

FURTHER READINGS

CHAPTER 1

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. Teaching Sociology: Sports Rediscovered

Topic 2. Differences between play, games, and sports

Topic 3. Origins and early history of the sociology of sport

Topic 4. Professional associations in the sociology of sport

Topic 5. Sports as social phenomena

Topic 6. Different approaches in the sociology of sport

Topic 7. Sociologists ask critical questions about sports in society

Topic 8. Basketball: A case history of institutionalization

Topic 1. Teaching Sociology: Sports Rediscovered

By Jay Coakley, Professor Emeritus; Sociology Department; University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

The material in this section is to help instructors request a new sociology of sport course, defend an existing course, and prepare to teach a course. To request or defend a sociology of sport course, feel free to use any of the material in the following essay. The essay appeared as the foreword in Kyle C. Longest, ed., *Teaching the Sociology of Sport: A Collection of Syllabi, Assignments, and Other Resources* (pp. v–ix), Washington, DC: American Sociological Association. For those looking for syllabi and course outlines, you may check the table of contents for this book at the end of this essay and use the accompanying order form to obtain it.

Teaching the sociology of sport once or twice every academic year since 1972 has been my most satisfying professional experience. It hasn't been easy, and I didn't leave every class session with feelings of euphoria about my wit and wisdom, but it allowed me to make sociology and the sociological imagination relevant in the lives of many students who would have bypassed sociology during their time in college. Additionally, it allowed me to combine teaching, research and service in satisfying ways.

My immediate colleagues fully supported my interests in the sociology of sport, partly because my course enrolled many students and helped the department meet its FTE/credit hour goals. Rather than enabling me to stake out turf in the graduate program, teaching a sociology of sport course connected me with the campus and the local community, where everyone from parents to school and community officials wanted to know more about sports so they could make informed decisions about allocating personal and organizational resources.

Back in 1970, a curriculum committee at Northern Arizona University turned down my request to add a sociology of sport course to the Arts and Letters curriculum. I taught the course anyway under a special topics title, and in 1972, made a more convincing case when the course was accepted by the College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs. Today, with the benefit of hindsight, I could make an even better case by drawing on materials in the following paragraphs. Feel free to use this material as you wish.

Sports as significant social phenomena

Historical and anthropological research indicates that people worldwide have always engaged in playful physical activities and incorporated human movement into collective rituals (Huizinga, 1955). All social life is embodied, and people across cultures have included “the physical” in their collective lives. Spontaneous and guided play, and innumerable physical games have been key components of family and community life from ancient times to the present (Henricks, 2007; Sutton-Smith, 1997).

Initially tied to religious beliefs, play and games were gradually secularized between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. With increasing rationalization, industrialization, democratization, and urbanization, play came to be linked with socialization and social control, games were organized to fit emerging social and cultural conditions, and particular physical games and contests took the forms of folk sports and recreational sports (Guttmann, 1978). By the beginning of the twentieth century, organized sports emerged in Northern Europe, and European colonizers, missionaries, and global travelers exported them around the world.

Variations in the meaning, purpose, and organization of sports indicate that they are cultural practices that serve different social purposes from time to time and place to place. However, recent capitalist expansion and various dimensions of globalization have made organized, competitive sports pervasive and highly visible components of the social and cultural landscape of many societies today.

Like other cultural practices, sports are historically produced and socially constructed. The most prominent forms of sport embody dominant meanings and practices in society, but people continually invent new sport forms and practices organized around oppositional ideas and beliefs, and these may inspire the formation of alternative structures and subcultures. In other words, sports are dynamic phenomena and constitute contested cultural and social terrains, which make them fertile ground for sociological research and analysis. This was recognized by George Ritzer, the supervising editor for the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (2007), when he included fifty-five major articles on sports topics in that reference work.

It is difficult to argue the existence of a monolithic global sport culture, but rule-governed, competitive sports capture widespread individual and collective attention today. They're implicated in local, national, and global power relations, and they reaffirm globally dominant ideologies associated with social class, gender, race and ethnicity, sexuality, and physical ability. They're linked with the organization and dynamics of family life, especially in neo-liberal societies. Parents, politicians, and educational leaders see them as useful sites for socialization and education, and they are promoted as vehicles for developing local and national identities as well as transcending them. In addition to nation-states, transnational corporations now sponsor particular sport forms to maintain their economic hegemony in both established and emerging markets. Corporate executives now realize, as did Gramsci (1971) when he discussed consensus-generating processes, that sponsoring people's pleasures produces support for sponsors and the ideologies that perpetuate their power. At the same time, most sport organizations seek corporate support to insure their survival.

As cultural practices, organized sports are increasingly important for individuals and collectivities. They are sociologically significant because they're developed around and reaffirm particular ideas about the body, social relationships, competence and achievement, human abilities and potential, masculinity and femininity, and the meaning of success. When I ask students in my large introductory sociology classes to write for me a description of the most memorable experience they had during high school, nearly forty percent of them highlight a sport-related experience.

Although sport participation is clearly a source of joy, excitement, and significance for many individuals today, commercial spectator sports provide larger collective gathering sites and command more collective attention than any other events. The Olympic Games, soccer's World Cup (men's and women's), the Tour de France, the tennis championships at Wimbledon, American football's Super Bowl, and championship boxing bouts capture the interest of billions of people who watch them on satellite-fed video screens and televisions in over two hundred countries around the world.

People of all ages connect with sports through the media. Newspapers devote entire sections of their daily editions to sports, and the coverage of sports frequently surpasses coverage devoted to the economy, politics, or any single topic of interest. Major magazines and hundreds of specialty magazines cater to a wide range of interests among sport participants and fans. Radio covers numerous sport events and sports talk programming attracts millions of listeners every day. Sports events, together with news and commentary about sports, make up the most prevalent category of television programming in most nations today. As broadband internet access has expanded, media-facilitated connections to sports have grown exponentially.

High-profile teams and athletes are now globally recognized, and this recognition fuels everything from product consumption to tourism. Sports images pervade many cultures, and in regions where there is an assumed connection between sport participation and character development, people expect athletes to be models of dominant values and lifestyles, especially for impressionable young people. This creates a paradoxical situation in which athletes often are held to a higher degree of moral accountability than other celebrities at the same time that they are excused for transgressing traditional normative boundaries.

People worldwide increasingly talk about sports. Many relationships revolve around sports, especially among men but also among a growing number of women. Some people identify so closely with teams and athletes that their moods and overall sense of well-being are impacted by game outcomes and athlete performances. In fact, people's identities as athletes and fans may be more important to them than their identities related to education, religion, work, and family.

Overall, sports and sports images have become a pervasive part of people's everyday lives, especially among those who live in countries where resources are relatively plentiful and access to media is high. This makes sports a logical focus for the attention of sociologists.

Sports as sociologically significant

The fact that sports have not attracted attention from many sociologists is not surprising. Knowledge production in universities continues to be based on European cultural traditions that assume clear-cut mind-body distinctions. An uncritical acceptance of Cartesian mind-body dualism has created a research culture that ignores bodies or relegates them to the repair shops located in university medical schools or departments concerned with body mechanics. Unlike scholars in Asian cultures, where widely used ontological approaches assume mind-body integration as the foundation for being human, U.S. scholars seldom acknowledge that human existence is embodied or that clearly embodied activities, such as sports, ought to be studied seriously.

This intellectual climate has made sports and other forms of physical culture risky topics for research and teaching, and there is little support, recognition, and funding for sociologists who decide to make sport an area of professional expertise. Although play and games received attention from a few European and North American behavioral and social scientists between 1880 and the 1950s, sports received scarce attention during those years. In one of the notable exceptions, Thorstein Veblen included discussions of college sports in *Theory of the Leisure Class* published in 1899. Max Weber mentioned English Puritan opposition to sports in his 1904 and 1905 volumes of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, and William Graham Sumner discussed “popular sports” in his 1906 book, *Folkways*. And Willard Waller devoted attention to the “integrative functions” of sports in US high schools in *The Sociology of Teaching* in 1932. But even these scholars mentioned sports only in passing, and they never inspired others to view sports as legitimate topics of study.

Theodor Adorno’s student Heinz Risse was the first notable scholar to refer to a “sociology of sport” when he published *Sociologie des Sports* in 1921. But it took another 35 years until other scholars in Europe and North America rediscovered sports as social phenomena. The emergence of a subdiscipline in the sociology of sport was grounded in the work of sociologists and physical educators during the 1950s and 1960s. The formation of the International Committee for Sport Sociology (ICSS) and the publication of the *International Review for Sport Sociology (IRSS)* in the mid-1960s marked the formal birth of the field. Other publications in the 1960s and 1970s provided examples of the research and conceptual issues discussed by scholars who claimed an affiliation with the sociology of sport. In addition to meeting at the annual conferences of the ICSS beginning in the mid-1960s, scholars in the sociology of sport also met at the annual conferences of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS). This organization, founded in 1978, remains an active community of scholars today, and its members have edited and supported the quarterly *Sociology of Sport Journal* since 1984.

Although the sociology of sport has its academic roots in traditional disciplines, its early growth was fueled partly by the radical and reform-oriented work of social activists trained in a variety of social sciences. Initiated in the 1960s, that work attracted the attention of young scholars in sociology and physical education. Despite being viewed as a social institution in a structural-functional sense by some scholars, sports were also used as a focal point for critical analyses of US society during the 1970s. Opposition to the war in Vietnam inspired analyses of the autocratic structure and militaristic culture characteristic in most sports. Critiques of capitalism were tied to research on the role of competition in social life and the rise of highly competitive community and school sponsored sports for young people. Concern with high rates of aggression and violence in society was tied to an analysis of contact sports in which the physical domination of opponents was valorized. Analyses of racial and civil rights issues were tied to discussions of racism in sports and led to the boycott of the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games by some black American athletes (Edwards, 1969). Analyses of gender relations were inspired by the widespread failure of US high schools and universities to comply with Title IX legislation that, among other things, mandated gender equity in all educational programs sponsored by schools that received federal funds—and sports had always been deemed educational for the men who played them.

