

Eleventh Edition

# SPORTS *in* SOCIETY

*Issues and Controversies*



Jay Coakley

# SPORTS IN SOCIETY

*This page intentionally left blank*

# SPORTS IN SOCIETY

---

## *Issues and Controversies*

ELEVENTH EDITION

**Jay Coakley, Ph.D.**  
University of Colorado  
Colorado Springs





## SPORTS IN SOCIETY: ISSUES AND CONTROVERSIES, ELEVENTH EDITION

Published by McGraw-Hill Education, 2 Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10121. Copyright © 2015 by McGraw-Hill Education. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. Previous editions © 2009, 2007, and 2004. No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written consent of McGraw-Hill Education, including, but not limited to, in any network or other electronic storage or transmission, or broadcast for distance learning.

Some ancillaries, including electronic and print components, may not be available to customers outside the United States.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC/DOC 1 0 9 8 7 6 5 4

ISBN 978-0-07-802252-4

MHID 0-07-802252-5

Senior Vice President, Products & Markets: *Kurt L. Strand*

Vice President, General Manager, Products & Markets: *Michael Ryan*

Vice President, Content Production & Technology Services: *Kimberly Meriwether David*

Managing Director: *Gina Boedeker*

Managing Editor: *Sara Jaeger*

Associate Marketing Manager: *Alexandra Schultz*

Director, Content Production: *Terri Schiesl*

Content Project Manager: *Jessica Portz*

Buyer: *Jennifer Pickel*

Cover Designer: *Studio Montage, St. Louis, MO.*

Cover Image: © *Ernie Barnes Family Trust*

Media Project Manager: *Jennifer Bartell*

Compositor: *Laserwords Private Limited*

Typeface: *10/12 Jansen Text LT STD*

Printer: *R. R. Donnelley*

All credits appearing on page or at the end of the book are considered to be an extension of the copyright page.

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Coakley, Jay J.

Sports in society: issues and controversies / Jay Coakley, Ph.D., University of Colorado, Colorado Springs.—Eleventh edition.

pages cm

ISBN 978-0-07-802252-4 (alk. paper)

1. Sports—Social aspects. 2. Sports—Psychological aspects. I. Title.

GV706.5.C63 2015

306.4'83—dc23

2013046643

The Internet addresses listed in the text were accurate at the time of publication. The inclusion of a website does not indicate an endorsement by the authors or McGraw-Hill Education, and McGraw-Hill Education does not guarantee the accuracy of the information presented at these sites.

*To the memory of Ernie Barnes—a  
uniquely perceptive artist whose drawings  
and paintings capture the movement and  
spirit of athletic bodies in ways that inspire  
people worldwide.*

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jay Coakley and granddaughter, Ally, are running buddies in local Colorado races.

Jay Coakley is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs. He received a Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Notre Dame and has since taught and done research on play, games, and sports, among other topics in sociology. Dr. Coakley has received many teaching, service, and professional awards, and is an internationally respected scholar, author, and journal editor. In 2007 the Institute for International Sport selected him as one of the 100 Most Influential Sports Educators, and the University of Chichester in West Sussex, England awarded him an Honorary Fellowship in recognition of his outstanding leadership in the sociology of sport; in 2009, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education inducted Coakley into its Hall of Fame.

A former intercollegiate athlete, Coakley continues to use concepts, research, and theories in sociology to critically examine social phenomena and promote changes that will make social worlds more democratic and humane. He currently lives in Fort Collins, Colorado with his wife, Nancy.

# ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST



The cover image, *His Effort*, is a painting by the late Ernie Barnes (1938–2009), an internationally known artist, a former professional football player, and an unforgettable friend.

Barnes is best known for his unique figurative style of painting, and he is widely recognized as the foremost African American artist of his generation. His paintings first became known to millions of people when used as the cover theme for the hit television show *Good Times* and as the cover art on such popular albums as Marvin Gaye's *I Want You*, Donald Byrd's *Donald Byrd and 125th Street, NYC*, and B. B. King's *Making Love Is Good for You*.

Barnes's ability to capture the powerful energy and movement of sports earned him recognition as "America's Best Painter of Sports" by the American Sports Museum. In 1984 he was appointed official artist for the Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles. His sports commissions include paintings for the Los Angeles Lakers, Carolina Panthers, New Orleans Saints, Oakland Raiders, and New England Patriots, as well as a painting displayed at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the National Basketball Association.

One of the remarkable features of Barnes's work is his use of elongation and distortion to represent energy, power, grace, intensity, and fluidity in his art. His sports background provided a distinct vantage point for observing bodies in movement, and he used his unique understanding of the human anatomy to portray not only athletes but everyday mannerisms in delayed motion. As a result, his images communicate an intimate sense of human physicality.

For many people, Ernie Barnes captures the spirit and determination of athletes as they express themselves through movement. His images present to us the kinesthetic soul of sports.

This is the sixth consecutive cover of *Sports in Society* that presents the art of Ernie Barnes. When Ernie spoke to students in Los Angeles, he usually brought copies of the book with him to show that art, sport, and academic learning could come together in their lives. This particular cover image was chosen to represent Barnes's legacy based on *his effort* to represent the wonder and endurance of the human spirit.

Much of Barnes's work can be viewed at [ErnieBarnes.com](http://ErnieBarnes.com). My thanks go to Ernie's longtime friend and assistant, Luz Rodrigues, and his family for sharing *His Effort* for this edition of *Sports in Society*.



