



# **Sports in Society: Issues & Controversies**

---

## **Chapter 1**

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



# Sports Are Social Phenomena

---

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



# **SOCIOLOGY** is a tool for studying sports in society

---

- **Sociology** provides useful
  - Concepts
  - Theories
  - Research methods
  
- These tools enable us to “see” behavior as it connected with history, politics, economics, and social life



# CULTURE

---

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

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



# SOCIETY

## *A collection of people*

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

# **SOCIOLOGY** Vs. **PSYCHOLOGY**

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



# Critical thinking about sports helps us

---

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



# **SOCIOLOGY** may lead to controversial recommendations

---

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





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

---

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



# *Ideologies*

---

*The sets of interrelated ideas that people use*

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



# The characteristics of **Ideologies** are:

---

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



# “Dominant Ideology”

- Represents the perspectives and ideas favored by people who have power and influence in society



- **Dominant ideologies** serve the interests of people with power and influence



# Gender Ideology

refers to

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



# Racial Ideology

refers to

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



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

---

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



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

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





# Disagreements in the Sociology of Sport

---

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



# **SPORT** Is Defined by Some Scholars As Activities That Are



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



# Institutionalization Occurs When

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



## Play vs. Dramatic Spectacle

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

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

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





**SPORTS** are  
contested activities

*This means that there are struggles over:*

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