

SECOND EDITION

Sport and Physical Culture IN CANADIAN SOCIETY

EDITED BY

JAY SCHERER BRIAN WILSON



This book is dedicated to Heather, Emma, Christopher, Desirée, and Bailey.

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Preface

Students who study the social dimensions of sport and physical culture inevitably bring their own perceptions and taken-for-granted understandings of what these popular practices are all about. It makes sense that these perceptions are often grounded in their own personal and individualized experiences in sport and physical culture. These perspectives are, of course, valuable, but they can also be limiting, as people often do not consider how their own immediate experiences emerged from and are related to our societies' histories, and to the broader structural influences that exert enormous influence on our lives. For example, the ways people are governed, the media people use and are exposed to, and the ways that inequities in society have been and are currently dealt with, are all in some way relevant to experiences with, understandings of, and access to sports and physical culture.

This text is based on the idea that historical, comparative, and critical reflection is needed if we are to better understand, and indeed work towards improving, relationships between and in sport, physical culture, and society. Indeed, in many instances, after completing one or two sociology and history courses, the perceptions of students often change quite dramatically as they cultivate and refine their own sociological imaginations. Students learn, for example, that the opportunities to participate in various sports in Canada are by no means equitable, and that significant and enduring issues and problems remain in contemporary sport and physical culture. More importantly, they learn that the personal troubles that individuals experience along these lines are intimately connected to public issues of social structure and historical relations.

Although this text has a deliberately distinct Canadian focus and emphasizes our unique social history, we live in a world that has never been more interconnected. Indeed, what happens in the world of sport (and beyond sport) outside of our borders influences sport in our country. Canadians have, of course, historically embraced a wide range of local sport and athletic heroes, in addition to following the most popular continental major league sports through the mass media. Today, we also follow teams and sports from around the world, including the most popular European soccer leagues and other international competitions on a host of digital and, increasingly, interactive platforms. For generations, moreover, waves of immigrants have been bringing their own sports and physical cultures to Canada, thus expanding the sporting horizons of Canadians and the structure of the country itself. While Canada has similarities with other countries, we are unique, and, over time, we have shaped our own cultural ideologies and institutions, including our ways of interpreting and playing sport, sometimes in competing and contradictory ways.

THE CONTENT OF THE TEXT

Sport and Physical Culture in Canadian Society contains 16 chapters. Because the chapter sequence has been purposely coordinated, we recommend that the chapters be read consecutively. However, since the content of each chapter is distinctive, it is certainly possible to read the chapters in an altered order, or as standalone contributions. Each chapter concludes with relevant Critical Thinking Questions, Suggested Readings, and References.

In a revised first chapter, Drs. Jay Scherer, Brian Wilson, and Jane Crossman set the stage for the book, and provide readers with a foundation for thinking sociologically about sport and physical culture in Canada. In doing so, they underline the social significance of sport and physical culture in Canada and introduce a host of key sociological concepts, such as *social structure*, *agency*, *power*, *ideology*, *hegemony*, and the *sociological imagination*, among others.

In Chapter 2, Dr. Ian Ritchie presents a wonderfully rich historical overview of the main sociological theories that have been used by sociologists of sport to understand sport and physical culture. Since it is impossible to provide a complete inventory of the myriad of sociological theories, he focuses on four theories that have influenced the development of the field: structural functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, and critical social theories.

In an entirely new historical chapter, Dr. Carly Adams invites students to refine their sociological imaginations by bringing a historical sensitivity to the analysis of contemporary issues in sport and physical culture. In so doing, Adams provides an important historical treatment of the development of modern sport in Canada. She pays particular attention to the groups that have exerted ideological and moral leadership in institutionalizing various sports and “preferred ways of playing” that have set powerful limits and pressures on the sporting opportunities of Canadians, especially along the lines of social class, gender, and race and ethnicity.

Dr. Rob Beamish, the author of a revised fourth chapter, provides students with an insightful overview of sport and social stratification in Canada, with a particular focus on class relations and economic inequality. He outlines the main sociological theories that have focussed on social class, as well as the contemporary studies that have explored the relationship between sport participation and income, with a particular focus on the expansion of economic inequality in Canada over the course of the past three decades.

In a revised Chapter 5, a new lineup of scholars—Drs. Victoria Paraschak, Matias Golob, Janice Forsyth, and Audrey Giles—critically explore a host of issues associated with race and ethnicity in sport and physical culture in Canada against the backdrop of unequal power relations. They demonstrate how sport has historically been structured to privilege certain racial and ethnic groups over others, and that many of these issues endure in contemporary Canadian society. In a crucial addition to the chapter, the authors have included a new section, Indigenous Peoples and Sport, with specific reference to the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) and, in particular, its sport-related Calls to Action.

In a revised sixth chapter, Drs. Mary Louise Adams and Sarah Barnes critically examine a range of contemporary issues and debates relevant to gender, sexuality, and sport. Adams and Barnes do not shy away from controversial topics such as separate sporting events for men and women, sex testing in sport, and sport typing (e.g., why certain sports are “male only”). They have also included, in this edition, an expanded discussion of the impact of the #MeToo movement in sport, and an analysis of the questions that surround the inclusion of transgender athletes in various sports and physical cultures against the backdrop of a changing sex/gender system.

