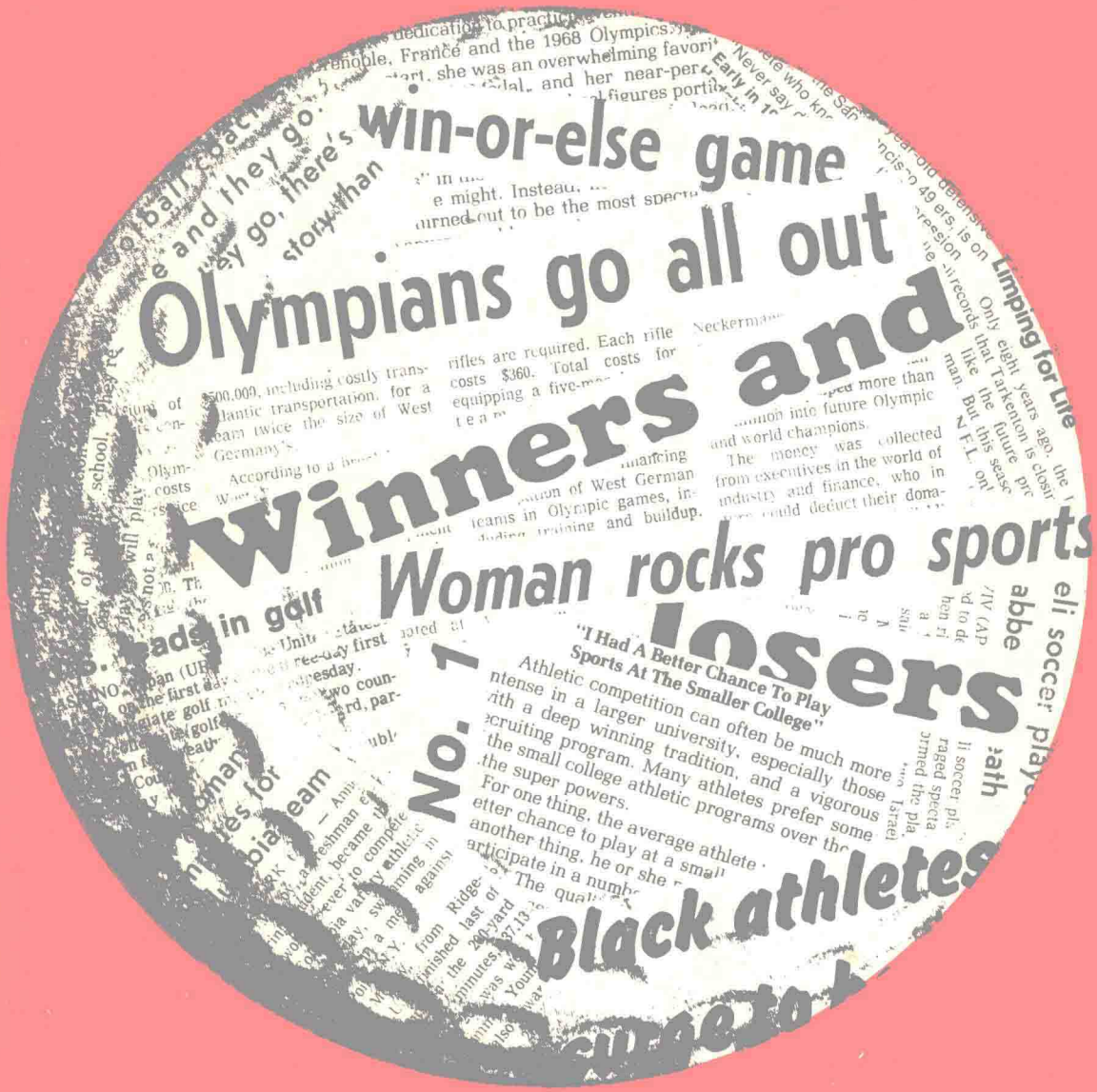
SPORT SOCIOLOGY:

CONTEMPORARY THEMES



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SPORT SOCIOLOGY

Contemporary Themes

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Preface

Since the publication in 1969 of John Loy and Gerald Kenyon's reader *Sport, Culture, and Society*, several other anthologies have followed. One may well ask, therefore, "why another reader?" The fact is, the study of sport from a socio-cultural perspective has generated a substantial amount of literature in recent years. New themes and areas of interest have emerged, and the discipline of Sport Sociology has undergone substantial systematization. The editors believe that there is now a need for an anthology which captures and articulates the excitement of the contemporary literature, and, which attempts to present it in as lucid and intelligible manner as possible.

The articles in this book, while retaining the integrity of the discipline, reflect careful selection and screening. The majority have been "tried and tested" in the classroom with most favorable results. Recently published articles which have not been used in the classroom were evaluated by the editors for suitability with the needs and interests of the student in mind.

While the book is intended for beginning and intermediate level students of sport and society, some prior exposure to course work in the social sciences is advisable. However, in the absence of such a background, we have attempted to remedy the situation and assist students by including unit introductions. It is recommended that they be read prior to embarking on a specific unit since they highlight some of the major concepts and ideas contained in specific selections. In order to further assist the reader, both general and specific discussion questions are included at the end of each unit. These complement the unit introductions and are intended to guide both student and instructor in terms of "what to look for" in reading a particular article. The answers to these questions should also provide the student with a helpful review of the article for reference in small group discussion, and in writing papers and essays.

This anthology consists of forty-three articles organized into twelve teaching units. Seven of these units are unique in the sense that they present concepts or themes which, heretofore, have received only minimal attention in published form. Units such as *The American Sports Hero* (edited by Melnick), *Violence in Sport* (edited by Hart), *Adult-Sponsored Activities for Children* (edited by McIntyre), and *Sport Subcultures* (edited by Yiannakis) reflect some of the special interests and expertise of the editors; others, such as *Sport, Politics and Economics, An Assessment of the Value of Competition* and *The Future of American Sport* attempt to capture contemporary themes and/or problems. While it is recommended that the units be read in the order in which they are presented, to preserve topic continuity, each unit is sufficiently self-contained to be dealt with as a separate entity or to supplement other related readings.

