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SOCIOLOGY OF NORTH AMERICAN SPORT

ELEVENTH EDITION

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PREFACE

It is with great sorrow that I must share with readers of this book that my co-author, colleague, and special friend D. Stanley Eitzen passed away on July 3, 2017. We co-authored *Sociology of North American Sport* through 10 editions, and we were beginning to write the 11th edition when he passed away. Our co-authorship was only part of the wonderful personal friendship that we had. Since its beginnings back in 1980, Stan was a devoted member of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS), and he attended all but two or three of the annual conferences. I know many NASSS members held Stan in high regard and enjoyed the communication they had with him over the years.

Stan's research interests were in sociology of sport, political sociology, family, criminology, social inequality, and social problems. He served as editor of the *Social Science Journal* and the *Journal of the Western Social Science Association* and as president of the NASSS. His hobbies included wood carving, painting, and golf.

Dr. Becky Beal had agreed to work with us on the 11th edition of this book before Stan died. She has been a major help in preparing the present edition, so in recognition for her contributions to this edition, Becky deservedly is now one of the co-authors. Stan Eitzen's name remains as a co-author because of his contributions to each of the previous editions.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS TEXT

Sport is sometimes trivialized as a playground separate from the real world. This is certainly not an accurate representation of sport's role in society. More accurately, sport is a microcosm of society as well as a site for culturally changing society. Indeed, as a microcosm and as a phenomenon for social change, sport in the United States and Canada has a profound influence on the social life of large numbers of people of all ages.

Three goals have continued to guide our endeavors in writing this book. Our first goal is to analyze sport sociologically and, in so doing, to demythologize sport. This method promotes an understanding of how a sociological perspective contrasts with common-sense or taken-for-granted perceptions about sport and society. For most readers, this will result in understanding sport in a new way. We identify various social theoretical perspectives and explore the ways in which they contribute to an understanding of contemporary sport. Our experience is that this approach helps readers to incorporate implicitly the sociological perspective in their repertoire for understanding other parts of the social world.

Our second goal is to highlight to our readers in sociology—as well as in sports management, physical education, kinesiology, and related fields in social science, fitness, and health sciences—the importance of including the sociology of sport as a legitimate subfield in each of these disciplines. Our message to all of our

readers is that sport is a social activity worthy of serious inquiry. It is a substantive topic as deserving of sociologists' attention as the standard specialties: family, religion, and politics. Not only is sport a microcosm of the larger society, sports phenomena offer a fertile field in which to test sociological theories. Indeed, although the mechanical and physiological factors of sport are important, the social milieu in which participation is embedded is crucial with respect to who participates, when, where, and the consequences of such participation. Sport involvement is more than just making use of the levers of the body and using strength, endurance, and fitness to achieve objectives.

Our final goal is to make readers aware of the positive and negative consequences of the way sport is organized in North America. We are concerned about some of the trends in contemporary sport, especially the movement away from athlete-oriented activities and toward the impersonality of what we term "corporate sport." We are committed to advancing sport and society in a more humane and socially just direction, and this requires, as a first step, a thorough understanding of the principles that underlie the social structures and processes that create, sustain, and transform the social organizations within the institution of sport.

Our aim is to excite readers about current sociological issues, problems, and trends in sport. Accordingly, the order of the chapters has been arranged to fit logically with a sociological analysis; also, all of the chapters have been thoroughly revised, and the content has been updated. We have tried to incorporate the salient research and relevant events that have occurred since the publication of the previous edition of this book.

In the first two editions of this book, we focused on sport in the United States; the focus in all subsequent editions, including this one, has been broadened to include sport in Canadian society. There are many parallels between sport and society in the United States and Canada, as well as important differences. Finally, we have made a special effort in this edition to incorporate issues of social class, race-ethnicity, and gender throughout the text.

ORGANIZATION

In Chapter 1, we describe the unique focus of sociology as a discipline and identify the different analytic

levels employed by sociologists. We identify the major sociological theories that provide different and important ways to understand sport. Next, we show how sport provides an ideal environment for utilizing certain sociological instruments and methodologies and affords a setting for the testing of sociological theories.

The phenomenon of sport represents one of the most pervasive social institutions in North America. In Chapter 2, we discuss the relationships among technological, industrial, and urban developments and the rise of organized sport.

The major theme of this book is that sport is a microcosm of society. Salient social values are identified in Chapter 3, and we discuss how sport reflects and reinforces the core values, beliefs, and ideologies of North American society.

Chapter 4 analyzes two major social problems in sport: (1) violence, including participant and fan violence, athletes' abuse of women, and violence against athletes and (2) substance abuse by athletes.

Sport is typically assumed to be an egalitarian and meritocratic institution. In Chapter 5, we examine these two assumptions as they relate to social class and social mobility. The analysis shows that these beliefs are largely myths.

Systematic and pervasive discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities has been a historical feature of American society, but many Americans believe that sport has been and is free of racism. Chapter 6 documents the historical and contemporary facts illustrating that sport has had and still has many of the same racial problems as the larger society. Although the focus of this chapter is on African Americans and sport, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans and their connections to the sports world are also discussed.

The theme of Chapter 7 is that the world of sport has largely been the exclusive domain of males and that sociocultural forces have combined to virtually exclude female sport involvement. We discuss the problems of equity that persist despite changes in the opportunity structure. Also included in this chapter are issues of sexuality as they relate to women and men athletes.

For millions of people, involvement in sport begins in youth sports programs. In Chapter 8, we describe how children are socialized into sport, and we discuss some of the consequences of these sports experiences.

Sport and education are inexorably intertwined in North America. Chapter 9 examines interscholastic sport, focusing on the social sources responsible for the promotion of sports programs, the consequences of school sports programs, and the problems surrounding school sport.

Chapter 10 is devoted primarily to big-time intercollegiate sport. Although this level of sport is extremely popular, we focus here on the many problems that compromise the integrity of the educational mission of universities.

Economic factors play an overriding role in much of contemporary sport in the United States and Canada. The emergence of unprecedented affluence in certain sectors along with the enormous increase in interest in sport has had a dramatic economic impact. Chapter 11 describes the multidimensional aspects of economic considerations in sport, including the ongoing problems between owners and players.

There is a symbiotic relationship between sport and the mass media. In Chapter 12, we review the social purposes of the mass media and their relation to sport, the influence of the mass media on sport and the impact of sport on the mass media, and the role of the sports journalist.

Although the sport establishment publicly disavows any relationship between politics and sport, they are closely related. In Chapter 13 we discuss the close ties between the two and show that there are several characteristics inherent in both institutions that serve to guarantee this strong relationship.

In Chapter 14, we explore the relationship between one of the oldest universal social institutions—religion—and one of the newest, in terms of a highly organized leisure activity—sport. We trace the changing relations between the two institutions and show how contemporary sport has many of the characteristics of a religion. We also describe how religious agents and agencies use sport to promote religion and how athletes employ magico-religious rituals, taboos, and fetishes in the hope of enhancing their performances.

The final chapter speculates on the future of sport in North America. The basic theme is that since sport reflects society, sport will undoubtedly undergo some transformation as society changes. We describe several current trends and possible future changes in

society and discuss how each is likely to be manifested in sport changes.

Each chapter in this edition has a Notes section that provides readers with relevant references to the various topics found in the chapter. These can be quite useful to students and researchers who seek additional information on a given topic.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

It has been three years since the previous edition of this text appeared, and a lot has happened in the world of sport over that time period. The revisions for the current edition have therefore been extensive, and we hope both students and professors will appreciate the additions and updates.

EXPANDED EXPLANATION OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO SPORT

Sociological theories provide contrasting ways of understanding social life. Traditional social theories are regularly undergoing change and reinterpretation. In this edition, we have written a more wide-ranging explanation of sociological theories and their relevance to sports. After presenting a detailed description of the various sociological theories in the first chapter of the book, in this chapter we explain and elaborate on how those theories are relevant to understanding the sports topics that are the focus of the following chapters.

UPDATED CONTENT AND REFERENCES

This edition focuses on current issues, such as sports academies, the changing role of parents and coaches in youth sports, and youth sports as “traveling leagues.” Significant developments in high school and intercollegiate sports, making them more commercial and placing increasing pressure and stress on coaches and athletes, are explained. We have renewed our suggestions for reform at both of these levels of sport. Recent trends in the social problems of sport—violence and substance abuse—are highlighted. Sports gambling has been moved to Chapter 11. We have also focused on people with disabilities and LGBTQ in several chapters rather than in just one chapter.

The socioeconomic topics of sport change quickly, so we have updated, described, and analyzed

these transformations. Social media are playing an increasingly significant role in sport, so we identify the new social media forms and their relevance in contemporary sport. With each new trend and development in the sociology of sport we have provided the most up-to-date analysis, and the book has many references that support this new content.

EXPANDED FOCUS ON DIVERSITY

Although this text has always recognized the importance of diversity in sport and society, the current edition includes additional information on Native Americans, Latinos, Asians, and other minority groups in relation to sport. Recent opportunities for and achievements of minority and female athletes, coaches, and sports organizations, as well as the influence of globalization on promoting diversity, are identified and discussed.

NEW TABLES AND FIGURES

All of the tables and figures from the previous edition have been updated to account for changes in the subject from the previous edition. But there are also new tables and figures to illustrate subject matter that is new to this edition. The organizational structure of the NCAA, salaries of professional athletes and coaches, the wealth of the owners of professional sports team franchises, and the value of these franchises are a few examples of subjects addressed in the updated tables and figures.

NEW "THINKING ABOUT SPORT" BOXES

There are more than twenty-five boxes in this edition, several of which are new. These boxes feature thought-provoking essays on sport topics that expand on and supplement the regular textual content in each of the chapters in which they appear. For example, in Chapter 7 there is a new box entitled "The Humiliating Practice of Sex-Testing Female Athletes." The box describes how the International Association of Athletics (track and field in the United States) Federations (IAAF) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) introduced a "gender-verification" strategy—a

chromosome test—and when questions about a female athlete's sex arose, international sport organizations asserted the right to employ the chromosome test while also retaining the right to use a hormone test, a gynecological exam, and a psychological evaluation. Another example of a new box is found in Chapter 6, entitled "Dirk Nowitzki's Influence Can't Be Overstated;" its purpose is to acquaint readers with the role foreign-born athletes are playing in U.S. and Canadian sports.

NEW PHOTOS

Most of the photos in this edition are new, and they provide a pictorial supplement to the sports topics discussed. We have selected photos illustrating the diversity of participants in North American sports.

WEB RESOURCES

All web resources have been updated to highlight current sports organizations and resources. Web resources are available at www.oup.com/us/sage-eitzen.

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SOCIOLOGY OF NORTH AMERICAN SPORT

PART

1

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF SPORT

CHAPTER 1

THE SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SPORT IN NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETY

What sports can do for everyone, no matter the shape or size or race or ethnicity or religion. . . . People find teams, people find players, people find colors because of sport . . . and it brings people together like none other.

—LEBRON JAMES, NBA SUPERSTAR¹



Rupp Arena is an arena located in downtown Lexington, Kentucky. It serves as home court to the University of Kentucky men's basketball program and is named after legendary former Kentucky coach Adolph Rupp. With an official capacity of 23,500, it is currently the largest arena in the United States designed specifically for basketball. (Photo: Andy Lyons/Getty Images)

Sport is a ubiquitous word and activity, and Americans and Canadians relish playing it, watching it, and reading about it, but when people hear there is a field of academic study called sociology of sport, they typically ask, “What has sociology got to do with sport?” The short answer is that sociologists study social behavior of all kinds, from interpersonal social relations to group formations to formal social organizations. Sport is fundamentally a social phenomenon that encompasses all of these social forms of human activity. For this reason, sport is viewed as an appropriate and relevant topic for study by sociologists.

Sociologists also realize that sport is an extraordinarily popular and pervasive worldwide social endeavor and therefore a suitable subject for study and analysis. Indeed, North Americans are inundated daily by sports, in part because of the massive expansion of youth, high school, and intercollegiate sports, the enormous growth of professional sports, and the expanded mass media coverage of sports events, especially on television and the Internet, during the past twenty-five years.

It occurred to us that since so few people seem to realize that there is a field of academic inquiry called sociology of sport, it would be appropriate to begin with a definition of the word that is the subject of this book—sport. This will be followed by brief discussion of the sociology of sport as a field of study. We then describe the pervasiveness of sport in North America.

What is sport? There is no universal definition of sport, mainly because such a variety of games and physical activities are conventionally called sports. Generally, we define sport as any competitive physical activity that is guided by established rules. John Loy, one of the first generation of sport sociologists, defined sport “as any form of playful competition whose outcome is determined by physical skill, strategy or chance employed singly or in combination.”² Many other definitions of sport are quite similar. (For an elaboration on the word sport, see the “Levels of Sport” section later in this chapter.)

AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT AS A FIELD OF STUDY

Sociology of sport as an organized field of study is just over fifty years old. It began at about the same

time that sport psychology, sport history, and sport philosophy were emerging as systematic academic disciplines with a sport focus.

Most current sport sociologists were attracted to this field of study through their own involvement in sport, first as youth sport athletes, then as high school athletes; a few were college athletes, and several were professional athletes. As college students, these future sport sociologists—seeking to find a career to meet their needs and interests—took courses in the sport sciences. In addition, while enrolled in college courses in traditional disciplines, such as psychology or sociology, they found ways to integrate those subjects into their interest in sports. Many who ultimately became sport sociologists were able to enroll in a sociology of sport course.

