

FURTHER READING

CHAPTER 13

This file contains additional readings from earlier editions of *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, and some extra materials provided by Jay Coakley. These have not been included within the book as much of the content is explicitly focused on the USA, but users of the book may find these readings useful and interesting. Please feel free to send your feedback and/or suggest additional readings to us at jcoakley@uccs.edu or e.pike@chi.ac.uk.

Topic 1. Political protests and boycotts and the Olympic Games

Topic 2. Politics exist in all organized sports

Topic 3. Giving gifts to IOC members: When is it a form of bribery?

Topic 1. Political protests and boycotts and the Olympic Games

The Olympic charter tells the world that “No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas.” This was reaffirmed in 1936 when Avery Brundage, chairman of the U.S. Olympic Committee and later the president of the International Olympic Committee from 1945 to 1972, said “One of the basic principles of the Olympic Games is that politics plays no part whatsoever in them.”

But history suggests otherwise, as nation-states have unceasingly used the games for political purposes. Additionally, there have been striking cases of political protests and boycotts through the history of the modern games, which began in 1896. Here are the major examples:

1922—Women protest against exclusion

Women were excluded from the first modern Games in Athens, Greece. In Paris in 1900 they were allowed to participate in sports such as swimming and archery, because they were deemed by the men in the IOC to be “ladylike” sports; but were not allowed to participate in any of the track and field events, the most popular events in the games, which were deemed to be unladylike. Women protested with little success for the next twenty years (through games held in St. Louis, London, Stockholm, and Antwerp), and in 1922, led by Alice Milliat, a French athlete-activist, nearly 1,000 women track and field athletes held their own Women’s Olympics in Paris. By 1928, the IOC added a few track and field events for women into the Olympic Games, and most women ended their boycott of the games. But women have continued to struggle to the present day for full inclusion, leading the IOC to gradually add women’s events that were previously deemed “overly strenuous” for a woman’s body.

1920 and 1924—The IOC bans Germany

As punishment for its role in World War I, the IOC and other member nations ruled that Germany could not send teams to the games in Paris and Amsterdam. Additionally, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was banned in 1923 due to the Bolshevik revolution and the formation of a Communist government. As a result, the USSR and its major allies, including the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) did not send teams to the games until 1952 in Helsinki, Finland where it would have been strategically difficult to prevent the USSR, the second most powerful nation in the world at the time, from playing a role in the games being held only a few miles from its border.

1936—The Republic of Spain boycotts the “Nazi Games” in Berlin in 1936

The Olympic Games in Berlin remain a contentious issue for many people. With the Nazis in power and with their obvious commitment to racism, anti-Semitism, and military buildup, there was pressure exerted on many nations and the IOC itself to boycott the games. The only nation that boycotted was the new Republic of Spain that elected to hold an alternative People’s Olympics in Barcelona. However, fascists challenged the government of the new republic, and the ensuing civil war cancelled the games in Barcelona, even after many athletes had already arrived ready to compete. (The war ended in 1939 with a new fascist government; one of the officers in that totalitarian government, Juan Antonio Samaranch, went on to be the president of the IOC from 1980–2001).

1964—The IOC bans South Africa from the games in Tokyo, Japan

Protests over the brutal racist apartheid regime in South Africa led the IOC to ban that nation from the Olympic movement in 1964. This wasn't done because Avery Brundage and the rest of the IOC objected to racism, but they did fear boycotts and disruptions of the games as protests against South Africa grew worldwide.

1956—Boycotts over communist repression and the Israeli invasion of Egypt

The Olympic Games in Melbourne, Australia were held as the heat of the Cold War was felt worldwide. An anti-communist revolt in Hungary had recently been quelled by a brutal response on the part of the Soviet Union (USSR); additionally, tensions in the "Middle East" reached a peak as the Israeli military invaded the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip, which threatened the border of Egypt and the Suez Canal, which had been built by Egyptians. In response to brutal Soviet tactics in Hungary, the games were boycotted by Spain, Switzerland, and The Netherlands. At the same time, Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon boycotted the games to protest Israeli military action and the crisis related to the Suez Canal and related disagreements with the United States over the control of the canal (used to transport oil from the part of the world to the United States).