A book such as this owes a debt of gratitude to many. In particular, we wish to thank all those contributors and publishers whose works appear in this edition.

The Editors
Brockport, New York

Contents

Unit I

The Sociological Study of Sport

This perspective, in its broadest sense, employs theoretical frameworks and the empirical tools of the social sciences to aid man in better understanding human behavior in sport contexts. All the research tools available to the sociologist, social psychologist, and anthropologist can and have been used in an effort to ascertain the manifest and latent functions of sport in modern society. As in any other scientific effort, scholars with an interest in sport have also attempted to describe, discover, and explain this phenomenon with the eventual goal being the prediction of sport-related human social behavior. The student of human social behavior must be constantly aware of the fact that prediction of behavior is not absolute but is necessarily stated in probabilistic terms.

In the initial selection, sociologists Eldon Snyder and Elmer Spreitzer address their remarks primarily to the sport sociologist. The major thrust of this article is their critique of the strengths and weaknesses of the sociological study of sport. Whereas the authors are advocating adoption of sport sociology by the discipline of sociology, there are many scholars in the field who would argue that sport sociology has already achieved an independent status as a discipline with its own focus of attention (sport), modes of inquiry (methods of the social sciences) and a unique body of knowledge (sport studies).

In the second selection, sport social psychologist, Rainer Martens, outlines a number of fundamental topics associated with the social psychology of physical activity. He also makes it quite clear that a social analysis approach is necessary if an integrated body of knowledge is to be forthcoming.

SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT: AN OVERVIEW

Eldon E. Snyder—Elmer Spreitzer

This review sketches some strengths and weaknesses in the subfield and its potential for generating and testing theoretical frameworks. The analysis includes research on sport from the following perspectives: interinstitutional relationships, social stratification, small groups, and social psychology. In recent years, the sociology of sport has become more sophisticated in terms of research questions posed, research design, quantitative analysis, and cross-cultural comparisons. As one dimension of leisure, sports represent a serious topic for scholarly research to round out our understanding of the human person as a social being.

The sociology of sport has yet to become a mainline specialty within the discipline, and some might question whether it should ever become one. Given the proliferation of specializations within sociology, we might ask to what end is such elaboration of descriptive content directed? In other words, does a discipline grow by spinning off more and more content areas, or does it develop through the creation of paradigms that are generic in nature. The "hard" sciences did not develop by continually carving out new content areas; rather, they developed through the creation of theoretical frameworks that transcended specific content. Why, then, should we legitimate an area such as the sociology of sport by instituting journals and convention sessions on that topic, textbooks and courses, and state-of-the-field articles?

We suggest that sport as a substantive topic has as much claim on the sociologist's attention as the more conventional specialties of family, religion, political, and industrial sociology. Sports and games are cultural universals and basic institutions in societies, and are some of the most pervasive aspects of culture in in-

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dustrialized societies. Moreover, all of the traditional content areas are, in principle, equal—unless we impose a value judgment of some type to assert that some institutional spheres are more important. Empirically, we could impose a hierarchy on the content areas in terms of their lineage (religion via Weber would be high here) or in terms of their explanatory power (economic sociology would be high here).

Basically, we argue that a sociologist studies sports for the same reasons as any other topic—for intrinsic interest and to impose sociological frameworks as a means of constructing and refining concepts, propositions, and theories from the larger discipline.[1] A scholar's claim, however, on institutional and societal resources to pursue one's intrinsic interests does not carry much weight these days. We suggest that the sociology of sport is of value to the larger discipline primarily in terms of its capacity to serve as a fertile testing ground for the generating and testing of theoretical frameworks. Sociology will not grow by filling in dots on the canvas of social life; rather, it grows by imposing order on clusters of dots. Substantive specialties such as the sociology of sport can feed back to the larger discipline in terms of concept formation, theory construction, and theory verification. Glaser and Straus (1967) recommend the inductive approach to theory building through wrestling with empirical content and ultimately deriving generic frameworks that are applicable to a variety of subject areas. From a theory verification perspective, substantive areas such as the sociology of sport represent a testing ground to explore the generality and explanatory power of theories in a variety of social settings.

One might suggest that the sociology of sport is a species of the sociology of leisure. Clearly, sport could be subsumed under leisure studies as simply another way in which people spend their discretionary time. Since both the sociology of leisure and sport focus on the noninstrumental facets of social life, they probably will merge into a more generic specialization such as the sociology of expressive behavior. Presently, however, the two content specialties are very distinct in the sense of having their own associations, conventions, professional registers, journals, and sessions within the conventions of general sociology. Given the separate evolution of the two specialties of leisure and sports, the present analysis focuses solely on sports.[2]

The phenomenon of sport represents one of the most pervasive social institutions in the United States. Sports permeate all levels of social reality from the societal down to the social psychological levels. The salience of sports can be documented in terms of news coverage, financial expenditures, number of participants and spectators, hours consumed, and time samplings of conversations. Given the salience of sports as a social institution, a sociology of sport has emerged that attempts to go beyond the descriptive level by providing theoretically informed analyses and explanations of sports activity.