Chapter 7 is an exciting new addition to the textbook. In underlining some of the most recent and troubling issues in youth sport and physical culture, Jesse Couture and Dr. Jason Laurendeau hold up the concept of “prolympism”—as a dominant structure and ideology—for critical reflection, especially in light of high dropout rates across various sports. So, too, do they address the ongoing concerns about sexual harassment and abuse in youth sport. They also explore the emergence of

alternative youth sport opportunities, including those driven by young people themselves—trends that will continue to alter and challenge the dominant sports culture in the years to come.

The authors of the revised eighth chapter, Drs. Jason Laurendeau and Danielle Peers, explore how deviance—and by extension, normalcy—is conceptualized and understood, and how the power relations within which these distinctions are embedded. Along these lines, the authors also introduce an expanded discussion about the institutionalization of the Paralympic Games and the debates over who can participate in this sporting event. They also critically examine a wide range of topics and issues in sport and physical culture, including the debates over the use of performance-enhancing drugs in sport in relation to key concepts such as “positive deviance.”

Dr. Stacy Lorenz, the author of a revised Chapter 9, invites students to explore competing theories of violence to help understand violence in sport and physical culture. In focusing on a host of historical issues associated with the development of sport and masculinity, Lorenz offers an insightful examination of debates over the role of fighting in men’s hockey. In light of several recent high-profile lawsuits, Lorenz also provides a critical discussion about the prevalence of head injuries and concussions in sport. The chapter concludes with a broader exploration of other instances of sports-related violence, including still frequent instances of hazing in youth sport.

In Chapter 10, another new addition to the text, Dr. Parissa Safai builds on the preceding chapter by considering a number of issues pertaining to the relationships between sport and health. She focuses on the implications of popular taken-for-granted notions that equate bodies to machines while also discussing the culture(s) of risk and the normalization of pain and injury tolerance in sport. The chapter concludes with a thoughtful discussion about how the sociological imagination can help us make sense of contemporary issues related to mental health in sport, and how dominant values that underlie sport and society are linked to a range of sport-related health issues.

Chapter 11, *Sport, Media, and Ideology*, revised by Drs. Jay Scherer and Mark Norman, explores the power of the media in setting decisive limits and pressures on how Canadians consume sport, including a host of new digital opportunities for today’s “prosumers.” They begin by providing a historical overview of the sports–media complex in Canada, and the struggles between various networks to secure the rights to air popular sports content. They then present a critical analysis of the dominant ideological themes associated with televised sport, including consumerism, nationalism, and militarism, as well as other gender and racial/ethnic ideologies. They also, however, note the emergence of alternative, and, indeed, critical forms of media that are challenging the dominant power structures of the sports–media complex.

Chapter 12 is another new chapter, which explores the often taken-for-granted links between sport, physical culture, and politics. In so doing, Dr. David Black and Maya Hibbeln hold up important policy decisions—like the decisions to invest hundreds of millions of dollars of public funds to host sport mega-events, or the investment of public resources in high profile elite athlete assistance programs like *Own the Podium*—for critical reflection. They underline the power of various interest groups to unevenly shape these types of far-reaching decisions, even in the face of opposition.

In a revised Chapter 13, Drs. Brad Humphreys and Brian Soebbing provide a critical overview of the unique economic structure of major league sport. Included here is a focus on labour relations, as well as a discussion of ownership patterns of

major league sports franchises in relation to social class, gender, and race and ethnicity. Building on the previous chapter, they also explore—and, at times, debunk—the economic arguments that are often summoned by proponents to justify the use of public funds to build new arenas and stadium developments, or to host sporting events like the Olympic Games.

In Chapter 14, another new addition to the text, Drs. Simon Darnell and Lyndsay Hayhurst introduce the concepts of globalization and uneven development, before inviting students to consider the myriad ways in which sport and physical culture have been powerfully structured against the backdrop of these processes in recent years. Included in this new chapter is a critical discussion on the history and institutionalization of Sport for Development and Peace initiatives, and the opportunities and, inevitably, the challenges that arise through these well-intentioned programs.

In a new penultimate chapter, Drs. Brian Wilson and Brad Millington consider links between sport, physical culture, and environmental issues. They outline, on one hand, how environmental issues impact (and may impact, in the future) sport and physical culture, and on the other hand, how sport and physical cultural activities impact (and may impact) the environment. Their chapter focuses especially on how sport organizations have responded to concerns about sport-related environmental problems, and the range of inequities that are associated with environmental issues more generally. The chapter includes definitions and critical reflections on key concepts like “sustainability” and “ecological modernization”—concepts that are commonly used to guide and understand ways that sport organizations and others respond to environmental issues.

Finally, Drs. Brian Wilson and Jay Scherer frame the revised final chapter on the future of sport and physical culture around four overarching categories that have been associated with major social changes: governance, globalization, technology and media, and the environment. The chapter offers a set of predictions that are intended to inspire thinking about current trends in sport, physical culture, and society, and what sport, physical culture, and society might look like in the future. The chapter closes with an outline of strategies through which students of the sociology of sport and physical culture might contribute to and advocate for social change in and around sport and physical culture.

New to this edition, an instructor’s manual will be made available from our catalogue.

On behalf of all the contributors, we hope that you enjoy reading this book, and that it provides you with a solid sociological foundation from which to further understand and think critically about all of the rich dimensions of sport and physical culture in Canadian society.

Jay Scherer and Brian Wilson

Acknowledgments

This book has been more than three years in the making. As editors, we would like to thank those colleagues, friends, and family, as well as others, without whom this book would simply never have come to fruition.