1968—proposed boycott by the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR)

The 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City came at a time when worldwide awareness of civil rights abuses reached a high point. This awareness was especially intense in the United States where the civil rights movement was in full swing. San Jose State sociology professor/activist Harry Edwards and others organized the international OPHR and called for a global boycott of the 1968 games. The global boycott didn't occur, but many high-profile African American athletes refused their invitations to the games. Others who competed in the games intended to voice public support for OPHR, but only Tommie Smith and John Carlos, medal winners in the 400-meter race, publically protested with their infamous—now famous—bare feet and gloved fists. They were expelled from the Olympic Village and sent back to the United States where they were condemned for being political. But their fates were less dramatic than the fates of many college students in Mexico City; as they protested the use of public money to fund the games while Mexican poverty was stifling the rest of the nation, over 200 of them were gunned to death by the Mexican military.

1972 and 1976—Anti-apartheid boycotts

The 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, Germany were the scene of a terrorist attack by Palestinian commandos who kidnapped 11 Israeli athletes. A number of African nations threatened a boycott over the IOC approval of participation in the games by teams from South Africa and Rhodesia, both of which maintained white racist regimes. However, the boycott was called off when the IOC expelled both nations from the Olympic membership. Commitment to a boycott was renewed prior to the 1976 games in Montreal, Canada over the anticipated participation of the national team from New Zealand, a nation that had officially sponsored a rugby tour of South Africa, despite an IOC ban against all sport competitions with South African teams. When New Zealand was not expelled, 28 nations, mostly from Africa, boycotted the Montreal games. Additionally, the Republic of China (Taiwan) withdrew from the 1976 games in Montreal because they refused to participate if the People's Republic of China (PRC) was allowed to participate under the flag of China. Until 1976, the PRC had boycotted the Olympic

Games because Taiwan was a participant. It wasn't until the games in Moscow in 1980 that the PRC sent a national team to the games—because Taiwan joined with the United States to boycott those. But Taiwan participated in the 1984 games in Los Angeles because the PRC had joined the boycott led by the USSR and its allies. When Taiwan came to the games, they did so under the new name of “Chinese Taipei.”

1980—The United States and its allies boycott the games in Moscow

When troops from the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan without UN approval to quell terrorist activity (as the United States did in 2001), then-President Jimmy Carter stated that the United States would boycott the games in Moscow if Soviet troops were not withdrawn. The USSR maintained troops in Afghanistan, and the United States, along with 65 allied nations, refused to allow their national teams to compete in Moscow. This left only 81 nations to compete in Moscow, and the USSR suffered a massive debt due to the lack of tourism and television revenues. Twenty-nine of the boycotting nations held an event called the “Liberty Bell Classic,” also referred to as the Olympic Boycott Games, at the University of Pennsylvania. The Republic of China (Taiwan) boycotted the 1980 Winter Olympic Games in Lake Placid because they refused to use the name “Chinese Taipei.”

1984—The USSR and its allies boycott the games in Los Angeles

In a move to spite and get even with the United States, the USSR and its eastern-bloc allies, with the exception of Romania, boycotted the games in Los Angeles and held their own Friendship Games in Moscow where there were existing Olympic venues. Representatives of the United States convinced, coerced, and “bribed” its allies to participate in the games. The absence of teams from the USSR, East Germany, Cuba, and other sport powerhouses enabled the U.S. team to sweep a disproportionate number of medals. This created a chauvinistic fervor that turned the 1984 games into a major financial success—the largest in Olympic history, despite little competition for medals.

1988—Boycott over hosting the games in South Korea

When the 1988 games were awarded to Seoul, Korea, the regime in North Korea argued that they should be named as a co-host for the games. When this did not occur, North Korea along with Ethiopia and Cuba boycotted the games.

2000—Gender testing and a threatened boycott

A year before the games scheduled for Sydney, Australia in 2000, a delegation representing female athletes worldwide threatened the IOC with a boycott and a disruption of the games if it allowed the continuation of gender testing. The delegation was armed with scientific data proving the inadequacy of the tests and with support from major international sport governing bodies, such as those for soccer and track and field (FIFA and IAAF). The IOC feared violence over this issue, so they suspended the testing and said it would be done only in individual cases when there was a serious question about an athlete's gender. Additionally, the IOC banned Afghanistan from sending a team due to the Taliban government's repressive policies against women.