Today, those of us who use sociology to study sports or use sports to extend knowledge in sociology are an active, diverse, and steadily expanding collection of scholars from sociology and related disciplines. The field is unique because many of us realize that it's important to support each other – despite theoretical and methodological differences – because we often lack adequate support on our campuses.

Although the American Sociological Association's Guide to graduate departments lists few sociologists and sociology departments with expertise in the sociology of sport, this source does not provide data on the departments where most sociology of sport courses are taught. Teaching and doing research on sports and sport-related topics may not be the most effective way to succeed in the reward structures maintained in large research universities, but it often leads to valued rewards in colleges and universities that emphasize teaching and the use of particular courses to generate FTE and recruit majors.

Making the case for courses and research in the sociology of sport is becoming easier because there are respected journals devoted to research on sports in society (*Sociology of Sport Journal*, the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, the *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, and *Sport in Society*). Additionally, mainstream sociology journals now accept and publish research on sports and sport-related topics. National and regional sociology organizations worldwide now sponsor regular sessions in the sociology of sport at their annual conferences, and there are annual conferences sponsored by national and regional sociology of sport associations around the world. After attending such conferences since the mid-1970s I can say that they have kept me informed of cutting edge theory and research in sociology and provided much useful information for my teaching.

Overall, teaching the sociology of sport provides an opportunity to explain concepts and theories in connection with events and activities that resonate with students. Although some students resist a critical analysis of cultural practices that give them pleasure, most embrace the opportunity to learn about sports as social phenomena and have a basis for making informed decisions about the role of sports in their lives, families, schools, and communities.

REFERENCES

- Edwards, Harry. 1969. *The revolt of the black athlete*. New York: The Free Press.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the prison notebooks*. (Q. Hoare and G. Smith, eds. & trans.). New York: International Publishers.
- Guttman, Allen. 1978. *From ritual to record: The nature of modern sports*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Henricks, Thomas S. 2006. *Play reconsidered: Sociological perspectives on human expression*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Huizinga, Johan. 1955. *Homo ludens: A study of the play element in culture*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Sutton-Smith, Brian. 1997. *The ambiguity of play*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Topic 2. Differences between play, games, and sports

Many scholars have developed definitions of play, games, and sports. Their goal has been to distinguish these three activities as well as identify similarities between them. I've found two approaches to be helpful as I think about these three activities.

One approach was developed more than a half century ago by the late Gregory Stone (1955) who said that sports are composed of two types of action: play and dis-play. "Play," according to Stone, involves spontaneous actions that freely expressed the immediate emotions and concerns of one or more players. The dynamics of play are emergent and largely unpredictable. "Dis-play," on the other hand, refers to spectacular actions motivated by the desire of one or more entertainers to amuse spectators. Stone (1955) related these two activities with games and sports in this way:

Play and dis-play are precariously balanced in sport, and, once that balance is upset, the whole character of sport in society may be affected. Furthermore, the spectacular element of sport may, as in the case of American professional wrestling, destroy the game. The rules cease to apply, and the "cheat" and the "spoilsport" replace the players.

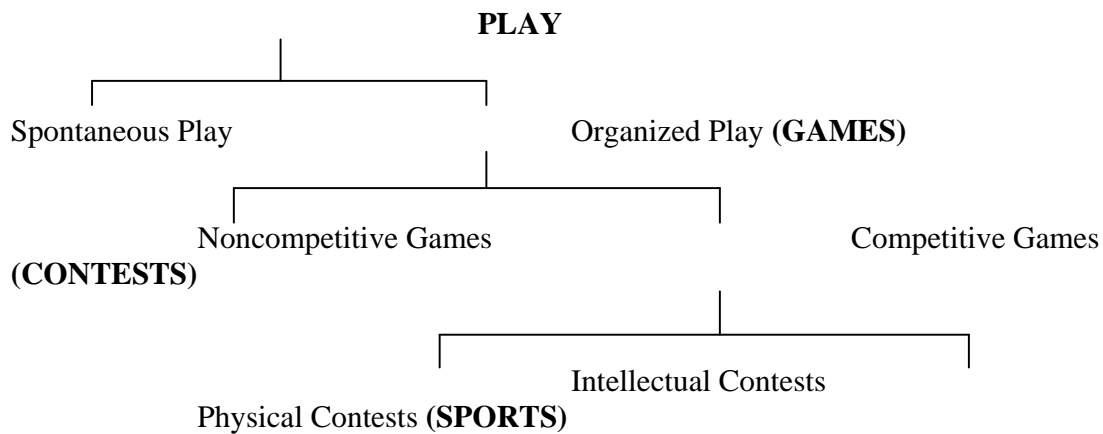
Stone distinguished sports from play, because sports are not characterized by complete freedom, spontaneity, and personal expression. However, he also thought that sports contain a "spirit of play" that provides intrinsic satisfaction to athletes. In other words, there is an emergent component to sports, and this prevents them from being "acted out" according to a preplanned script designed to amuse an audience. Stone wanted to acknowledge that sports include activities that emerge from one moment to the next as players make choices and respond to changing circumstances.

Stone also acknowledged that sports are organized and involve displays of skills that are evaluated and rewarded either informally (praise, status, reputation) or formally (trophies, medals, money). In this way sports involve structured actions that dis-play individual and collective skills at the same time that they involve freedom, spontaneity, and personal expression.

Stone also said that if the balance of play and dis-play were tipped so that one dominated and excluded the other, sports would cease to exist and be replaced by play or spectacle. When Stone was writing in the 1950s, he warned that sports at that time were, in his view, becoming commercialized to the point that "spectators [were beginning] to outnumber participants in overwhelming proportions, and the spectator, as the name implies, encourages the spectacular—the dis-play."

Stone underestimated the extent to which a "spirit of play" could survive as sports were commercialized as forms of entertainment. However, his warnings are worth keeping in mind as sports continue to change and as spectacles such as professional wrestling, ultimate fighting, and other activities designed to amuse audiences become popular.

Another approach to play, games, and sports was developed by Allen Guttmann (1978, p. 9). Using research in history and anthropology as his starting point, he created the following model to diagram the relationships between play, games, contests, and sports:



This model was built on the assumption that PLAY is the foundation for all games, contests and sports. GAMES consist of *organized play*, CONTESTS consist of *competitive games*, and SPORTS consist of *physical contests*. Therefore, SPORTS are a collective physical embodiment of contests, games, and play.

Models developed by others use different approaches to categorizing activities so that sports can be defined and subjected to study and analysis. However, these two approaches provide a basic understanding of how scholars have defined sports and linked them with play and games.

Guttman, Allen. 1978. *From ritual to record: The nature of modern sports*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Stone, Gregory. 1955. American sports: Play and display. *Chicago Review* 9: 83–100.

Jay Coakley

Topic 3. Origins and early history of the sociology of sport

Adapted from:

Coakley, Jay. 1987. Sociology of Sport in the United States. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 22, 1: 63–79.

Introduction: Initial Steps

The growth of the leisure industry and the increased visibility of sport participation in most industrial nations during the post-World War II years attracted the attention of a few scholars in both physical education and sociology (cf. Loy, McPherson, and Kenyon, 1978a). In 1964 an international group of social scientists sensitive to the social and cultural significance of sports during the late 20th century formed the International Committee for the Sociology of Sport. Gregory Stone, a sociologist from the University of Minnesota, was the only person from the United States on the first executive board, but the formation of the committee fueled efforts to explain and promote the sociology of sport through selected publications, as well as through interpersonal networks in selected sociology and physical education departments.

The publication of the *International Review of Sport Sociology* (IRSS) in 1966 crystallized awareness of the new field. During that year, the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AAHPER) included a session on the sociology of sport in its program; Gerald Kenyon, John Loy, and C. M. White were invited speakers. During the following year, an international workshop on the sociology of sport hosted by the University of Illinois provided the papers for a volume on *The Cross-Cultural Analysis of Sport and Games* edited by Günther Lüschen (1970). In 1968 the American Sociological Association included a discussion on the sociology of sport led by Charles Page (University of Massachusetts), and the American Association for the Advancement of Science sponsored a session on the psychology and sociology of sport at its annual conference. Later that year, under the sponsorship of the Committee of Institutional Cooperation (CIC), which linked 11 major midwestern universities, over 50 scholars gathered at the University of Wisconsin for the first major sociology of sport conference in the United States. The conference proceedings were edited by Gerald Kenyon (1969) and published with the title, *Sociology of Sport*.

The incorporation of the sociology of sport into the curricula of U.S. physical education and sociology departments was encouraged between 1969 and 1972 by the publication of four major anthologies by U.S. authors (Loy and Kenyon, 1969; Sage, 1970; Hart, 1972; Stone, 1972). During these same years, interest generating critiques of U.S. sports were written by Harry Edwards (*The Revolt of the Black Athlete*), Jack Scott (*The Athletic Revolution*), and Paul Hoch (*Rip off the Big Game*). Then the field's first American textbook, *Sociology of Sport*, was published by Harry Edwards in 1973. Between 1973 and 1978 the publication of eleven additional books designed especially for classroom use fostered the integration of the field into a growing number of university courses (Talamini and Page, 1973; Sage, 1974; Ibrahim, 1975; Ball and Loy, 1975; Landers, 1976; Nixon, 1976; Yiannakis et al., 1976; Coakley, 1978; Eitzen and Sage, 1978; Loy, McPherson and Kenyon, 1978; Snyder and Spreitzer, 1978).