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Perhaps our biggest debt of gratitude, though, is owed to Jane Crossman, who was instrumental in preparing the foundation for this edition of the text. Jane, as many readers will know, edited two earlier textbooks (*Canadian Sport Sociology*), before asking Jay to become a co-editor for the first edition of this text, which was published by Pearson in 2015. Jane, now retired after a remarkable 34-year career at Lakehead University, generously “passed on the torch” to the current editors for this edition. On behalf of the contributors and all of the students who have benefited from your teaching over the years, thank you, Jane.

Finally, we would like to thank our families (Heather, Emma, and Christopher, for Jay; and Desirée and Bailey, for Brian) for their unwavering support and encouragement. This book is dedicated to them.

Jay Scherer and Brian Wilson

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Chapter 1

Sport and Physical Culture in Canadian Society

Jay Scherer, Brian Wilson, and Jane Crossman



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, students will be able to:

- 1 Explain the social significance of sport and physical culture in Canada.
- 2 Discuss the differences between sociology and other disciplines in the social sciences.
- 3 Explain and define key sociological concepts.
- 4 Discuss the importance of having a “sociological imagination.”

The Canadian team wins at the Women's Football Bronze Medal match between Brazil and Canada, 2016.

Robert Cianflone - FIFA/FIFA/Getty Images

Blue Jay's Justin Smoak hits a grand slam against the Miami Marlins on August 31, 2018.
Mark Brown/Stringer/Getty Images



INTRODUCTION

For thousands of students enrolled in kinesiology, human kinetics, and sport-related programs across the country, the practices of sport and physical activity are so pervasive that they are widely taken for granted as a part of the rhythm of their own lives and as indelible elements of the fabric of Canadian **society**. By society, we mean “the structured social relations and institutions among a large community of people which cannot be reduced to a simple collection or aggregation of individuals” (Giddens & Sutton, 2017, p. 20). For many of us, our earliest childhood memories include our first athletic experiences in organized sport settings or informal experiences at the playground or in school. Moreover, sport is a popular and pleasurable everyday topic of conversation among ordinary Canadians of all ages and is widely regarded as a common sense social lubricant. We habitually discuss the chances of our favourite National Hockey League (NHL) team making the playoffs, the performance of our Fantasy Football team, the latest scandal rocking the sports world, how the high school soccer team is performing, or the latest tweet by a sports personality.

Sport is intimately connected to the most significant social institutions of Canadian society, including the media, the education system, the economy, and various levels of government, as well as a broader web of social relations. Canadians are inundated with images and stories of sports and athletes that now air on an unprecedented number of specialty sport channels (such as TSN and Sportsnet) that are part of the BCE and Rogers telecommunications empires. Students will be well aware that the Internet has a never-ending reservoir of sports-specific sites offering live feeds, recent and past game results and statistics, and continual insider information about teams and players. Online fantasy leagues, meanwhile, allow millions of sports fans to control the destiny of “their” teams and chosen players at their convenience. Most city newspapers still devote an entire section to sports (in print and online), knowing that a significant percentage of readers purchase or subscribe to newspapers for the sports coverage alone—a fact not lost on advertisers in search of sizable and predictable audiences. Following Sidney Crosby’s overtime gold-medal-winning goal for the Canadian men’s hockey team at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver—a game watched by 26.5 million Canadians—Bell Canada wireless and wired networks carried the most calls and

text messages in its history. In sum, sport is an extremely popular social phenomenon that has exploded in visibility and popularity in the last 30 years.

Of course, we aren't merely a nation that follows sports. Many parents devote huge amounts of time, energy, and money so that their children can participate in organized sport. Provinces, mindful of the declining fitness levels and reported obesity rates of children and youth, are taking a hard look at extending the number of hours per week devoted to physical education curricula. Canadian colleges and universities offer a wide range of intramural and interschool sports for both women and men. Some baby boomers now reaching retirement age are spending significant amounts of their leisure time actively involved in their favourite sport or physical activity. In fact, there are approximately 3,300 arenas, 1,300 curling rinks, and more than 2,300 golf courses in Canada. The 2017 Toronto Waterfront Marathon saw roughly 25,000 people cross the finish line. Many of these activities are more than sports played for the fun of friendly competition—they're also popular social and cultural events.

In many respects, we can say that as sporting activities and leisure pursuits available to Canadians have increased over the past 50 years, sport and leisure is democratizing in important and meaningful ways. Having said this, the term democratization suggests much more than an increased number of sport facilities, or even having more people involved in sport than in the past. As Donnelly and Harvey (2007) note, **democratization** refers to the “process of change towards greater social equality”—with a “fully democratized sport environment” including “both the right to participate, regardless of one's particular set of social characteristics, and the right to be involved in determination of the forms, circumstances and meanings of participation” (p. 108).

With this in mind, it is important to, on one hand, highlight that many groups that have historically been left out of the sport equation are now finding more opportunities to participate. The 2017 North American Indigenous Games held in Toronto, Ontario, had 5,000 competitors. Paris, France, home of the 2018 Gay Games, welcomed more than 15,000 athletes from more than 65 countries. Unprecedented numbers of girls and women now participate in a host of sporting activities they were once excluded from—especially sports that traditionally emphasized aspects of physicality for boys and men, like wrestling.