2008—Threatened boycotts over China's treatment of Tibet

Human rights activists worldwide were incensed when the IOC voted China as the host of the 2008 games. Protests around the world objected to China's treatment of Tibet, but Tibet was used by many as a symbol of China's larger record of human rights abuses. Although the protests involved millions of people around the world and disrupted the global torch run sponsored by China and the IOC, a boycott never materialized, mostly because many of the nations in which protests were held had less than shining human rights records—and there also was much money to be made on the games by people in those nations, especially the United States.

2014—Threatened boycott of games to be held in Sochi, Russia

The government of Georgia, a former republic of the USSR, announced in mid-2008 that it would recruit support for a boycott of the winter games in 2014. The games are being held in Russia, which invaded the territory of Ossetia, a disputed part of Georgia that borders Russia and is an area through which a pipeline transports oil used in Europe and North America (this reduces U.S. dependence on oil from western Asia—the “Middle East”—while avoiding contact with Iran and Russia).

Jay Coakley

Kidd, Bruce (with Maggie MacDonnell). 2007. Peace, sport and development. In *Sport for Development and Peace*, International Working Group (SDP/IWG), *Literature Reviews on Sport for Development and Peace* (pp. 158–194). Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto, Faculty of Physical Education and Health; online, <http://iwg.sportanddev.org/data/htmleditor/file/Lit.%20Reviews/literature%20review%20SDP.pdf> (retrieved 1/24/08).

Topic 2. Politics exist in all organized sports

This reading contains full explanations of the seven realms in which politics exists in sports.

What Qualifies as a Sport?

As noted in chapter 1, there is no universal agreement on the definition of *sports*. What is considered a sport in a society or a particular event, such as the Olympics, is determined through political processes. The criteria used to identify sports reflect the ideas and interests of some people more than others. In the Olympics, for example, a competitive activity or game for men must be played in at least seventyfive countries on four continents to be considered for inclusion in the Olympic Games; an activity or a game for women must be played in at least forty countries on three continents. It also must have an officially designated international governing body, a requisite number of national governing bodies, and a history of international championships before the IOC will consider recognizing it as an Olympic sport. However, IOC decisions about what qualifies as a sport can be changed, as seen in 2005 when baseball and softball were eliminated from the program for the 2012 Olympics in London.

In these days of multibillion-dollar media contracts, an activity or a game is more likely to be recognized as a sport if it is attractive to younger viewers, who will bring new advertisers and corporate sponsors to the Olympics and the television coverage of the Games. It also helps if women play the activity because more women than men watch the Olympics and the IOC knows it must highlight gender equity if it is to avoid bad publicity for the Olympics as a whole.

This method of determining what qualifies as a sport favors nations that historically have emphasized competitive games and had the resources to export their games around the world. Former colonial powers are especially favored because they used their national games to introduce their cultural values and traditions to people in the regions that they colonized. Wealthy and powerful nations today not only have their national sports broadcast on satellite channels around the world but also have the resources to subsidize the development of these sports worldwide. Therefore, when the IOC uses its method of recognition, the sports from wealthy nations are at the top of the list. When these sports are recognized as official Olympic sports, the cultural values and traditions of wealthy and powerful nations are reaffirmed. In this way, the sports in wealthy and powerful nations become part of an emerging global culture that favors their interests. This also is why native games in traditional cultures are not a part of the Olympics. Games played only in limited regions of the world don't qualify for recognition as sports. Therefore, if people from nations with traditional cultures want to participate in the Olympics, they must learn to do sports as they are done in wealthy nations. If people in traditional cultures lack access to the equipment and facilities needed to train in their homelands, they must depend on support from people and organizations in wealthy nations to become athletes in recognized "international" sports. In this way, sports enable people and organizations in wealthy nations to gain a cultural foothold in other nations and use it to promote changes that foster their interests.

This type of political process also occurs in other contexts. For example, for well over a hundred years, the men who have controlled athletic departments in North American high schools and colleges have used a power and performance model to designate certain activities as varsity sports. They have organized these sports to emphasize competition and physical dominance, so they reaffirm male notions of character and excellence.