Although sociology of sport has not been a rapidly growing field of study, it has advanced to the point where it is taught in most colleges and universities, and it has attracted a group of dedicated scholars with interests in research and publication (see Box 1.1). There are currently about 1,200 faculty members teaching courses in the sociology of sport in North American colleges and universities. This is not a large number as academic and scholarly societies go, but the quantity of such courses has been increasing slowly throughout higher education, and the future looks good for the development of the sociology of sport.

Sociology of sport scholars are often utilized as consultants and “experts” by newspaper sports reporters and sports television broadcasters when they are doing a story with sociological relevance. Moreover, sport sociologists frequently publish their research in a variety of mainstream sociology journals beyond the three identified in Box 1.1.

Sport sociologists who teach, research, and publish were attracted to this discipline for many different reasons. Some were inclined toward a career involving sport because of their personal experiences in sport during their childhood and adolescence. Others were interested in pursuing an understanding of the connections between sports and the family, education, economy, politics, mass media, religion, and cultural identities such as race, gender, or disability. Like academic scholars in other disciplines seeking to advance knowledge in their discipline, sport

BOX 1.1 THINKING ABOUT SPORT: SCHOLARLY ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT

Virtually every academic discipline (also called field of study) has formed associations or societies and created journals with the purpose of providing an outlet for advancing knowledge in the discipline through exchanging research findings and social networking as well as promoting its assets, visibility, and diversity.

In North America, the sociology of sport has a scholarly organization named the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS). At present, there are about 400 NASSS members. The official scholarly publication of NASSS is the *Sociology of Sport Journal*, which is published quarterly by Human Kinetics Publishers. A second

publication, the *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, is published by Sage Publications (no relation to the co-author of this text). Annual NASSS conferences are held in cities throughout the United States and Canada.

Internationally, the sociology of sport is represented by the International Sociology of Sport Association (ISSA), which was founded in 1965. ISSA sponsors a scholarly publication titled the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*; it is published by Sage Publications. ISSA is also a research committee of the International Sociological Association. At present, ISSA has some 250 members from countries throughout the world. ISSA holds annual conferences, including congresses in conjunction with the World Congress of Sociology and the Pre-Olympic Scientific Congress.

sociologists aspire to learn about and understand the complex sociological meanings of and connections between general social practices and sport in the hope that they can make positive contributions to both sport and society. We hope this overview of sociology of sport is helpful to readers for developing an understanding of what this field of study is about. The remaining sections of this chapter deal with general topics and issues that will form a foundation for the specific subjects described and analyzed in the chapters that follow.

THE PERVASIVENESS OF SPORT

We begin with a brief description of the importance of sport in society, followed by an introduction to the discipline of sociology and a discussion of how the sociological approach aids in our understanding of sport.

Although seemingly a trivial facet of life, sport is important, particularly as our social lives become increasingly leisure oriented. Sport constitutes much of our everyday conversation, reading material, recreational activities, and discretionary spending. According to The Physical Activity Council, nearly 75 percent of Americans are involved in some type of sport activity, recreational endeavor, team sport, or fitness program, with some 212.6 million “actives” taking part in a wide range of sports and fitness



Skateboarding, like other sports that began as informal activities, began with friends skateboarding together, much like the photo here. Skateboarding has become more corporate which has had two effects. One, it has increased the popularity of the sport. Two, it has spurred many skaters to create their own local practices. Today there is more diversity in participants and styles of skateboarding than ever before. (Photo: © Paul Topp|Dreamstime)

activities in 2018 on a “regular basis” and another 42 million active on a “casual basis.” One event, the annual New York marathon, attracts more than 51,000 participants.³

Sport is big business. According to a Plunkett Research analysis, the estimated size of the entire

U.S. sport industry in 2016 was \$498.4 billion (yes, billion!). Here are a few examples:

- According to *Forbes* magazine, the Dallas Cowboys were worth \$4 billion in 2017.
- LeBron James was paid about \$772 million in salary and endorsements in 2016, making him the highest paid athlete in North America.
- Alabama's Nick Saban was the highest paid coach in college football in 2018, earning a total of \$11 million in salary and bonuses.
- In 2016, the Texas A&M University athletic department reported \$192,608,876 in total revenue.
- A 30-second advertisement during the 2018 Super Bowl on NBC cost \$5 million.
- NCAA men's basketball saw an overall attendance of 32,382,283 fans for the 2016–17 season in Divisions I, II, and III.
- NCAA women's basketball attendance during the 2017–18 season set an all-time record with nearly \$12 million patrons attending games across all three divisions.⁴

Newspapers devote more space to sports than to a variety of other topics, including business news, which would seem to be of more importance in a capitalist economy. *USA Today*, America's so-called nation's newspaper, devotes one of its four major news sections to sport; moreover, in recent years articles about sports have increasingly been appearing in the other sections as well. For many readers, sports sections are the most closely examined part of the daily newspaper.

Evidence of sportsmania is also seen in the amount of television time dedicated to sport: almost one-fifth of major TV network time is devoted to sport, and some cable and satellite networks provide twenty-four-hour sports coverage. Most professional sport organizations now have their own subscriber TV networks (e.g., NFL Network, MLB Network, NHL Network, NCAA Network). Television networks bid billions of dollars for multiyear rights to televise college basketball tournaments, professional sports, and the Olympic Games. Approximately \$10 billion is bet illegally annually on the Super Bowl outcome with bookies, offshore, and on the Internet.

Table 1.1 shows the extraordinarily large scale of sports spectatorship in the United States. When these

TABLE 1.1 NUMBER OF SPECTATORS AT MAJOR SPORTS EVENTS IN 2017

Sport	Number of Spectators
Major League Baseball	73,159,068
National Hockey League	21,501,698
National Basketball Association	21,972,129
National Football League	17,510,312
Major League Soccer	7,375,144
Canadian Football League	2,003,714
Women's National Basketball Association	1,465,432
NCAA Division I-A:	
Football	43,529,377
Men's basketball	27,234,610
Women's basketball	8,286,356

Source: A variety of sources were needed to compile these figures, but the single best source is Plunkett Research, Ltd., <https://www.plunkettresearch.com/statistics/sports-industry/>.

numbers are multiplied by the average cost of tickets, parking, and refreshments, the amount generated by sports attendance is huge. Similarly, with about half of the U.S. population regularly participating in sports, the amount spent on sports-related goods is enormous (about \$46 billion in 2017 just in retail sports sales).

Language is a fundamental feature in every culture, and the language of sports idioms pops up constantly in Americans' speech and writing. Idioms are common phrases or terms whose meaning are not real but can be understood by their popular use. Take, for example, these terms from baseball—ballpark figure, bush league, cover all the bases, heavy hitter, pinch hit, screwball—or these from boxing—pull your punches, saved by the bell, throw in the towel, down for the count. Undoubtedly, readers can think of others from their favorite sport.

THE DISCIPLINE OF SOCIOLOGY

In this section we turn to an examination of the substantive topics that form the discipline of sociology at this time. As we noted above, sociology is the

systematic study of social behavior interpersonally, in groups, and in organizations. Sociologists are especially interested in the social patterns that emerge whenever people interact over periods of time. They also study human groups and organizations, the size of which can range from a couple to a church, from a family business to a corporation, from a community to a nation. Regardless of size and purpose, similarities exist in group structures and in the processes that create, sustain, and transform them. In other words, a group that forms to make quilts for charity will be similar in important ways to a group that forms with the goal of winning football games. We know, for example, that through recurrent interaction certain characteristics emerge: (1) a division of labor; (2) a hierarchical structure of ranks (i.e., differences in power, prestige, and rewards); (3) rules; (4) punishment for the violation of rules; (5) criteria for the evaluation of things, people, ideas, and behavior; (6) a shared understanding of symbols with special meanings (gestures, objects, or specialized language such as nicknames); and (7) member cooperation to achieve group goals.⁵

Sociologists are interested not only in the underlying order of social life but also in the principles that explain human social behavior. Sociology is joined in this quest by other social science disciplines—namely, psychology, political science, economics, history, and anthropology. Each of the social sciences has a unique orientation. Psychological explanations of human behavior focus on personality, mental processes, and human behavioral characteristics. Political scientists are concerned with governmental organization and the forms and uses of power and authority. Study of the production of goods and services is the domain of economists. Historians concentrate on individuals (mostly leaders), events, and trends of the past. Origins, development, and characteristic patterns of cultures, past and present, are the interests of anthropologists.

Each of the various social sciences is useful to sociologists because they all have humans as their central subject. Indeed, the literature of sociology is rich with information drawn from other social sciences in the pursuit of studying sociological questions. These might be the social conditions in the community or society such as varying degrees of unemployment,

inflation, leisure time, urban blight, or restricted opportunities for minority groups.

An extremely important external influence on human behavior has to do with the meanings that the members of a social organization share. These shared meanings constitute culture. Under the rubric of culture are the standards used to evaluate behavior, ideology, customs, and expectations for persons occupying various positions—all of which limit the choices of individuals, regardless of their biological heritage or their psychological proclivities.

Each individual in society is, because of his or her wealth, occupation, education, religion, racial and ethnic heritage, gender, and family background, ranked by others and by himself or herself. Placement in this complex hierarchy exerts pressures, both subtle and blatant, on people to behave in prescribed ways. As sociologists have accumulated knowledge about all of these topics, they have integrated information from other social sciences to supplement their sociological findings.

The goal of this book is to provide a comprehensive sociological analysis and explanation of sport in the United States and Canada. Such an inquiry, we hope, not only will be interesting and meaningful but also will introduce readers to a new way to understand the social world in general and the phenomenon of sport in particular.

ASSUMPTIONS OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

We have seen that human behavior is examined through different disciplinary lenses and that each field of inquiry makes important contributions to knowledge. Of the disciplines focusing on human behavior, sociology is commonly the least understood, so we plan to introduce readers to the sociological ways of perceiving and interpreting the role of sport in society. We begin by enumerating the assumptions of the sociological approach that provide the foundation for this unique way of viewing the world.⁶

Individuals Are, by Their Nature, Social Beings

There are two fundamental reasons for the assumption that humans are naturally social beings. First, children enter the world totally dependent on others

for their survival. This initial period of dependence means, in effect, that each individual is immersed in social groups from birth. Second, throughout history individuals have found it advantageous to cooperate with others for defense, for material comforts, to overcome the perils of nature, and to improve technology.

Individuals Are, for the Most Part, Socially Determined

The assumption that individuals are socially determined stems from the first assumption of the sociological approach—that people are social beings. Individuals are products of their social environments for several reasons. During infancy, children are at the mercy of others, especially parents. These persons can shape the potential behaviors of infants in an infinite variety of ways, depending on their proclivities and those of the society.

Parents have a profound impact on their children's ways of thinking about themselves and about others; they transmit religious views, attitudes, and prejudices about how other groups are to be rated. Children are punished for certain behaviors and rewarded for others. Whether children become bigots or integrationists, traditionalists or innovators, saints or sinners, athletes or nonathletes depends in large measure on parents, siblings, peers, and others with whom they interact.

Parents act as cultural agents, transferring the ways of the society to their children. As a consequence, a child is born not only into a family but also into a society, both of which shape the personality characteristics and perceptions of each individual. Society shapes our identity, our thoughts, and our emotions. Thus, the structures of society become the structures of our own consciousness; they do not stop at the surface of our skin but, rather, penetrate and envelop us. One's identity is socially bestowed and shaped by the way he or she is accepted, rejected, and defined by others. Whether an individual is attractive or plain, witty or dull, worthy or unworthy depends on the values of the society and the groups in which the individual is immersed. Although genes determine an individual's physical characteristics, the social environment, especially an individual's social class location, determines how those characteristics will be evaluated.

Suggesting that we are socially determined is another way of saying that we are, in many ways, dependent on and manipulated by social forces. A major function of sociology is to identify the social forces that affect us so greatly. Accordingly, one task of sociology is to learn about issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia in an effort to understand how they work. This is often difficult, however, because we typically do not recognize their existence. Social forces may have prompted us to believe and to behave in racist, sexist, and homophobic ways.

Saying that people are dependent on and manipulated by social forces does not imply a total social determinism. Such words are merely used to convey the idea that much of who we are and what we do is a product of our social environment. However, society is not a rigid, static entity composed of robots; there are nonconformists, deviants, and innovators as well. Although the members of society are shaped by their social environment, they also change that environment. Human beings are the shapers of society; in other words, they possess *human agency*, meaning that they have the capacity to make choices and to impose those choices on the world. This is the third assumption of the sociological approach.

Individuals Create, Sustain, and Change the Social Forms Within Which They Conduct Their Lives

An old but still popular saying—that “we are captains of our fate”—contains a core insight of sociology. In brief, the argument is that individual persons within social groups of all sizes and types (families, peer groups, work groups, athletic teams, corporations, communities, and societies) actually form, and are formed by, their members. The groups and organizations that interacting persons create become a source of control over them (i.e., they become puppets of their own creation), but the continuous interaction of individuals within groups and organizations also changes, influences, and helps construct and maintain these social entities.

Two important implications stem from this assumption that groups are created and sustained by persons through interaction. The first is that through collective action, individuals are capable of changing the structure of society and even the course of

history. Individuals are not passive. Rather, they actively shape social life by adapting to, negotiating with, and changing social structures. This process, too, illustrates *human agency*.