On the other hand, though, and acknowledging ways that opportunities for Canadians to participate in sport and in physical culture have expanded in recent years, there remain significant and enduring issues of inequality between men and women, rich and poor, and along racial and ethnic lines, that continue to structure sporting experiences for Canadians in different ways. For example, according to the latest research paper released by Canadian Heritage (2013), there are clear patterns associated with sports participation that point to much broader structural issues that set decisive limits and pressures on who participates in sport and physical activity across the country:

1. Sport participation rates across the country continue to decline.
2. The gender gap in sport participation has increased, and men are more likely to participate in sport than women.
3. Sport participation rates decrease as Canadians get older, yet the participation rates of young Canadians are declining faster than that of older Canadians.
4. Higher income earners are more likely to participate in sport than less affluent Canadians, and household income decisively influences children's participation in sport.
5. Sport participation of non-Anglophones is declining, and established immigrants participate in sport less than recent immigrants do.

There are other obvious disparities as well. For example, female athletes are still regularly marginalized and under-represented in the media and society at large. Furthermore, in 2018 women comprised only 29 of 100 active members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and in a 2012–2013 report, women were shown to hold only 17% of head coaching positions in Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS), down from 19% in 2010–2011 (Donnelly, Norman, & Kidd, 2013). Yet, while all of these observations are important and point to the fact that interest and participation in sport and physical activity are related to a number of standard sociological variables (gender, race, social class, age, geographic location, education levels, etc.), they do little to address the wider sociological significance of these seemingly obvious facts. Instead, it is more fruitful to ask, as Hall, Slack, Smith, and Whitson (1991) did almost three decades ago: Are patterns of male and female participation in sport the result of social structures and unequal power relations that favour and empower men? What is it about the class structure of Canadian society that perpetuates unequal class relations and unequal access to sport participation? Why do older Canadians continue to struggle to gain access to various sports facilities? These questions and many others

. . . connect the study of sport to the study of change and resistance in relations between dominant and subordinate groups in society. When these questions are asked, and when research uncovers interesting lines of analysis and further investigation, we show that to study sport sociology is not just of interest to a few fans but something that is important to the understanding of Canadian society. (Hall et al., 1991, p. 20)

While sport continues to offer a host of opportunities and pleasurable experiences, including fun, relaxation, and potential health-related benefits for millions of Canadians, we would be naive to believe that the world of sport is devoid of the problems, social and environmental issues, and unequal power relations present in our society. Moreover, sport regularly makes the headlines for all the wrong reasons: Discriminatory practices, exploitation of athletes, labour disputes, drug use, sexual abuse and assault, gambling, environmental damage, and the habitual glorification of violence, the byproducts of an industry focused on promoting a hypermasculine spectacle for profit. Indeed, sociologists of sport often study these sorts of problems, and how they have accompanied sport’s evolution into a more competitive, organized, and bureaucratic (i.e., more “rationalized”) enterprise.

The sociological analysis of sport and physical activity provides students with the opportunity to ask thought-provoking questions using “concepts and theories that emphasize social as opposed to individual causes and that point toward structural solutions to problems identified in sport” (Hall et al., 1991, pp. 11–12). For example:

- Why has participation in sport historically been stratified by age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status?
- Why is a power and performance model of sport privileged over alternative ways of playing sport?
- Will leagues with high rates of concussions and other injuries, like the Canadian and National Football Leagues, still exist in two decades?
- Why do so many cities invest significant amounts of public funds in “world-class” sports arenas and stadiums?

- Why do countries spend billions of dollars to host the Olympic Games—and what are the social, economic, and environmental implications of such events?
- Why do gay men hesitate to come out in professional sports environments?

Crucially, in thinking about these types of questions and political issues,

the sociology of sport is going beyond a concern with phenomena within sport. It is seeking to demonstrate the significance of sport to some of the central problems of sociology: the explanation of structures of class, gender, and racial inequality, as well as the processes through which social change is achieved and circumscribed. (Hall et al., 1991, p. 12)

Thus, the chapters in this text will emphasize that sport is not simply a reflection or mirror of society, but “a world in its own right, with its own life and its own contradictions” (Harvey, 2000, p. 19). It is also important to recognize, though, that just as sport is *shaped by the social world around us*, it also *actively shapes the social world*. As we shall see throughout this textbook, while sport is a social practice that is influenced by broader power relations that benefit some individuals and groups more than others, it also enables individuals and groups—who may resist or subvert the status quo within or around sport.

To help us think through and recognize some of the processes, complexities, and issues that are related to sport, this book offers opportunities and tools for reflecting on our preconceived ideas about sport, and how it works. For example, because of the predominance of black athletes in certain sports, we may believe that racism no longer exists in sport, or that black athletes are simply “naturally gifted.” Or, thanks to our regular exposure to hockey, we may have come to accept that fighting is simply “part of the game.” By honing our analytic skills, using some of the sociological tools offered in this book, we will be in a better position to assess the assumptions that underlie such beliefs, and consider other explanations for particular social phenomena. We will also be in a better position to consider the implications of holding particular unquestioned assumptions—and how our taken-for-granted beliefs might inadvertently contribute to systems of unequal power relations.