# CONTENTS

Preface xi

## **1 The Sociology of Sport: What Is It and Why Study It? 2**

About This Book 4

About This Chapter 4

Using Sociology to Study Sports 4

Defining Sports 6

What Is the Sociology of Sport? 9

Why Study Sports in Society? 13

Summary: Why Study the Sociology of Sport? 21

## **2 Producing Knowledge About Sports in Society: What Is the Role of Research and Theory? 24**

Producing Knowledge in the Sociology of Sport 26

Doing Research and Using Theory in the Sociology of Sport: A Case Study 28

The Impact of Sociology of Sport Knowledge 42

Using a Critical Approach to Produce Knowledge 44

Summary: How Is Knowledge Produced in the Sociology of Sport? 48

## **3 Sports and Socialization: Who Plays and What Happens to Them? 50**

What Is Socialization? 52

Becoming and Staying Involved in Sports 54

Changing or Ending Sport Participation 58

Being Involved in Sports: What Happens? 62

How Do Sports Affect Our Lives? 68

Summary: Who Plays and What Happens? 77

## **4 Sports for Children: Are Organized Programs Worth the Effort? 80**

Origin and Development of Organized Youth Sports 82

Major Trends in Youth Sports Today 86

Informal, Player-Controlled Sports: A Case of the Generation Gap 93

Youth Sports Today: Assessing Our Efforts 95

The Challenge of Improving Youth Sports 98

Recommendations for Improving Youth Sports 100

Summary: Are Organized Programs Worth the Effort? 102

## **5 Deviance in Sports: Is It Out of Control? 106**

Defining and Studying Deviance in Sports 108

Challenges Faced When Studying Deviance in Sports 108

Research on Deviance in Sports 119

Performance-Enhancing Substances: A Case Study of Deviant Overconformity 130

Summary: Is Deviance in Sports Out of Control? 142

## **6 Violence in Sports: Does It Affect Our Lives? 146**

What Is Violence? 148

Violence in Sports Throughout History 149

- Violence on the Field 150
- Violence off the Field 162
- Violence Among Spectators 165
- Terrorism: Planned Political Violence at Sport Events 173
- Summary: Does Violence in Sports Affect Our Lives? 175

## **7 Gender and Sports: Is Equity Possible? 178**

- Cultural Origins of Gender Inequities 180
- Orthodox Gender Ideology and Sports 184
- Mainstream Sports Reaffirm Orthodox Gender Ideology 188
- Progress Toward Gender Equity 195
- Gender Inequities Remain 199
- Barriers to Equity 209
- Gender Equity and Sexuality 213
- Strategies to Achieve Equity 217
- Summary: Is Equity Possible? 222

## **8 Race and Ethnicity: Are They Important in Sports? 224**

- Defining *Race* and *Ethnicity* 226
- Creating Race and Racial Ideologies 227
- Sport Participation Among Ethnic Minorities in the United States 240
- Race, Ethnicity, and Sport in a Global Perspective 254
- The Dynamics of Racial and Ethnic Relations in Sports 257
- Summary: Are Race and Ethnicity Important in Sports? 261

## **9 Social Class: Do Money and Power Matter in Sports? 264**

- Social Class and Class Relations 266
- Sports and Economic Inequality 267
- Social Class and Sport Participation Patterns 273

- Global Inequalities and Sports 284
- Economic and Career Opportunities in Sports 286
- Sport Participation and Occupational Careers Among Former Athletes 293
- Summary: Do Money and Power Matter in Sports? 298

## **10 Age and Ability: Barriers to Participation and Inclusion? 302**

- What Counts as Ability? 304
- Constructing the Meaning of *Age* 308
- Constructing the Meaning of *Ability* 315
- Sport and Ability 326
- Disability Sports 331
- Technology and Ability 340
- To “*Dis*” or Not to “*Dis*” 345
- Summary: Are Age and Ability Barriers to Participation? 346

## **11 Sports and the Economy: What Are the Characteristics of Commercial Sports? 350**

- Emergence and Growth of Commercial Sports 352
- Commercialization and Changes in Sports 362
- The Organization of Professional Sports in North America 367
- The Organization of Amateur Sports in North America 375
- Legal Status and Incomes of Athletes in Commercial Sports 377
- Summary: What Are the Characteristics of Commercial Sports? 385

## **12 Sports and the Media: Could They Survive Without Each Other? 388**

- Characteristics of the Media 390
- Sports and Media: A Two-Way Relationship 400

Images and Narratives in Media Sports 410  
 Experiences and Consequences of Consuming Media Sports 419  
 Sport Journalism 423  
 Summary: Could Sports and the Media Survive Without Each Other? 425

## **13 Sports and Politics: How Do Governments and Global Political Processes Influence Sports? 428**

The Sports–Government Connection 431  
 Sports and Global Political Processes 443  
 Politics in Sports 458  
 Summary: How Do Governments and Global Political Processes Influence Sports? 460

## **14 Sports in High School and College: Do Competitive Sports Contribute to Education? 462**

Arguments for and Against Interscholastic Sports 464  
 Interscholastic Sports and the Experiences of High School Students 464  
 Intercollegiate Sports and the Experiences of College Students 472  
 Do Schools Benefit from Varsity Sports? 481

High School and College Sports Face Uncertainty 488  
 Summary: Do Competitive Sports Contribute to Education? 503

## **15 Sports and Religions: Is It a Promising Combination? 506**

How Do Sociologists Define and Study Religion? 508  
 Similarities and Differences Between Sports and Religions 510  
 Modern Sports and Religious Beliefs and Organizations 513  
 The Challenges of Combining Sports and Religious Beliefs 530  
 Summary: Is It a Promising Combination? 535

## **16 Sports in the Future: What Do We Want Them to Be? 538**

Envisioning Possibilities for the Future 540  
 Current Trends Related to Sports in Society 542  
 Factors Influencing Trends Today 546  
 Becoming Agents of Change 551  
 The Challenge of Transforming Sports 555  
 Summary: What Do We Want Sports to Be? 558  
**References** 561  
**Name Index** 648  
**Subject Index** 663

# PREFACE

## PURPOSE OF THIS TEXT

The eleventh edition of *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies* provides a detailed introduction to the sociology of sport. It uses sociological concepts, theories, and research to raise critical questions about sports and explore the dynamic relationship between sports, culture, and society. The chapters are organized around controversial and curiosity-arousing issues that have been systematically studied in sociology and related fields. Research on these issues is summarized so that readers can critically examine them.