One might speculate as to why sport is a recent entry to the substantive specialties within sociology. If, in fact, sociology is a residual field that assimilates topics unclaimed by more established fields, why is it that sports (also, leisure and recreation) were not an early part of the sociological package? Perhaps one answer to this question lies in the increased salience of these spheres as concomitants of economic development and affluence. Another explanation may be that sports previously were viewed as primarily physical, rather than social interaction, and thus devoid of sociological significance. Still another explanation may be that the world of sports is often perceived as illusionary, fantasy, and a sphere apart from the "real" world (Huizinga, 1955). Perhaps Americans are uneasy with play and this ambivalence may explain the relative lack of interest in sports on the part of sociologists (Stone, 1971:48). In a similar vein, Dunning (1967) argues that sociologists who have defined play and sport in terms of fantasy, and who are thus ambivalent about seriously studying the topic, may be reflecting a Protestant Ethic orientation toward work and leisure. In fact, an element of snobbery is probably involved: "The serious analysis of popular sport is construed to be beneath the dignity of many academics" (Stone, 1971:62). In response to such sentiments, Dunning (1971:37) emphasizes that "sports and games are 'real' in the sense they are observable, whether directly through overt behavior of people or indirectly through the reports which players and spectators give of what they think and feel while playing and 'spectating'." There is increasing realization that sport as an institution permeates and articulates with other institutions. Consequently, a substantial literature is developing in the sociology of sport, some of which is cumulative, and much of which goes beyond description toward explanation.[3] Disciplines other than sociology contribute to this literature; physical educators are particularly visible in this specialty. Moreover, some prominent physical educators researching in this area are, in effect, sociologists, either through formal or informal training.

Definition of Sport

The meaning of sport, like time, is self-evident until one is asked to define it. There is little disagreement in classifying physical activities such as basketball, football, handball, tennis, and track as sports. Hunting, fishing, and camping are often considered sports, but do they contain the same elements as, say, football and basketball? Can mountain climbing, bridge, and poker be classified as sports? Edwards (1973) presents a typology to clarify the concepts of play, recreation, contest, game, and sport. He arrays these activities on a continuum in the above order with play and sport as the polar activities. As one moves from play toward sport the following occurs (Edwards, 1973:59):

> Activity becomes less subject to individual prerogative, with spontaneity severely diminished.
>
> Formal rules and structural role and position relationships

and responsibilities within the activity assume predominance.

Separation from the rigors and pressures of daily life becomes less prevalent.

Individual liability and responsibility for the quality and character of his behavior during the course of the activity is heightened.

The relevance of the outcome of the activity and the individual's role in it extends to groups and collectivities that do not participate directly in the act.

Goals become diverse, complex, and more related to values emanating from outside of the context of the activity.

The activity consumes a greater proportion of the individual's time and attention due to the need for preparation and the degree of seriousness involved in the act.

In summary, Edwards (1973:57-58) defines sport as "involving activities having formally recorded histories and traditions, stressing physical exertion through competition within limits set in explicit and formal rules governing role and position relationships, and carried out by actors who represent or who are part of formally organized associations having the goal of achieving valued tangibles or intangibles through defeating opposing groups." Lüschen (1967:127; 1970:6; 1972:119) defines sport as an institutionalized type of competitive physical activity located on a continuum between play and work. Sport contains intrinsic and extrinsic rewards; but the more it is rewarded extrinsically (including socially), the more it tends to become work in the sense of being instrumental rather than consummatory (also see Loy, 1968). These attempts to define sport are admittedly imprecise. Sport may be defined in terms of the participants' motivation or by the nature of the activity itself. Sport is a playful activity for some participants, while others participate in the context of work or an occupation. Moreover, the boundaries of sport as an activity blend into the more general sphere of recreation or leisure. In the present paper, we shall not attempt to carve out boundaries for the topic; rather, we delineate the specialty in operational terms of what sociologists actually do with the content of sport. We attempt to synthesize and interpret the work done in this area while organizing the literature in terms of the unit of analysis. We begin by analyzing sociological research concerning sport at the macro level.

Societal Perspectives

One research tradition within the sociology of sport focuses on the relationship between sports and the larger society. The analysis involves the following basic questions (Lüschen, 1970:8): What is the nature of sport as a social institution, and how does it relate to other institutions? What is the structure and function of sport, and what social values does it promote?

This macro level of analysis is probably the most well-developed area in the sociology of sport. Sport as a microcosm of society is a *leitmotiv* that permeates much of the literature. Particular emphasis involves the social values, beliefs, and ideologies that are expressed and transmitted through the institutional configuration of sport. This theme is discussed by Boyle (1963) in *Sport: Mirror of American Life*; he analyzes sport as a mirror of society involving elements of social life such as stratification, race relations, commerce, automotive design, clothing style, concepts of law, language, and ethical values. In this context, a recent study by Snyder (1972a) classifies slogans placed in dressing rooms by high school coaches into motifs that are used to transmit beliefs, values, and norms to athletes. These slogans emphasize the development of qualities such as mental and physical fitness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, perseverence, self-discipline, and subordination of self to the group. Many of these characteristics are supported by values inherent in the Protestant Ethic. In this sense, sport is a "value receptacle" for the dominant social values (Edwards, 1973:355). Furthermore, cross-cultural data concerning sports and games show that they tend to be representative of a particular society's values and norms (Roberts and Sutton-Smith, 1962).

Numerous researchers have documented the interrelationship between sport and society by analyzing specific sports. Riesman and Denny (1954) describe how rugby changed to become the game of football that was congruent with the American ethos. Similarly, cultural themes in major league baseball reflect American values of specialization, division of labor, individual success, and the importance of teamwork (Voigt, 1971; Haerle, 1973).

The prevalence of writings on the social functions of sport are supported from several disciplines—sociology, history, philosophy, and physical education. Methodologically, this literature relies on historical accounts, autobiographies, content analysis, and other qualitative techniques. These studies explicitly or implicitly embrace the theoretical posture of functionalism. In this regard the study of sports provides ample evidence of pattern maintenance, tension management, integration, and systemic linkages with other social institutions.