This way of defining and organizing sports seldom has been questioned, but if power and performance sports attract fewer girls and women than boys and men, it may be time to ask critical questions about what qualifies as a varsity sport and why. When we ask these questions, we become sensitive to the politics that have long worked to the advantage of men in sports. Trying to change taken-for-granted political realities always creates resistance among those who have benefited from them. Ironically, many men say that people who challenge traditional realities are slaves to “political correctness.” What they mean, however, is that they don’t want to change the insensitive and self-interested ways of doing things that allow them to ignore the needs of others.

The development of criteria underlying the meaning and organization of sports also occurs on a global scale. Sociologist Peter Donnelly illustrates this in his analysis of how they have been combined to form a global sport monoculture, which he calls “prolympism.” Prolympism is now the model for determining what qualifies and is funded as “sport” in nations around the world. This occurs even in nations where prolympism is clearly inconsistent with traditional games. In this way, the politics of defining *sport* are both local and global in impact.

What Are the Rules of a Sport?

Sports are social constructions because people create them as they interact with one another within the constraints of culture and society. The rules that govern sports also are social constructions created through political processes. Why should first base be 90 feet from home plate in Major League Baseball? Why should a basketball rim be 10 feet above the ground? Why should the top of a volleyball net be 88 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches off the ground in international women’s volleyball?

Why can’t pole vaulters use any type of pole they want? Why can’t tournament golfers use any golf club or golf ball they want? Why is 6 centimeters the maximum height for the sides of bikini bottoms worn by women in beach volleyball when men wear long shorts? This list of questions could go on and on. The point is that the rules of sports can be based on many concerns, and this makes them political. Because sports have more rules than many human activities, they are especially political.

Who Makes and Enforces the Rules in Sports?

The rules of an “official” sport are determined by a recognized governing body that makes decisions affecting the sport and its participants. The process of becoming recognized as the *sole* Governing bodies have power, status, and control over resources, so it is common for more than one organization to claim that it is the rightful rule-making body for a sport. The simultaneous existence of various governing bodies creates confusion for athletes and spectators. Professional boxing, for example, has at least four governing bodies (the WBO, the WBU, the WBF, and the IBO), each with its own weight categories and championships and each claiming to be the official rule-making body for boxing.

“New” sports, such as skateboarding, snowboarding, in-line skating, and BMX (biking), each have had at least two organizations vying to be official governing bodies. As organizations seek power over sports and the athletes who participate in them, they battle one another to recruit dues-paying members and sponsor competitive events, especially national and international championships. In the process, their policies confuse athletes and limit participation opportunities. When this occurs, people clearly see politics in sports.

When rules exist, there is a need for rule enforcement. This adds another political dimension to sports. Anyone who has ever refereed or officiated a game or match will tell you that rule violations are seldom clear-cut. Identifying violations is difficult, and few people see violations the same way. Rule violations occur on a regular basis in many sports, but the best referees learn when to call fouls or penalties in connection with these violations. In fact, referees and officials discuss when they should or should not call fouls during games and matches. They realize that it is a political challenge to make sports appear to be fair to athletes and spectators.

Enforcing off-the-field rules is also a political challenge. The process of investigating rule violations, determining innocence or guilt, and punishing rule violators involves judgments based on ideas about fairness, moral principles, economic interests, personal reputations, organizational prestige, or other factors. How these factors are considered and which ones prevail in the rule enforcement process are political matters.

Who Organizes and Controls Sport Events?

Representatives of official governing bodies often organize and control sport events. Standards emerge when the governing body is stable, but standards don't exist once and for all time. For example, even though governing bodies devise formal standards for judging performances in figure skating, diving, and gymnastics, research shows that the votes of judges are influenced by political loyalties, personal connections, coercion, and bribes. This has been a serious issue in many Olympic Games, but it became widely publicized in 2002 when a judge for the figure skating pairs competition allegedly favored a Russian couple over a Canadian couple. Her scores determined who received the gold and silver medals, respectively. After much debate, the International Skating Union (ISU) awarded the Canadian couple a gold medal without taking the gold medal away from the Russian couple. Then the ISU changed its rules to discourage unfair judging in the future, but the changes were widely criticized and have been revised at least twice between 2003 and 2006.