Chapter content is guided by sociological research and theory and based on the assumption that a full understanding of sports must take into account the social and cultural contexts in which sports are created, played, given meaning, and integrated into people's lives. At a time when we too often think that a "website search" provides everything we need to know, I intend this text as a thoughtful scholarly work that integrates research on sports as social phenomena, makes sense of the expanding body of work in the sociology of sport, and inspires critical thinking.

## FOR WHOM IS IT WRITTEN?

*Sports in Society* is written for everyone taking a first critical look at the relationships between sports, culture, and society. Readers don't need a background in sociology to understand and benefit from discussions in each chapter; nor do

they need detailed knowledge of sport jargon and statistics. My goal is to help readers identify and explore issues related to sports in their personal experiences, families, schools, communities, and societies.

The emphasis on issues and controversies makes each chapter useful for people concerned with sport-related policies and programs. I've always tried to use knowledge to make sports more democratic, accessible, inclusive, and humane, and I hope to provide readers with the information and desire to do the same.

## WRITING THIS REVISION

As soon as the tenth edition of *Sports in Society* went to press I began research for this edition. This involves reading six newspapers each day, including *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Financial Times*. I also read two sports magazines—*Sports Illustrated* and *ESPN The Magazine*—and three or four other magazines that often carry articles about sports. But most of my research involves reading every abstract for every article published in the major journals dealing with sports as social phenomena. I regularly survey the tables of contents of a few dozen journals in sociology and related fields to find articles on sport-related topics. Although I do not read every article or every book in the field, I read many and take notes as I do.

Finally, I track photos that I might buy for the edition, and I take thousands of photos myself,

always hoping to have ten to twenty new ones for each new edition. I regularly ask friends to take photos if they are in unique sport settings. In the final photo selection I usually review 250 photos for every one I choose to include in the book.

In all, this amounts to thousands of hours of research, writing, and discussing issues with people from many walks of life in the United States and other parts of the world I've had opportunities to visit.

## CHANGES TO THIS ELEVENTH EDITION

This edition is new in many respects, and most sections of the book, including tables and figures, have been updated. However, as new material was added, other material had to be deleted or put in the Online Learning Center. New chapter-opening quotes, photos, and examples maintain the timeliness of content. This edition also is more carefully and clearly linked with the corresponding website ([www.mhhe.com/coakley11e](http://www.mhhe.com/coakley11e)), and the Online Learning Center contains additional substantive materials related to each chapter topic.

New research and theoretical developments are integrated into each chapter. There are about 1400 *new* references included in this edition—nearly 2200 references in all—to assist those writing papers and doing research. Most new references identify materials published since the manuscript for the previous edition left my hands.

The sociology of sport has expanded so much in recent years that *Sports in Society* is now an introduction to the field more than a comprehensive overview.

### Revision Themes and New Materials

This edition presents reorganized chapter openers consisting of a photo, provocative quotes from popular sources, a brief Chapter Outline, and Learning Objectives. At the end of each chapter are new lists of Supplemental Readings

that are featured in the Online Learning Center (OLC), along with selected sport management discussion issues related to the chapter content.

The most significant change in this edition is a new chapter on age and ability. Research and knowledge about variations in sport participation patterns by age and abilities have increased dramatically over the past decade. This serves as a foundation for discussions of how and why participation declines after early adolescence and is consistently low among people with specific physical or intellectual impairments. There are detailed discussions of age- and ability-segregated events, such as Masters competitions for older people and the Paralympics and Special Olympics for people with impairments currently defined as performance-limiting in sports. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the use of movement enabling technologies in sports.

Another major change is that the chapter on gender is rewritten so the coverage of ideological issues and structural inequities (for girls and women) matches the sequence used in the chapters on race and ethnicity, social class, and age and ability. This continuity enables readers to see similarities in the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion across these socially significant attributes.

Chapter 1 now introduces “the great sport myth”—the widespread belief that all sports are essentially pure and good, and that their purity and goodness are transferred to those who participate in or watch sports. This concept helps readers understand how and why sports are perceived in such positive terms worldwide and why it is difficult to promote critical thinking about sports in society. References to the great sport myth appear in most of the chapters. Chapter 1 also has a new explanation of ideology to give readers a clearer idea of how sports are cultural practices linked with our everyday lives and other spheres of society.

Chapter 2 contains new figures on the knowledge production process and the primary data collection methods in sociology of sport

research. There is a new explanation of gender as meaning, performance, and organization in social worlds, and new discussions of the differences between quantitative and qualitative research and the use of the telephone for conducting interviews. There is a new section, “The Impact of Sociology of Sport Knowledge,” that explains why we do research and produce knowledge about sports in society. A new *Reflect on Sports* box focuses on “Critical Feminist Theory Today: From the Margins to Mainstream.”

The history chapter from the tenth edition is now accessible through the OLC, and the chapter on socialization is now Chapter 3, following the knowledge production chapter. It contains a new section on “Family Culture and the Sport Participation of Children,” which examines families as the immediate contexts in which socialization into sports is initiated and nurtured. There also are new discussions of the transition out of competitive sports careers, of recent research on the sport experiences of gay and lesbian athletes, and current approaches to sports and socialization as a community process.