Many observers have pointed to the safety value function that sport serves for society. On a structural level of analysis, a vulgar Marxism is sometimes invoked in viewing sports as an opiate and as producing unreality, mystification, and false consciousness. Similarly, many scholars have commented on the psychodynamic function of sports. Gerth and Mills (1954:63), for example, suggest that "Many mass audience situations, with their 'vicarious' enjoyments, serve psychologically the unintended function of channeling and releasing otherwise unplaceable emotions. Thus, great values of aggression are 'cathartically' released by crowds of spectators cheering their favorite stars of sport—and jeering the umpire."

In related context, several empirical studies have attempted to document political concomitants of participation in sports. For instance, several surveys found

that athletes tend to be more conservative, conventional, and conformist than their nonathletic counterparts (Phillips and Schafer, 1970; Rehberg, 1971; Schafer, 1971; and Scott, 1971). According to these observers, sport has a "conservatizing" effect on youth through its emphasis on hard work, persistence, diligence, and individual control over social mobility. Clearly, the transmission of societal values is an important function of schools anywhere. Schafer (1971) suggests, however, that the value mystique surrounding high school sports might be dangerous in the sense of producing conformist, authoritarian, cheerful robots who lack the autonomy and inner direction to accept innovation, contrasting value systems, and alternative life-styles. This provocative hypothesis is worthy of testing with a longitudinal design.

Although the above observations are intuitively persuasive, Petrie (1973) reports no significant political differences between athletes and nonathletes among Canadian college students in Ontario. Perhaps there are subcultural differences between the intercollegiate athletic programs in Canada and the United States that would account for his findings. Many questions in this area await further research. If sport promotes a conservative ideology, how pervasive is its influence, and what is the *process* by which it has this effect? Furthermore, how much transfer effect is there into adult life? And, if sport induces this type of politicoeconomic mentality, are the consequences primarily for athletes, or are other segments of the population likewise affected?

The economic, commercial, and occupational facets of sport also have been analyzed. Furst (1971:165) attributes the rise of commercialism in sport to the increasing number of people "with time, money, and energy to engage in and embrace the world of sports." Kenyon (1972) cites the change in American society toward mass consumption and professionalism as having ramifications within sport. The economic aspects of sport are evident in conflicts in several cities over the securing of professional sports franchises, the location of new stadia and arenas because of the multiplier effect on restaurants, hotels, parking lots, theatres, bars, etc. The fact that general scheduling of television programs is partly determined by the timing of prominent sports events bespeaks the economic salience of sports in the United States. We will discuss occupational and career aspects of sports later.

The articulation of sport with the religious institution is also of interest. As the ancient Olympic games were grand festivals with much religious and political significance, contemporary sports events can be seen as America's "civil religion" (Rogers, 1972:393). Athletic events often open with prayer as well as the national anthem, teams frequently have a chaplain, and many teams have prayer sessions prior to the contest. In a survey of high school basketball coaches and players, Snyder (1972a:91) reports that the majority of the teams sampled invoke prayer before or during games. Football coaches generally welcome reinforcement from the religious sector. "Louisiana State University's coach . . . credits a Graham campus crusade in the Fall of 1970 with helping his football team win a victory over Auburn University. Dallas Cowboy's head football coach . . . presided over a Billy Graham Crusade For Christ held on the Cowboy's home field, the Cotton Bowl, in 1971" (Edwards, 1973:124). Rogers (1972:394) suggests that "sports are rapidly becoming the dominant ritualistic expression of the reification of established religion in America." In this context, a number of writers have suggested that religion and sport interact to reinforce the status quo and to reaffirm the conventional wisdom.

Similarly, the linkage between sport and the educational institution has been explored by sociologists. The United States differs from most nations in that amateur athletes are almost totally dominated by high schools and colleges; very little is carried on under the aegis of clubs or the government. The incorporation of amateur athletics into educational institutions has important consequences. As early as 1929 the Lynds noted the position of honor attributed to athletics and the low esteem accorded to academic pursuits in the high school status hierarchy of *Middletown*. Waller (1932) viewed the high school as a social organism and suggested that interscholastic athletics are justified because they promote the competitive spirit, act as a means of social control and system integration, and prepare students for adult life. The various sports themselves constitute a status hierarchy in schools and colleges; generally there is more interest in football and basketball than all the other sports and extracurricular activities combined (Hollingshead, 1949:193; Gordon, 1957; Coleman, 1961). These studies provide quantitative and qualitative documentation of the value orientations among youth and the relative importance of sports in the spectrum of high school activities.

A cumulative research tradition in the sociology of sport focuses on the relationship between participation in sport and academic performance and aspirations. Coleman's (1961) study of students in ten midwestern high schools suggests that the nature of interscholastic athletic competition focuses an inordinate amount of attention of sport which results in a depreciation of academic pursuits. His data, however, do not consistently support his hypothesis. For example, in six of the ten high schools, the grade averages of the top athletes were higher than their nonathletic peers. Additional studies generally show that, with qualifications, athletes tend to have as high or higher educational achievement and expectations than their nonathletic counterparts (Bend, 1968; Rehberg and Schafer, 1968; Schafer and Armer, 1968; Schafer and Rehberg, 1970; Spreitzer and Pugh, 1973). Additional analysis of the psychological and social concomitants of participation in interscholastic athletics is presented below in the section on social psychological aspects.

It is interesting to note that although conflict has long been defined as an essential element of most sports, nevertheless a functional model is inherent in most social scientific research on sport. In other words, the ways in

which sport facilitates social integration and equilibrium have been of more interest than social conflict over scarce resources in the world of sport. The paradox of viewing explicit, structured conflict in the world of sport through the lens of an equilibrium framework is indicative of a root orientation toward harmony that spilled over from the larger discipline. It is curious that contemporary research on sport almost completely neglects current structural conflicts in the world of sport—exemption from anti-trust laws inter-league raiding of players, player drafts, the reserve clause, league expansions and mergers, strikes, and working conditions. The players themselves have not been unaware of economic antagonism in sport as evidenced by the players' ready reception of competing leagues, strikes, formation of players' associations (unions), expose books, and use of the judicial system for redress of economic grievances.