In other words, even our most accepted beliefs and normalized values need to be held up for critical reflection and analysis, while all of the sports that we play and enjoy—and the institutions and social relations that they are connected to—need to be recognized as social and historical products that have been made and remade by Canadians over the course of many decades, against the backdrop of a range of cultural struggles. It is important, therefore, to look critically at sport to better describe and explain sport—and *as a way of supporting attempts to change and improve sport*. At its very root, then, the sociology of sport is creative, passionate, and exhilarating, and can reveal new insights and lines of analysis that can make crucial contributions to broader attempts to understand contemporary Canadian society.

SOCIOLOGY AS A SOCIAL SCIENCE

Sociology is not a practice, but an *attempt to understand*. (Berger, 1963, p. 4)

Sociology is one of the social sciences, along with economics, anthropology, political science, and psychology. It is “the disciplined study of human social behaviour, especially the investigation of the origins, classifications, institutions, and development of

human society on a global level” (Henslin, Glenday, Pupo, & Duffy, 2014, p. 5). Sociologists are interested in social interactions that take place between humans, groups, and societies. They examine the ways in which social structures, power relations, and institutions enable and constrain individuals and groups; they are concerned with the social rules and ideologies that not only bind people together, but also separate them.

Yet as the English sociologist Anthony Giddens (1987) noted, it must also be emphasized that “sociology cannot be a neutral intellectual endeavour” (p. viii). Rather, it is a critical examination of the contemporary social situation with the underlying goal not only to *understand* social phenomena, but to *improve* society. Because sociology is concerned with our behaviour as social beings, subdisciplines have emerged that are broad in scope and diverse in nature. One of those subdisciplines, which forms the foundation for this book, is called the sociology of sport.

The sociology of sport refers to a field of research concerned with relationships between sport and society, and especially the role of sport in social and cultural life. Sociologists of sport study humans/agents involved in sport (athletes, coaches, fans, team owners), the institutions and social structures that affect their sport experiences (education, media, economics, politics), and the processes that occur in conjunction with sport (social stratification and mobility, deviance, violence, inequality). Some of the aims of the sociology of sport include:

- to examine critically the role, function, and meaning of sport in the lives of people and the societies they form;
- to describe and explain the emergence and diffusion of sport over time and across different societies;
- to identify the processes of socialization into, through, and out of modern sport;
- to investigate the values and norms of dominant, emergent, and residual cultures and subcultures in sport;
- to explore how the exercise of power and the stratified nature of societies place limits and possibilities on people’s involvement and success in sport as performers, officials, spectators, workers, or consumers;
- to examine the way in which sport responds to social changes in the larger society; and
- to contribute both to the knowledge base of sociology more generally and also to the formation of policy that seeks to ensure that global sport processes are less wasteful of lives and resources. (ISSA, 2005)

Sociologists of sport are also concerned with how the structure of organized sport and the dominant cultural ideologies that are also associated with sport, including the oft-promoted links between hockey and “being Canadian,” are relevant to differently positioned people—with respect to, for example, class, race, age, and sexuality. Indeed, one of the main roles of sociologists is to “disentangle the complex relationships between individuals and their social world” (Naiman, 2012, p. 2). When we attend to long-held myths and taken-for-granted assumptions about the world of sport, we are in a better position to begin the work of “disentangling” these relationships.

With this background, we list below some of the activities that sociologists of sport actually do:

1. **Serve as experts** to government agencies, public enquiries, and commissions in areas such as drugs, violence, and health education, thus contributing to their reports.

2. **Act as advocates** for athletes' rights and responsibilities by providing research for groups who seek to challenge inequalities of gender, class, ethnicity, age, and disability, particularly with respect to access, resources, and status.
3. **Promote human development** as opposed to performance efficiency models within physical education and sport science.
4. **Encourage better use of human and environmental resources**, thus ensuring that there is a sporting future for generations to come. (ISSA, 2005)

It's important to emphasize, then, that sociologists of sport look at a range of structural and historical explanations to help them make sense of social behaviour and social issues, on the one hand. On the other hand, psychologists examine intrinsic explanations to explain individual behaviour. However, is it enough to consider intrinsic factors and personal choices by athletes to explain the systemic use of, for example, performance-enhancing drugs in many professional sports? Or do we need to examine a host of structural issues and, indeed, the increasing rationalization of high-performance and professional sport in relation to values of competition and the significant financial rewards (sponsorship and salaries) on offer to contemporary athletes as decisive factors that contribute to these patterns? Alternatively, why should we consider banning performance-enhancing drugs at these levels if their use is endemic: is it cheating if everyone is doing it? Finally, why are the debates associated with drug use in sport so heavily moralized at this particular historical moment? On the contrary, why has the use of various performance-enhancing drugs been entirely normalized in other occupations and industries and actively encouraged and promoted in relation to other aspects our personal lives? Students will be well aware, for example, that other performance enhancers like Viagra and Cialis are habitually promoted during popular sports broadcasts to reach male audiences.

Because we seek to both understand and denaturalize longstanding assumptions and beliefs, in addition to engaging in political dialogue and debate on how to improve contemporary sporting practices and cultures in Canadian society, the sociology of sport is a complex, controversial, and often challenging pursuit. Moreover, sociologists of sport pose difficult questions about social problems and issues that are not always answered. It is, however, a fascinating endeavour—so much so that it can foster stimulating discussion on a wide range of topics and ideas.