Chapter 4, on youth sports, presents a new discussion of how the culture of childhood play has nearly disappeared in most segments of post-industrial society. There’s also an expanded discussion of the possibility that in the United States some upper-middle-class parents use youth sports as a way to create mobility opportunities and reproduce privilege for their children. Finally, there is a discussion of how and why youth sports in the United States are programmatically fragmented and exist independently of any theory-based approach to teaching age-appropriate physical skills and promoting life-long involvement in sports and physical activities.

Chapter 5, on deviance, contains a new discussion of the relationship between deviant overconformity and injuries, concussions, and repetitive head trauma in sports. There’s also an explanation of how widespread acceptance of the great sports myth leads people to deny or ignore certain forms of deviance in sports and

use punitive social control methods that focus on individuals rather than the systemic problems that exist in various forms of sport. This is followed by a discussion of new surveillance technologies being used to police and control athletes, especially in connection with the use of performance-enhancing substances.

Chapter 6, on violence in sports, contains new discussions of the NFL’s investigation of players’ and coaches’ alleged use of bounties as incentives to injure opponents and why violent sports have become commercially successful in certain cultures. The issue of concussions and head trauma is also discussed in connection with the culture of violence that is widely accepted in heavy-contact sports. The highly publicized violent sexual assault involving members of the high school football team in Steubenville, Ohio, is also discussed relative to issues of gender and violence. Finally, there is an expanded discussion of how the threat of terrorism is perceived and how it influences the dynamics of social control at sport events.

Chapter 7, on gender and sports, introduces the concept of *orthodox gender ideology* to help readers understand the cultural origins of gender inequality and why sports are one of the last spheres of social life in which the two-sex approach is accepted in a way that normalizes gender segregation. The term *orthodox* is used to show that this view of gender represents a way of thinking that many people have internalized as unchanging “truth” and often link to their religious beliefs or an overall sense of right and wrong. This chapter also contains a new section on “Progress Toward Gender Equity,” which identifies girls’ and women’s increased participation as the single most dramatic change in sports over the past two generations. There is an updated *Reflect on Sports* box that examines Title IX compliance and “what counts as equity in sports.” A new *Reflect on Sports* box deals with how football impacts policies and progress toward gender equity. A new table presents data on female and male athletes at recent

Paralympic Games, and a new section, “The Global Women’s Rights Movement,” discusses the belief that girls and women are enhanced as human beings when they develop their intellectual *and* physical abilities. New discussions of the media coverage of women in sports and the impact of budget cuts and the privatization of sports are presented to show that programs for women and girls remain vulnerable to cuts because they lack a strong market presence and have not been profit producing.

Chapter 8, on race and ethnicity, presents a revised discussion of how racial ideology influences sports participation. There is a new *Reflect on Sports* box dealing with “Vénus Noire: A legacy of Racism After 200 years,” and a new discussion of the isolation often experienced by women of color participating in or coaching college sports. New research is presented to show the ways that some Japanese parents use youth sports leagues to establish relationships with other Japanese families and connect their children with Asian American peers. Finally, there is a new section on race, ethnicity, and sports in a global perspective in which efforts to control the expression of racism at sport events is discussed.

Chapter 9, on social class, has expanded discussions of whether building a new stadium triggers new jobs for the surrounding community and how the economic downturn has impacted sports participation in the United States. There is a new discussion of research on whether local boxing gyms help participants bond with one another and acquire forms of social capital that alter their structural position in society, as well as a new discussion of data on the impact of wealth, as opposed to income, on sport participation patterns.

Chapter 10, written with Elizabeth Pike, my colleague from the University of Chichester in England, is new and focuses on issues and controversies related to age and ability in sports. The framework of this chapter is built on research showing how social definitions of age and ability impact the provision of sport participation

opportunities and the decisions made by people to become involved and stay involved in sports. The sections on masters events, the Paralympics, the Special Olympics, and related forms of sport provision illustrate the complexity of sports when they are viewed in a general social and cultural context in which age and ability influence how people are perceived and they include physical activities in their lives.

Chapter 11 deals with the commercialization of sports. It contains a new section on how the NFL and other major sport organizations have used their nonprofit status to avoid paying taxes while they generate billions of dollars in income and pay executives up to \$30 million per year. There also is a discussion of how the great sport myth is used to appropriate public money to build sport venues and subsidize sport teams. Labor relations in sports are discussed in more depth, with explanations of collective bargaining agreements, lockouts, and the role of players’ associations.

Chapter 12, on sports and the media, contains much new material on the changing media landscape and how it is related to sports. There is a new discussion of fantasy sports as an arena in which participation is influenced by gender and the quest to sustain white male privilege. There’s also new material on how social media are used by established sport organizations and by athletes practicing parkour and other emerging sport activities around the world. A new section focuses on the rapid escalation of media rights fees and how they are driving up the costs for cable and satellite TV providers and consumers. Changes in media coverage are discussed, with attention given to how masculinity and sexuality are presented in sports media. Finally, there is a new discussion of how entertainment journalism has replaced investigative journalism in sports media.

Chapter 13, on politics, government, and global processes, is updated in its coverage of sport and national identity in global relations, and how the Olympics and men’s World Cup

have become tools for generating profits for the International Olympic Committee and FIFA at the same time that the countries hosting these games incur increasing debt for debatable returns. Research on recent sport mega-events is used to discuss the challenges and the pros and cons of hosting such events. There is an expanded discussion of the new political realities of sports—where team ownership and event sponsorship have become global in scope, where athletes seek opportunities worldwide, where global media make it easy to follow the sporting events of teams from all over the world, and where fans' loyalties are no longer limited to teams from their own regions or countries. Research is presented to show that these realities are linked with corporate expansion, the global flow of capital, the business strategy of global media companies, and processes of *glocalization* through which global sports are integrated into people's everyday lives on a local level.