It is only in the last five years that the back regions and infrastructure of organized sports have been brought to light, and most of this writing appears in semipopular outlets such as the *Intellectual Digest, Psychology Today,* and the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*. Serious observers in this tradition (Edwards, 1969, 1973; and Scott, 1971) show how the youth movement of the late 1960s had reverberations in the world of sport. Perceived injustices in the sports establishment came under blistering attack. One segment of this "revolution" involved the black athlete and traces its roots to the civil rights movement. The threatened boycott of the XIX Olympiad and the clenched fist demonstration by black sprinters on the victory stand exemplify this reaction. Another facet of the conflict trend centers around the objections by athletes to imposition of a monolithic life-style (short hair, clean shaven, etc.). More recently, women's liberation appeared in the world of sport to seek more equitable distribution of the resources and rewards as well as to emanicipate women from arbitrary sex role definitions regarding appropriate physical activities.

In sum, we argue that sport contains many of the sources of conflict inherent in the larger society. The contours of conflict in the world of sport are evident in bold relief as compared to the veiled manipulation of power in society at large. Therefore, the arena of sport represents a potentially rich area for the testing of generic theoretic frameworks concerning conflict:

> It seems not unreasonable to suggest that football and other similar sports can serve as a kind of "natural laboratory" for studying the dynamics of group conflicts in a more detached manner than has often proved possible in the past with respect, for example, to the study of union-management conflict, class, international and other types of group conflicts where the strength of the involvements on one side or the other has acted as a hindrance to the achievement of full objectivity (Dunning, 1971:43).

Stratification Aspects

When one considers the pervasiveness of social stratification, it is not surprising that processes of social differentiation operate within the world of sport. As early as Veblen (1899), social scientists have noted the patterning of leisure behavior along social class lines. Veblen suggested that a new era was emerging in which leisure for the few was yielding to leisure for the masses. Sport as a species of leisure is no exception to the pattern of differential participation across class lines. Lüschen (1969), for example, reports a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and sports involvement in Germany. Differences by class also have been reported in the preference, meaning, and salience of sports (Stone, 1969; Lüschen, 1972). Kenyon (1966) studied patterns of indirect and direct involvement in sports among adults in Wisconsin; he found no consistent relationship between social status and the degree of sports participation. Burdge (1966) analyzed involvement in sport according to level of occupation; he found that both active participation and spectatorship were more common at the higher occupational levels. Although the above research documents the expected variations in sports activities by social class, recent research indicates additional complexity. For example, recent data collected in the Midwest using a refined measure of sports involvement found a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and *cognitive* involvement (knowledge about sports), but no consistent relationship was observed on the *behavioral* and *affective* dimensions of involvement (Snyder and Spreitzer, 1973a). This study suggests that sports involvement tends to cut across social categories. Sport is so much a part of the cultural air through mass media and conversation that one cannot be totally insulated from its influence.

Within the sociology of sport, athletic achievement is frequently cited as an avenue for social mobility, particularly for minority groups, and there are a sufficient number of superstar celebrities to sustain this perception. Clearly, such cases are a tiny fraction of professional athletes; however, there are other ways in which sport can facilitate social mobility. Loy (1969) suggests that participation in athletics can stimulate higher levels of educational aspirations in order to extend one's athletic career, and thus indirectly result in higher educational achievement and the acquisition of secular skills that are functional in the nonathletic sphere. Youth who excel in athletics frequently receive educational and occupational sponsorship by influential persons which gives them leverage in the secular world. In this connection, a recent study shows that high school athletes rank their coach second only to parents in terms of influencing their educational and occupational plans (Snyder, 1972b). Moreover, coaches often gratuitously advise their players on educational and occupational matters. In addition, ever since the English gentleman proclaimed that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, it has been argued that participation in sport generates character traits that transfer to other areas of life. There is limited evidence for this contention; we shall analyze the pertinent studies below in the section on social psychological aspects of sport.

Contrasting research findings suggest, however, that sport may also have a negative effect on the social mobility of participants. Spady (1970) interprets his findings as

showing that athletic involvement is sometimes counterproductive in the sense of raising educational aspirations without providing the necessary cognitive skills for educational achievement. With respect to blacks, sports may function as a magnet attracting youth to one specialized channel of mobility which tends to cut down the number of mobility options perceived as available for minority youth. Edwards (1973:201-202) argues that the success of black athletes tends to have a boomerang effect of attracting black youth away from higher level occupations as an avenue for mobility. Of course, the actual number of individuals of any race who achieve eminence in sports is very small.[4]

Most of the literature concerning sports and social mobility is conjectural, anecdotal, or at best descriptive. Most studies are based on cross-sectional data, and thus the inferences drawn are tentative and exploratory. One study, however, provides a follow-up analysis of former high school and collegiate athletes (Bend, 1968). This research indicates that athletic participation is associated with postgraduate occupational mobility. This is an area ripe for systematic research particularly with longitudinal designs. Recently some interesting research has emerged concerning the career patterns and mobility processes of athletic coaches (Loy and Sage, 1972; Snyder, 1972c). This line of research contributes to the literature on the sociology of occupations.