Research and writing was encouraged by the publication of the *Sport Sociology Bulletin* early in 1972. The editor, Benjamin Lowe, announced in the first issue that the publication schedule of his *Bulletin* would reflect the growth of sport sociology. The schedule immediately became regular (bi-annual issues), and by 1975 the two issues of the *Bulletin* contained nearly 160 pages.

This prompted Lowe to publish a full scale bi-annual journal under the title of the *Review of Sport and Leisure*. The last issue of the *Bulletin* then appeared in 1977.

A number of other regular publications appeared during the 1970's. In 1976, Richard Lapchick, a political scientist and founder of The Institute for Sport and Social Analysis, published the *Arena Newsletter* and the bi-annual *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*. The format and content of the newsletter changed in 1978 when it was replaced by an expanded publication, *Arena Review*. The officially stated purpose of Lapchick's organization was "to conduct serious inquiries into problem areas of sports" (1976). According to his description of *Arena*, these problem areas included "the political economy of sport, women and sport, race and sport, medical abuse of athletes, athletes' rights, and sport as a builder/divider of the concept of community." Another publication, the quarterly interdisciplinary *Journal of Sport Behavior*, also appeared during 1978 under the sponsorship of the United States Sports Academy in Mobile, Alabama.

Other journals related to the concerns of sport sociologists also appeared during the 1970's. There was the *Journal of Sport History* (1974), the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* (1974), and the *Journal of Sport Psychology* (1979). These joined the already existing *Journal of Popular Culture* (1966), the *Journal of Leisure Research* (1969), and the longstanding *Journal of Physical Education and Recreation*, the *Research Quarterly*, and *Quest*. Furthermore, during the 1970's and early 1980's there were a number of established social science and sociology journals that published special issues devoted to the sociology of sport.

Throughout the 1970s, both the American Sociological Association and the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation included sessions on the sociology of sport in their annual conferences, and the regional affiliates of these two parent organizations frequently did the same at their annual meetings. In 1978 the University of Minnesota hosted a second CIC sponsored symposium on the sociology of sport, and the conference proceedings were again published (Krotee, 1979). Most important, however, was that a group of symposium participants decided that the future of the sociology of sport in North America depended on the formation of a new organization through which those in the field could receive relevant information and regularly communicate with others. This marked the beginning of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS).

The response to the new organization and its newsletter was so encouraging that Susan Greendorfer, Andrew Yiannakis, and a number of others planned and organized the first NASSS Conference held in Denver in 1980. Annual conferences have been held each year since then, and a bi-annual newsletter has been published every year since 1978. In 1983, two years after the *Review of Sport and Leisure* ceased to appear (for reasons unrelated to the demand for a journal in the field), members of NASSS made the decision to publish a quarterly journal. Jay Coakley was the founding editor, and the first issue of the *Sociology of Sport Journal* (SSJ) was published by Human Kinetics Publishers in March, 1984.

American Society and the Emergence of the Sociology of Sport

There are interesting parallels between the social conditions associated with the emergence of American sociology during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the emergence of the sociology of sport in the 1960s and 1970s. A review of the conditions and events at the beginning of the 20th century indicates that the emergence and early growth of American sociology went hand-in-hand with journalistic muckraking and progressive reformism. The muckrakers of that time highlighted the existence of social problems and exploitation. They

called attention to extreme poverty, overcrowding, social disorganization, and the powerlessness of those most vulnerable to the overwhelming influence of ungoverned industrial expansion. Complementing the muckrakers were the progressive reformers who proposed corrective changes through programs that would restructure social conditions and create orderly social progress. And complementing the reformers were social and behavioral scientists who provided the theories needed to give credibility and legitimacy to the reform programs being proposed and developed. In summary, sociology emerged out of a set of social conditions characterized by high rates of change coupled with progressive orientations which, in turn, generated ideas about using planned intervention to control the nature and dynamics of future changes.

The emergence of the sociology of sport in the United States during the mid-1960s and early 1970s followed a similar pattern. The muckrakers created widespread awareness of problems in sport, especially problems of exploitation and abuse suffered by athletes at all levels of sport involvement. Between 1969 and 1978, there appeared over two dozen book length exposés on all levels of sport, from youth leagues to the professional leagues. The authors of these books, including a number of well-known former athletes, disclosed things never before discussed in print. They questioned popular American beliefs about sport, they challenged widely accepted attitudes, and they raised serious questions about the existing structure, organization, and consequences of American sports.

Even sportswriters, never known for their critical comments about sports, did their own brand of muckraking. Following the lead of Tom Wolfe and his “new journalism,” they focused on numerous controversial issues. And after witnessing the role played by journalists in exposing the Watergate scandal, the sportswriters, especially those who were younger and college-educated, began to engage in serious investigative reporting. In commenting on this change, Rick Telander (1984), a former sociology student at Northwestern University and a writer for *Sports Illustrated* during the 1970s, explained that during this time “conspiracies and coverups lurked everywhere, and sports were no exception.” Young writers “had no problem thinking of themselves as Woodwards or Bernsteins (the journalists who exposed Watergate) in search of locker room ‘Deep Throats’ (the code name of their secret source in the White House) who would reveal the dirty tricks of sport.” The “progressive reformers” of the 60s and 70s, some of whom also played roles as muckrakers, emphasized possibilities for change by calling for a restructuring of sports and sport experiences. It was during these years that Jack Scott founded his Institute for the Study of Sport and Society—an organization that sponsored and encouraged the writing of influential exposés including Dave Meggyesy’s *Out of Their League* (1971), Gary Shaw’s *Meat on the Hoof* (1972), and Paul Hoch’s *Rip off the Big Game* (1972). Cary Goodman from the New School for Social Research in New York City founded Sports for the People, a radical organization designed to use sport as a vehicle for training activists and promoting social change. Out of that short-lived organization located in the Bronx people formed the Center for Athletes’ Rights, designed to provide legal assistance for athletes who were being exploited in organized sport structures.

George Leonard and his associates founded the Esalen Sports Center in southern California in 1973; the goal of the center was “to foster an orientation to sports beyond mere competition and physical activity,” and Leonard promoted the idea that sports should be organized to improve the human condition. An unlikely but very influential person during the 1960s was author James Michener who wrote a popular “muckraking-reformist” book, *Sports in America* (1976).

Finally, scholars in the sociology of sport often provided the logical and empirical support for calls for changes made by reformers, thereby lending credibility and legitimacy to their platforms and organizations. Like sociology itself, the sociology of sport emerged at least partially as a response to the awareness of problems generated by muckrakers, and to the call for changes by reformers.

The awareness of social problems and issues during the 1960s and early 1970s was similar to what existed during the Progressive Era. There were striking similarities between the interests of the social scientists of both periods; order and change were the focus of collective attention, and interests in reform were pervasive. Notably, during the 60's and 70's, the significance of sport on the social landscape was difficult to ignore. Organized sport had grown tremendously on all levels. The baby boom (1946–1964) and suburbanization had fueled the development of thousands of youth leagues. Interscholastic sports at both high school and college levels had hit new heights of popularity as they modeled themselves after increasingly popular professional sports which, in turn, were publicized through growing television coverage. But more important than its growth, sport during the 60s and 70s could be connected with central social and political issues attracting the attention of both muckrakers and reformers. It was this fact that had an important impact on the emergence of the sociology of sport.

The 60s began with President John F. Kennedy making a plea for Americans to initiate a new commitment to progress and change by becoming physical fit through exercise and sport participation. He established a White House Committee on Health and Fitness and an annual National Youth Fitness Congress, and he asked leaders at all levels of government to promote “sports participation and physical fitness.” In fact, he told American parents and teachers that “We do not want our children to become a generation of spectators. Rather, we want each of them to be a participant in the vigorous life.” Kennedy’s statements served to legitimize a growing emphasis on sport in the American way of life. Importantly, they reaffirmed an already widespread commitment to organizing children’s play. But all was not well in youth sports. Autocratic coaches, naive parents, and programs organized to promote elitist definitions of excellence were criticized by muckrakers and reformers. Exposés were written, and there were calls for changes grounded in concerns for the psychological and social development of children. The legitimacy of the critiques and the calls for change were enhanced by sport sociologists gathering data on sport participation and individual development.

Sport-related issues also overlapped with race-related civil rights issues. With a few exceptions, many minority group members with widespread name recognition during this period were black athletes. This, coupled with the increased visibility of sport itself, led the sport setting to take on a significant symbolic attachment to the civil rights movement. Organized in part by Harry Edwards and Jack Scott, the boycott of the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City by black American athletes had much more to do with the status of blacks in American society as a whole than it had to do with sport. But sport could be counted on to generate the attention reformers desired. Then the research of sociologists such as Edwards, Eitzen, Sage, Loy, and others established the fact that not even sport was free of racism. Reformers argued that sport, like other institutional spheres of American society, warranted change. This pattern was partially repeated in Richard Lapchick’s organization of the American anti-apartheid boycotts of South African sport teams and athletes; the content of the *Arena Review* and the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* focused heavily on this and related issues.

The Vietnam War along with domestic civil disorders raised serious questions about the issues of violence and aggression. Sports, especially those involving heavy contact, were natural

targets for analysis and reform in conjunction with these issues. Football, ice hockey, and boxing attracted the most attention because they could be used to illustrate the dangers of normalized forms of aggressive action. Sport was also a setting in which the dynamics and consequences of such action could be exposed and used to support the arguments of reformers. Research on violence and aggression in sport was certainly associated with these concerns.

Questions about the relative merits of competition and cooperation during the 60s and 70s also drew attention to sport. Sport took on powerful symbolic value relative to this issue because it was an activity in which competitive excess had created a host of visible problems. When the legendary football coach Vince Lombardi was rumored to have said that “winning is not the most important thing, it is the only thing,” research on sport assumed even more meaning. Reformers quickly linked the narrowly defined success ethic in sport to general concerns about capitalism, the ethics of achievement, and the definition of success in the United States.