Chapter 14, on high school and college sports, includes new research findings related to issues such as the rising costs of sport programs, who benefits from the revenues generated by certain sports, the dramatic increase of inequality between programs at both the high school and college levels, and young people's perceptions of athletic and academic achievement in schools with high-profile sport programs. There also are new sections on budget issues and the uncertainty that faces school sports today, and the issues currently faced by the NCAA as it tries to control a college sport system that is increasingly unmanageable and inconsistent with the goals of higher education.

Chapter 15, on religion and sports, presents new information on world religions and how they influence conceptions of the body, evaluations of physical movement, and sport participation. There also is updated information about the ways in which individuals and organizations combine sport with religious beliefs, and how this has spread beyond the United States in recent years.

Chapter 16 has been shortened and now focuses primarily on the process of making change in sports rather than describing what the future of sports might be. This is because there is a need for us to acknowledge the power of corporations in shaping sports to fit their interests and to develop strategies for creating sport forms that directly serve the needs of individuals and communities.

### Supplemental Readings and New Website Resources

Each chapter is followed by a list of Supplemental Readings that provide useful information about topics in the chapters. The Supplemental Readings have been expanded for each chapter and can be found in the Online Learning Center (OLC).

### New Visual Materials

There are 120 photos, 20 figures, and 31 cartoons in this edition; 61 of the photos are new. These images are combined with new diagrams, figures, and tables to illustrate important substantive points, visually enhance the text, and make reading more interesting.

### Online Learning Center

The website [www.mhhe.com/coakley11e](http://www.mhhe.com/coakley11e) is an important feature associated with the eleventh edition of *Sports in Society*. The site contains general information about this edition, along with links to supplemental materials associated with each chapter. Those materials include

- Supplemental Readings that add depth and background to current chapter topics
- Group projects
- Previous chapters on coaches, competition, history (from the 10th edition), and social theories (from the 9th edition)
- True/false self-tests for each chapter



- A cumulative 230-page bibliography that lists all references from this and the last six editions of *Sports in Society*
- A complete glossary of key terms integrated into the index

## ANCILLARIES

### Instructor's Manual and Test Bank

An instructor's manual and test bank are available to assist those using *Sports in Society* in college courses. It includes the following:

- *Chapter outlines.* These are full outlines that provide a section-by-section topic list for each chapter. They are useful for test reviews and organizing lectures, and they may be reproduced and given to students as study guides.
- *Test questions (multiple choice).* These questions are designed to test students' awareness of the central concepts and ideas in each chapter. For the instructor with large classes, these questions are useful for creating chapter and midterm tests, as well as final exams.
- *Discussion/essay questions.* These questions can be used for tests or to generate classroom discussions. They're designed to encourage students to synthesize and apply materials in one or more of the sections in each chapter. None of the questions asks the students to simply list points or give definitions.

### Computerized Test Bank

A computerized version of the test bank for the instructor's manual is available in both IBM and Macintosh formats to qualified adopters. This software provides a unique combination of user-friendly aids and enables the instructor to select, edit, delete, or add questions and to construct and print tests and answer keys.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book draws on ideas from many sources. Thanks go to students, colleagues, and friends who have provided constructive criticisms over the years. Students regularly open my eyes to new ways of viewing and analyzing sports as social phenomena. Special thanks go to friends and colleagues who influence my thinking, provide valuable source materials, and willingly discuss ideas and information with me. Elizabeth Pike, Chris Hallinan, and Cora Burnett influenced my thinking as I worked with them on versions of *Sports in Society* for the United Kingdom, Australia/New Zealand, and Southern Africa, respectively. Peter Donnelly, co-author of past Canadian versions, has provided special support for this edition and influenced my thinking about many important issues. Laurel Davis-Delano deserves special thanks for her constructive critiques of recent past editions. Thanks also go to photographers and colleagues, Lara Killick, Barbara Schausteck de Almeida, Elizabeth Pike, Bobek Ha'Eri, Becky Beal, Kevin Young, Jay Johnson Michael Collins, Tim Russo, Basia Borzecka and my daughter, Danielle Hicks, for permission to use their photos. Once again, I thank Ossur ([www.ossur.com](http://www.ossur.com))—a company that designs and manufactures prosthetics and orthotics—for photos used in this and previous editions. Rachel Spielberg, a recent Smith College grad, coach, and artist contributed new cartoons to this edition; thanks to her for working with me.

Thanks also to Nicole Bridge, who organized my often heavily revised drafts for production, and to Jessica Portz and Sara Jaeger who coordinated this edition through a slalom-like course of deadlines.

Finally, thanks go to Nancy Coakley, my life partner and best friend, who has lived through eleven editions of *Sports in Society* and assisted with each one in more ways than I can list here. She keeps me in touch with popular culture sources related to sports, and tells me when my ideas should be revised or kept to myself—a frequent occurrence.

My appreciation also goes to the following reviewers, whose suggestions were crucial in planning and writing this edition:

Maureen Smith, California State University–  
Sacramento State

Brooke Estabrook–Fishinghawk, Texas Tech  
University

Mark Vermillion, Wichita State University

Thomas Rotolo, Washington State University

Andrew Meyer, Baylor University

Marc Postiglione, Union County College  
Gary Sailes, Indiana University

Finally, thanks to the many students and colleagues who have e-mailed comments about previous editions and ideas for future editions. I take them seriously and appreciate their thoughtfulness—keep the responses coming.

Jay Coakley  
Fort Collins, CO

*This page intentionally left blank*

# SPORTS IN SOCIETY



(Source: Jay Coakley)

# THE SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT

## What Is It and Why Study It?

Our sports belong to us. They came up from the people. They were invented for reasons having nothing to do with money or ego. Our sports weren't created by wealthy sports and entertainment barons like the ones running sports today.

