



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

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## **Chapter 1**

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



# Sports Are Social Phenomena

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- ☐ 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

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- ☐ **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

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*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*

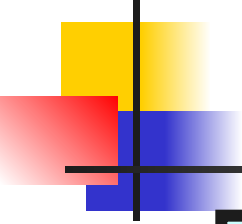


# SOCIETY

## *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**

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- ☐ **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

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- ☐ 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

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- ☐ **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*?

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- **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***

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***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:

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- ☐ **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*?

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- **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

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- **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