Sociologists have also focused considerable attention on race as a dimension of stratification within sport. Since coaches are likely to recruit and play the most capable athletes regardless of race in order to enhance their own reputation as successful (winning) coaches, sport is often seen as a sphere of pure achievement and racial integration. Several research efforts challenge this assumption. Rosenblatt (1967) analyzes the batting averages of baseball players from 1953 to 1965 and concludes that discrimination is not directed at the superior black players; rather, he sees discrimination being directed at black players of the journeymen level. Pascal and Rapping (1970) extend this line of research and conclude that black pitchers must be superior to white pitchers in order to play in the big leagues. Yetman and Eitzen (1971, 1972) reach a similar conclusion from their findings that black players are disproportionately distributed in starting (star) roles. Johnson and Marple (1973) provide evidence to suggest that journeymen black players are dropped from professional basketball faster than comparable whites, a fact that would have dire economic consequences because pension plans are based on the number of years played.

There are several explanations for the apparent discrimination against medium-grade black players. One interpretation is that some coaches are prejudiced against blacks, but they must recruit the best minority players to remain competitive; yet they informally use a quota system to limit the number of blacks on the team. Thus, black players are more likely to be on the starting team (Yetman and Eitzen, 1972). Brower (1973:27) reports two reasons cited by owners of professional football teams for preferring white players: " . . . white players are desirable because white fans identify with them more readily than blacks, and most paying customers are white"; and "there are fewer problems with whites since blacks today have chips on their shoulders."

Another form of apparent discrimination in sports involves the practice of "stacking" wherein black athletes are allegedly assigned only to certain positions on the team (Edwards, 1973:205). In an interesting, theoretically informed study based on propositions derived from Grusky's (1963a:346) theory of the structure of formal organizations and Blalock's (1962) theory of occupational discrimination, Loy and McElvogue (1970:7) hypothesized that "There will be less discrimination where performance of independent tasks are largely involved, because such do not have to be coordinated with the activities of other persons, and therefore do not hinder the performance of others, nor require a great deal of skill in interpersonal relations." Loy and McElvogue found support in the data for their hypothesis that blacks are less likely to occupy central positions on professional baseball and football teams.

These studies are interesting contributions to the sociology of minority group relations. The work by Loy and McElvogue (1970) in this area is noteworthy since it synthesizes two theoretical frameworks from the larger discipline—Grusky's propositions on the formal structure of organizations and Blalock's (1962) propositions on racial discrimination. Such research efforts illustrate fruitful reciprocity between the sociology of sport and the larger discipline.

Recent research also focuses on discrimination in sport with respect to females. A girl actively involved in sport is likely to have her "femininity" called into question (Harris, 1973:15). Traditional sex role definitions either do not legitimate athletic pursuits for females or they narrowly define the range of appropriate physical activities (Griffin, 1973; Harris, 1971, 1973; Hart, 1972). In this regard, women are clearly at a disadvantage in terms of opportunities and resources available for physical expression of the self in the form of sport. Metheny (1965) traces the historical antecedents of the feminine image and the degree of acceptance for females in competitive sports. It is generally considered inappropriate for women to engage in sports where there is bodily contact, throwing of heavy objects, aggressive face-to-face competition, and long distance running or jumping. A recent survey by the authors of this article asked the respondents: "In your opinion, would participation in any of the following sports enhance a woman's feminine qualities?" The frequency distribution of affirmative responses was as follows: swimming 67 percent, tennis 57 percent, gymnastics 54 percent, softball 14 percent, basketball 14 percent, and track and field 13 percent.[5] The impact of the women's liberation movement on female involvement in sport represents a topic for additional research, and it is a research area that can feed back to the larger discipline in areas such as socialization, sex roles, and social movements.

Small Group Perspectives

The sociology of sport is a natural testing ground for theoretical frameworks in areas such as small group processes, collective behavior, personal influence, leadership, morale, and socialization. In sport the roles are clearly defined; performance measures are comparatively straightforward; and the contamination involved with artificiality and obtrusiveness of the investigator is less problematic than most areas of sociological research. Nevertheless, the sociology of sport includes relatively little experimental or even field studies. Sport teams represent an *in vivo* laboratory for the study of communication networks, cooperation, competition, conflict, division of labor, leadership, prestige, cohesion, and other structural properties of small groups. Several small group studies have focused on the effect of interpersonal relations among team members on team performance. One of the first studies (Fiedler, 1954) in this area analyzed the relationship between team effectiveness and the personal perceptions that team members have of one another. His findings suggest that winning teams are characterized by players who prefer to relate to one another in a task-oriented manner as contrasted with affective relations. Klein and Christiansen (1969), on the other hand, report a positive relationship between cohesiveness (interpersonal attractiveness) and performance of basketball teams. Their study also suggests that focused leadership (consensus concerning the peer leader) is conducive to team success. Heinicke and Bales (1953) likewise find an association between focused leadership and achieving task-oriented group goals. In a recent study, Eitzen (1973) shows that homogeneity in background characteristics of team members is related to team success. The relationship is interpreted in terms of heterogeneity increasing the likelihood of cliques within the team, which reduce cohesion and ultimately cause poor team performance.

Other studies, however, fail to replicate the finding of a relationship between cohesion and team success (Fielder, 1960; Lenk, 1969; Martens and Peterson, 1971). Nevertheless, these studies indicate the fruitfulness of research on sport teams using small group theoretical frameworks. The ambiguity of the findings shows the need for additional research to clarify our understanding of team structural characteristics, cohesiveness, and conflict according to the type of sport. For example, the role relations among a rowing crew require a synchronization of effort with each member performing a similar task, whereas most team sports involve individualization, specialization, and division of labor. Clearly, the dependent variable of team success is an applied perspective and approaches a market research orientation; however, we suggest that theoretically informed propositions that are derived from this type of research ultimately can be generalized to intergroup relations in general.