—Ken Reed, Sport Policy Director,  
League of Fans (2011).

HOW DO YOU distinguish sports from entertainment, fakery from reality, when the two are so inseparable?

—Selena Roberts, sports journalist,  
The New York Times (2007)

Competitive cheer may, some time in the future, qualify as a sport under Title IX. Today, however, the activity is still too underdeveloped and disorganized to be treated as offering genuine varsity athletic participation opportunities for students.

—U.S. District Judge Stefan R. Underhill  
(in Moltz, 2010)

Sports is real. . . . Sports is Oprah for guys. . . . Sports is woven deeper into American life than you know. You may change religion or politics, but not sport teams.

—Rick Reilly (2009)

## *Chapter Outline*

**About This Book**

**About This Chapter**

**Using Sociology to Study Sports**

**Defining Sports**

**What Is the Sociology of Sport?**

**Why Study Sports in Society?**

**Summary: Why Study the Sociology of Sport?**

## *Learning Objectives*

- Explain what sociologists study about sports and why sociology of sport knowledge is different from information in sports media and everyday conversations.
- Understand issues related to defining sports and why a sociological definition differs from official definitions used by high schools and universities.
- Explain what it means to say that sports are social constructions and contested activities.
- Explain why sociology of sport knowledge may be controversial among people associated with sports.
- Understand the meaning of “ideology” and how ideologies related to gender, race, social class, and disability are connected with sports.

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

If you're reading this book, you have an interest in sports or know people who play or watch them. Unlike most books about sports, this one is written to take you beyond scores, statistics, and sports personalities. The goal is to focus on the "deeper game" associated with sports, the game through which sports become part of the social and cultural worlds in which we live.

Fortunately, we can draw on our emotions and experiences as we consider this deeper game. Take high school sports in the United States as an example. When students play on a high school basketball team, we know that it can affect their status in the school and the treatment they receive from both teachers and peers. We know it has implications for their prestige in the community, self-images and self-esteem, future relationships, opportunities in education and the job market, and their overall enjoyment of life.

Building on this knowledge enables us to move further into the deeper game associated with high school sports. For example, why do so many Americans place such importance on sports and accord such high status to elite athletes? Are there connections between high school sports and widespread beliefs about masculinity and femininity, achievement and competition, pleasure and pain, winning and fair play, and other important aspects of U.S. culture?

Underlying these questions is the assumption that sports are more than games, meets, and matches. They're important aspects of social life that have meanings going far beyond scores and performance statistics. Sports are integral parts of the social and cultural contexts in which we live, and they provide stories and images that many of us use to evaluate our experiences and the world around us.

Those of us who study sports in society are concerned with these deeper meanings and stories associated with sports. We do research to increase our understanding of (1) the cultures

and societies in which sports exist; (2) the social worlds created around sports, and (3) the experiences of individuals and groups associated with sports.

## ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

This chapter is organized to answer four questions:

1. What is sociology, and how is it used to study sports in society?
2. What are sports, and how can we identify them in ways that increase our understanding of their place and value in society?
3. What is the sociology of sport?
4. Who studies sports in society, and for what purposes?

The answers to these questions will be our guides for understanding the material in the rest of the book.

## USING SOCIOLOGY TO STUDY SPORTS

Sociology provides useful tools for investigating sports as social phenomena. This is because **sociology** is the study of the social worlds that people create, maintain, and change through their relationships with each other.<sup>1</sup> The concept of **social world** refers to an identifiable sphere of everyday actions and relationships (Unruh, 1980). Social worlds are created by people, but they involve much more than individuals doing their own things for their own reasons. Our actions, relationships, and collective activities form patterns that could not be predicted only with information about each of us as individuals. These patterns constitute identifiable ways of life and social arrangements that

---

<sup>1</sup>Important concepts used in each chapter are identified in **boldface**. Unless they are accompanied by a footnote that contains a definition, the definition will be given in the text itself. This puts the definition in context rather than separating it in a glossary. Definitions are also provided in the Subject Glindex.

are maintained or changed over time as people interact with one other.

Social worlds can be as large and impersonal as an entire nation, such as the United States or Brazil, or as personal and intimate as your own family. But regardless of size, they encompass all aspects of social life: (a) the values and beliefs that we use to make sense of our lives; (b) our everyday actions and relationships; and (c) the groups, organizations, communities, and societies that we form as we make choices, develop relationships, and participate in social life.

Sociologists often refer to **society**, which is a relatively self-sufficient collection of people who maintain a way of life in a particular territory. In most cases, a society and a nation are one and the same, such as Brazil and Brazilian society. But there are cases where a society is not a nation, such as Amish Mennonite society as it exists in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and other parts of the United States.

The goal of sociology is to describe and explain social worlds, including societies—how they are created, re-created, and changed; how they are organized; and how they influence our lives and our relationships with each other. In the process of doing sociology we learn to see our lives and the lives of others “in context”—that is, in the social worlds in which we live. This enables us to identify the social conditions that set limits or create possibilities in people’s lives. On a personal level, knowing about these influential conditions also helps us anticipate and sometimes work around the constraints we face at the same time that we look for and take advantage of the possibilities. Ideally, it helps us gain more control over our lives as well as an understanding of other people and the conditions that influence their lives.

### Key Sociology Concepts

Sociologists use the concepts of culture, social interaction, and social structure to help them understand sports as social activities.

**Culture** consists of *the shared ways of life and shared understandings that people develop as they live together*. Once a culture exists, it influences relationships and social interaction.

**Social interaction** consists of *people taking each other into account and, in the process, influencing each other’s feelings, thoughts, and actions*. Through interaction we learn to anticipate the thoughts and actions of others and predict how others may respond to what we think and do.