Research on competition expanded dramatically in response to these issues, and sport received scholarly attention because of its association with these issues. Questions about authority and power, and about the autocratic orientations of business, political, and educational leaders led people to focus attention on coaches and their dictatorial methods of controlling teams and players. During the late 60s and early 70s students throughout the U.S. were demanding more responsiveness from administrators and teachers and more opportunities for making decisions having an impact on their lives. Because coaches were highly visible and had reputations for being authoritarian leaders, they occasionally became the focus of considerable attention among muckrakers, protesters, reformers, and sport sociologists. Statements made by a small but visible group of coaches simply intensified the notion that the typical coach was a tough, straight (heterosexual), traditional representative of the establishment. In the minds of reform-oriented people this made the coach a symbol of an obsolete social order, inhibiting individual development and undermining democracy. Sport sociologists focused on this and related issues in a number of studies.

The role of higher education was also being debated during this time. Reformers and student leaders raised questions about expenditures of educational resources and the linkages between the university and the rest of the community. Similar questions were raised about secondary education. Open classrooms, student discretion in choosing desired classes, the elimination of requirements, and experiential learning were seen as the basis for future curricula. Elitism, social conservatism, and escapist activities were antithetical to these new ideas. Sport, especially in the form of American interscholastic sport teams, represented the epitome of what reformers wanted to change. The outcomes of these concerns were numerous investigations of the academic, social, and political attitudes and behaviors of athletes compared with “nonathletes.”

The complexity of issues related to sports was demonstrated in the 1970s when sport was linked with the women’s movement through the passage of Title IX legislation. Discussions about Title IX often focused on women’s sport programs even though the legislation was actually drafted to cover all school programs, academic (especially) and extracurricular. This connection precipitated numerous studies, articles, and books on women in sport, many of which became important additions to the sociology of sport literature.

As with the social sciences around the turn of the century, the bulk of exploration and discussion in the emerging field of sport sociology during the 70’s was carried on in a frame of mind characterized by optimism and a search for ways to reform basic institutions. During the same time, similar explorations and discussions in other subdisciplines of sociology were focusing on schools, criminal justice and the law, welfare, family, gender roles, race relations,

social stratification, poverty, and the actions and resources of the power elite. With all the links between sport and central issues attracting the attention of reformers, the sociology of sport merged and took on a relatively unique character in the United States.

Unfortunately, much of the sociology of sport research through the 1980s was neither cumulative nor theory-based, nor was it dedicated to theory development (Kenyon, 1986). Instead, it was usually designed to describe sport in ways that questioned popular beliefs or documented issues and problems. This is true in the field as a whole, but it is especially true of work done in the United States. This is not to say that theory did not inform some of the work done by American sport sociologists, but little of their research has grown directly out of concerns for theory testing or theory development in sociology.

Issues of Legitimacy and Growth

In 1980 John Loy noted that “the sociology of sport has yet to be perceived as a legitimate subfield within either physical education or sociology owing to factors associated with critical mass, academic status, and ideological orientations” (p. 106; see also Loy, McPherson, and Kenyon, 1978a). Despite progress in each of the three areas discussed by Loy, his conclusion was accurate at the time, and the absence of a critical mass of scholars continued to characterize the sociology of sport. Additionally, its academic status remained low in both sociology and physical education.

Identifying the number of sport sociologists in the United States has always been a difficult task. “Membership” in this field depends on subjective identification as well as a personal commitment to teaching, doing research, and publishing in the area, and interacting on a regular basis with like-minded colleagues. When I first looked at this issue in the 1980s, here is what I found.

Physical Education

When people join or renew their memberships in the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, a division of AAHPERD), they select an affiliation with one of several disciplinary academies, including the Sport Sociology Academy (SSA). SSA membership in February for each year since 1981 looks like this: in 1982 it was 728, in 1983 it was 915, in 1984 it was 884, in 1985 it was 1010, in 1986 it was 819, and in 1987 it was 770. Unfortunately, data are not available for years before 1982, and it cannot be concluded whether the membership decline since 1985 signals a trend. NASPE members sometimes alter their disciplinary affiliations to receive new information in an area they know little about, or simply to rotate their affiliations between several areas in which they have interests. Therefore, the two year decline in SSA affiliations could simply reflect a drop among those temporarily curious about the field, or a cyclical pattern among those who regularly rotate their affiliations. At any rate, it can be concluded that there is no evidence of a unilinear increase in the Sport Sociology Academy membership. There is no official list of how many physical education departments offer special Ph. D. programs in the sociology of sport, but the number is low, and it has not increased significantly over the past 6-10 years. Other than the program at the University of Illinois (with John Loy and Susan Greendorfer), the graduate programs at most major schools offer only a minor emphasis on the sociology of sport, if it is emphasized at all at the graduate level. Similarly, the Sports Studies, Leisure Studies, and Kinesiology programs offering a sociology of sport emphasis are few. When such an emphasis does exist it depends more on the presence of an interested faculty member than on a continuing departmental commitment to sport sociology.

The emphasis in most physical education and related departments has shifted to sport/leisure management instead of the sociology of sport. However, it is important to note that many established departments in the United States have in fact sought faculty to teach undergraduate and some graduate courses in sport sociology. This “position” is often combined with a psychology of sport emphasis, although there are some physical educators who are devoting their primary attention to the sociology of sport. In sum, legitimacy and growth have increased slightly since 1980, but full legitimacy and critical mass are far from being achieved.

Sociology

In the American Sociological Association (ASA) there were 249 (2%) out of about 13,000 members who declared “Leisure/Sport/Recreation” as one of their areas of interest in 1986; in 1979 there were 255, in 1982 there were 287, and in 1984 there were 246. This compares to 151 members who made a similar declaration in 1976 (Loy, 1980). In an analysis of the 151 members in 1976, Loy identified only 28 people who could actually be designated sport sociologists, including 4 physical educators and 8 graduate students. Among those expressing interest in “Leisure/Sport/Recreation” as a subfield it was difficult to identify sport sociologists without contacting individual scholars. However, it appeared that the number of “sport sociologists” in the American Sociological Association increased slightly between 1975 and 1985. However, an analysis of information in the ASA’s 1986 *Guide to Graduate Departments in Sociology* suggests this increase did not occur among the most productive scholars in sociology, nor among those associated with the graduate departments in which most future sociologists were being trained. Furthermore, it seems that the number of sociologists focusing on this interest area peaked in the early 1980s and stayed at about 250 since then.

In the ASA’s 1986 *Guide*, there were comprehensive data on 201 departments offering an MA and/or PhD degree in sociology (the *Guide* includes all major departments). For each department there was also a list of its special degree programs, a list of special content areas students may emphasize in their degree programs, lists of faculty with full-time, part-time, and joint/adjunct appointments, along with major areas of expertise listed for each faculty member, and finally, a list of those completing their degrees during the year, along with titles of their dissertations. For the purpose of this analysis the following information was taken from the *Guide*:

- The 201 graduate departments collectively offered 501 special degree programs for students. Only 3 departments offered special programs related to sport, and none of the three were at the PhD level. In fact, one of the programs was an MA that focused on leisure and recreation, and the other two programs (the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and the University of Nevada at Las Vegas) had only one faculty member who listed sport as an area of expertise (Jay Coakley and James Frey, respectively) and, during 1986, neither had any students in their programs. This meant that there were no well-established special programs in the sociology of sport in any of the graduate departments listed in the 1986 *Guide*.
- Out of 3320 content areas of emphasis listed collectively for the 201 departments, “Leisure/Sport/Recreation” only appeared 28 times (8%), and in 16 of those cases the departments did not have a single faculty member who listed sport as an area of expertise. In fact, only 8 of these departments had a faculty member who listed sport as an area of expertise and also offered a PhD. However, the sociology department at Bowling Green State University in Ohio provided students with an option of pursuing a strong emphasis in sport sociology at both the MA and PhD levels.

- Of 4,059 faculty members in the 201 departments, only 31 (.7%) listed the sociology of sport as an area of expertise, and it was listed as the highest priority area of expertise by only 4 individuals with full time faculty appointments and 3 with part-time or joint appointments; 5 individuals listed “sport” as their 2nd priority area of expertise, and 19 listed it as their 3rd, 4th, or 5th priority among their areas of expertise. In summary, only a few sociologists in the mid-1980s identified “sport” as an area of interest and expertise.
- Out of 499 PhD’s awarded in 1986 only one (.2%) recipient completed a dissertation on a topic in the sociology of sport (Michael Messner at the University of California, Berkeley).
- There was only one joint appointment between a sociology department and a physical education department (George Sage at the University of Northern Colorado).
- A comparison of 31 departments listing “Leisure/Sport/Recreation” as a specialty in 1980 with the 28 listing it in the 1986 *Guide* shows that during those 6 years 15 departments actually withdrew the area as a specialty (3 because they dropped their degrees completely), and 12 departments added the area as a specialty - a net loss of three departments offering an emphasis at least partially related to sport. Important to note here is that not a single Ph.D. program in sociology offered a special program in the sociology of sport, and only two Ph.D. programs in the United States contained more than one person listing sport as an area of expertise (Bowling Green State University with Eldon Snyder, Elmer Spreitzer, and Dean Purdy; and Kansas State University with Richard Brede and Henry Camp-both of whom list sport as their third priority area).

These data strongly suggest that the sociology of sport lacked full legitimacy in sociology at that time, and that the growth of the field in terms of graduate programs and the production of degree recipients was minimal between 1975 and 1985. The absence of programs at the Ph.D. level indicates that sociology students had few opportunities to study sports during their training, and were unlikely to choose sport-related topics for their dissertation research.