In so doing, the chapters in this text will regularly invite you to reflect on your own sporting experiences and, indeed, hold up your own **practical consciousness** for critical reflection. By practical consciousness we mean your accepted beliefs—all of the things about sport and Canadian society that you may be tacitly aware of without, at times, being able to directly express or explain. Your practical consciousness is shaped by your experiences of “doing,” “consuming,” and “interacting” with various social structures, institutions, and ideologies; these are the experiences that frame the possibilities you can imagine in sport and beyond. However, your practical consciousness is far from simply reflective of dominant interests and beliefs—it is also subject to ongoing refinement (hence, practical), especially as you encounter new experiences, ideas, and information. As such, practical consciousness is never static. Actions and experiences supporting practical consciousness strengthen it, while new actions and experiences can challenge our assumptions and make us question various “truths” about what we once took for granted.

For example, an adult-controlled and increasingly professionalized “power and performance” model based on competition, domination of opponents, rationalized rules, and scorekeeping is widely understood as a common sense and normal way for

children and youth to play sport in the eyes of many administrators, coaches, and parents, who themselves often grew up playing similarly structured sports. Indeed, your own practical consciousness may have been reinforced over years of engaging in these types of sporting experiences that have now simply come to seem natural (and, of course, regularly pleasurable, thrilling, and fun). Still, is this the only way that youth sport can be structured? Or, are there alternative ways of organizing sport, according to different values and principles? How did the “power and performance” model of sport come to be institutionalized as the preferred way of playing over the years? Before revisiting these ideas, though, let’s first briefly consider the origin of the sociology of sport and some of the issues associated with defining sport.

ORIGINS OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT

The sociology of sport field of study is relatively new, and scientific research in the field only emerged in the 1960s.¹ The 1960s and 1970s constituted an important time for the development of the study of the sociology of sport. During that time there was much unrest in North America, particularly with regard to the involvement of the United States in the Vietnam War and the American civil rights movement. For example, during the medal presentation for the men’s 200 metres at the 1968 Summer Olympic Games in Mexico City, John Carlos and Tommie Smith made a gloved Black Power salute—thereby using the global visibility provided by the Olympic Games as a vehicle to broadcast their anger with the plight of African Americans and unequal race relations in the United States. This gesture of resistance was symbolic of the imbalance of societal power that prevailed not only for African Americans, but also for other minority groups who were increasingly challenging social norms and various institutions. Sport was no exception. Sociologists understood that it was no longer enough to simply describe and celebrate sport and various athletic accomplishments; instead, they needed to examine and explain how various social institutions transform sport and, likewise, how sport can be used to transform broader social structures against the backdrop of a range of cultural struggles, pressing political debates, and social movements. The **sociology of sport**, then, is a sub-discipline of sociology that examines the relationships between sport and society, and studies sport as a central part of Canadian social and cultural life.

While there is a range of national and international organizations associated with the sociology of sport, there is immense value in understanding sport within the context of Canadian society specifically—while also making connections to continental and, indeed, global patterns and forms of social organization. The organization of Canadian society has many similarities with the United States; however, there are also significant differences between the countries. Canadian history is, of course, substantially different from that of the United States, and there are unique social relations (between Anglophones and Francophones, Indigenous and Euro-Canadians, etc.) that point to these enduring distinctions. Canadians also have competing visions of the roles and structures of government, vastly different commitments to the provision of social services (including universal healthcare), a longstanding history of public broadcasting by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Radio-Canada, and, at times, radically different visions for foreign policy than Americans.

It should be no surprise, then, that significant aspects of the organization and structure of Canadian sport are different compared to sport in the United States and, indeed, other parts of the world. Of course, as Jay Scherer and Mark Norman note



Winning American track and field athletes protest with the Black Power salute at the Summer Olympic games, Mexico City, Mexico, October 19, 1968.

John Dominis/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images

in Chapter 11, Canadians have always followed the North American major leagues in significant numbers (in addition to NCAA football and basketball). We are also now more interconnected with the rest of the world than ever before. In 2018, for example, we watched France win the FIFA World Cup in Russia with 32 nations qualifying; Brooks Koepka (United States) and Ariya Jutanugarn (Thailand) win the US Open Golf Championships; and Novak Djokovic (Serbia) and Angelique Kerber (Germany) win the singles events at Wimbledon. So, to claim that Canadian sport is a unique entity, thriving on its own without any external influences, would be naive and inaccurate.

There are, however, undeniably unique elements in Canadian life and culture, and sport continues to play a significant role in providing a range of symbolic meanings and values that are important to Canadians and are part of the ongoing story that we tell ourselves about who we are and what it means to be Canadian. For example, winter sports are often thought of as distinctly Canadian cultural forms, especially sports like hockey, curling and, perhaps to a lesser extent, cross-country and alpine skiing and snowboarding. In many neighbourhoods across the country, when the weather gets cold enough, the boards go up for outdoor ice rinks, and surfaces and backyards are flooded to make rinks for thousands of Canadians to play shinny on. Sport has, moreover, the capacity to represent our communities and indeed our nation on the world stage. In the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang, South Korea, Canada won 29 medals to place third in the overall medal standings, and 28 medals in the Paralympic Games, to also place third overall. Both were record performances for Canadian teams. Over the course of these events, Canadians

enjoyed a host of remarkable displays of athleticism from numerous athletes. Many of these performances—like Sidney Crosby’s gold medal goal at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games; the gold medal by the Canadian women’s ice hockey team at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games; and the 1972 Summit Series between Team Canada and the Soviet Union—have been “mythologized” in Canadian culture as part of the story of who we are and what we value as a country.