Second, these social forms that are created and changed by people have a certain momentum of their own that restricts change. Although human-made, the group's expectations and structures also take on a sacred quality—a sanctity of tradition—that constrains behavior in socially prescribed ways. By extension, we can infer that social arrangements, because they are a result of socially constructed activity, are imperfect. Slavery benefits some segments of society by taking advantage of others. A competitive free enterprise system creates winners and losers. The wonders of technology make worldwide transportation and communication easy and relatively inexpensive, but they also create pollution and waste natural resources. These examples show that both positive and negative consequences emanate from human social actions and organizations.

THINKING AS A SOCIOLOGIST: SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Sociologist C. Wright Mills, in his classic *The Sociological Imagination*, articulated an unusual form of creative thinking that has been a benchmark for sociologists for more than half a century. He referred to this style of thinking as a *sociological imagination*, which requires an awareness of the relationships between the individual and the broader society inasmuch as individual circumstances are inextricably linked to the structure of society. A sociological imagination, according to Mills, enables sociologists (actually, all of us) to realize the connections between our immediate, personal lives and the detached, impersonal social world that surrounds and shapes us. The sociological imagination involves several related components:⁷

- The sociological imagination is inspired by a willingness to view the social world from the perspective of others.
- It involves moving away from thinking in terms of the individual and her or his problems, focusing rather on the social, economic, and historical circumstances that produce the problems. Put

another way, the sociological imagination is the ability to see and understand the societal patterns that influence individuals, families, groups, and organizations.

- Possessing a sociological imagination, one can move from examining a single unemployed person to analyzing the societal change from manufacturing to a service/knowledge economy, from a homeless family to the lack of affordable housing, and from a racist coach to institutional racism.
- Applying a sociological imagination requires renouncing the taken-for-granted assumptions about social life and establishing a critical distance. In other words, one must be willing to question the traditional explanations for the structural arrangements that shape social behavior.
- When employing this imagination, one begins to see the solutions to social problems not in terms of changing individuals but in terms of changing the structure of society.

UNITS OF SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

We have seen that sociologists are interested in social organizations and in how social forces operate to channel human behavior. The scope of sociology ranges from individuals sharing common social characteristics to small groups to society.



The pervasiveness of sport throughout North America is evident at the micro level with informal play. It exists also at the macro level, which is structured by teams, leagues, and large sport organizations. At both levels a great deal of social learning occurs that socializes participants into the larger culture. (Photo: © Paul Topp/Dreamstime)

The Micro Level

At the micro level, the emphasis is on the structure of relatively small groups, such as families, friendship groups, and such organizations as the Friday night poker club, the local Nazarene Church, the African Violet Society, and the Middletown High School football team. Some research questions of interest at this level are: What are the principles underlying group formation, stability, and change? What are the most effective forms of organization to accomplish group goals? Under what social conditions is member cooperation maximized? Under what social conditions is member behavior least predictable?

Sports teams are especially useful research settings in which to test theories about social organization. Sociologists of sport have researched, for example, the organizational characteristics correlated with success (leadership style, leadership change, homogeneity of members). They have examined where in sports organizations racial discrimination is most likely to occur.

As a final example of the micro level, sport sociologists have researched sports teams to examine the important social processes of competition and cooperation. Sport provides innumerable instances in which competition and cooperation occur separately and simultaneously. On the one hand, sports contests are instances of institutionalized conflict. Therefore, they may serve to control undesirable aggression and violence in socially acceptable channels. On the other hand, sports teams require cooperation to be effective.

An important question—some would say a central question—in sociology is this: What facilitates group cohesion? (Under what conditions do members pull together, and when do they pull apart?) The leaders of sports teams—coaches, managers, and athletic directors—spend a good deal of their time working to build group unity. Some are successful; others are not. Is it a matter of charisma, authoritarianism, homogeneity of personnel, winning, social control, or what?

The Macro Level

Social behavior exists in a larger social setting—a context that is also structured—with its own norms, values, statuses, roles, and social institutions. These components of social structure constrain social

groups and the attitudes and behaviors of individuals, regardless of their group memberships.

Societal norms are societal prescriptions for how one should act and dress in given situations—for example, at a restaurant, church, school, concert, or football game. In other words, norms are situational. Why is the national anthem always played at sports events but not at concerts? Clearly, behavior considered appropriate for spectators at a football game (e.g., spontaneous screams of exuberance or despair, the open criticism of authority figures, and even the ritual destruction of goalposts) would be inexcusable behavior at a poetry reading. We know what is expected of us in these different situations. We also know how to act with members of the opposite sex, with elders, and with children. Thus, behavior in society is patterned and norm-structured. We know how to behave, and we can anticipate how others will behave. This allows social interaction to occur smoothly.

Values are also part of society's culture. They are the criteria we use in assessing the relative desirability, merit, or correctness of objects, ideas, acts, feelings, or events. This is the topic of Chapter 3, so we will only state here that members of society are taught explicitly and implicitly how to judge whether someone or something is good or bad, moral or immoral, appropriate or inappropriate. North Americans, for example, believe that winning—in school, in sports, in business, and in life—is a legitimate goal. They not only value success but also know precisely how to evaluate others and themselves by this critical dimension.

Statuses and roles are social positions (statuses) and behavioral expectations (roles) for individuals. There are family statuses (daughter, son, sibling, parent, husband, wife); age statuses (child, adolescent, adult, elder); gender statuses (male, female); racial statuses (African American, Hispanic, Native American, white); and socioeconomic statuses (poor, middle class, wealthy). For each status, there are societal constraints on behavior. To be a male or a female in North American society, for example, is to be constrained in a relatively rigid set of expectations. Similarly, African Americans and others of minority status have been expected to “know their place.” Historically, their place in sport was segregated, and they were denied equal access to sports participation

with whites. Even with civil rights laws requiring equality, the place of racial minorities often remains unequal—in sport at certain playing positions, head coaching, and administration.

Societal institutions are universally characteristic of societies, but popular usages of this term are imprecise and sometimes even incorrect. Sociologists use the term to mean social arrangements that channel behavior in prescribed ways in the important areas of social life. Social institutions are devised by the persons making up a society and passed on to succeeding generations to provide “permanent” solutions for crucial societal problems.

In sociology, a social institution is not merely something established and traditional (e.g., a janitor who has worked at the same school for forty-five years), nor is the term limited to a specific organization such as a school, a prison, or a hospital. An institution is much broader in scope and in importance than a person, a custom, or a single social organization.

Another way to characterize social institutions is to say they are cultural imperatives. They serve as regulatory agencies that channel behavior in culturally prescribed ways. All societies face problems in common, and their members are continually seeking solutions. Although the variety of solutions is almost infinite, there is a similarity in the outcomes sought—namely, stability and maintenance of the system.

Social institutions for family, education, polity, education, mass media, and religion thrive as part of all contemporary societies. For example, human societies instill in their members predetermined channels for marriage. Instead of being allowed a whole host of options (e.g., polygamy, polyandry, or group marriage), in a given society sexual partners are expected to marry and to set up a conjugal household. The actual options across human societies are many, but most partners tend to choose what their society deems appropriate. The result is a patterned arrangement that regulates sexual behavior and ensures a stable environment for the care of dependent children. See Table 1.2 for a list of common societal tasks and the resulting institutions.

Unity and stability are crucial for the survival of society, and social institutions tend to provide these. By definition, then, social institutions are

TABLE 1.2 COMMON SOCIETAL TASKS AND RESULTING SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Societal Problems	Social Institution
Sexual regulation; maintenance of stable units that ensure continued births and care of dependent children	Family
Socialization of newcomers to the society	Education
Maintenance of order; distribution of power	Polity
Production and distribution of goods and services; ownership of property	Economy
Understanding the transcendental; searching for the meaning of life, death, and humankind’s place in the world	Religion
Understanding the physical and social realms of nature	Science
Providing for physical and emotional health care	Medicine

conservative. They provide the answers of custom and tradition to questions of societal survival. For this reason, any attack on a social institution is often met by aggressive, even violent, opposition.

Over the course of the past two centuries—with industrialization, modernization, globalization, and advanced technology—sport has become a social institution in nations throughout the world. Several societal needs are popularly believed to be served by sport:

- Sport serves as a safety valve for both spectators and participants, dissipating excess energies, tensions, and hostile feelings in a socially acceptable way.
- Athletes serve as role models, possessing the proper mental and physical traits to be emulated by other members of society.
- Sport is a secular, quasi-religious institution that uses ritual and ceremony to reinforce the values of society, thereby restricting behavior to the channels approved by custom.
- Sport serves as a source for learning the skills and strategies of some of the most popular cultural physical activities, while also promoting health and physical fitness.

Micro and Macro Levels and This Book

The primary focus of this book will be at the macro level. We will describe how sport reinforces societal values. We will analyze the reciprocal linkages of sport with other institutions—sport and education, sport and religion, sport and politics, sport and the economy, sport and the mass media—and we will ask who benefits, and who does not, from the way sport is organized? Although the level of analysis is macro, the research findings from sociopsychological and micro studies will be included whenever appropriate.

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES: CONTRASTING WAYS TO SEE AND UNDERSTAND SOCIAL LIFE

The previous sections about the discipline of sociology and units of sociological analysis set the stage for a description of social theories. Like other academic disciplines, sociology has theories that are generalized explanations of how, in this case, the social world explains the social order. Some social theories explain aspects of the social world and enable prediction about future events, but sociology theories are better understood as models that work in a limited range of settings; as such they are always tentative, subject to new research findings and changing social conditions.

On reading the word *theory*, many readers roll their eyes and say “Oh, no, not theory again.” But because theory is so fundamentally a part of every knowledge domain, learning about it is essential if one hopes to become knowledgeable about a field of study. And in any case, theory is not all that complicated. It is merely an explanation or a set of statements that attempt to explain observed phenomena and can be used to test predictions or hypotheses.

We all use theories, albeit informally, every day of our lives. We are constantly processing thoughts like “Given the experiences that I have had, if I take this action, I believe that will happen.” All of us undergo dozens of these mental machinations each day. We are using theory when we do so.

A fundamental feature of a scientific discipline (field of study) is that it is grounded in theoretical formulations; it is theory driven. A sociological theory offers an explanation of social life by making

assumptions about the general patterns found. It is a way of making sense of the complex social world.

Those who prepare for a career in sociology must spend many hours of study learning about the theories of the leading social theorists of the past and present time. As a result, most sociologists come to be guided by one particular theoretical perspective. They do not necessarily reject other theoretical formulations, but the focus of attention, the questions they ask, the relationships sought, the interpretations rendered, and the insights unraveled by one of the theoretical perspectives appear more persuasive than alternatives.

Several social theoretical perspectives provide vantage points from which to view social life. Each of these guides our thinking, narrows our perceptions to certain relevant phenomena, and, in doing so, helps us understand our social life. In the pages that follow, we discuss several major theoretical perspectives that are used to understand the social world and, for our purposes in this book, the world of sport. Each of these perspectives is useful because it focuses on a different feature of social life, providing insights missing from the others.

FUNCTIONALISM

The functionalist perspective views a society as analogous to a living organism, with each part—brain, heart, lungs—contributing functionally to the organism’s survival. Thus, a human society is viewed as composed of various interdependent parts, primarily the social institutions—the economy, education, religion, government, and so forth—as the structured components that maintain the social system as a whole, contributing and promoting social value consensus and stability. The parts of the system are basically in harmony with each other, exhibiting the characteristics of cohesion, consensus, cooperation, reciprocity, stability, and persistence.⁸ The high degree of social system cooperation—and societal integration—is accomplished because there is a high degree of consensus on societal goals and on cultural values.

Consensus in a social system, according to the functionalist perspective, is achieved through the interdependence of the different parts of the system. Although there are obvious differences in resources among the various groups and organizations in

society, countervailing pressures are expected to prevent abuse, exploitation, and domination by one group. Functionalists view activists' efforts to bring about social change as undesirable; all social change is expected to be gradual, adjustive, and reforming because the primary social process of functionalism emphasizes cooperation and basic social stability. Even the poor and powerless are not expected to rebel because they have internalized the values of the society and they believe the system is intrinsically just. Societies, then, are basically stable entities.

Functionalists acknowledge that dynamic persuasive social change efforts can lead to disruptions, and that instability can lead to social system disorder, even volatility. However, self-correcting mechanisms of the social system are expected to reverse societal dysfunctions and restore the system's status quo.

North American Sport from a Functionalist Perspective

Functionalists examining any facet of society emphasize the contributions that various parts make to the stability of society. Sport, from this perspective, unifies and preserves the existing social order in several ways. For instance, sport is viewed as symbolizing the North American way of life—competition, individualism, achievement, and fair play. Not only is sport compatible with basic North American values, it is also a powerful mechanism for socializing youth to adopt desirable character traits, such as accepting authority and striving for good health and physical fitness, both of which are useful for promoting and maintaining a nation's strength.

For functionalists, North American sport supports the status quo by promoting the unity of citizens through patriotism—the national anthem, militaristic displays, and Christian religious rituals that accompany sports events. Can you imagine, for example, a team that espouses anti-establishment values in its name, logo, mascot, and pageantry? Would we tolerate a professional sport team called the Atlanta Atheists, the Boston Nazis, the Pasadena Pacifists, or the Sacramento Socialists? Functionalists view sport as inspiring us through the achievements of athletes, and the feelings of unity in purpose and loyalty of fans are displayed.