Furthermore, it also seems that sociologists who claimed “sport” as an area of expertise generally relegated concerns with sport and sport research to a low priority among their areas of expertise. Of the 31 sociologists who mentioned sport as an interest area, less than half have regularly published or done research on sport-related topics. Some of those actively engaged in research and publication in the past even shifted their priorities to other areas of interest. This latter pattern is normal in professional careers, but it slowed growth in the sociology of sport, because there few established sociologists came into the field or made sport a central area of expertise - the flow appeared to be in the opposite direction. Scholars entering the field during the 1980s had only secondary interests in sport, not only in the way they subjectively identified themselves as professionals, but in the resources they committed to sport-related teaching, research, publication, and attendance at professional meetings.

One encouraging and important note on legitimacy during this time was that about half the major introductory sociology textbooks published during the mid-1980s included sections or chapters on “sport as a social institution” or on “sport and leisure.” These texts also included references to books and articles in the field. Furthermore, the ASA’s Teaching Resource Center sponsored and distributed a monograph, *Syllabi and Instructional Materials for Courses on Sociology of Sport* edited by William Whit in 1985. This publication was designed to assist sociologists developing courses on sport, and the ASA has continued to publish revisions of this book, the latest being in 2008.

During the 1980s, the sociology of sport continued to lack legitimacy in physical education as well as in sociology. Declining enrollments in higher education during the 1980s (the

youngest of the baby boom generation was 23 years old in 1987) and a student shift to majors in business and engineering (due to student perceptions of the job market and an ideology of self-interest promoted by the Regan administration) were also factors that slowed growth in the sociology of sport.

NASSS and the SSJ

According to 1987 NASSS data, there were 160 members with addresses in the United States. Seventy-seven listed addresses in physical education departments, 48 in sociology departments, 10 in Kinesiology, Sport Studies, or Leisure Studies departments, and 25 in other departments or outside of universities. Although there were just under 100 American NASSS members in 1980, the first year of the organization's existence, the number of members with U.S. addresses remained at about 165 between 1982 and 1986.

SSJ data showed that subscription rates steadily increased since the first issue was published in March, 1984. However, the bulk of that increase occurred because of the growth in institutional-library subscriptions. For example, for the first issue in 1984 there were 146 individual and 27 institutional subscribers in the United States, and for the last issue in 1986 there were 210 individual and 197 institutional subscribers. This indicated that there was a growing tendency to define the literature in the field as important enough to include in library collections.

Afterward

I wrote this paper in 1986. At that time, it updated and extended previous analyses of the sociology of sport in the United States. It provided a chronology of major events in the history of the field through 1986, and a description of the social context in which the field emerged and grew. A review of data from sociology and physical education led me to conclude that the sociology of sport in the United States lacked full academic legitimacy and a critical mass of scholars in both disciplines as of the mid-1980s. I also concluded that the number of scholars identifying the sociology of sport as their primary interest area would not change significantly in the immediate future. Finally, I presented a content summary of papers published in the first 14 issues of the *Sociology of Sport Journal* (1984–1987). This revealed the priorities given to research topics and research methodologies among U.S. scholars doing work in the field.

Reading this paper today provides people with information about the origin of the field and its growth over the first two decades of its existence. As of 2009, the sociology of sport has gained some academic legitimacy and membership in the major professional associations has grown since the mid-1980s, but the field continues to struggle for full acceptance in both sociology and physical education/kinesiology. Articles on sport-related topics are more common in sociology journals, but they are relatively rare in kinesiology and sports studies journals where articles on sport management have become increasingly common. Many sport management articles present “applied sociology of sport,” but it is not identified as such. This is the result of student preferences for courses and majors that they perceive to have an occupational connection in their lives. These students are more comfortable saying that they are sport management majors than saying they are sport sociology majors; their parents and friends understand the occupational relevance of “management,” but not “sociology.”

This continues to present challenges to the sociology of sport, even though “social issues” in sports are now regular topics in the popular media. Scholars in the field are regularly cited in popular articles, but there continues to be relatively few Ph.D. (doctoral) programs in the U.S.

that offer a focus on the sociology of sport. This means that many people in the field have highlighted the sociology of sport in their own work after obtaining more general degrees in sociology or sports studies/kinesiology/physical education.

My conclusions in 1986 have not been substantively contradicted in the years through 2009. The field has grown slowly but it continues to lack full legitimacy in both sociology and physical education. In the face of the deep global economic recession that began in 2008, it is unlikely that the field will experience significant growth in the near future. In fact, it may be difficult to retain members as departments are forced to cut faculty and courses.

References

- Ball, D. and J. Loy, eds. 1975. *Sport and Social Order*. Reading Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Coakley, J. 1978. *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies*. St. Louis: The C.V. Mosby.
- Edwards, H. 1969. *The Revolt of the Black Athlete*. New York: The Free Press.
- Edwards, H. 1973. *Sociology of Sport*. Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press.
- Eitzen, D. S. and G. Sage. 1978. *Sport and American Society*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown.
- Hart, M. ed. 1972. *Sport in the Socio-Cultural Process*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown.
- Hoch, P. 1972. *Rip off the Big Game*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books.
- Ibrahim, H. 1975. *Sport and Society*. Long Beach, CA: Hwong.
- Kenyon, G. 1969. *Sociology of Sport*. Chicago: The Athletic Institute.
- Kenyon, G. 1986. The significance of social theory in the development of sport Sociology. In C.R. Rees and A. Miracle, eds. *Sport and Social Theory*. Champaign, Il: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Krotee, M. 1979. *The Dimensions of Sport Sociology*. West Point, N.Y.: Leisure Press.
- Landers, D. ed. 1976. *Social Problems in Athletics*. Urbana, Ill: University Of Illinois Press.
- Loy, J. 1980. The emergence and development of the sociology of sport as an academic specialty. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 51, 1: 91–109.
- Loy, J. and G. Kenyon, eds. 1969. *Sport, Culture and Society*. New York: Macmillan.
- Loy, J., B. McPherson, and G. Kenyon. 1978a. The Sociology of Sport as an Academic Specialty. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation.
- Loy, J., B. McPherson, and G. Kenyon, eds. 1978b. *Sport and Social Systems*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley.
- Lüschen, G., ed. 1970. *The Cross-Cultural Analysis of Sport and Games*. Champaign, IL: Stipes.
- Meggyesy, D. 1971. *Out of their League*. New York: Paperback Library Edition.
- Michener, J. 1976. *Sports in America*. New York: Random House.
- Nixon, H. 1976. *Sport and Social Organization*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Sage, G. H., ed. 1970. *Sport and American Society*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Sage, G. H., ed. 1974. *Sport and American Society* (2nd ed.). Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Scott, J. 1969. *The Athletic Revolution*. New York: The Free Press.
- Shaw, G. 1972. *Meat on the Hoof*. New York: Dell.
- Snyder, E. and E. Spreitzer. 1978. *Social Aspects of Sport*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Stone, G., ed. 1972. *Games, Sport and Power*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books
- Talamini, J. and C. Page, eds. 1973. *Sport and Society*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co.
- Telander, R. 1984. The written word: Player-press relationships in American sports. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 1, 1: 3–14.

Yiannakis, A. et al., eds 1976. *Sport Sociology: Contemporary Themes*. Dubuque, Iowa:
Kendall/Hunt.

Topic 4. Professional associations in the sociology of sport

Prior to 1980, very few people studied sports in society. Scholars were not concerned with physical activities and thought that sports were unrelated to important issues in society. However, some sociologists and physical educators in North America and Europe began to think outside the box of their disciplines. They decided that sports should be studied because they were becoming increasingly important activities in many societies. During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the sociology of sport gradually came to be recognized as a legitimate subfield in sociology and physical education/ kinesiology/sport science.

Research and interest in the sociology of sport has increased significantly in recent years. Part of this growth is due to the efforts of scholars in the following professional associations:

1. *The International Sociology of Sport Association (ISSA)*. This organization, formed in 1965, meets annually and attracts international scholars. Since 1965 it has sponsored publication of the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. Membership in 2007 was about 240 people from 40 nations.
2. *The North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS)*. This organization, formed in 1978, has held annual conferences every year since 1980, and it has sponsored publication of the *Sociology of Sport Journal* since 1984. Membership in 2007 was 380 people.
3. *The Sport Sociology Academy (SSA)*. This loosely organized group is one of ten disciplinary academies in the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), which is part of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AAHPERD), headquartered in the United States. The academy does not sponsor a journal, but it does sponsor sociology of sport research sessions at the annual conferences of AAHPERD. There are similar organizations in many countries.
4. *European Association for the Sociology of Sport (EASS)*. This organization was formed in 2001, and has held regular conferences since then. It has sponsored the publication of the *European Journal for Sport and Society* since 2004.
5. *Association for the Study of Sport and the European Union*. This organization was formed in 2005 to promote an inter-disciplinary understanding of the implications of the European Union for sport, and consequences for policies, law and society.
6. *Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudios Socioculturales del Deporte (ALESDE)*. The Latin American Association of Socio-cultural Studies of Sports was formed by Latin American sociologists in 2007 in Guadalajara (Mexico). Its first conference was in 2008, hosted by the Federal University of Paraná in Curitiba, Brazil.

The sociology of sport is now a global discipline. It will continue to grow and become increasingly relevant if scholars in the field conduct and publish research that people find useful as they seek to understand social life and participate effectively as citizens in their communities and societies.

Jay Coakley

Topic 5. Sports as social phenomena

The following essay is an adaptation and update of an article titled, “Sports” by Jay Coakley and Janet Lever. It appeared in E.F. Borgatta and J.V. Montgomery, eds. 2000. *Encyclopedia of Sociology* (pp. 2985–2991). New York: Macmillan Reference.