When international politics influence judges, it is disheartening to athletes, but it should be no more disheartening than the knowledge that "cuteness," "hairstyles," "body build," and "eye color" can also influence judges when it comes to female athletes in certain events. This is a form of cultural politics that force some athletes to spend thousands of dollars on everything from braces to straighten their teeth to plastic surgery if they wish to be successful. Politics come in many forms.

Now that sports are heavily commercialized, official governing bodies and a combination of corporate sponsors and media production people organize and control events. The location and timing of events, event schedules, the awarding of press credentials, and the choices of which television companies will broadcast the events and which corporate logos will be displayed are resolved through political processes. The participants in those processes and their interests change from one event to the next; this means that there is never an end to politics in sports.

Where Do Sport Events Take Place?

Site selection decisions have become increasingly political recently because more "places" now bid to host teams and events. The selection of Olympic sites has always been political as clearly demonstrated by the site selection, vote-buying scandal involving the IOC and the Salt Lake Olympic Organizing Committee during the 1990s. As the stakes for hosting the Olympic Games have increased, bid committees have been willing to wine, dine, bribe, and pressure IOC members, whose votes determine which city hosts a particular Games.

The politics of site selection also operate in other ways. For example, when Atlanta was selected to host the 1996 Games, it was clear to many people worldwide that the selection process was influenced by the television rights fees anticipated from NBC and the location of Coca-Cola's international headquarters in Atlanta. Coca-Cola had a sixty-seven-year history of paying hundreds of millions of dollars to support the IOC and sponsor the Olympics, and IOC members felt indebted to the corporation. During the Games, the red-and-white Coke logo was so evident in Atlanta and Olympic venues that many observers described them as the "Coca-Colympics."

The selection of Beijing, China, for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games involved political considerations and complex political processes. China was desperate to host the games because it wanted to showcase its culture, solicit tourism and business investments, and claim political legitimacy as a global power. The members of the IOC selection committee were influenced by many considerations: China was home to nearly 20 percent of the world's population, it had never hosted an Olympic Games, bringing Olympism to China would strengthen the Olympic movement, and the potential economic benefits of awarding the games to China were very high because corporate sponsors would see China as a prime site for capitalist expansion. NBC, the U.S. network with the rights to televise the 2008 Games, saw China as an attractive site for marketing its coverage. NBC knew that by 2008 many Americans would be very interested in China because of its size, power, culture, and economic growth potential. NBC also knew it could use that interest to boost ratings and sell high-priced advertising time to transnational corporations.

Site bids for events such as Super Bowls, All-Star games, NASCAR races, the NCAA men's and women's basketball tournaments, and large international events may not cost as much as bids to host the Olympics, but they are just as political. In many parts of the world, these politics reflect environmental issues. For example, the use of open space or agricultural land for golf courses is being contested in Europe, Japan, and even North America. As one researcher claims, "golf has acquired the status of a four-letter word because of the havoc it has wrought across the globe" (www.twinside.org.sg/title2/ttcd/TA-06.doc). The Global Anti-Golf Movement (www.antigolf.org/) is fueled by widespread objections to the use of chemical fertilizers and massive water resources to keep grass soft and green for golfers representing the economic elite in societies. It is a loosely organized collection of lobbying groups, often focused on environmental issues in densely populated regions of India and Southeast Asia.

Ski resort expansion in North America, Europe, and Japan also has been resisted for environmental reasons. The organizers of the 2000 Sydney Games faced severe criticism when they failed in important ways to live up to the environmental principles developed by the original bid committee. Such examples highlight the fact that the politics of place in sports often involve local opposition to hosting events and building sport facilities.

Who Is Eligible to Participate in a Sport?

Yamile Aldama was born in Cuba, she lives in London, and she is a citizen of Sudan; soon she will also be a British citizen. To make things more interesting, let's imagine that she married a Jamaican and gave birth to a child in the United States. As an elite athlete, Ms. Aldama asks where her national team is because she wants to compete in the Olympics. Such questions are increasingly common today as athletes have parents from different nations and a birthplace that differs from the nations where they live, train, attend school, or get married.