Functionalist theorists focus on the integrating benefits of youth, high school, and intercollegiate sport for students, faculty, alumni, and community members. They also look for positive consequences for participants such as grades, self-esteem, career aspirations, and the career mobility patterns of former athletes.

Clearly, then, sport from the functional perspective is seen as good: sport socializes citizens into proper social behavior, sport unites, and sport inspires. Conversely, questioning or criticizing sport, or North American nationalism in any way, is viewed by functionalist theorists as challenging a foundation of North America's social order. A recent example of this can be seen in the public outrage when some professional athletes began either sitting or kneeling during the playing of the U.S. national anthem.⁹

CONFLICT THEORY

The social theorist who articulated the fundamental tenets of conflict theory, Karl Marx, never called his theoretical formulations "conflict theory," but despite the demonization of Marx, especially in the United States, his ideas about capitalist society have been historically adopted and modified and enunciated as conflict theory.

The assumptions of conflict theorists are quite different from those of functionalist theorists. Instead of the social harmony that functionalism conceives, the conflict theory perspective posits conflict as endemic to capitalist societies, especially because of the social class differences that emerge in capitalist society resulting from the ways people are organized for production, distribution, and consumption of material goods. The conflict perspective views things that people desire, such as property, prestige, and power, as largely possessed by the socially elite, resulting in a fundamental cleavage between the wealthy and powerful and the disadvantaged—namely, the working class. Moreover, the wealthy and powerful class uses its resources to maintain its power and advantages.

The emphasis of the conflict perspective, then, is on the social, political, and material inequalities in society and on the ways in which societal power and wealth are intertwined and dominate the rest of society, frequently leading to disharmony, disruption, instability,

and conflict. Of course, conflict can take many forms, not necessarily outright violence; disagreement, tension, and hostility surrounding needs, interests, values, and goals are likely to be more prevalent.

Functionalism's vision of social harmony, stability, and consensus is seen as unrealistic and illusory by conflict theorists. They argue that what actually happens in society is that the wealthy and powerful, through their control of the decision-making apparatus, maintain their advantages by fostering ideological conformity—although it is sometimes achieved by coercion—through the government, economic system, schools, churches, and other social institutions. This is seen as an effective means of maintaining social order because it can be sustained through popular compliance, resulting in the underclass of individuals defining conditions that are actually hostile to their interests as being legitimate—a condition that Karl Marx called *false consciousness*.¹⁰

North American Sport from a Conflict Theory Perspective

The conflict perspective contends that the society reflects the interests of the powerful and advantaged and that sport at every level—youth, high school, college, and professional—is organized to exploit athletes and achieve the goals of the elite (e.g., profits, recognition, public relations, prestige). Moreover, any critical questioning or instigation for reform in sports is repressed in several ways.

First, the prevailing myths of capitalism, especially the notion that anyone can succeed if he or she works hard enough, are promoted and reinforced in sport. Popular locker-room slogans reinforce this: "Workers Are Winners," "Play as Hard as You Can for as Long as You Can." The highest praise a coach can give to an athlete is to say that she or he is "a hard worker."

Second, sport diverts the attention of the large mass of people away from the harsh realities of poverty, job insecurity, rising debt, and dismal life chances that many of them experience.

Third, sport gives false hope to African Americans, minorities, and other oppressed people. Many are led to believe that sport is a realistic avenue of upward social mobility; indeed, the high visibility of the few professional athletes seems to provide "proof" that sports

ability readily translates into monetary success. The reality, of course, is that only an extremely small percentage of athletes ever achieve professional status. For example, only one high school basketball player out of 100 (1%) becomes an NCAA Division I player, and only one NCAA Division I player out of 100 (1%) becomes an NBA player. These figures are similar for other sports (more discussion of this last point in Chapter 5).¹¹

One sport sociology research tradition from a conflict perspective has focused on intercollegiate athletics. This research illuminates the power that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has over athletes, the cozy relationship between the NCAA and television networks, the resistance of the NCAA and university administrators to implementing Title IX (which requires equal treatment for women), the big-business aspect of big-time college sport, illegal tactics by coaches in recruiting athletes, and the exploitation of athletes.

CONFLICT/CULTURAL SOCIAL THEORIES

Several variants of the conflict perspective have gained popularity. We shall not attempt to identify or describe all of them because that would take us far afield from our main interests in this book. However, we do think it is useful to briefly identify and discuss those variants that have had the most influence in sociology of sport: hegemony theory, feminist theory, and race theory. As a general category, they are often referred to as critical theories or cultural theories.

Hegemony theory, feminist theory, and race theory—like conflict theory—seek to understand the sources of power, how power works, and how individuals and groups exert human agency—meaning the capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own free choices—as they cope with, adapt to, and change existing power relationships. Instead of seeing society as dominating individuals completely, these theories view human agency as an omnipresent option.

Hegemony Theory

In sociology hegemony refers to the social, cultural, and ideological sides of power and domination, and the political and economic influence exerted by dominant individuals or groups. Beyond that, hegemony

theorists critique the social forces that prevent people from seeing and understanding the forms of power and domination that exist in society and affect their lives, especially those forms that privilege men over women, rich over poor, and whites over people of color.¹²

Hegemony theory stems from conflict theory, but it adds ideology and culture to the importance of the economy, politics, and the cultural patterns of dominance and influence in society. It highlights the role that dominant groups play in government, economic systems, mass media, education, and sport in maintaining and promoting their interests. By dominant groups we mean the powerful and wealthy who own most of the land, capital, and technology and who employ most of the workforce. It is they who manipulate the social, political, and economic values of society so that their views become the dominant world views of society.

North American Sport from a Hegemony Perspective

Applying hegemony theory to sport requires that we step back from thinking about sport merely as a place of personal achievement and entertainment and study sport as a cultural practice embedded in political, economic, and ideological formations. Of particular relevance is the question of how sport is related to social class, race, gender, and the control, production, and distribution of economic and cultural power in the commodified sport industry.¹³

Hegemony theorists agree with functionalists on many features of society but differ significantly in interpretation. Both sets of theorists agree that sport socializes youth, but hegemony theorists view this process critically because they see sport as a mechanism to socialize youth into obediently following orders, working hard, and fitting into a system that is not necessarily beneficial to them. Both agree that sport reinforces the status quo. Instead of interpreting this as good, as functionalists maintain, a hegemony theorist views this as bad because it reflects and strengthens the unequal distribution of power and resources in society.

While recognizing that sport is a microcosm of society, hegemony theorists go beyond that insight

to emphasize that the conditions of sport can change from the top down (from power structures) or from the bottom up (from the human agency of the participants themselves). Whereas functionalism and conflict theories explain social life as deriving from a single source (value consensus for functionalists and the economy for conflict theorists), hegemony theorists emphasize the diversity of social life, stressing that understanding hegemonic practices requires looking at a number of forces (e.g., historical, cultural, economic, and political forces and the media).

Feminist Theory

Feminist struggles for political, social, economic, and educational equality of women have roots extending back in history for centuries. Feminist theories began as critiques of the dominant social theories that did not include women or did not take women's issues seriously. According to feminist theorists, inequalities faced by women are related to differential access, different treatment and exploitation, patriarchy, and male dominance. While critiquing these social and political relations, a great deal of feminist theory focuses on the promotion of women's rights and interests.

During the past hundred years, feminist issues have included social injustices as well as access to employment and equality in the workplace, equal political representation, equality of educational opportunity, redress for sexual harassment in all social institutions, and legal access to contraception and abortion. Feminist theory rests on two fundamental assumptions: first, that human experiences are gendered, and second, that women are oppressed within patriarchy and have a commitment to change those conditions. Three of the most prominent themes addressed in feminist theory are patriarchy, stereotyping discrimination, and oppression.¹⁴

North American Sport from a Feminist Perspective

Sport from a feminist theoretical perspective is seen as a gendered activity in which males have the power. Some examples of feminist research topics focusing on sport are the ideological control of women through the underrepresentation of women athletes

in media images, the trivialization of women athlete's accomplishments, the hidden discourse of homophobia, and "the construction of women as unnatural athletes and of female athletes as unnatural women."¹⁵ Chapter 7 is devoted to a discussion of gender in North American sport. In that chapter, we describe and analyze a variety of feminist theoretical topics as they play out in sport.

Race Theory

Race theory—often called critical race theory (CRT)—is "a framework from which to explore and examine the racism in society that privileges whiteness as it disadvantages others because of their 'blackness.'"¹⁶ Its main concern is with the inescapable and inherent racism that is an everyday occurrence for people of color, a racism that is thoroughly rooted in the social fabric of North American society (and others as well), permeating its social structures and practices. Because racism is entrenched, it permeates all of the social institutions in which the white majority has profited, and continues to profit, from the persistence of such social practices; consequently, it tends to become a covert mechanism for maintaining racial prejudice and discrimination.

Race theory's primary mission is to analyze, deconstruct, and socially transform society to improve relationships among race, racism, and power. This theoretical perspective has been applied in a variety of contexts where institutionalized oppression based on race occurs, especially in legal-judicial areas as well as in education, where educational opportunity and experiences form the basis for the future acquisition of income, wealth, health, and longevity.

North American Sport from a Race Theory Perspective

According to sports studies scholar Kevin Hylton, for CRT analysts "the question is not do we live in a racist society? Rather it is a conclusion: we do live in a racist society and we need to do something about it. Therefore, anti-racism should be mainstreamed into the core business of sport."¹⁷ Histories of North American sport reveal that sport has simultaneously been a powerful reinforcer of racist ideology and an instrument of opportunity for African Americans and other

people of color. With African Americans and other people of color playing such a prominent historical role in both U.S. and Canadian sports, sports studies researchers have incorporated race theory into their research arsenal. The role of racial-ethnic minorities in sport is examined in more detail in Chapter 6.

INTERACTIONIST THEORY

This theory is different from the preceding theories we have identified and described. All of those are in one way or another structural theories, so their scope of analysis is the macro level. That is, they concern the components of society: institutions (e.g., the economy), politics, religion, culture, the media, social classes, race, and gender. Our focus on topics in this book is at that level.

Although the structural theories pay some attention to how people give meaning to their lives, interactionist theory converges exclusively on this aspect of human activity, especially on how individuals and groups interpret and understand their social worlds by attaching meaning to symbols. This is an ongoing process because the social world is continually constructed and reinvented by the participants.¹⁸

The important sociological insight here is that meaning is not inherent in an object; instead, people learn how to define reality from other people through interaction and by learning the culture. This process is called the social construction of reality. Race and gender, for example, are socially constructed inasmuch as people attach social meanings to different bodily characteristics (see Chapters 6 and 7).

North American Sport from an Interactionist Perspective

Sociologists of sport using interactionist perspectives have conducted various kinds of research by interviewing, watching, and listening to subjects. The goal has been to determine how participants (players, coaches, officials, administrators, and spectators) understand their world.

Other interaction-level research has centered on topics such as socialization into sport, the process of retirement from sport, male bonding in locker rooms, sport rituals, and the characteristics of sport subcultures (e.g., rock climbing, skateboarding, boxing,

pool hustling, playground basketball, high school football, and professional golf played by women). We will describe and discuss these in more detail in various chapters.

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES AND SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT: OUR POSITION

Thus far we have identified and described several social theoretical perspectives, stressed that each has its unique view of the social world and how it works, and acknowledged that each provides valuable insights for understanding society. Each has its strengths and weaknesses, but none is endorsed by all sociologists. In the course of the following chapters, we will provide additional information about the relevance of these theories to the various chapter topics. As we do so, we will refer to the functionalist perspective using that term. However, in the interest of brevity we shall conceptually collapse conflict, critical/cultural, hegemony, feminist, and race theories into a single concept, which we will call the conflict/cultural perspective because they are all underpinned by critiques of domination and oppression.

As for social theories and our positions regarding the social world of the United States and Canada, we draw certain insights from each of the social theories. However, our perspective assumes a basic critical stance about contemporary social practices and organizations for three reasons.

First, we are critical of existing power arrangements because they are, by definition, oppressive toward the powerless segments of the population. We question the functionalist perspective because it fosters the status quo. We measure myths against reality. Conversely, the conflict/cultural perspective of social structure demystifies, demythologizes, and, sometimes, emancipates. This, we feel, is the appropriate core of a sociological perspective.

In concordance with the general field of sociology, our underlying assumption is that things are not as they seem in sports. For example, do school sports serve educational goals? Are athletes in big-time college programs exploited? Does participation in sport build character? Are sports free of racism? Are school sports sexist? Is sport a realistic mechanism of upward mobility for lower-class youth? Is success,

or failure, the most common experience of athletes? In making such queries, we question existing myths, stereotypes, and official dogma. This type of critical examination of sport tends to sensitize us to the inconsistencies present in North American sport.

Second, our perspective directs attention toward social problems emanating from current structural arrangements. We ask, under contemporary social arrangements, who gets what and why? Who benefits from and bears the social costs of change and stability? Sport, much like the core institutions of the economy, religion, and family, is an area where these kinds of questions typically are not asked.

Third, our perspective seeks to determine how social arrangements might be changed to enhance the human condition. This leads us to the two goals we have had in writing this book:

1. To report what is known about sport and society from social science research.¹⁹
2. To make the case for reform. As social scientists, we are obliged to be as scientific as possible (using rigorous techniques and reporting all relevant findings whether or not they support our values). At the same time, however, we are committed to moving sport and society in a more humane direction.