The sheer popularity and visibility of these sporting events and physical activities that bring together more groups of Canadians than other aspects of culture suggest that they are important features of everyday life in Canada and contribute to a distinctive Canadian cultural identity. Still, even our most cherished identities and normalized sporting practices, such as the national sport of hockey, are far from simply natural extensions of the Canadian environment. Even the definition of *sport* has been widely debated and contested.

DEFINING SPORT: POWER AT PLAY

The meaning of the word sport has evolved over time, and until recently sport has simply been understood as an activity that requires physical exertion. For the purposes of this textbook, **sport** is defined as any formally organized, competitive activity that involves vigorous physical exertion or the execution of complex physical skills with rules enforced by a regulatory body.

An examination of the components of this definition is worthwhile. First, in order for the activity to be *competitive*, the organizational and technical aspects must become important, including equipment and systematic training protocols. Second, the rules of the activity must become standardized and formalized by a regulatory body that oversees rule enforcement. “What we are talking about, in short, is the institutionalization of sport and the rationalization of both sports training and the sports organizations that sponsor training, and under whose auspices competition occurs” (Hall et al., 1991, p. 14). The notion of **institutionalization** is especially notable here, as it represents how particular forms of sport come to be taken for granted, and often unchallenged. Gruneau and Whitson (1993), in their classic book *Hockey Night in Canada*, offer a cogent definition of this term as it relates to sport, and describe how it takes place:

[Institutionalization refers to] the process by which one dominant set of patterns, rules, and ways of playing has emerged to define and regulate our contemporary sense of what sport is and how it should be played. More precisely, a way of playing has come to be seen as the way of playing. This has involved certain necessary conditions, such as written rules and the creation of formal organizations capable of establishing and regulating preferred conditions and standards of play for the modern era. (p. 35)

This definition reveals how particular versions of sport become dominant; it also invites us to consider a broader range of possibilities of how sport can and should be played, and the range of ways in which sport could be understood or re-defined in the future. For example, are chess boxing (an 11-round match consisting of alternate rounds of boxing and “blitz” chess sessions) or competitive rock-paper-scissors contests sporting events? The World Chess Boxing Organization and the World Rock Paper Scissors Society may think so; others may not. What about the billion dollar industry of eSports? Also consider the made-for-TV coverage of the

World Series of Poker. In his article “Sport or Not a Sport? Pot Is Split on Poker,” Mike Dodd (2006) considers this question. ESPN (the E standing for Entertainment) never called poker a sport. Certainly, a mental component is required to play poker, but is there a physical component? On the one hand, some poker players, such as Doyle Brunson, age 72, argue that there is because of the length of tournaments: “The last tournament I won, I played 18 hours one day, 16 hours the next day and 16 hours the last day. That’s pretty tough” (Dodd, 2006, p. 13C). On the other hand, some athletes might object to the use of the words *poker* and *sport* in the same sentence. Bryan Clay, the 2004 Olympic silver medallist in the decathlon, feels that “the word athlete and the word sport are getting so watered down” (Dodd, 2006, p. 13C). Even though the IOC hasn’t recognized poker, it does recognize another card game: contract bridge.

Instead of focusing on the endless (but often enjoyable!) debates and discussions over the definition of sport, it is more productive to consider some of the ideas associated with how organized sport and informal ways of playing have emerged over the course of many years. In so doing, we will focus not only on formal practices associated with sport, but also on the less formalized aspects of physical activity that are important for millions of Canadians. By informal sport, we mean physical activities that are self-initiated with no fixed start or stop times. Informal sport has no tangible outcomes such as prizes or ribbons, and victory and reward are not dominant features in this form of activity: for example, children getting together after dinner to play a game of pickup baseball, playing a game of tennis with a roommate, going for a round of golf with three friends, rock climbing, or windsurfing. Here we are interested in the social significance not only of prominent forms of sport in Canadian culture, but also of games of pickup basketball, shinny, the beer leagues of old-timer hockey, softball, and all of the other informal activities that are important and popular parts of Canadian culture and everyday life.

Sport (formal and informal) is **socially constructed**, as are all of the shared meanings about social life that shape the world in which we live. That is, sport has been invented and reinvented by generations of men and women for a wide range of purposes through historical social processes and social interactions. The idea of social construction, thus, invites us to raise questions about what is seemingly understood as simply “natural” and “normal,” and, in turn, underscores that society and all of its institutions—including sport—are always in process and “under construction,” and that the task of sociologists is to investigate this process.

In other words, sport shapes and is shaped by the social world around us and through our social interactions, and because sport is a social construct it can be changed and given different forms and meanings over time, and from place to place: it can be socially *reconstructed*. Indeed, it scarcely needs saying that a certain activity that is considered to be a sport in one culture or subculture may simply not be considered a sport in another culture or in another era. The debates about defining sport, then, “are less important than studying the social relations and distributions of political and economic resources that have meant that some games and physical pursuits have become institutionalized features of Canadian life while others have not” (Hall et al., 1991, p. 15).

Together, all of these ideas point toward the importance of embracing a critical sociological outlook that emphasizes the role of social construction in all of our lives; human beings live in historical webs of meaning that they themselves continue to make and remake. Indeed, even our most naturalized social relations and institutions (money, democracy, the legal system, etc.), as well as our taken-for-granted identities, need to be understood as historical and cultural constructs that are constantly

changing as we interact with each other and within various social and historical structures. In this respect, we will focus on making historical and comparative connections to illuminate how various sports and their related meanings change, while also illustrating the significance of sport and human agency in processes of broader sociohistorical reproduction and transformation.

