professional Organizations in the **Sociology of Sport** :

- The International Sociology of Sport Association (*ISSA*)
- The North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (*NASSS*)
- The Sport Sociology Academy (*SSA*) in AAHPERD (*American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*)



Disagreements in the Sociology of Sport

- **Scholars** in the field see themselves as
 - Sport sociologists concerned with sport science issues
 - Sociologists concerned with social and cultural issues
- **Scholars** may see themselves as
 - professional experts (interested in consulting and the application of knowledge to improve sports)
 - critical sociologists (interested in social & cultural transformation), or
 - knowledge builders (interested in using research to accumulate knowledge about social life)



SPORT Is Defined by Some Scholars As Activities That Are



- Physical
- Competitive
- Institutionalized
- Motivated by a combination of internal & external rewards



Institutionalization Occurs When

- Rules become standardized
- Official agencies enforce rules
- Organizational & technical aspects of the activity become important
- Learning game skills becomes formalized



Play vs. Dramatic Spectacle

- Play** involves expressive activity done for its own sake; it is often spontaneous and guided by informal, emergent norms
- Dramatic Spectacle** involves performances to entertain an audience for the purpose of obtaining rewards

An **Alternative Approach** to Defining **Sports**:

- Determine what activities are identified as **sports** in a society
- Determine whose **sports** count most when it comes to obtaining support and resources





SPORTS are
contested activities

This means that there are struggles over:

- The meaning, purpose, & organization of **sports**
- Who will participate and the conditions under which **sport** participation occurs
- How **sports** will be sponsored, and what the reasons for sponsorship will be