To accomplish these goals, we combine a scientific stance with a muckraking role. The latter is important because it compels us to examine such social problems as drug use in sports, the prevalence of racism and sexism in sports, illegal recruiting, inhumane treatment of players by bureaucratic organizations and authoritarian coaches, and the perversion of the original goal of sport. Only by thoroughly examining such problems, along with the traditional areas of attention, will we realistically understand the world of sport and its reciprocal relationship with the larger society.

Sociology is not a comfortable discipline; looking behind the "closed doors" of social life can be unsettling, even troubling. A critical/cultural analyst of society must ask such questions as these: How does society really work? Who really has the power? Who benefits under the existing social arrangements, and who does not? Asking such questions means that the inquirer is interested in looking beyond the

commonly accepted explanations, in “seeing through” the facades of social structures. The sociological assumption providing the basis for this critical stance is that the social world, its political system, its economic system, its educational system, its laws, its ideology, its distribution of power, and its sports institutions are all created and sustained by people. And, as a consequence, they can be changed by people. If we wish to improve imperfections in our society, then we must attempt to understand how social phenomena work and learn what changes will help achieve our goals.

The sociological perspective is discomfiting to some people because understanding the constraints of society is liberating. However, liberation from the constraints of tradition means freedom from the protection that custom provides. It often means liberation from the domination, oppression, injustice, discrimination, and so forth that typically has been prominent in the traditional social world.

SPORT AS A MICROCOSM OF SOCIETY

The analyst of society is inundated with data. She or he is faced with the problems of sorting out the important from the less important and discerning social patterns of behavior and their meanings. Consequently, he or she needs shortcuts to ease the task. A focus on sport is just such a technique for understanding the complexities that exist in the larger society.

Sport is an institution that provides scientific observers with a convenient laboratory within which to examine values, socialization, stratification, and bureaucracy, to name a few structures and processes that also exist at the societal level. The types of games people choose to play, the degree of competitiveness, the types of rules, the constraints on the participants, the groups that do and do not benefit under the existing arrangements, the rate and type of change, and the reward system in sport provide us with a microcosm of the society in which sport is embedded.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF SPORT AND SOCIETY

Suppose an astute sociologist from another country were to visit the United States and Canada with the intent of understanding North American values, the

system of social control, the division of labor, and the system of stratification. Although she or he could find the answers by careful study and observation of any single institution, such as religion, education, polity, economy, or family, an attention to sport would also provide answers. It would not take that sociologist long to discern the following qualities in sport that are also present in the broader North American societies.

The High Degree of Competitiveness

Competition is ubiquitous in North America. North Americans demand winners. In sports (for children and adults), winning—not pleasure in the activity—is the ultimate goal. The adulation given winners is prodigious, whereas losers are maligned. Consider, for example, such popular locker-room slogans as “Show Me a Good Loser and I’ll Show You a Loser” and “Lose Is a Four-Letter Word” or the different ways in which the winner and the loser of the Super Bowl or Stanley Cup championship are evaluated. Clearly, to be second best is not good enough. “Nobody remembers who came in second” is the conventional wisdom. The goal of victory is so important for many that it is considered laudable even when attained by questionable methods. “Whatever you can get away with” is another conventional insight.

The Emphasis on Materialism

Examples of the value North Americans place on materialism are blatant in sport (e.g., players signing multimillion-dollar contracts, golfers playing weekly for first-place awards of more than a million dollars, professional teams being moved to more economically fertile climates, and stadiums being built at public expense for hundreds of millions of dollars).

The Pervasiveness of Racism

Although conditions have improved greatly over the past forty years, racist attitudes and actions still affect who plays, the positions played, the numbers of starters, and the futures of minority group members in North American sport. Just as in the larger society, racial minorities in sport are rarely found in positions of authority.

The Pervasiveness of Male Dominance

Men control sport. Almost every major professional, amateur, and educational sport organization in North America is under the management and control of men. The proportion of women in leadership and decision-making positions in North American sport, those with power and influence, is quite small—far smaller, certainly, than would be expected based on the number of female sport participants. Significant shifts in the balance of gender dominance in sports have occurred slowly.

Sport continues to contribute to the perpetuation of male dominance through four minimalizing processes:

1. Defining—by defining sport as a male activity;
2. Directly controlling—men control sport, even women's sport;
3. Ignoring—by giving most attention to male sports in the media and through community and school budgets, facilities, and the like; and
4. Trivializing—women's sports and women athletes continue to be belittled and diminished, especially in the mass media.²⁰

The Domination of Individuals by Bureaucracies

Conservative bureaucratic organizations, through their desire to perpetuate themselves, curtail innovations and deflect activities away from the wishes of individuals and often from the original intent of these organizations. Many sport organizations—the NCAA, intercollegiate athletic conferences, professional sport leagues—pride themselves on having adopted bureaucratic business practices.

The Unequal Distribution of Power in Organizations

Autocratic and hierarchical organization characterizes North American economic enterprises. The structure of sport in North America is such that power is in the hands of the wealthy (e.g., boards of regents, corporate boards of directors, the media, wealthy entrepreneurs, the Canadian and U.S. Olympic Committees, the NCAA in the United States, and Canadian Interuniversity Sport). Evidence of the power of these individuals and organizations is seen

in the exemptions allowed them by provincial and state governments, as well as by the Canadian and U.S. national governments, in dealing with athletes, in tax breaks, and in the concessions that communities make to entice professional sports franchises to relocate or to remain and, incidentally, to benefit the wealthy of that community.

The Use of Conflict to Change Unequal Power Relationships

Conflict, in the form of lawsuits, strikes, boycotts, and demonstrations, historically and in more recent times has been used by labor groups, minorities, and the poor to rectify grievances. It is used by the less powerful (e.g., African Americans, women, and athletes) in sport and in society for similar reasons.

Sport Is Not a Sanctuary: Deviance Is Found Throughout Sport

Corruption, law-breaking, unethical behavior, delinquency, and so forth are endemic to human societies. Because sport reflects society, bad actors and bad actions will be found in sport just as they are in other American and Canadian social institutions. Both fairness and unfairness are found. There are ethical and unethical athletes, coaches, and athletic administrators. It is impossible to imagine the worst about sports anymore. Cheating is accepted, drugs are common, rapists sneak into locker rooms; nothing is beyond belief.

LEVELS OF SPORT

One final task remains for this first chapter. We need to establish at the outset the subject matter of this book. As we noted near the beginning of the chapter, our object of study is *sport*, which we defined as any competitive physical activity that is guided by established rules. Competition, the first of the three characteristics of sport, involves the attempt to defeat an opponent. This opponent may be a mountain, a record, an individual, or a team. The second characteristic involves physical activity. One attempts to defeat an opponent through physical abilities such as strength, speed, stamina, and accuracy. Of course, the outcome is also determined by the employment of strategy and tactics, not to mention chance. Rules, the final characteristic of sport, distinguish it from

more playful and spontaneous activities. The scope, rigidity, and enforcement of the rules, however, vary by type and level of sport, as we shall see.

We recognize that our definition of sport is too broad to be entirely adequate. A pickup game of basketball and a game in the National Basketball Association are examples of two related but at the same time very different activities that fall under our definition.²¹ In the same way, an improvised game of football is sport; so is professional football—although it has been argued that professional football is not sport because of its big-business aspects or because it is more like work than play for the participants. Clearly, there is a need to differentiate several levels. We do that by labeling them informal sport, organized sport, and corporate sport. These distinctions have been made by other sport analysts, and many of the ideas that follow stem from their insights.

INFORMAL SPORT

Informal sport involves playful physical activity engaged in primarily for the enjoyment of the participants. A touch football game, a neighborhood basketball game, and a playground game of baseball or softball are examples of this type of sport. In each of these examples, some rules guide the competition, but these rules are determined by the participants and not by a regulatory body. Furthermore, there are no formalized teams or leagues in informal sport.



The sport of basketball crosses all levels of sports participation, from the informal neighborhood pickup game to street tournament games to organized high school games to the corporate level of the National Basketball Association. (Photo: © Dinozaver|Dreamstime)

ORGANIZED SPORT

The presence of a rudimentary organization distinguishes *organized sport* from informal sport. There are formal teams, leagues, codified rules, and related organizations. These exist primarily for the benefit of the players by working for fair competition, providing equipment and officials, scheduling, ruling in disputed cases, and offering opportunities for persons to participate. Public recreation department sport leagues, civic-sponsored sport leagues, Little League programs, interscholastic teams and leagues, and low-pressure college team leagues are examples of organized sport that have not lost the original purposes of the activity.²²

A strong case can be made, however, that many youth sport programs have become too organized to maintain the goal of fun through the participation of young athletes. If so, they belong in the “corporate” category, as we shall see in Chapter 8. The same is true for high school sport in some situations, as illustrated in Chapter 9.

CORPORATE SPORT

Corporate sport has elements of informal sport and organized sport, but it has been modified by economics, politics, and the mass media. According to observers of sports trends, corporate sport is a corrupted, institutionalized version of sport. It is sport as spectacle, sport as big business, sport as an extension of power politics. The pleasure in the activity for the participants has been lost in favor of extrinsic rewards for them, entertainment for fans and alumni, and potential profits for team owners, universities, and other business interests.

Whereas sports organizations at the organized sport level devote their energies to preserving the activities for the participants’ interests, organizations at the corporate sport level have enormous power (often a monopoly). With that power, they become more interested in perpetuating the organization through public relations, making profits, monopolizing the media, crushing opposing organizations, or merging leagues to limit opposition and to control player salaries. Professional sports leagues, big-time college athletics governed by the NCAA and Canadian Interuniversity Sport, and the Olympic Games governed by the International Olympic Committee are

examples of the bureaucracies that characterize corporate sport and subvert the pleasure of participating for the sake of the activity itself. For an example of an organizational chart that clearly demonstrates the bureaucratic corporate structure of an organization that controls intercollegiate sports, see Figure 1.1.

The three levels of sport can be placed on a continuum from play to work. As one moves from informal to corporate sport, the activities become more

systematized, with a subsequent loss of autonomy and pleasure for athletes. Corporate sport dominates sport in North America; therefore, we will give considerable attention to corporate sport in this book. That level is but an extension of the organized sport level, however, so we will at times direct our attention toward organized sport as well.

Pseudo-sport is another activity often included in the sports pages of newspapers, but one that we claim

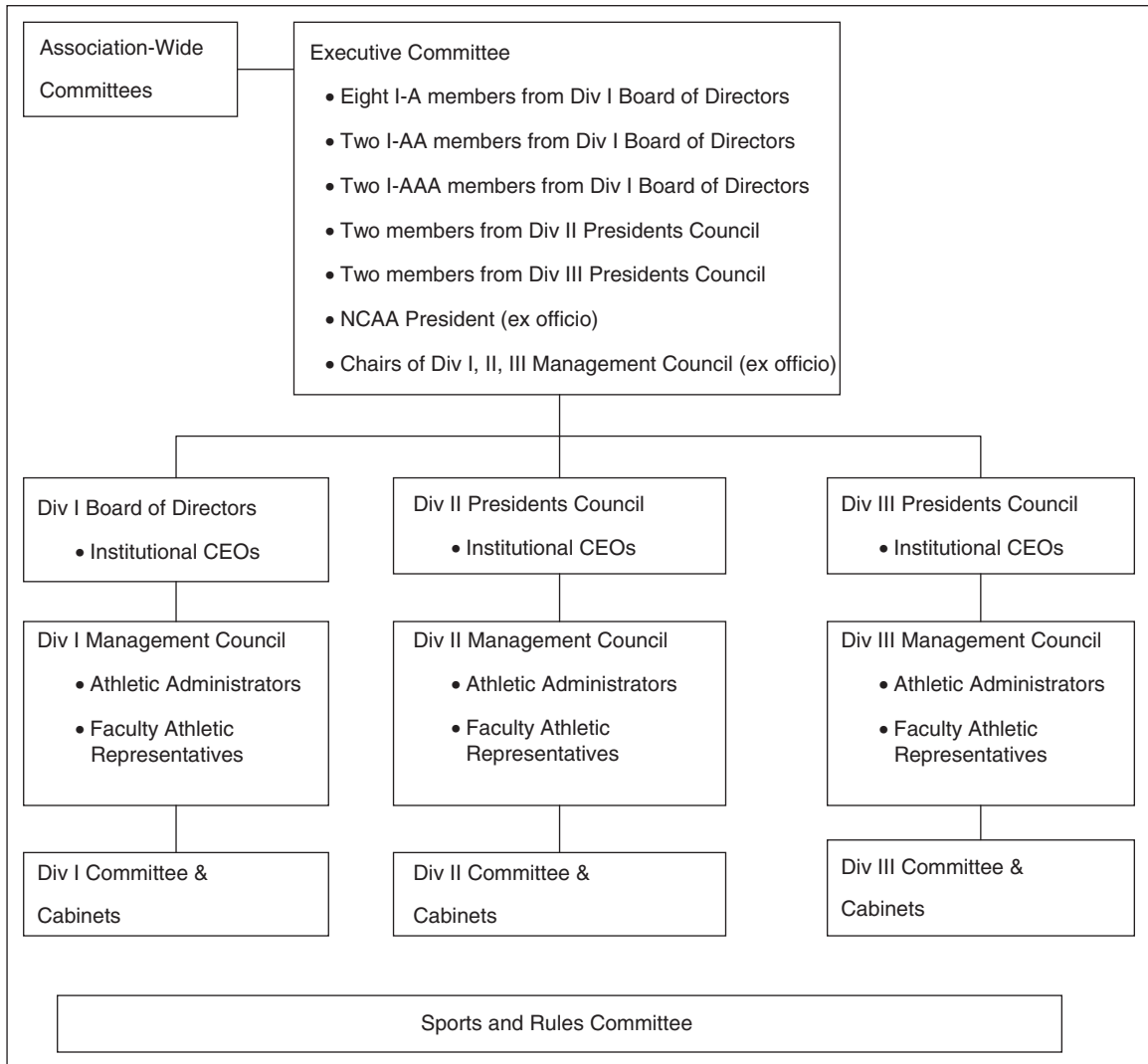


FIGURE 1.1 NCAA Committee Organizational Chart

Source: NCAA.

falls outside even our broad definition. The form of wrestling known as World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE)—as well as activities involving teams such as the Harlem Globetrotters—involves a privately controlled entertainment company and is an example of pseudo-sports. Although athletes are involved in these activities and the activities involve physical prowess, they are not sport because they are not competitive. They may be packaged as competition, but these activities exist solely for spectator amusement.