**Social structure** consists of *the established patterns of relationships and social arrangements that take shape as people live, work, and play with each other*. This is the basis for order and organization in all social worlds.

These three concepts—culture, social interaction, and social structure—represent the central interconnected aspects of all social worlds. For example, a high school soccer team is a social world formed by players, coaches, team parents, and regular supporters. Over time every team creates and maintains a particular *culture* or a way of life consisting of values, beliefs, norms, and everyday social routines. Everyone involved with the team engages in *social interaction* as they take each other into account during their everyday activities on and off the playing field. Additionally, the recurring actions, relationships, and social arrangements that emerge as these people interact with each other make up the *social structure* of the team. This combination of culture, social interaction, and social structure comprises the team as a social world, and it is connected with the larger social world in which it exists.

Peer groups, cliques, and athletic teams are social worlds in which participants are known to one another. Communities, societies, concert crowds, and online chat rooms are social worlds in which participants are generally unknown to each other. This means that the boundaries of social worlds may be clear, fuzzy, or overlapping, but we generally know when we enter or leave a social world because each has identifying features related to culture, social interaction, and social structure.



We move back and forth between familiar social worlds without thinking. We make nearly automatic shifts in how we talk and act as we accommodate changing cultural, interactional, and structural features in each social world. However, when we enter or participate in a new or unfamiliar social world, we usually pay special attention to what is happening. We watch what people are doing, how they interact with each other, and we develop a sense of the recurring patterns that exist in their actions and relationships. If you've done this, then you're ready to use sociology to study sports in society.

### **Sociological Knowledge Is Based on Research and Theory**

My goal in writing this book is to accurately represent research in the sociology of sport and discuss issues of interest to students. At a time when online searches provide us with infinite facts, figures, and opinions about sports, I am primarily interested in the knowledge produced through systematic research. I use newspaper articles and other media as sources for examples, but I depend on research results when making substantive points and drawing conclusions. This means that my statements about sports and sport experiences are based, as much as possible, on studies that use surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observations, content analyses, and other accepted methods of research in sociology.

The material in this book is different than material in blogs, talk radio, television news shows, game and event commentaries, and most of our everyday conversations about sports. It is organized to help you critically examine sports as they exist in people's lives. I use research findings to describe and explain as accurately as possible the important connections between sports, society, and culture. I try to be fair when using research to make sense of the social aspects of sports and sport experiences. This is why over

1700 sources are cited as references for the information and analysis in this book.

Of course, I want to hold your attention as you read, but I don't exaggerate, purposely withhold, or present information out of context to impress you and boost my "ratings." In the process, I hope you will extend your critical thinking abilities so you can assess what people believe and say about sports in society. This will enable you to make informed decisions about sports in your life and the social worlds in which you live.

### **DEFINING SPORTS**

Most of us know enough about the meaning of sports to talk about them with others. However, when we study sports, it helps to precisely define our topic. For example, is it a sport when young people choose teams and play a baseball game in the street or when thirty people of various ages spend an afternoon learning and performing tricks at a skateboard park? These activities are sociologically different from what occurs at major league baseball games and X Games skateboard competitions. These differences become significant when parents ask if playing sports builds the character of their children, when community leaders ask if they should use tax money to fund sports, and when school principals ask if sports are valid educational activities.

When I say that I study sports, people ask if that includes jogging, double-dutch, weight lifting, hunting, scuba diving, darts, auto racing, chess, poker, ultimate fighting, paintball, piano competitions, ballroom dancing, skateboarding, Quidditch, and so on. To respond is not easy, because there is no single definition that precisely identifies sports in all cultures at all times.

According to definitions used widely in North America and much of Europe, **sports** are *physical activities that involve challenges or competitive contests*. They are usually organized so that



Is “Competitive Cheer” or cheerleading a sport? The answer to this question is important because it will impact the budgets, participation rates, and gender equity decisions in U.S. high school and college sport programs. Sociologists study why certain activities are considered to be sports in particular social worlds, who has the power to make such decisions, and how those decisions affect people’s lives. (Source: Jay Coakley)

participants can assess their performances and compare them to the performances of others or to their own performances from one situation to another. However, the organization, meaning, and purpose of sports often vary from one cultural context to another.

Some sports are organized to emphasize free-flowing, playful action and exist primarily for the pleasure of the participants. Examples include 5K fun runs, spontaneous games of Ultimate in open areas, and skateboarding in the streets or local skate parks. In contrast, other sports are organized to include scheduled and regulated action with participants displaying their skills for the pleasure of spectators. These include professional and other elite sports that people follow through media and pay to see in person. NFL games, matches in professional soccer leagues, and major golf tournaments are examples.

Most sports, however, are organized in ways that fall somewhere between these two extremes.

They are formally organized and, even though people may watch them, they exist mostly for participants, who enjoy them, value the skills needed to play them, and receive external rewards, such as peer or family approval, social status, or formal awards for playing them. Softball leagues, scheduled volleyball tournaments, and most organized youth sports are examples.

Scholars who study sports as social phenomena generally use a flexible and inclusive definition of sport. Although past research in the sociology of sport has focused mainly on what you and I would describe as “organized sports,” current research often focuses on **physical culture**, *which includes all forms of movement and physical activities that people in particular social worlds create, sustain, and regularly include in their collective lives*. This could be tai chi done in a Beijing park, capoeira in a Sao Paulo plaza, parkour in a Paris neighborhood, or break-dancing in New York City’s Central Park. Of course, organized sports are a central and often dominant component of physical culture in many societies today, but it has not always been this way and there continue to be societies in which traditional folk games and expressive forms of movement are more important than formally organized, competitive sports. Research on physical culture is important because it helps us understand how people think and feel about their bodies and how they define movement and integrate it into their lives (Dworkin and Wachs, 2009; Silk and Andrews, 2011). Additionally, it provides a foundation for critically examining the deeper game associated with sports in society.