Who plays and who doesn't is a hotly contested issue in sports. As people in governing bodies make eligibility decisions, they use criteria such as gender, age, weight, height, ability (and disability), place of residence, citizenship, educational affiliation, grade in school, social status, income, or even race and ethnicity to determine participation eligibility. Although eligibility policies often are presented as if they were based on unchanging truths about human beings and sports, they are grounded in political agreements. This is true in local youth sport programs and the Olympics.

People often debate the seeming arbitrariness of eligibility rules. For example, NCAA eligibility rules are so complex that the organization publishes brochures and supplements explaining who may and may not play under various conditions. Lawsuits are filed when people feel that they've been denied eligibility unfairly. High school students challenge eligibility rules when their families move from one school district to another and they are declared ineligible to play varsity sports. The "no pass, no play" rules in U.S. high school sports also are debated. Even in youth sports, there are frequent debates about the age and weight rules used to determine eligibility. These have increased as children of immigrants want to play youth sports and have none of the formal birth records that are routinely kept in the United States. Athletes with disabilities regularly challenge rules prohibiting their participation in certain sports. Within events such as the Paralympics there are frequent debates about disability classifications and eligibility.

There are literally hundreds of other noteworthy cases of eligibility politics in amateur and professional sports. For example, eighteen-year old basketball players may be denied an opportunity to make money playing in the NBA, but eighteen-year-old golfers can obtain their PGA or LPGA tour cards and win money in tournaments, and tennis players can earn prize money as young as fifteen years old. The meanings given to age vary from one context to another as eligibility is determined. As global mobility increases, there will be more questions about eligibility as it is related to citizenship, nationality, and place of residence. Amateur sports have long been the scene for debates over the meaning of *amateur* and who qualifies as an amateur athlete. Because these meanings are socially determined, they change over time and from place to place. This is another reason why politics will always be a part of sports.

How Are Rewards Distributed to Athletes and Others?

The distribution of rewards is an issue at all levels of sport participation. Coaches, league administrators, sportswriters, judges, team owners, arbitrators, tournament committees, and parents decide who will receive special commendations, certificates of accomplishment, trophies, scholarships, contracts, pay increases, and so on. "Who gets what?" is a political question, and the answers are not always clear-cut. People discuss and sometimes argue about rewards. As the level of competition increases, so do the stakes associated with decisions. At the highest levels of competition, these decisions can involve massive amounts of money and status.

With the increased commercialization of sports, there are heated debates about the ways that revenues should be distributed among sport organizations, organization officials, owners and promoters, athletes, and others connected with sports. The political processes associated with the distribution of revenues in commercial sports are complex and never ending. These processes take various forms and come to different resolutions in different countries and sports.

An important "who gets what?" issue in U.S. sports concerns pay for intercollegiate athletes. Why should a talented intercollegiate football player who risks his health and endures pain and injury while generating millions of dollars for his university be limited to receiving an athletic

grant-in-aid worth only a fraction of what NFL players are paid? Why is this player not allowed to make money selling his own image on shirts or coffee mugs, while the university uses his image to market everything from the school itself to merchandise with the university logo on it? Athletes in revenue-producing sports say this is unfair; university spokespeople say that there is no fair way to pay all athletes who play on varsity teams, and no way to determine the dollar value of the contributions made by athletes in revenue-producing sports. Regardless of current policy, the debate will continue, and athletes will continue to lose unless they organize and obtain more power.

Other debates revolve around questions such as these: Why should professional sport team owners make more money than the best players on their teams? What percentage should agents receive when they negotiate player contracts? Why should prize money in a NASCAR race reflect how many times a driver has raced during a season in addition to how the driver finishes a race? Why should Olympic athletes not be paid for their participation when they collectively generate over a billion dollars during the Games? Why should the IOC receive 33 percent of the revenues from every Olympics, and why should the USOC receive 12.8 percent of the money paid by U.S. television companies for the rights to broadcast the Olympics (about \$114 million in 2008) when the United States already has more athlete-training money than any other nation? Should athletes receive compensation when their images and uniform numbers are used in video games? These and hundreds of similar questions show that the “politics of rewards” are an integral part of sports.