The utility of the sport context to test sociological propositions is illustrated in a further extension of Grusky's (1963a) concept of organizational *centrality* to the study of professional baseball team managers. Grusky analyzed differential recruitment of baseball players into managerial positions in terms of the centrality of the player's position. He found support for the hypothesis that centrality of position (e.g., infielders, catcher) is associated with higher rates of recruitment into managerial positions. Loy and Sage (1968) extend the centrality framework to explain the emergence of informal leaders on baseball teams. They found support for Grusky's hypothesis; infielders and catchers were more likely to be chosen as team captains, best liked, and perceived as highly valuable members of the team.

Grusky (1963b) also studied managerial succession (firing the manager) and team performance in major league baseball. He found that changing managers was negatively associated with team performance; however, he rejected the intuitive notion that managers are fired because of the team's poor performance. Rather, he suggested that the causal direction is two-way since managerial succession can also produce poor team performance. In a stimulating exchange, Gamson and Scotch (1964:70) argue that "the effect of the field manager on team performance is relatively unimportant." They suggest that Grusky's findings should be interpreted in terms of ritual scapegoating. Grusky's (1964) response included a specification of the relationship in terms of "inside" successors to the managerial position being less disruptive than "outside" successors (cf., Gouldner, 1954). Eitzen and Yetman (1971) also used Grusky's propositions concerning managerial succession in their study of coaching changes and performance of college basketball teams. They found support for Grusky's hypothesis, but basically they concluded that teams with poor performance records are likely to improve their records with or without a coaching change. Thus, the critical variable is the degree of team success before the arrival of the new coach—not the performance of the new coach.

Social Psychological Aspects

When viewed from the standpoint of the collectivity, socialization refers to the process of transmitting social values and norms to the individual members. Viewed from the perspective of the individual, socialization refers to the resulting changes that occur within the individual. Numerous observers have pointed to the potential of sport as an agency for socialization.[6] The theoretical rationale for examining socialization within the world of sport is implicit in the classic works of symbolic interaction (Cooley, 1922; Mead, 1934), where play and games are analyzed as part of the socialization process. More recently, psychologists have analyzed games and sport in the context of socialization (Piaget, 1962; Erickson, 1965; and Sutton-Smith, 1971). Ingham et al. (1973:243) observe that "the processes involved in the social construction of life-worlds are also in evidence in the social construction of play worlds. Similarly, the processes by which we come to know the life-world are the processes by which we come to know the play-world."

Basically, it is suggested that the athlete undergoes a socialization process when interacting with coaches and fellow athletes in the subculture of sport (Phillips and Schafer, 1970). If this line of reasoning is extended, we would expect the potency of the socialization process to vary according to the individual's degree of involvement in sport. Kenyon (1969) provided a theoretical discussion of this process, and Snyder (1972b) offers empirical support for this hypothesis of differential consequences according to degree of sport involvement. In the latter study, interestingly, the interaction patterns between the coach and outstanding athletes were markedly different from the coach's relations with marginal players.

Kenyon (1969:81) proposes that the socialization consequences of sports involvement be considered from a temporal perspective—particularly in terms of the stages of becoming involved, being involved, and becoming uninvolved. He suggests that research from this perspective could be informed by role theory and reference group frameworks. An intriguing study would be to trace the social psychological dynamics that trigger changes in the individual's progression from one stage of involvement to another.[7] In a similar vein, Page (1969:20) suggests the possibility of an identity crisis emerging after a successful athlete has completed his/her active playing days. A study of prominent soccer players in Yugoslavia reveals some negative psychological concomitants of the players' disengagement from athletic careers (Mihovilovic, 1968). The study indicates the importance of gradual withdrawal from the active role, especially when the athletic role is the individual's sole identity anchor. Taking on the role of coach, referee, or similar official has been one way in which the transition process is softened for former athletes (Snyder, 1972d).

Perhaps the topic that has received the most cumulative, quantitative research in the sociology of sport concerns the social psychological consequences of active participation in athletics by youth. A series of studies focus on the question of whether athletes differ from nonathletes on personality dimensions such as extraversion, conformism, conventionality, aspirations, conservatism, and rigidity (Schendel, 1965; Schafer and Armer, 1968; Phillips and Schafer, 1970). Earlier in this paper we discussed the positive relationship between participation in athletics and academic performance and aspirations among high school boys. Rehberg and Schafer (1968) report that participation in sport has the most effect on boys least disposed to attend college by raising their educational expectations to attend college. We alluded above to the possible two-edged sword effect of sport serving as a channel for mobility while also raising levels of aspiration without providing the corresponding instrumental skills (Spady, 1970). Similar studies on college level athletes yield inconsistent findings (Pilapil et al., 1970; Sage, 1967; and Spady, 1970). Additional research at the college level is needed.

A relatively underdeveloped area in this subfield is the social psychology of consciousness states, intrinsic satisfaction, body perceptions, and affective concomitants of sport. Some journalistic reports argue that commercialized sports desensitize, exploit, and manipulate players to achieve the ultimate goal of winning and profits (Meggyesy, 1971; Hoch, 1972; Shaw, 1972). On the other hand, several studies point to positive affective consequences of sport involvement (Layman, 1968, 1972). There is empirical evidence to suggest, for example, that sports participation is associated with life satisfaction (Washburne, 1941; Snyder and Spreitzer, 1973b). This finding is consistent with many studies documenting a positive relationship between social participation and psychological well-being (Wilson, 1967). Further explanation may rest with the intrinsic satisfaction that flows from involvement in sport. Dunning (1967:148) reasons that sport participation generates a "tension-excitement" that forms a pleasurable contrast to routinized aspects of everyday life.

A pertinent study by Snyder and Kivlin (1974) studied the self-perceptions of outstanding female athletes with the expectation that female athletes would evidence low scores on measures of psychological well-being and body image on the basis of role conflict reasoning. The findings did not support the hypothesis, and the authors concluded that the intrinsic satisfaction flowing from sports participation tended to counteract any negative impact from sex role stereotyping. Additional research is needed on this topic.