People in all cultures have engaged in playful physical activities and incorporated human movement into their everyday routines and collective rituals. The first examples of organized games in societies worldwide emerged in the form of various combinations of physical activities and religious rituals, and they were closely connected with the social structures, social relations, and belief systems in the social contexts where they existed. Although they often re-created and reaffirmed existing systems of power relations and dominant ideologies, they sometimes served as sites for resistant or oppositional behaviors. Variations in the forms and dynamics of physical activities and games indicate that they are cultural practices that serve different social purposes and take on different meanings from time to time and place to place.

The physical activities that most sociologists identify as “modern sports” emerged in connection with a combination of rationalization, industrialization, democratization, and urbanization processes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As various forms of physical activities and play took the form of institutionalized, competitive, rule-governed contests, they were also implicated in processes of social development and the organization of family life, socialization and education, identity formation and government policy, commodification and the economy, and globalization and the media. Today, sports constitute a significant part of the social, cultural, political, and economic fabric of most societies.

As cultural practices, organized sports constitute an increasingly important part of people’s lives and collective life in groups, organizations, communities, and societies. In addition to capturing individual and collective attention, they are implicated in power relations and ideological formation associated with social class, gender, race and ethnicity, sexuality, and physical ability. Because sports are social constructions, they are developed around particular ideas about the body and human nature, human abilities and potential, manhood and womanhood, and what is important and unimportant in life. These ideas usually support and reproduce dominant ideologies in a society, but this is not always the case. Ideologies are complex webs of ideas and beliefs; therefore, the relationship between sports and ideological formation and transformation can be inconsistent and even contradictory. Furthermore, sports come in many forms and are given social meanings that are linked to the values and experiences of those who create and play them.

Although sports exist for the enjoyment of the participants, commercialized forms of sports are now planned, promoted, and presented for the entertainment of vast numbers of spectators. Mega-events such as the Olympic Games, soccer’s World Cup (men’s and women’s), the Tour de France, the tennis championships at Wimbledon, American football’s Super Bowl, and championship boxing bouts capture the interest of billions of people when they are televised by satellite in over two hundred countries around the world. These and other formally organized sport events are national and global industries. They are linked with processes of state formation and capitalist expansion and are organized and presented as consumer activities for both participants and spectators.

Although sport programs, events, and organizations may be subsidized directly or indirectly by local or national governments, support increasingly comes from corporations eager to associate their products and images with cultural activities and events that are a primary source of pleasure for people all over the world. Corporate executives have come to realize that sponsoring people's pleasures can be crucial in creating a consensus to support corporate expansion. At the same time, most sport organizations have sought corporate support.

People of all ages consume sports through the media. Newspapers in many cities devote entire sections of their daily editions to sports, especially in North America, where the space devoted to sports frequently surpasses that given to the economy, politics, or any other single topic of interest. Major magazines and dozens of specialty magazines cater to a wide range of interests among participants and fans. Radio coverage of sporting events and sports talk shows capture the attention of millions of listeners every day in some countries. Television coverage of sports, together with commentary about sports, is the most prevalent category of video programming in many countries. First, the transistor radio, and more recently satellites and Internet technology have enabled millions of people around the world to share their interests in sports. Today, people use the internet and sport video games to integrate sports into their lives in new ways that influence social relationships.

People worldwide now recognize high-profile teams and athletes, and this recognition fuels everything from product consumption to tourism. Sport images are a pervasive part of life in many cultures, and the attention given to certain athletes today has turned them into celebrities, if not cultural heroes. In cultures in which there have been assumed connections between participation in sport and character formation, there has been a tendency to expect highly visible and popular athletes to become role models of dominant values and lifestyles, especially for impressionable young people. This has created a paradoxical situation in which athletes often are held to a higher degree of moral accountability than are other celebrities while at the same time being permitted or led to assume permission to act in ways that go beyond traditional normative boundaries.

People worldwide increasingly connect with others through conversation about sports. Relationships often revolve around sports, especially among men but increasingly among women. Some people identify with teams and athletes so closely that what happens in sports influences their moods and overall sense of well-being. In fact, people's identities as athletes and fans may be more important to them than their identities related to education, religion, work, and family.

Overall, sports and sports images have become a pervasive part of people's everyday lives, especially among those who live in countries where resources are relatively plentiful and the media are widespread. For this reason, sports have become topics for the attention of sociologists and others concerned with social life.

Using Sociology to Study Sports

Although play and games received attention from various European and North American behavioral and social scientists between the 1880s and the middle of the 20th century, sports received scarce attention in that period. Of course, there were notable exceptions. Thorstein Veblen wrote about college sports in the United States in 1899 in Theory of the Leisure Class. Max Weber mentioned English Puritan opposition to sports in his 1904 and 1905 volumes of The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, and William Graham Sumner discussed "popular

sports” in his 1906 Folkways. Willard Waller devoted attention to the “integrative functions” of sports in U.S. high schools in The Sociology of Teaching in 1932.

The first analyst to refer to a “sociology of sport” was Theodor Adorno’s student Heinz Risse, who published Sociologie des Sports in 1921. Sports received little or no further analytic attention from social scientists until after World War II. Then, in the mid-1950s, there was a slow but steady accumulation of analyses of sports done by scholars in Europe and North America.

The origins of the sociology of sport are linked with sociology and physical education. The first professional association dedicated to the field was the International Committee for Sport Sociology (ICSS). This occurred in the mid-1960s, and the ICSS began at that time publishing the *International Review for Sport Sociology (IRSS)*. Other publications in the 1960s and 1970s provided examples of the research and conceptual issues discussed by scholars who claimed an affiliation with the sociology of sport. In addition to meeting at the annual conferences of the ICSS beginning in the mid-1960s, many scholars in the sociology of sport also met at the annual conferences of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS). This organization was founded in 1978 and it began publishing the *Sociology of Sport Journal* in 1984.

The early growth of the sociology of sport was fueled partly by the radical and reform-oriented work of social activists trained in a variety of social sciences. That work attracted the attention of a number of young scholars in both sociology and physical education. Objections to the war in Vietnam inspired analyses of autocratic and militaristic forms of social organization in sports and other spheres of social life. Critiques of capitalism were tied to research on the role of competition in social life and the rise of highly competitive youth sports and interscholastic sports. Concern with high rates of aggression and violence in society was tied to an analysis of contact sports that emphasize the physical domination of opponents. Analyses of racial and civil rights issues were tied to discussions of racism in sports and to issues that precipitated the boycott of the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games by some black American athletes (Edwards, 1969). Analyses of gender relations were inspired by the widespread failure of U.S. high schools and universities to comply with Title IX legislation that, among other things, mandated gender equity in all sport programs sponsored by schools that received federal funds.

Today, those who are dedicated to studying sports as social and cultural phenomena constitute a small but active, diverse, and steadily expanding collection of scholars from sociology, physical education and kinesiology, sport studies, and cultural studies departments. This has made the field unique because many of these scholars have realized that to maintain the field they must support each other despite differences in the research questions they ask and the theoretical perspectives and methodologies they use.

Mainstream sociology has been slow at the institutional level to acknowledge the growing social and cultural significance of sports and sports participation. The tendency among sociologists to give priority to studies of work over studies of play, sports, or leisure accounts for much of this disciplinary inertia. Furthermore, sports have been seen by many sociologists as nonserious, nonproductive dimensions of society and culture that do not merit scholarly attention. Consequently, the sociology of sport has continued to exist on the fringes of sociology, and studying sports generally does not forward a scholar’s career in sociology departments. For example, in 1998-1999 only 149 (1.3%) of the 11,247 members of the American Sociological Association (ASA) declared “Leisure/Sport/Recreation” as one of their 3 major areas of interest, and over half those scholars focused primarily on leisure rather than sports. Only 37 ASA

members identified “Leisure/Sport/Recreation” as their primary research and/or teaching topic (0.3% of ASA members), and only two Canadian and two U.S. sociology departments offer a graduate program in the sociology of sport, according to the 1998 Guide to Graduate Departments of Sociology. At the 1998 annual ASA meeting, there were approximately 3800 presenters and co-presenters, and only 20 dealt with sport-related topics in their presentations; only two of the 525 sessions were devoted to the sociology of sport. Patterns are similar in Canada, Great Britain, and Australia (Rowe et al., 1997).

In physical education and kinesiology, the primary focus of most scholars has been on motor learning, exercise physiology, biomechanics, and physical performance rather than the social dimensions of sports (see Sage, 1997). Social and cultural issues have not been given a high priority in the discipline except when research has had practical implications for those who teach physical education, coach athletes, or administer sport programs. As the legitimacy and role of physical education departments have been questioned in many universities, the scholars in those departments have been slow to embrace the frequently critical analyses of sports done by those who use sociological theories and perspectives. Therefore, studying sports as social phenomena has not earned many scholars high status among their peers in physical education and kinesiology departments. However, the majority of sociology of sport scholars with doctorates have earned their degrees and now have positions in departments of physical education or kinesiology and departments of sport studies and human movement studies.

There have been noteworthy indications of change. For example, there are now a number of journals devoted to social analyses of sports (*Sociology of Sport Journal*, the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, the *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, and *Culture, Sport, Society*). Many mainstream journals in sociology and physical education now accept and publish research that uses sociological perspectives to study sports. National and regional professional associations in both sociology and physical education in many countries sponsor regular sessions in the sociology of sport at their annual conferences. Annual conferences also are held by a number of national and regional sociology of sport associations around the world, including those in Japan, Korea, and Brazil, as well as the countries of North America and Europe. The International Sociology of Sport Association (ISSA – formerly the ICSS) holds annual conferences and meets regularly with the International Sociological Association. Attendance at many of these conferences has been consistent, and the quality of the programs has been impressive. The existence of such organizational endorsement and support, along with continued growth in the pervasiveness and visibility of sports in society, suggests that the discipline will continue to grow.