DEFINING PHYSICAL CULTURE

As you may have noticed, we've been using the terms "physical" and "culture," among other terms, to help us describe what sport is, and the topics that are of interest to many sociologists of sport. We doubt this is surprising for you, considering the centrality of the physical body to many discussions about sport and social issues, and the significance of culture to any kind of sociological analysis of human group life.

As a way of highlighting and recognizing the ever-present interrelationships between the physical body and culture—and their relevance to a sociological understanding of sport—we have decided to include the term **physical culture** alongside sport in the title of this book. Social historian Patricia Vertinsky described the study of physical culture as the study of "the way [the body] moves, is represented, has meanings assigned to it, and is imbued with power" (quoted in Smishek, 2004). Hargreaves and Vertinsky's (2007) ground-breaking collection *Physical Culture, Power and the Body* includes several examples of how topics like racism, gender, media representation, performance enhancement, violence, technology, surveillance, colonization, deviance, and violence—all topics covered in parts of this book—are relevant to our understandings of what bodies can do and "should" do, our bodily experiences, and relationships between power and the body. Underlying Hargreaves and Vertinsky's understanding of the physical body is an argument that pervades this chapter, which is: to understand the body (and sport), *it is crucial to attend to the social and cultural contexts that the body exists within*. They state:

. . . the body has undeniable biological and physiological characteristics that appear as "natural" and indisputable in commonsense thinking, but . . . these very personal and personalized beliefs are only experienced and understood within a social context. In other words, there is a clear relationship between the anatomy of the body and social roles, so that our bodies are at the same time part of nature and part of culture. (Hargreaves & Vertinsky, 2007, p. 3)

Sociologists of sport who focus especially on corporeality emphasize, like Hargreaves and Vertinsky, that the physical body is not only a biological entity, but also a social and cultural one. Seeing the body in this way means also attending to the role of bodies in relations of power and forms of domination (for example, forms of abuse in and around sport; see Chapter 9)—and how bodies can also be tools for resistance (think of subcultural activities, like parkour, that symbolically challenge the logic that underlies the design of urban spaces, and most forms of competitive sport—see Chapter 7).

Alongside these understandings of the physical body, we recognize also the importance of the term **culture**. Although the term has been used in somewhat different ways over time, and across a range of disciplines—in this book we will work with a two-pronged definition. On one hand, culture refers here to a "way of life"—to the activities, norms, customs, values, symbols, and shared meanings and materials that we might refer to when describing how a group or society operates day-to-day.

On the other hand, but relatedly, culture also implies the terrain of symbols and practices that not only bring people together, but are also used to disrupt and contest. As McRobbie (1991) put it, “the cultural is always a site of struggle and conflict” (p. 36). As you can see, the terms “physical” and “culture” work well together here in the sense that their meanings are conjoined and interdependent—which is to say, physical bodies are shaped by culture at the same time that culture itself includes and is shaped by physical bodies. This view of physical culture in relation to struggle and conflict aligns well with the view of sport as “contested terrain,” which is also featured throughout this book. Moreover, and since sport is itself a form of culture—and one that commonly features active bodies—it is not difficult to see how these concepts are integrally linked too.

In the next sections, we discuss some of the reference points and tools that sociologists commonly use to help them understand how taken-for-granted sport and physical cultural practices are related to and emerged from broader structures, and through a range of historical developments. Importantly, by using these tools to see sport and physical culture in historical context, it will also be easier to envision how social problems and inequalities that were socially constructed can also, therefore, be socially *deconstructed* and changed—hopefully, for the better. Central to these ideas is the concept of the sociological imagination.

The Sociological Imagination

In 1959, the US sociologist C. Wright Mills coined the phrase **the sociological imagination**. The term refers to a way of thinking about the world—a way for ordinary people, using a set of reflective, sociological tools, to more broadly understand “what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves” (p. 5). Mills recognized that most people, understandably, see and interpret the world from their own personal and individualized perspectives—perspectives that are grounded in the private orbits of their families, neighbourhoods, jobs, and friendships. Nearly everyone, for example, attributes their successes and their failures to their own personal initiatives and abilities, and to their immediate life circumstances. “The well-being they enjoy,” Mills (1959, p. 3) wrote, is often not attributed “to the big ups and downs of the societies in which they live.” Likewise, Mills (1959, p. 1) also recognized that individualized perspectives also place limits on how we understand and interpret the obstacles and difficulties that we inevitably encounter over the course of our lives: “Nowadays men [and women] often feel that their private lives are a series of traps. They sense that within their everyday worlds, they cannot overcome their troubles, and in this feeling, they are quite correct.”

In thinking about these issues, Mills invited readers to embrace a sociological way of thinking as a way of helping them make sense of how their lives—their opportunities and their challenges—are pressured, shaped, and directed by broader social and historical forces, and to move beyond individualized and personalized ways of seeing and understanding the world. This quality of the mind—the ability to “grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society” (Mills, 1959, p. 6)—is the sociological imagination. Indeed, as Mills (1959, p. 6) explained: “No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history, and of their intersections within society has completed its intellectual journey.”

In further explaining the interrelationships between personal biography, history, and social structure, Mills explores the troubles and problems that individuals experience from two approaches: “personal troubles of milieu” and “public issues of