SUMMARY

Sociology of sport as an organized field of study is less than fifty years old. Although not a rapidly growing field of study, it has advanced to the point where it is taught in most colleges and universities, and it has attracted a group of dedicated scholars with interests in research and publication as well as in teaching this subject.

The perspective, concepts, and procedures of sociology are used in this book to describe and explain the institution of sport in North America. The subject matter of sociology is social behavior and social organization. There is no universal definition of sport, primarily because there is such a variety of games and physical activities that are conventionally called sports. Sport involves different types of social organizations, such as teams and leagues. These, in turn, are part of larger social organizations, such as schools, communities, international associations, and society. The task of this book is to assist readers in understanding the principles that underlie the structures and processes that create, sustain, and transform these social organizations. Most importantly, from our standpoint, this undertaking requires that readers examine the social arrangements of sport from a critical stance.

Some sample questions that must direct curious readers are these: How does the social organization really work? Who really has the power? Who benefits, and who does not?

Several social theoretical perspectives provide vantage points from which to view social life. Each of these guides our thinking, narrows our perceptions to certain relevant phenomena, and, in doing so, helps us understand our social life. We present

several major theoretical perspectives that are used to understand the social world and—for the purposes of this book—the world of sport.

The two fundamental themes of this book are introduced in this chapter. The first is that sport is a microcosm of society. Perceiving the way sport is organized, the types of games people play, the degree of emphasis on competition, the compensation of the participants, and the enforcement of the rules is a shorthand way of understanding the complexities of the larger society in which sport is embedded. The converse is also true. The understanding of the values of society, of its types of economy, and of its treatment of minority groups, to name a few elements, provides important foundations for the perception or understanding of the organization of sport in society.

The second theme is that the prevailing form of sport—the corporate level—has corrupted the original forms of sport. Instead of player-oriented physical competition, sport has become a spectacle, a big business, and an extension of power politics. Play has become work. Spontaneity has been superseded by bureaucracy. The goal of pleasure in the physical activity has been replaced by extrinsic rewards, especially money. But sport, like all social phenomena, is constantly changing, and the possibilities for change are endless.

NOTES

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 13. George H. Sage, *Power and Ideology in American Sport: A Critical Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1998).
 14. The author of this book is considered one of the icons of the feminist movement. See bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 2000); see also Wendy Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski, *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013).
 15. Susan Birrell, “Feminist Theories for Sport,” in Coakley and Dunning, *Handbook of Sport Studies*, 68.
 16. Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013); see also Kevin Hylton, “Race” and Sport: *Critical Race Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 22; Billy J. Hawkins, Akilah R. Carter-Francique, and Joseph N. Cooper, eds., *Critical Race Theory: Black Athletic Sporting Experiences in the United States* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017).
 17. Kevin Hylton, “How a Turn to Critical Race Theory Can Contribute to Our Understanding of ‘Race’: Racism and Anti-Racism in Sport,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 45, no. 3 (2010): 338; see also Kevin Hylton, “Talk the Talk, Walk the Walk: Defining Critical Race Theory In Research,” *Race Ethnicity and Education* 15, no. 1 (2012): 23–41.
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 20. Adrienne N. Milner and Jomills Henry Braddock II, *Sex Segregation in Sports: Why Separate Is Not Equal* (New York: Praeger, 2016).
 21. For a thorough discussion on the differences between play, game, and sport, see John W. Loy and Jay Coakley, “Sport,” in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Vol. 9, ed. George Ritzer (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 4643–4653.
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CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND THE RISE OF SPORT IN NORTH AMERICA

[T]hroughout [North] American history the form and purpose of sporting events have been closely connected to the larger society from which they arose.

—RICHARD O. DAVIES¹



College basketball teams in the first years of the twentieth century were becoming popular. Shown here is the basketball team of the former Colorado Normal School—also called the Colorado Teachers College—now the University of Northern Colorado. Basketball was a new sport, having been invented by James Naismith in 1891, a Canadian-American physical educator and innovator, while he was a physical education instructor at what is now Springfield College. After students in his class showed enthusiasm for playing basketball, Naismith wrote the original rule book. Naismith lived to see basketball adopted as an Olympic demonstration sport in 1904 and as an official event at the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin. (Photo: Courtesy of the University of Northern Colorado Archives)

History helps us understand change and how a social institution, in this case sport, came to have the features it currently has. Whenever we try to know why something is as it presently is, we have to look for activities and events that occurred earlier. The forms, functions, and practices of sport in any given society are rooted in historical, social, and cultural traditions, and it is our contention that a study of sport based solely on the present will result in an incomplete picture of sport as a social and cultural practice. Thus, one who studies the sociology of sport in North America without learning about sport's history on this continent will never truly understand the social and cultural forces that underpin contemporary sport. In this chapter, we examine the changing sociocultural conditions of Canadian and American societies over the past 400 years and attempt to demonstrate how these conditions have affected and influenced the rise and current state of North American sport.

The United States and Canada have experienced similar stages of historical development. Each went through a period of British control; each had a period of westward expansion; each experienced a massive influx of immigrants from Europe; and each underwent urbanization and industrialization during the late nineteenth century. The two countries share a common language, they share a border for more than 3,000 miles, and about 85 percent of the Canadian population lives within 100 miles of the American–Canadian border. It is hard to imagine any two countries in the world having closer social and cultural ties than Canada and the United States.²

Over the past four centuries, the United States and Canada have grown from a few widely scattered and disunited settlements located along the eastern seaboard of part of North America into two of the most modern and industrially advanced nations in the world. They have also become two of the leading nations in sports. Fostered by a variety of historical, political, social, and economic conditions, sports have become a major national pastime for the people of both countries. From agrarian societies whose inhabitants had little time for games and sports except on special occasions, North Americans have become two nations of citizens who watch ten to twenty

hours of sports on television each weekend and consider it almost a duty to participate in some form of exercise or sport for recreation.

PRE-COLUMBIAN AND COLONIAL TRADITIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

For many centuries before European colonization began in what is now Canada and the United States, Native American settlements were scattered throughout North America. It is estimated that some 6 to 8 million native peoples were dispersed across the continent at the time of Columbus's voyages. What is quite clear is that although there was great diversity among the cultures of Native Americans, they all enjoyed a variety of physical play and game activities. In his book *American Indian Sports Heritage*, Joseph Oxendine—himself a member of the Lumbee tribe who grew up in a segregated Native American community in North Carolina—asserts that “games among traditional American Indians ranged from the seemingly trivial activities primarily for the amusement of children to major sporting events of significance for persons of all ages.”³ Typically, there was a close linkage between the games and sports and the world of spiritual belief and magic.

Among the various sports engaged in by Native Americans long before European settlement in North America, lacrosse seems to have been one of the most popular; thus, lacrosse is often recognized as the oldest North American sport, with roots running deep into Native American history. It is perhaps the best known Native American game because it is currently played in clubs, secondary schools, and universities throughout North America. In 1994 the Canadian Parliament recognized lacrosse as Canada's “national summer sport.”⁴

THE COLONISTS RESTRICT PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

During the two centuries following Columbus—the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—Spain, France, and England explored and colonized most of North America. But by the late eighteenth century, Great Britain had triumphed over the other two countries and controlled the entire eastern half of what is now

the United States and the eastern two-thirds of what is now Canada (except for two small fishing islands off the coast of Newfoundland, which remained under the control of France).

We are accustomed to thinking that the wide array of formalized participant and spectator sport that we currently enjoy has always existed. But, unimaginable as it seems, there were no formally organized participant or spectator sports during the colonial period in North America. In the first place, people had little leisure time or opportunity to engage in games and sports. The harsh circumstances of wrestling a living from the environment necessitated arduous daily work. Colonists had to devote most of their efforts to basic survival tasks.

A second factor restricting sports involvement was the church. Religion was the most powerful social institution in the North American colonies. Puritanism was prominent in the New England colonies, and other Christian religions dominated social life in the middle and southern colonies. (The subject of sport and religion is examined more fully in Chapter 14.)

All of these religious groups placed severe restrictions on play and games, with the Puritans being the most extreme. They directed attacks at almost every form of amusement: dancing for its carnality, boxing for its violence, maypoles for their paganism, and play and games in general because they were often performed on the Sabbath. Moreover, religious sanctions were closely bound to the dislike of playful activities of any kind. Honest labor was the greatest service to God and a moral duty. Any form of play or amusement signaled time-wasting and idleness and was therefore defined as wicked. That everyone has a calling to work hard was a first premise of Puritanism. Followers believed that it was not leisure and amusement but diligent work that symbolized the glorification of God.⁵

Laws prohibiting a form of social behavior and the actual social customs and actions of a people rarely coincide. In the case of the colonies, religious and legal strictures failed to eliminate the urge to play among the early North Americans. Although frequently done in defiance of local laws, sports such as horse racing, shooting matches, cockfights, foot races, and wrestling matches were engaged in throughout the colonies to break the monotony of life.

The most popular sports of the gentry were cockfighting, hunting, dancing, and—most popular of all—horse racing. Other recreational activities were popular among those who frequented the taverns. The tavern was a social center, primarily for drinking but also for all manner of popular pastimes, such as cards, billiards, bowling, and rifle and pistol target shooting.⁶

As colonial settlement moved west into the hinterland in the eighteenth century, religious restrictions against sport became less and less effective. Men and women in the backcountry enjoyed a variety of competitive events when they met at barbecues and camp meetings. They gambled on these contests, especially horse races, cockfights, and bearbaiting.

The physical activities that marked these infrequent social gatherings were typically rough and brutal. Two popular activities were fistfights, which ended when one man could not continue, and wrestling, in which eye gouging and bone-breaking holds were permitted.⁷ Horse racing was the universal sport on the frontier because every owner of a horse was confident of its prowess and eager to match it against others. Both men and women were skillful riders. The other constant companion of the frontiersman—the rifle—engendered a pride in marksmanship, and shooting matches were a common form of competition.⁸

Life in the colonies was quite different for African slaves, who numbered approximately 200,000 in the mid-eighteenth century, just before the American Revolution. The majority lived in what is now the southeastern United States, where plantations had developed. Most plantation slaves worked in the fields, but some were craftworkers, messengers, and servants.

Slaves were often given the responsibility for the care and maintenance of the horses owned by plantation owners for the purpose of entering them in the popular horse-racing events throughout the South. Because black slaves were often adept at handling horses, many plantation owners used them as jockeys for the horses they entered in races. Boxing was also popular; some plantation owners pitted their slaves against slaves of other plantation owners, with owners gambling on the outcome an integral part of the bouts.⁹

When not working at their assigned jobs, games and sporting activities were commonly played in slave quarters by children and adults. Most plantation owners actively promoted these physical activities as a way to foster social harmony, relaxation, and fun. We will have more to say about African Americans in sport in Chapter 6.

EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY: TAKEOFF OF INDUSTRIALIZATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND ORGANIZED SPORT

Play, games, and sports in every society are always closely tied to the political, economic, religious, and social institutions as well as the cultural traditions and customs. The major catalyst for the transformation of North American sport was a series of inventions in England in the late eighteenth century that completely changed the means by which goods were produced. These inventions made possible technological advances that ushered in two of the most important developments in human history—the industrial revolution and the technological revolution.

The major characteristic and social consequence of the industrial revolution was the factory system. The initial impact was seen in the textile industry. The spinning of thread and the weaving of cloth had traditionally been done at home on spinning wheels and handlooms, but new methods for performing these tasks enabled them to be done in factories by power-driven machinery.

Other industries emerged. The successful smelting of iron with the aid of anthracite coal was perfected around 1830. By 1850 improved methods of making steel had been developed. Steel production was the backbone of industrial development because the machinery for factories was primarily made from steel. Artisans and craftspersons were transformed into an industrial workforce.