Among other indications of growth, articles in the *Sociology of Sport Journal* are cited regularly in social science literature (*The Journal Citation Reports*, 1998). Scholars in the field are recognized as “public intellectuals” by journalists and reporters associated with the mass media. Quotes and references to sociology of sport research appear increasingly in the popular print and electronic media. Amazon.com, the world’s major Internet book seller, listed over 260 books in its “Sociology of Sport” reference category in March, 1999. Most important, major publishers such as McGraw-Hill estimate that every year nearly 30,000 university students take courses in the “sport in society” category.

Complicating the issue of future growth is the fact that scholars in this field regularly disagree about how to “do” the sociology of sport. Some prefer to see themselves as *scientific experts* who do research on questions of organization and efficiency, while others prefer to see themselves as facilitators or even *agents of cultural transformation* whose research gives a voice

to and empowers people who lack resources or have been pushed to the margins of society. This and other disagreements raise important questions about the production and use of scientific knowledge, and many scholars in the sociology of sport are debating those questions. As in sociology as a whole, the sociology of sport is now a site for theoretical and paradigmatic debates that some scholars fear will fragment the field and subvert the maintenance of an institutionalized professional community (Ingham and Donnelly, 1997). Of course, this is a challenge faced in many disciplines and their associated professional organizations.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

Through the mid-1980s, most research in the sociology of sport was based on two assumptions. First, sport was assumed to be a social institution similar to other major social institutions (Lüschen and Sage, 1981). Second, sports were assumed to be institutionalized competitive activities that involve physical exertion and the use of physical skills by individuals motivated by a combination of personal enjoyment and external rewards (Coakley, 1990). These conceptual assumptions identified the focus of the sociology of sport and placed theory and research on sports within the traditional parameters of sociological theory and research.

Theory and research based on these assumptions were informative. However, many scholars in the field came to realize that when analytic attention is focused on institutionalized and competitive activities, there is a tendency to overlook the lives of people who have neither the resources to formally organize their physical activities nor the desire to make them competitive. Scholars became sensitive to the possibility that this tendency can reinforce the ideologies and forms of social organization that have disadvantaged certain categories and collections of people in contemporary societies (Coakley, 1998). This encouraged some scholars to ask critical questions about sports as contested activities in societies. Consequently, their research has come to focus more on the connections between sports and systems of power and privilege and the changes needed to involve more people in the determination of what sports can and should be in society.

These scholars used an alternative approach to defining sports that revolved around two questions: "What gets to count as a sport in a group or society?" and "Whose sports count the most?" These questions forced them to focus more directly on the social and cultural contexts in which ideas are formed about physical activities and the social processes that privilege some forms of physical activities. Those who have used this approach also note numerous cultural differences in how people identify sports and include them in their lives. In cultures that emphasize cooperative relationships, the idea that people should compete for rewards may be defined as disruptive, if not immoral, and for people in cultures that emphasize competition, physical activities and games that have no winners may seem pointless. These cultural differences are important because there is no universal agreement about the meaning, purpose, and organization of sports. Similarly, there is no general agreement about who will participate in sports, the circumstances under which participation will occur, or who will sponsor sports or the reasons for sponsorship. It is now assumed widely by scholars who study sports that these factors have varied over time from group to group and society to society and that sociological research should focus on the struggle over *whose* ideas about sports become dominant at any particular time in particular groups or societies. This in turn has highlighted issues of culture and power relations in theory and research in the sociology of sport.

Before the mid-1980s, most research and conceptual discussions in the sociology of sport were inspired or informed by structural functionalist theories and conflict theories (Lüschen and Sage,

1981; Coakley, 1990), and in parts of western Europe, figurational sociology was used by some scholars who studied sports (see Dunning, 1992). Those with structural functionalist perspectives often focused on questions about sports and issues of socialization and character development, social integration, achievement motivation, and structural adaptations to change in society. The connections between sports and other major social institutions and between sports and the satisfaction of social system needs were the major topics of concern.

Those who used conflict theories viewed sports as an expression of class conflict and market forces and a structure linked to societal and state institutions. Their work was inspired by various interpretations of Marxist theory and research focused generally on connections between capitalist forms of production and consumption and social behaviors in sports and on the ways in which sports promote an ideological consciousness that is consistent with the needs and interests of capital. Specifically, they studied the role of sports in processes of alienation, capitalist expansion, nationalism and militarism, and racism and sexism (Brohm, 1978; Hoch, 1972).

Figurational or “process” sociology was and continues to be inspired by the work of Norbert Elias (Elias, 1978; Elias and Dunning, 1986; Jarvie and Maguire, 1994). Figurational sociologists have focused on issues of interdependence and interaction in social life and have identified historical linkages between the structure of interpersonal conduct and the overall structure of society. Unlike other theoretical approaches, figurational sociology traditionally has given a high priority to the study of sport. Figurational analyses have emphasized sports as a sphere of social life in which the dichotomies between seriousness and pleasure, work and leisure, economic and noneconomic phenomena, and mind and body can be shown to be false and misleading. Before the mid-1980s, research done by figurational sociologists focused primarily on the historical development of modern sport and the interrelated historical processes of state formation, functional democratization, and expanding networks of international interdependencies. Their best known early work focused on linkages between the emergence of modern sports and the dynamics of civilizing processes, especially those associated with the control of violence in society (Elias and Dunning, 1986).

Since the mid-1980s, the sociology of sport has been characterized by theoretical and methodological diversity. Fewer scholars use general theories of social life such as structural functionalism and conflict theories. The theories more often used are various forms of critical theories, including feminist theories and hegemony theory; also used are interpretive sociology (especially symbolic interactionism), cultural studies perspectives, and various forms of poststructuralism (Rail, 1998). Figurational or process sociology still is widely used, especially by scholars outside North America. A few scholars have done research informed by the reflexive sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (Laberge and Sankoff, 1988; Wacquant, 1995a, 1995b) and the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens (cf. Gruneau, 1999).

Methodological approaches also vary. Quantitative data and statistical analyses remain popular, although various qualitative methods and interpretive analyses have become increasingly popular, if not the dominant research approaches in the field (Donnelly, 2000). Ethnography and in-depth interviewing, along with textual and discourse analysis have emerged as common methodologies among many scholars studying sports and sport participation (Coakley and Donnelly, 1999). Quantitative methods have been used most often to study issues and questions related to sport participation patterns, the attitudinal and behavioral correlates of participation, and the distribution of sports-related resources in society. Both quantitative and interpretive methods have been used to study questions and issues related to socialization, identity, sexuality, subcultures, the body, pain and injury, disability, deviance, violence,

emotions, the media, gender relations, homophobia, race and ethnic relations, new and alternative sports forms, and ideological formation and transformation (Coakley and Dunning, 2000).

Final Note

Sociologists study sports because they are prominent and socially significant cultural practices in contemporary societies. The sociology of sport contains an active, diverse, and slowly expanding collection of scholars united by professional organizations and academic journals. Continued growth of the field depends on whether these scholars continue to do research that makes meaningful contributions to the way people live their lives and recognized and visible contributions to knowledge in sociology as a whole.

REFERENCES

- Brohm, Jean-Marie, 1978 (translated by I. Fraser). *Sport – A prison of measured time*. London: Ink Links, Ltd.
- Coakley, J. 1993. Sport and socialization. *Exercise and Sport Science Reviews* 21, 169–200.
- Coakley, J. 1990. *Sport in society: Issues and controversies* (4th edition). St. Louis: Mosby.
- Coakley, J. 1998. *Sport in society: Issues and controversies* (6th edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Coakley, J., and Donnelly, P. (eds.) 1999. *Inside sports*. London: Routledge.
- Coakley, J., and Dunning, E. (eds.) 2000. *Handbook of sport and society*. London: Sage.
- Donnelly, P. 2000. Interpretive approaches to the sociology of sport. Pp. 77–91 in Coakley, J., and Dunning, E. (eds.). *Handbook of sport and society*. London: Sage.
- Dunning, E. (ed.) 1971. *The sociology of sport*. London: Cass.
- Dunning, E., 1992. Figurational sociology and the sociology of sport: Some concluding remarks. Pp. 221–284 in Dunning, E., and Rojek, C. (eds.). *Sport and leisure in the civilizing process*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Edwards, H. 1969. *The revolt of the black athlete*. New York: The Free Press.
- Elias, N. 1978. *The civilizing process*, vol. 1: *The history of manners*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Elias, N., and Dunning, E. (eds.) 1986. *Quest for excitement: Sport and leisure in the civilizing process*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gramsci, A. 1971. *Selections from the prison notebooks*. (Q. Hoare and G. Smith, eds. & trans.). New York: International Publishers.
- Gruneau, R. 1999. *Class, sports, and social development*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Guttman, A. 1978. *From ritual to record: The nature of modern sports*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Guttman, A. 1994. *Games and empires: Modern sports and cultural imperialism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hoch, P. 1972. *Rip off the big game: The exploitation of sports by the power elite*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Huizinga, J. 1955. *Homo ludens: A study of the play element in culture*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Ingham, A. G., and Donnelly, P. 1997. A sociology of North American sociology of sport: Disunity in unity, 1965–1996. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 14 (4), 362–418.
- Jarvie, G., and Maguire, J. 1994. *Sport and leisure in social thought*. London: Routledge.
- Kenyon, G. S. (ed.) 1969. *Aspects of contemporary sport sociology*. Chicago: The Athletic Institute.