The "athletic revolution" described above involves protests against authoritarian practices within sport, particularly among coaches (Scott, 1971). A popular explanation is that the coaching profession either attracts persons with an authoritarian personality or, alternatively, coaches are socialized into this personality type. This explanation ignores the structural interpretation of authoritarian behavior developed in recent years.[8] In the latter context, Edwards (1973) reasons that the coach is *fully responsible* for the team's victories and defeats; yet he has *limited control* in determining the outcomes. Under these circumstances, then, Edwards (1973:139) points out that coaches insist upon running a tight ship and, consequently, a democratic leadership style would not enable the coach to maintain compliance under the tense conditions of a match where unquestioning obedience is required. The analysis of the coach's role shows that the authoritarian aspects of coaching behavior are structurally induced. Although the behavior of athletic coaches is not a particularly significant problem, it is a context in which the interpenetration of social structure and the personality is readily apparent.

Conclusion

Basically we have argued that sport is a social institution that interfaces with, and reflects, many dimensions of social life. Despite the pervasiveness of sport in society, the sociological study of sport is still not completely legitimated within the larger discipline. We suggest that research in this area will enter the mainstream when it

reaches the level of theoretical and methodological self-consciousness characteristic of the better works in the larger discipline. In other words, it is vain to argue in the abstract that the world of sport is worthy of social scientific study. A more fruitful approach to legitimacy for a new specialty is simply for the practitioners in that area to produce research that will be interesting to social scientists at large. Research that is of interest only to persons who are already intrinsically interested in sports will necessarily be of dubious value from a social scientific perspective.

It is clear that most researchers in the sociology of sport have a strong intrinsic interest and existential involvement in the subject matter of the subfield that is not characteristic of most other specialties within sociology. We suggest that this intrinsic interest needs to be tempered by a generalizing orientation if the sociology of sport is to contribute to the large discipline. A basically content-oriented strategy will not result in a body of systematic knowledge about social life. In other words, when content from the world of sport is analyzed by the sociologist, it should be selected because it is informative about the nature, antecedents, and consequences of basic social processes, and not simply because of intrinsic interest on the part of the investigator. The content of the world of sport must at times be viewed in instrumental terms if the subfield is to be truly in a reciprocal relationship with the larger discipline. General sociologists are likely to be interested in contributions from the sociology of sport only if some generalizing thrust is contained therein: "The purpose of a generalizing investigation is to test, reformulate, refine, or extend an abstract, general theory. A large number of concretely quite different settings serve equally well as instances of the process, for no particular one of them has any special importance for the investigation" (Berger et al., 1972: *xi*).

In analyzing the sociology of sport, we were struck by the "loyalty" of the scholars in this area. That is, many of the researchers in the specialty have published regularly in the area over the years. This is apparent because of the fact that most of the literature in this specialty is contained in comparatively few outlets. Moreover, judging from the congregation of the scholars in the sociology of sport at conventions, there is a strong affinity among social scientists in this specialty. There is always a danger that a given specialty will become too insulated from the larger discipline; this is particularly a problem with the sociology of sport because of the multidisciplinary composition of the specialty.

This argument is based on the assumption that a strong identification with, and immersion in, the larger discipline is necessary to keep the taproot of the sociological imagination alive. If this assumption is valid, the most enduring contributions to the sociology of sport are likely to come from research efforts informed by intellectual concerns derived from the larger discipline.

In this context, it is interesting to note that more developed specialties such as medical sociology involve more practitioners who are just passing through and happen to touch down for an episodic research effort on the content of a given specialty. For example, prominent general sociologists have contributed important studies to medical sociology (e.g., Parsons, Merton, Srole, Becker, Hollingshead). This is not to suggest, however, that individual scholars should be only occasional or episodic contributors to an academic specialty. Rather, we argue that from an aggregate or macro level, it is desirable that a circulation of practitioners occur within a specialty. The circulation of practitioners assures a steady flow of theoretical and methodological nutrition from the larger discipline and, most importantly, will function to keep the resident practitioners sensitive to significant research questions of generic sociological interest.

We predict that the field will continue to be strengthened by increased theoretical and methodological sophistication. The present state of development reveals less barefooted empiricism and more theoretically informed hypothesis testing. The research designs and interpretations of data show increasing sensitivity to alternative explanations and spurious relationships.[9] We observe a greater use of multivariate statistical techniques, but most importantly, the sociological imagination is increasingly evident by research that is going beyond the surface manifestations of sports to pose generic theoretical questions stemming from the larger discipline. Consequently, we conclude that the sociology of sport is shedding its *lumpen* heritage and is gaining respectability. Sociologists in general can look forward to some interesting contributions from this fledgling subfield in the years to come.

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NOTES

1. The term sociology of sport is simply a shorthand expression referring to "social scientific research in the area of sports."
2. For an overview of the sociology of leisure as an academic specialty, see R. Meyersohn (1969).
3. See Luschen (1968) for an extensive bibliography on the sociology of sport.
4. A newsletter dated June 21, 1973, from the U.S. Department of Labor reports "that about 400,000 young men played on high school baseball teams in 1970, another 25,000 were on college teams, and about 3,000 were in the minor leagues. However, only about 100 rookies made the 24 squads in the major leagues that year."
5. See Snyder and Spreitzer (1973a) for a description of the research procedures of this survey.
6. It is interesting to observe in this context that totalitarian governments invariably place a high priority on sport activities for youth.
7. Arthur Miller (1958) poignantly illustrates this type of process in his literary masterpiece, *The Death of a Salesman* (1958).
8. See Killian (1952), Lohman and Reitzes (1952), Kohn and Williams (1956), and Reitzes (1959), and Yinger (1965).
9. Parenthetically, we have found that research from the sociology of sport, particularly the analysis of the commonly held assumptions, are helpful and vivid aids in *teaching* general sociology and research methodology courses.