### Official Definitions of Sports

Defining *sport* in official terms and choosing specific activities that qualify as sports is an important process in organizations, communities, and societies. Being classified as an official sport gives special status to an activity and is likely to increase participation, funding, community support, and

general visibility. For example, in Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries, walking, bicycling, and certain forms of general exercise are considered to be “sports.” Therefore, those who participate regularly in these activities often see themselves as “sportspersons” and are treated that way by their peers. Additionally, public policies are likely to provide common spaces for these activities and financial support for events that include them.

The official definitions of sport used by organizations and officials in the United States are more exclusive in that they give priority to formally organized, competitive activities. Therefore, even though walking is encouraged for general health purposes, most people in the U.S. would not consider walking a sport, nor would they ever describe walkers as sportspersons. This is important because it also may mean that walking trails and walking events will receive much less financial and political support than stadiums and arenas in which elite and professional sports are played and watched—because these are seen as the “real” or official sports.

According to most people in the United States, Canada, and a growing number of other societies, sports involve rules, competition, scoring, winners and losers, schedules and seasons, records, coaches, referees, and governing bodies that set rules and sponsor championships. Additionally, organizations such as local park and recreation departments, state high school athletic federations, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and the United States Olympic Committee use their own criteria for defining *sport* and selecting activities for official recognition as sports for purposes of funding and support.

Official definitions of sport have important implications. When a definition emphasizes rules, competition, and high performance, many people will be excluded from participation, decide that they are not fit to play, or avoid other physical activities that are defined as “second class.” For example, when a 12-year-old is cut from an exclusive club soccer team, she may

not want to play in the local league sponsored by the park and recreation department because she sees it as “recreational activity” rather than a real sport. This can create a situation in which most people are physically inactive at the same time that a small number of people perform at relatively high levels for large numbers of spectators—a situation that negatively impacts health and increases health-care costs in a society or community. When sport is defined to include a wide range of physical activities that are played for pleasure and integrated into local expressions of social life, physical activity rates will be high and overall health benefits are likely.

### Sports Are Social Constructions

Understanding the sociology of sport is easier if you learn to think of sports as **social constructions**—that is, as *parts of the social world that are created by people as they interact with one another under particular social, political, and economic conditions*. This means that the kinds of sports that exist and gain popularity in particular social worlds often tell us much about the values and orientations of those who play, watch, or sponsor them. They also tell us about who has power in a social world.

Just as defining and identifying *official* sports is part of a political process, with outcomes that benefit some people more than others, so is the process of creating and sustaining sports in a social world. This becomes apparent when we examine the struggles that often occur over whose ideas will be used when making decisions about the following sport-related issues:

1. What is the meaning and primary purpose of sports, and how should sports be organized to fit that meaning and purpose?
2. Who will play sports with whom, and under what conditions will they play?
3. What agencies or organizations will sponsor and control sports?

Heated debates occur when people disagree on these issues. History shows that some

of these debates have caused bitter feelings and led to lawsuits, government intervention, and the passage of laws. For example, people often disagree about the meaning, purpose, and organization of cheerleading in U.S. high schools. Most school officials say that cheerleading is not a sport because its primary purpose is to support high school teams. But others argue that the cheerleaders at many schools are now organized as teams, they train like other athletes, and they compete in championships and bring recognition and rewards to their schools. This debate over the purpose of cheerleading will continue because the stakes are high: being designated an official high school sport brings funding and other support that affects the organization of cheerleading and the meaning it has in schools, communities, and American society.

Disagreements and struggles over the purpose, meaning, and organization of sports occur most often when they involve the funding priorities of government agencies (Eichberg, 2008). For example, if the primary purpose of sport is to improve health and fitness for everyone, then funding should go to sports that provide widespread recreational participation resulting in net positive effects on physical well-being. But if people see sports as “wars without weapons” with the purpose being to push the limits of human ability, then funding should go to sports organized to produce high-performance athletes who can achieve competitive victories. This issue is regularly contested at the national and local levels of government, in universities and public school districts, and even in families, as parents decide how to use their resources to support their children’s physical activities.

These examples show that sports are contested activities—that is, activities for which there are no timeless and universal agreements about what they mean, why they exist, or how they should be organized. This is also illustrated by historical disagreements over who is allowed to play sports and the conditions under which certain people can play. Cases involving

extended struggles are listed in the box, “Who Plays and Who Doesn’t” (p. 10).

The third issue that makes sports contested activities focuses on who should provide the resources needed to play them and who should control them. When people see sports contributing to the common good, it is likely that sport facilities and programs will be supported by government agencies and tax money. When people see sports as primarily contributing to individual development, it is likely that sport facilities and programs will be supported by individuals, families, and private-corporate sponsors. However, in both cases there will be struggles over the extent to which sponsors control sports and the extent to which sports are organized to be consistent with community values.

Struggles over these three issues show that using a single definition of sports may lead us to overlook important factors in a particular social world, such as who has power and resources and how meanings are given to particular activities at different times in a community or society. Being aware of these factors enables us to *put sports into context* and understand them in the terms used by those who create, play, and support them. It also helps us see that the definition of sports in any particular context usually represents the ideas and interests of some people more than others. In the sociology of sport, this leads to questions and research on whose ideas and interests count the most when it comes to determining (1) the meaning, purpose, and organization of sports; (2) who plays under what conditions, and (3) how sports will be sponsored and controlled. Material in each of the following chapters summarizes the findings of this research.

## WHAT IS THE SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT?

The **sociology of sport** is primarily a subdiscipline of sociology and physical education that studies sports as social phenomena. Most research and writing in the field focuses on “organized,