- Krotee, M. (ed.) 1979. *The dimensions of sport sociology*. West Point, NY: Leisure Press.
- Laberge, S., and Sankoff, D. 1988. Physical activities, body habitus and lifestyles. Pp. 267–286 in Harvey, J., and Cantelon, H. (eds.) *Not just a game: Essays in Canadian sport sociology*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.
- Lever, J., and Wheeler, S. 1993. Mass media and the experience of sport. *Communication Research* 20 (1), 299–313.
- Loy, J. W., and Kenyon, G. S. (eds.) 1969. *Sport, culture, and society*. London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd.
- Lüschen, G. (ed.) 1970. *The cross-cultural analysis of sport and games*. Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing Company.
- Lüschen, G., and Sage, G. H. 1981. Sport in sociological perspective. Pp. 3–21 in Lüschen, G., and Sage, G. H. (eds.) *Handbook of social science of sport*. Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing Company.
- Rail, G. (ed.) 1998. *Sport and postmodern times*. Albany, NY: State University Of New York Press.
- Rowe, D., McKay, J., and Lawrence, G. 1997. Out of the shadows: The critical sociology of sport in Australia, 1986–1996. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 14 (4), 340–361.
- Sage, G. H. 1997. Physical education, sociology, and sociology of sport: Points of intersection. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 14 (4), 317–339.
- Sage, G. H. 1998. *Power and ideology in American sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Wacquant, L. J. D. 1995a. The pugilistic point of view: How boxers feel about their trade. *Theory and Society* 24, 489–535.
- Wacquant, L. J. D. 1995b. Pugs at work: Bodily capital and bodily labour among professional boxers. *Body & Society* 1 (1), 65–93.

Topic 6. Different approaches in the sociology of sport

Scholars who study sports in society do not always have the same primary focus in their work. Some scholars are more interested in learning about sports than society. They focus on understanding the organization of sports and the experiences of athletes and spectators. Their goal, in most cases, is to improve sport experiences for current participants and make sport participation more attractive and accessible. They also may do research to improve athletic performance, the effectiveness of coaches, and the efficiency and profitability of sport organizations. These scholars often refer to themselves as **sport sociologists**, and see themselves as part of the larger field of **sport sciences**.

Scholars concerned primarily with social and cultural issues usually refer to themselves as sociologists who study sports or as cultural studies scholars. Their research on sports in society is often connected with other interests in leisure, popular culture, social relations, and social life as a whole. They use sports as windows into culture, society, and social relationships, and their research is designed to produce knowledge about social worlds in general as well as about sports in particular.

Differences between scholars are not unique to the sociology of sport. They occur in every discipline as researchers make decisions about the questions they ask and the knowledge they seek to produce. Knowledge is a source of power, and knowledge about sports in society has both practical and political implications—it helps people understand sports in their own lives as well as the societies in which they live.

Topic 7. Sociologists ask critical questions about sports in society

Debates about the purpose and goals of research often occur in sociology. In comparison with other social sciences, sociology is less closely tied to and supported by powerful interests in society. For example, political scientists often work for and are supported by governments or government agencies. Economists often work for and are supported by businesses and large public agencies. Psychologists often work in clinical settings and focus their attention on the problems of individuals.

In each of these cases, external sources provide valuable resources that support research, but those sources also focus the attention of researchers on relatively conservative topics. For example, the support received by political scientists often leads them to study topics related to "the interests of the state." Support received by economists often leads them to study topics related to "production and profit." And support received by psychologists leads them to study individuals coping mechanisms that enable people to deal with the status quo. These are worthy research topics, but they seldom produce knowledge about the ways that society might be reorganized so that power is more equally distributed and citizen participation is enhanced.

Sociologists, unlike many other social scientists, usually have less to lose by asking critical questions about society in general and sports in particular. They are more likely to feel free to explore alternative ways of looking at and organizing sports, and to consider projects that challenge the status quo and deal directly with problems and issues affecting the lives of people who lack power or who have been socially marginalized in particular social worlds. Of course, the disadvantage of not having regular sources of external support is that sociologists are not as likely to obtain large research grants or consulting jobs. The people who want to ask critical questions about sports usually do not have the money to fund large grants or hire consultants. This has implications for the status of scholars who study sports in society. If their universities define merit in terms of obtaining large research grants, these scholars and their teaching programs may be in jeopardy.

Topic 8. Basketball: A case history of institutionalization

As localized forms of physical activities and games become sports, they go through a process of **institutionalization**, that is, *they become formally organized with official rules and rule enforcement procedures*. Over time, the sport looks much the same from one situation to another, and it remains much the same over time.

To understand the process of institutionalization, it's best to look at the histories of particular sports. In this case, we'll look at the history of basketball to see how institutionalization occurs:

Before the invention of basketball, few people used gyms; gyms were not exciting places to visit. This presented a problem to the supervisors of athletic clubs. During the winter months their members were bored by indoor exercises such as push-ups, sit-ups, and chin-ups (hardly a surprising fact). Without stimulating indoor activities, club memberships began to dwindle. There was a definite need for a competitive game that could be played inside a gym; the game had to be simple, easily learned, and as interesting as the popular outdoor sports of football and baseball. To create such a game was the task assigned to 29-year-old Jim Naismith, a Canadian student at the International YMCA Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Naismith was an unordained Presbyterian minister who left his religious studies to work in the newly developing field of athletics. In the summer of 1891, he signed up for a seminar on the psychology of play. One of the concerns of his instructor was the absence of any competitive game to fill the winter months between the end of football season and the start of the track and baseball seasons. The seminar continued through the fall with each student trying to invent an indoor activity to meet the program needs of the training school and other YMCAs around the country.

One day, young Naismith went to a faculty meeting and offered suggestions on what physical education instructors might do to improve their courses. His seminar instructor responded by giving him the responsibility of teaching a gym class for a two-week period. So in late November, Naismith found himself with the job of developing a set of activities or a game that would hold the interest of a bunch of bored football players concerned with staying in shape through the winter and having fun at the same time.

For nearly the entire two weeks, Naismith tried various adaptations of grade school games and outdoor adult games. All of his attempts failed; the grade school games were boring and the adult games became so rough that his students experienced more injuries than fun. In a desperate, all-night session before his last class meeting, Naismith outlined a description of what was to later be named basketball. The morning of the class he typed up a set of rules and took them to his skeptical students. After a little pep talk he was able to convince them to choose sides and try the new game. Although there were no out-of-bounds lines, and they only had an old soccer ball and some peach basket goals, the students were intrigued by the game. Information about the game spread rapidly, and what began as an assignment for Naismith's seminar soon developed into an enjoyable competitive activity; out of the competitive activity emerged the sport of basketball.

This is how the process of institutionalization occurred:

- The rules became standardized. Through the established communication system of the YMCA, copies of Naismith's original rules were distributed to all parts of the country.

YMCA staff members and athletes throughout the country looked to Springfield for new developments and changes in the game rules.

- Clubs and organizations began to sponsor teams. Although basketball was first played by informal groups, the establishment of permanent teams representing various clubs and organizations came quickly. At first, the games between these teams were arranged by local YMCAs. Then some colleges started playing one another on an informal basis, and in 1896, Yale organized the first regular college team to play an official schedule. The next year, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) sponsored the first basketball tournament, followed in 1898 by the first game in the professional National Basketball League headquartered in New Jersey.
- Rule enforcement was taken over by official regulatory agencies. Regulatory functions were first handled by the people at the Springfield YMCA Training School. But they were quickly taken over by the AAU, followed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in 1908, and by a combination of the AAU and the NCAA in 1915. These governing organizations formalized the boundaries of the playing area, the size and height of the basket, the size of the backboard, the size and weight of the ball, the role of officials, and many other aspects of the game.
- The organizational and technical aspects of the game became important. Once it became an official game, basketball took on additional characteristics. It became more rationalized. Offensive and defensive strategies were developed, equipment became crucial to performance efficiency and the roles of players and coaches became specialized and well defined.
- The learning of game skills became formalized. After Naismith invented the game of basketball, it took only 13 years for the first book on technique to be published (*How to Play Basketball* by George Hepbron). Instructions on how to play were given by YMCA athletic clubs and schools around the country. Teaching experts were soon joined by other experts including coaches, trainers, managers, and more recently, team physicians.
- Spectators became characteristic at games. Spectators appeared in the first year of basketball's existence. Soon they became so common that gyms built after the turn of the century contained seating for those interested in watching.

Basketball was quickly transformed from a simple game into a sport through the process of institutionalization. The reasons for this rapid institutionalization were many. At first, basketball was an activity fitting the needs and interests of athletes and the organizations to which they belonged. When the potential for capturing the interests of players and spectators was seen, the agencies sponsoring teams had additional reasons for promoting a formalized version of the game. Some were interested in financial profits; others, such as high schools and colleges, were interested in promoting their prestige and public images. Basketball was also seen as a mechanism through which students or the members of athletic clubs could be brought together and given something to do during the winter months. All of these things contributed to the motivation needed for basketball to be converted from a game to a sport.

Similar processes of institutionalization are now occurring with snowboarding, skateboarding, mixed martial arts, disc golf, Ultimate (Frisbee), BMX, and other previously informal physical activities that people want to organize by establishing rules, standards, and governing organizations.

Institutionalization may be associated with debates about whether it should or should not occur. For example, there were heated debates when the International Olympic Committee

designated ballroom dancing, now named *DanceSport*, as a “recognized” Olympic sport that can apply to be on the official summer Olympic program. In many U.S. cities, newspaper editors regularly disagree about the events that should be covered in the sports section and the “lifestyle” sections of the paper. For example, the editors of USA Today decided in 2007 to cover the World Series of Poker in the sports section, but it took them years to give coverage in the sports section to synchronized swimming and rhythmic gymnastics, even though they were highly institutionalized sports in many regions of the world.