As Figure 2.1 shows, the proportion of workers engaged in agriculture has steadily decreased—from approximately 60 percent in 1850, to 40 percent in 1900, to less than 10 percent in 2010. Industry needed a plentiful supply of labor located near plants and factories, so population shifts from rural to urban areas began to change population characteristics and needs. Urbanization created a need for new

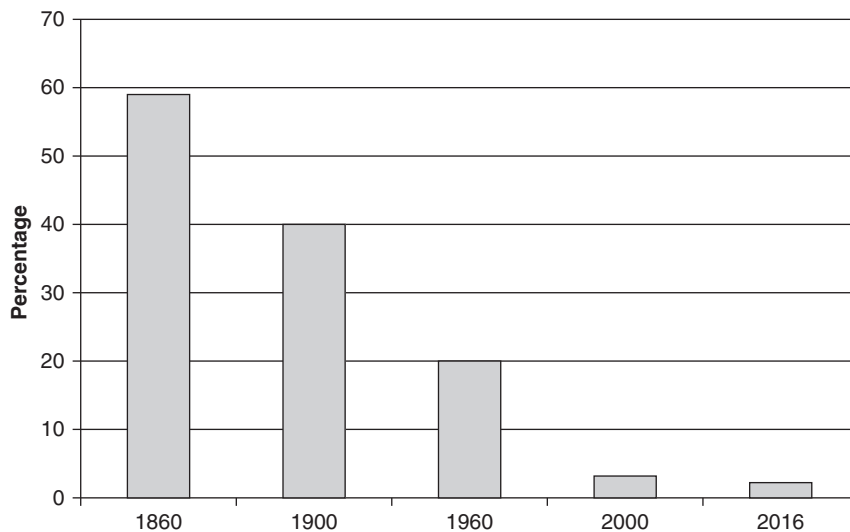


FIGURE 2.1 Percentage of Labor Force in Agriculture

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, "Employed persons by detailed industry, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity," February 2016, and earlier releases, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/tables.htm>. Washington, D.C., 2012.

forms of recreational activities, and industrialization gradually supplied the standard of living and the leisure time necessary to support broad-based forms of recreation and organized sport.¹⁰

BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANIZED SPORT

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, North Americans enjoyed essentially the same recreation and sports as they had during the colonial period. As conditions gradually changed from a rural to an increasingly urban population and from home trades and individualized occupations to large-scale industrial production, a growing interest in spectator sports emerged. Rowing, prizefighting, footracing (the runners were called pedestrians), and similar activities were especially popular, but the sport that excited the most interest was horse racing, with its traditions going back to early colonial days.

In May of 1823 a horse race between Eclipse and Sir Henry—the superstar horses of that era—attracted one of the largest crowds ever to witness a nineteenth-century sporting event in North America. A crowd estimated at 75,000 overwhelmed the racecourse. But thoroughbred racing was not the only popular form of horse racing. Harness racing had an enthusiastic following, and it has even been claimed that harness racing was the first modern sport in North America.¹¹

Horse racing was also much in demand in Canada. In *Canada's Sporting Heroes*, S. F. Wise and Douglas Fisher described its popularity in Quebec: "Almost from the outset of British rule in 1763 French Canadians took readily to . . . horse racing. . . . By 1829, interest was so great that special boat trips were laid on to bring Montrealers to Quebec for the races, and the Montreal newspaper *La Minerve* held its presses in order to bring its readers the latest results. . . . By the 1850s . . . regular race meetings were held in forty towns and villages throughout the province."¹²

Native American, French, and British traditions contributed to Canada's other sporting interests in the early nineteenth century. Native American games of lacrosse, snowshoeing, and canoe activities were adopted by the settlers. British and French settlers also took enthusiastically to physical activities that could

be played in the cold northern climate, so sleighing, ice skating, and curling were popular in the winter, whereas hunting, fishing, fox hunting, and horse racing were popular in the short Canadian summers.¹³

The transformation from occasional and informal sport to highly organized commercial spectator sport began for both the United States and Canada during the period before the American Civil War. Thus, the framework of modern sport was established during the first half of the nineteenth century, setting the stage for the remarkable expansion of mass popular sport and professional sport that followed in the second half of the nineteenth century.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION AND SPORT

Technological advances have been a dominant force for social change, for adaptations in social relationships, and for the transformation of business and governmental organizations over the past 200 years. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, technological advances made possible the large-scale manufacturing that is characteristic of industrialization. Through technology, which is the practical application of science to industry, many kinds of machines, labor-saving devices, and scientific processes were invented or perfected. Technological development was one of the most significant forces transforming sport from informal village festivals to highly organized sports. Of course, the technological revolution was only one of the factors contributing to the rise of modern sport, but ignoring its influence would result in an incomplete understanding of contemporary sport forms.

New Forms of Transportation Broaden Sport Opportunities

One area of technological innovation that had an enormous impact on the rise of sport was transportation. Travel of any kind was difficult and slow in the pre-1800 period. A distance that today takes hours to travel took more than the same number of days in those times. Modes of transportation were limited to foot, horse, and boat. Roads, when they existed, were primitive, dangerous, and often blocked by almost impassable rivers.

The first notable technological breakthrough in transportation came in the early nineteenth century with the development of the steam engine. This invention and its use on boats made it possible to fully develop river traffic. The first successful steamboat in North America, the *Clermont*, was built by Robert Fulton, and in 1807 it chugged 150 miles up the Hudson River from New York to Albany in about thirty hours. In time, steamboats stimulated the building of canals and the enlarging of rivers, thus opening new areas that had previously been isolated and cut off from commerce and trade.¹⁴

The steamboat did not solve all the transportation problems; river travel was of no help to people who did not happen to live near large rivers. Furthermore, it was not a particularly fast mode of transportation because the large steamers sometimes had to thread their way carefully through narrow or shallow water.

A new form of transportation began to compete with river transportation around the time that canal building reached its peak. This was the railroad. A fourteen-mile stretch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was opened in 1830. Railroad construction expanded rapidly—mostly short lines connecting principal cities—and by 1840 nearly 3,000 miles of track were in use in the United States.

It was the steamboats and railroads of the first half of the nineteenth century that had the first significant impact on sport. As one of the first products of the age of steam, steamboats served as carriers of thoroughbred horses to such horse-racing centers as Vicksburg, Natchez, and New Orleans, all located along the Mississippi River. Crowds attending horse races or prizefights were frequently conveyed to the site of the event via steamboats. The riverboats on the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence also served as carriers of racing or prizefight news up and down the river valleys.

More important to the development of organized sport was the railroad. In the years preceding the American Civil War, the widespread interest in thoroughbred and harness races was in great part nurtured by railroad expansion, as horses and crowds were transported from one locality to another. Similarly, participants and spectators for prizefights and foot races were commonly carried to the sites of competition by rail. Scheduling the fights where they would not be disrupted by the authorities frequently

became necessary because prizefighting was outlawed in many cities. This meant that spectators often had to use the railroad to get to the site of the bout.

New Forms of Communication Enable Dissemination of Sport Information

As important as transportation was to the rise of North American sport, the new forms of communication over the past century and a half have been equally significant. The invention and development of the telegraph was the most important advance in communication during the first half of the nineteenth century. Samuel F. B. Morse perfected an electrical instrument by which combinations of dots and dashes could be transmitted along a wire, and the first telegraph line was built between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., in 1844. Soon telegraph lines stretched between all the principal cities, and by 1860 some 50,000 miles of line existed east of the Rockies. Meanwhile, Western Union was extending its lines to the Pacific coast, putting the Pony Express out of business a little more than a year after it was founded.

From its invention in 1844, the telegraph rapidly assumed a significant role in the dissemination of sport news because newspapers and periodicals installed telegraphic apparatuses in their offices. Only two years after its invention, the *New York Herald* and the *New York Tribune* had telegraphic equipment. By 1850, horse races, prizefights, and yachting events were regularly reported over the wires.

Simultaneous with the development of the telegraph, a revolution in the dissemination of news occurred with improvements in printing presses and in other processes of newspaper and journal production. The telegraph and the improved press opened the gates to a rising tide of sports journalism, but the journalistic exploitation of sports did not actually take off until the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Whereas advances in electrical forms of communication were instrumental in the rise of sport, other communications media supplemented and extended sport publicity. In the early years of the nineteenth century, sports were more directly aided by magazine and book publishers than they were by newspapers. However, the rise of sports journalism was closely tied to new inventions in printing processes as well as to the telegraph network that spanned the continent in the mid-1800s.

As early as the 1830s, several of the largest newspapers were giving extensive coverage to prizefights, foot races, horse races, and other sports. What was perhaps the most notable newspaper concerned with sports in the United States—*The Spirit of the Times*—appeared in 1831 and survived until 1901.¹⁵

LATTER NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN SPORT

Entering the second half of the nineteenth century, North America was predominantly a land of small farms, small towns, and small business enterprises. But over the next fifty years economic, technological, and social changes transformed the lives of Americans and Canadians. Both countries evolved from rural and traditional societies into modern, industrialized nations. By the beginning of the twentieth century, citizens and immigrants in both nations were laboring in factories owned by large corporations.

Before 1850, U.S. industry had been largely concentrated in New England and the mid-Atlantic states, but by 1900 industrialization and manufacturing spread out to all parts of the country. As the factory system took root, however, a capitalistic class began to emerge, and a new form of business ownership, the corporation, became the dominant form of organization.

By the 1890s, corporations produced nearly three-fourths of the total value of manufactured products in the United States. The large corporations developed mass-production methods and mass sales, the bases of big business, because of the huge amounts

of money they controlled. To accommodate corporations, cities passed ordinances – ugly laws they were called – which were laws that protected corporations while discriminating against workers with disabilities. See Box 2.1 below.

Meanwhile, the conflict over control of the vast Canadian expanse of the continent, which had remained unresolved throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, was finally settled with the Confederation of Canadian Provinces in 1867. Canada became the first federal union in the British Empire, and the second half of the nineteenth century was a period of consolidation of provinces within the union.

Canadian industrialization was proceeding along a trajectory similar to that in the northeastern United States, and by the middle of the nineteenth century Canadian industry was well under way in Montreal and Quebec City. Little by little, factories appeared in those cities and provided jobs for thousands of workers. At the time of confederation, manufacturing in Canada was still primarily of a local handicraft nature requiring little capital, and much of the trade was based on farming, fishing, and timber products. However, beginning in the 1870s, Canadian manufacturing received an impetus from the new industrial revolution of steel and railroads, and advanced technology and corporate organization fostered a unified market and a factory system of specialized mass production to serve it.

As technology increased the means of industrial production in both Canada and the United States,

BOX 2.1 THINKING ABOUT SPORT: THE CHANGING SOCIAL STATUS OF "DISABILITY"

In 1881, the city of Chicago passed an ordinance (often referred to as "ugly law") that read: "Any person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed, so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object, or an improper person to be allowed in or on the streets, highways, thoroughfares, or public paces in the city, shall not therein or thereon expose himself to public view, under a penalty of a fine for 1 dollar." Additionally, some people with disabilities or physical abnormalities were used as entertainment in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in what were called "freak shows."

In short, people would pay money to see these "exotic" and "strange" examples of humanity. Ableism, similar to sexism or racism, is the ideology that some bodies/people are better than others. The aforementioned law and entertainment spectacle reproduced ableism as they reinforced the social definitions of "normal" and "good" bodies and, thus, constructed a hierarchy of human diversity. The historical disdain of disability was also expressed through derogatory terms including cripple, feeble-minded, or imbecile.

Sources: Ron Berger, *Introducing Disability Studies* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2013), 7–8; Brett Smith, ed., *Paralympics and Disability Sport* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

more and more people gave up farming and came to the cities to work in factories and offices. They were joined by a seemingly endless stream of immigrants who sought a better life in North America. Factories multiplied, and towns and cities grew rapidly. The first U.S. census, completed in 1790, recorded a population of nearly 4 million, about 6 percent of whom were classified as urban; by 1900 the population had risen to 76 million, with some 40 percent living in urban areas.

Figure 2.2 shows the general pattern of growth in urban population. From 1860 to 1910 the number of U.S. cities with populations greater than 100,000 increased from nine to fifty. The 1871 census of Canada reported that there were only twenty communities with more than 5,000 residents; by 1901 there were sixty-two, and twenty-four of those had a population of more than 10,000.

URBANIZATION AND THE RISE OF MODERN SPORT FORMS

Urban influences in both the United States and Canada had made their marks by the mid-nineteenth century, and the increasing concentration of city populations and the monotonous and wearisome repetition of industrial work created a demand for more recreational outlets. Urbanization created favorable conditions for commercialized spectator sports, whereas industrialization gradually provided the leisure time and standard of living so crucial to the growth and development of all forms of recreation and sport (see Figure 2.2).