Sometimes rewards involve status or prestige rather than money, such as being selected to a Hall of Fame or an All-American team. Even youth league teams have “politics of status” awards for “the most improved player of the year,” “the most valuable player,” “the most dedicated player,” and so on. When people agree on who should receive these awards, they forget that the selection process is political. It is only when they don’t agree that they complain about politics in sports.

Topic 3. Giving gifts to IOC members: When is it a form of bribery?

The scandals related to gifts given to IOC members by members of Site Bid Committees in Salt Lake City and other cities raised many sociological and ethical questions. Doug Booth, a sociologist from New Zealand wrote an article that discussed gift giving in sociological terms. He describes gift giving as a complex social process that is sometimes difficult to distinguish from bribery, and he uses concept of gift giving in analysis of recent events in the IOC Olympic Games site selection process. Here is a summary of his article:

Booth, D. 1999. Gifts of corruption? Ambiguities of obligation in the Olympic Movement. *OLYMPIKA: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 8, 43–68.

Booth makes the case that gift giving is a complex social process that must be understood in terms of the culture and situational context in which it occurs. For example, giving a person a gift may on the one hand be a warm expression of cultural etiquette and custom, hospitality and friendship, personal closeness and intimacy, or a symbolic exchange indicating a desired or established voluntary personal connection. On the other hand, giving a person a gift can be a cold, calculated attempt to gain an unfair advantage in competitive relationships, unethically influence others' decisions, or promote self-interests by creating a sense of obligation and an expectation that the receiver will reciprocate in some way. In either case, Booth says, "gifts are essential to nurturing and nourishing social relationships" (p. 45).

Booth explains that in the case of IOC processes for reviewing and evaluating site bids for the Olympic Games, there existed a gift culture that became corrupted as IOC members and representatives of the bidding cities pushed the norms governing gift giving to excessive extremes. He also notes that there are cases when gifts are difficult to classify as forms of bribery or as legitimate expressions of concern for others in the "Olympic family" around the world. For example, when medical treatment is offered to a child of an IOC member from a developing nation where medical care is difficult to obtain, is this unethical or is it consistent with the true spirit of Olympism? If an organizing committee from a very wealthy nation provides athletes from a poor nation with training opportunities that will help the athletes qualify for the Olympic Games, is it unethical or an expression of international brotherhood?

These examples are not meant to imply that IOC members and bid committees from Atlanta, Sydney, and Salt Lake City did not engage in immoral, unethical, and illegal behaviors in the case of gifts. Gift giving in each of these cases was done in private behind closed doors in a manner that clearly went outside the norms set by the IOC itself and outside the norms that regulate the behavior of public officials representing nations in international relations. Of course the IOC is a private organization. However, its claim that it promotes public good indicates that it ought to be reconstituted as an international public organization subject to the laws of similar organizations.

Complicating matters in the case of the Olympics is that there are extreme inequalities between participating nations. Under conditions of extreme inequality it is difficult to maintain a gift culture in which there are not pressures to engage in deviant and illegal behaviors. For example, when IOC members from poor nations, especially ones that had been former colonies of wealthy nations, interacted with representatives of wealthy bidding cities, they felt that it was their national duty to gain as many resources as possible for their countries. After all, didn't the wealthy countries build their resources by exploiting the environments and peoples of their

countries? Furthermore, why would an IOC member from a nation that has not ever won an Olympic medal of any kind be concerned with the relative quality of facilities in competing bid cities? The athletes from their country will never compete in most of those facilities, their fellow citizens cannot afford trips to attend events as spectators, and their countries will not benefit directly from the tourism associated with the Games. From their national perspectives, what is the bid process all about?

Another matter that complicates things is that if the IOC revised the bid process so that it occurred exclusively as a mercantile exchange rather than as personalized, cooperative efforts among those who come together in a spirit of friendship and family spirit, it will privilege wealthy nations such as the United States and give their national Olympic committees more power over the Olympics. In fact, as the investigations of IOC occurred some people felt that the process was stacked to benefit the United States, and bound to increase the power and influence of the United States in revenue producing international sports.

As Booth explains, gift giving is a complex process, and treating gift giving as a mercantile exchange does not eliminate all problems; it only changes them, and privileges those with financial resources in the process.