Towns and cities were natural centers for organizing sports. The popular sport of horse racing centered in New York, Boston, Charleston, Louisville, and New

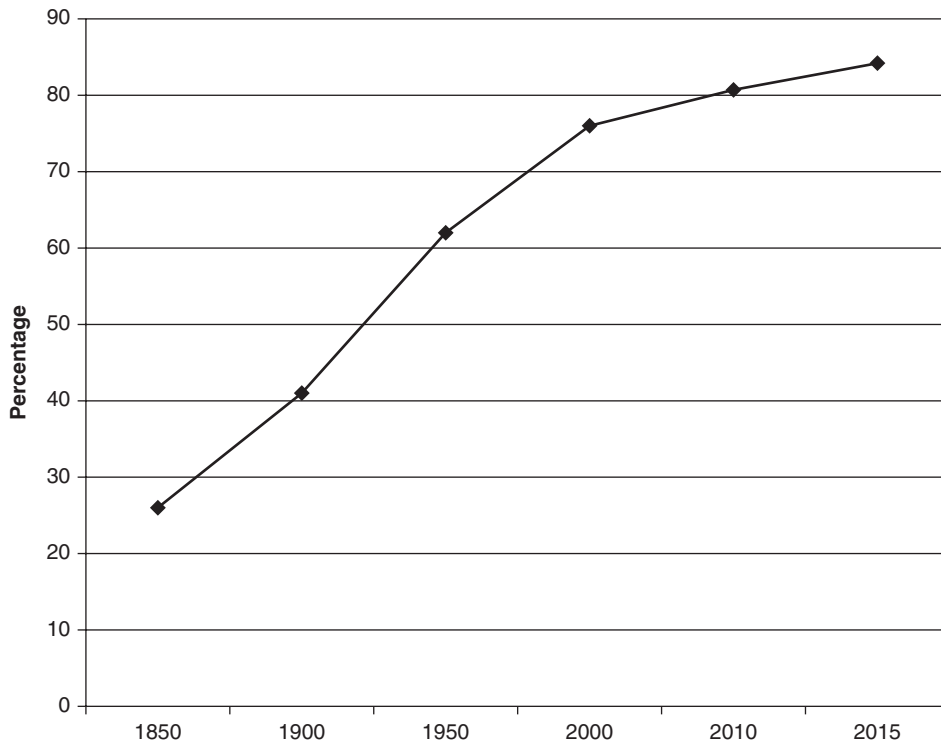


FIGURE 2.2 Percentage of U.S. Population in Urban Areas

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, *Population and Housing Unit Counts PHC-3*; 2010 Census of Population and Housing, *Population and Housing Unit Counts, CPH-2-1, United States Summary*; and "Percent Urban and Rural in 2010 by State," <https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html>, accessed March 2013.

Orleans, and the first organized baseball clubs were founded in such communities as New York, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, and Toronto. Yachting and rowing regattas, foot races, boxing events, billiard matches, and even the main agricultural fairs were held in or near the larger cities.

Diffusion of Sport from the Upper to the Lower Classes

Nothing in the recreational and sport scene was more startling than the sudden spread of sporting activities from the wealthy class into the upper middle, the middle, and even the working class. Millionaires pursued horse racing, yachting, lawn tennis, and golf. Working women and young ladies of the middle class turned to rowing and cycling, and working-class men played pool, fished, hunted, backed their favorite boxers, and gradually tried their hands at the sports of the affluent classes. The long winters in Canada provided plenty of opportunity for both affluent and working people to participate in skiing, ice skating, curling, and other cold-weather sports.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, people tried to adapt to the new urban-industrial society by forming subcommunities based on status. One type of status community was the athletic club, formed by younger, wealthy men who shared a common interest in sports. The private clubs were a major stimulus to the growth of yachting, baseball, lawn tennis, golf, track and field, and country clubs. Essentially the same pattern of upper-class promotion of organized sport through social elite sports clubs existed in Canada. Thus, members of the social elite in both the United States and Canada deserve much credit for early sporting promotion and patronage.¹⁶

New sports introduced by the wealthy were often adopted by the working class. Baseball is a classic example of this pattern. From an informal children's game played throughout the eighteenth century, baseball developed codified rules in the 1840s, and groups of upper-social-class men organized clubs, taking care to keep out lower-social-class persons. The first of these baseball clubs, the Knickerbockers of New York, was primarily a social club with a distinctly upper-class flavor; it was similar to the country clubs of the 1920s and 1930s before they became



Portraits of the original Cincinnati Red Stockings team members, ca. 1869. This was the first professional baseball team in the United States. The Red Stockings played games from coast to coast and chalked up a fabulous winning streak of sixty-five games without a defeat.

popular with the middle class. A baseball game for members of the Knickerbockers was a genteel amateur recreational pursuit, with an emphasis on polite social interactions rather than an all-out quest for victory.¹⁷

In the United States, the Civil War wiped out this upper-class patronage of the game, and a broad base of popularity existed in 1869 when the first professional baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, was formed. This was followed in 1876 by the organization of the first major league, and baseball became firmly entrenched as the American national pastime by the end of the century.

Baseball attracted the interest of Canadians as well, and by 1859, Torontonians had begun playing the game, spurring an expansion of play to other cities. In the mid-1880s, clubs from Toronto,



The first Stanley Cup Champions. The Stanley Cup was first awarded to the Montreal Hockey Club in 1893 when the team won the 1893 AHAC season. The team then had to defend its champion title through both league championships and challenge games organized by the Stanley Cup trustees. Until 1912, these challenges could take place before or during a league season. After 1912, the trustees ordered that challenges only take place after all league games were completed. Professional hockey was among the sporting pursuits fostered by railroad development. (Photo: Library of Congress)

Hamilton, London, and Guelph had formed Canada's first professional baseball league. By the end of the nineteenth century, baseball was solidly embedded in Canada's sporting culture.¹⁸

At about the same time, ice hockey, which was to become Canada's national pastime, was making its own early history. It seems to have been played in its earliest unorganized form in the mid-1850s, but the first public showing of the game took place in 1875. Ice hockey quickly became a favorite sport of Canadians.

As cities grew, an element of the population that journalists referred to as "rabble" and "rowdies" stimulated interest in organized sports. Wherever sports events were held, members of this group could be found gambling on the outcome and generally raising the emotional atmosphere of the event by wildly cheering their favorites and booing or attempting to disconcert those whom they had bet against. Although sports organizers publicly condemned the actions of this unruly element, they secretly spurred

them on because this group often helped ensure the financial success of sporting events.

The Role of African Americans in Sports During the Nineteenth Century

Despite living under conditions of slavery in the southern colonies, African Americans engaged in a wide variety of games and sport. Some were even trained by their plantation owners as boxers and jockeys. Emancipation in the mid-1860s gave African Americans hopes of participating in sports along with whites, but the post-Civil War years saw a mass social disenfranchisement of African Americans. Although a few African Americans played on professional baseball teams in the second half of the nineteenth century, many white players refused to play with the black players, so team owners stopped hiring blacks. As other professional and amateur sports developed during the latter nineteenth century, African Americans were barred from participation in most of them. But horse race jockeying was an exception; see Box 2.2 below. This issue is also discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

The Role of Immigrants in Sports During the Nineteenth Century

Between 1870 and 1900, some 12 million persons immigrated to the United States. At the beginning of this period, one-third of all U.S. industrial workers were immigrants; by 1900, more than half were foreign-born. During the same period, approximately 1.2 million immigrants entered the Canadian provinces.

Immigrants in both countries contributed to the rise of sport in a variety of ways. First, many immigrants settled in the cities and became a part of that urban population that sought excitement through sport and recreation as an antidote to the typically dull and monotonous jobs they held. Second, because a great many of these nineteenth-century immigrants did not possess the strict religious attitudes toward play and sport of the fundamental Protestant sects, they freely enjoyed and participated in sports of all kinds. Third, the immigrants brought their games and sports with them to North America. Cricket, horse racing, and rowing were widely popular with



The playground in a tenement alley, a substandard multifamily poor neighborhood in the urban core, usually in Boston or New York, in the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often occupied by newly arrived immigrants. This is a typical tenement image of kids playing games and sports in the street while multiple lines of laundry flap merrily in the breeze. While some neighborhoods were comprised of a heavy percentage of a given ethnic group, most tenements contained a wide variety of nationalities. (Photo: Hockey Hall of Fame/Library and Archives Canada/PA-049464)

the British immigrants. The Germans brought their love for lawn twobowling and gymnastics. German *turnverein* (gymnastic clubs) were opened wherever Germans settled; by the time of the Civil War, there were approximately 150 American *turnverein* with some 10,000 members.¹⁹

In Canada in 1859, German migrants had organized a *turnverein* in what is now Kitchener, and a Turner Association with forty members was active in Toronto in 1861. The Scots pioneered in introducing track-and-field sports to North America with their annual Caledonian games. In a definitive study, sport historian Gerald Redmond quite convincingly showed that the “emigrant Scots” were a dominant force in the development of Canadian sport in the

nineteenth century.²⁰ The Irish seemed to have a particular affinity for the prize ring, and some of the most famous nineteenth-century boxers in North America were immigrants from Ireland. Two Irish American boxing champions, John L. Sullivan and James J. Corbett, were among the most popular sports heroes of the century.

The Beginnings of Intercollegiate Athletics

The entire focus of Chapter 10 is on intercollegiate sports, so we forgo detailing the history of intercollegiate sports until that chapter.

The first North American colleges were established during the colonial period. They were small, widely scattered, and religiously oriented, and in

BOX 2.2 THINKING ABOUT SPORT: HORSE RACING AND THE GREAT AFRICAN AMERICAN JOCKEYS

Baseball was not America's first "national pastime." Before the Civil War it was horse racing that captured the sporting interest and enthusiasm of Americans. One hundred and fifty years before Jackie Robinson broke into Major League Baseball, African American jockeys competed alongside whites in horse races throughout the country. Despite the slavery system, racehorse owners and trainers recognized the skill, courage, and determination of African American jockeys and didn't hesitate to use them to win horse races. But most Americans and Canadians are unaware of the excellence of the African American jockeys during this period because, as one historian put it, "The black jockeys were ridden out of history." The status of black jockeys remained high in the years immediately following the Civil War. Indeed, in the first Kentucky Derby, held in 1875, the jockey on the winning horse was an African American, Oliver Lewis. More impressive, of the fifteen jockeys in that race, thirteen were African Americans. This was not unusual: until Jim Crow laws set in, segregating blacks and whites near the end of the nineteenth century, African Americans dominated the sport of horse racing—much

as they do NBA basketball today. Most horse-racing historians regard Isaac Murphy as the greatest jockey in the country in the decade and a half between 1884 and 1900. Murphy won his first Kentucky Derby in 1884. He became the first jockey to win two consecutive Kentucky Derbys, and his record of riding three Kentucky Derby winners was not equaled until 1930.

By the end of the 1890s, African American jockeys were the subjects of virulent racism sweeping the country in the form of a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which upheld the constitutionality of racial segregation in public venues under the doctrine of "separate but equal." In his book *The Great Black Jockeys*, historian Edward Hotaling laments, "By the early 1900s, the great black jockeys had gone from winning the Kentucky Derby to not being able to get a mount. . . . For all intents and purposes, they had vanished from the American racetrack." And their records of excellence, courage, and achievements have all but vanished from sports history, along with the admiration that should be theirs.

Sources: Edward Hotaling, *The Great Black Jockeys* (Rocklin, CA: Forum, 1999); Katherine C. Mooney, *Race Horse Men: How Slavery and Freedom Were Made at the Racetrack* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

what became the United States, most were less than thirty years old when the colonial period ended. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, colleges became the source of one of the most popular forms of sport: intercollegiate athletics.

Intercollegiate athletics began in the United States in 1852 with a rowing match between Harvard and Yale. But it was not until the 1870s and 1880s that intercollegiate sports became an established part of higher education and contributed to the enthusiasm for athletic and sporting diversions. Football became an extremely popular spectator sport during this era. It was a sport for the affluent classes rather than for the masses because it largely reflected the interests of the college students and alumni; the pig-skin game (an early nickname for the sport) nevertheless did develop into a national sport by 1900.

After students organized teams, collegiate sports revolutionized campus life, serving as a major source of physical activity for many students and a significant source of entertainment for other students,

alumni, and the general public. In the United States, intercollegiate athletics gradually became more than merely a demonstration of physical skills between rival institutions. Students, alumni, and the public began to regard victory as the measure of a college's prestige. Campus and commercial editors increased their coverage, and sports events became featured items in newspapers and magazines. As a result, this increased coverage focused attention on winning and made contest results appear to be an index of an institution's merit.

Thus, a belief emerged throughout American colleges that winning teams favorably advertised the school, attracted prospective students, enhanced alumni contributions, and—in the case of state-supported universities—increased appropriations from the state legislature. The notion that successful teams brought renown to the college (and to its president) must surely have been in the mind of University of Chicago president William Rainey Harper when he hired Yale All-American Amos Alonzo Stagg in 1890.



One of the oldest notions about female participation in sport was the idea that vigorous physical activity tended to “masculinize” the physique and behavior of girls and women. Nevertheless, even though females maintained a “ladylike” into the first decades of the twentieth century, they played a variety of games and sports. The college women in the photo are participating in sports, adopting the appropriate clothing they were expected to maintain while playing. The athletes even attracted a rather large group of spectators to watch the activity. (Photo: Playground in Tenement Alley, Boston, 1909 (b/w photo), Hine, Lewis Wickes (1874–1940)/Private Collection/J. T. Vintage/Bridgeman Images)

He asked Stagg to “develop teams which we can send around the country and knock out all the colleges. We will give them a palace car and a vacation too.”²¹

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND SPORT: TRANSPORTATION

Technological innovation continued to serve as a dominant force for shaping social change throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Transportation was one of the most prominent areas of its influence, as the growth of the railroad industry continued throughout the latter nineteenth century. Shortly after the Civil War, the Central Pacific and

Union Pacific workers laid the final rail to complete the first transcontinental line in North America. Other lines followed in the last three decades of the 1800s. Similar events were occurring in Canada. In November 1885 the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway was completed.²²

The railroad played an instrumental role in staging the first intercollegiate athletic event, a rowing race between Harvard and Yale. According to sport historian Ronald A. Smith, “the offer by a railroad superintendent to transport and house the crews of the two most prestigious colleges [Harvard and Yale] at a vacation spot over a hundred miles from the Cambridge campus and nearly twice that distance