



Sport in Society

Issues & Controversies

Sixth Edition

Jay J. Coakley

SPORT IN SOCIETY

Issues and Controversies

SIXTH EDITION

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Boston, Massachusetts Burr Ridge, Illinois Dubuque, Iowa
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SPORT IN SOCIETY

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Dedication
To Nancy, Dennis, Danielle, Tom,
and Maddie for Reasons Having
Nothing to Do with This Book



The cover image, “NIGHT GAME,” is the work of Ernie Barnes, an internationally known artist who played with the Denver Broncos and San Diego Chargers from 1960 to 1965. After his appointment as the Official Artist for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, Barnes’ talent was recognized around the world. He has been commissioned to do a painting to hang permanently in the Carolina Panthers football stadium and a painting to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the National Basketball Association. His images frequently capture people expressing spirit and determination in the face of scarce resources. The original oil painting of “NIGHT GAME” now hangs in the home of Whoopi Goldberg. Barnes works in his studio associated with The Company of Art, 8613 Sherwood, West Hollywood, California 90069.

Preface

PURPOSE OF THE TEXT

The sixth edition of *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies* has a twofold purpose: *first*, it is designed to provide a sound introduction to the sociology of sport; and *second*, it is written to encourage students to ask questions and think critically about sports as parts of social life.

I have organized the chapters to focus on curiosity-arousing issues. These issues are discussed in terms of recent research and theory in the sociology of sport. Although the concepts and source materials are not taken exclusively from sociology, discussions throughout the book are grounded in a sociological approach. Therefore, the emphasis is clearly on sports and sport-related behaviors as they occur in social and cultural contexts.

FOR WHOM IS IT WRITTEN?

Sport in Society is written for those taking their first look at sports from a sociological perspective. The content of each chapter is presented so it can be understood by beginning college students in either physical education or sociology. The discussion of issues does not presume prior courses in social science or in-depth experiences in sports. However, I have tried to present materials in ways that push students to think more critically about sports and how sports are related to their social lives.

Although I intend this book as an introduction to the field, I have written it not so much to describe the issues in the sociology of sport as to involve the reader in the analyses those of us in the field have done. The emphasis is on how the concepts and theories of sociology enable us to dig into sports as parts of culture and see them as *more* than just reflections of the world in which we live.

Since the book is organized in terms of an “issues approach,” the content of many chapters is useful for those concerned with sport policies and program administration. My emphasis through the book is on making sports more democratic and sport participation more accessible to all people.

CHANGES IN THE SIXTH EDITION

I have rewritten most sections of the sixth edition of *Sport in Society*. I have added updated material to all chapters, and reorganized chapters in response to new research findings and new theoretical developments in the field. Over 500 *new* references are cited in this edition; most of them highlight work published since the fifth edition went to press in 1993. This is three times the number of new references included in the fifth edition—an indication of the rapid expansion of research on sports and of the literature used by those of us in the field.

New Chapter on Socialization

One of the criticisms of past editions was the lack of a chapter devoted exclusively to socialization issues. Because recent qualitative research on socialization has provided new and insightful glimpses into the social worlds of sports and sport participation, the time was right for pulling this material together and discussing a wide range of issues key to the field. Chapter 4 focuses on what we know about becoming involved and staying involved in sports, about changing or ending active sport participation, and about the actual experience and consequences of being involved in sports. The chapter includes summaries of research dealing with socialization issues, and it highlights new approaches to socialization, including those

dealing with the media and the production and reproduction of cultural ideology. I introduce the concepts of “power and performance sports” and “pleasure and participation sports” to help students understand the range of sport experiences in people’s lives.

Revision Themes

This edition has a stronger emphasis on socialization themes than past editions do. But it also emphasizes the implications of what I would call the era of corporate sponsors in sports. The involvement of large corporations, including media companies, in sports has had a major impact on the presentation and use of sport-related images in society. We now see “Coca Cola-ized” versions of the Olympics, “Pepsi-ized” versions of the Super Bowl, “McDonald-ized” versions of intercollegiate sports, and “General Motor-ized” versions of anything men play and watch. We’ve been IOC’d, NFL’d, Super Bowl’d, World Cup’d, Final Four’d, World Series’d, and generally play-off’d to the point that it is hard to know where our own ideas about sports start and where the ideas of corporate sponsors and large sport organizations leave off. This edition is designed to provide students with a critically informed alternative view of sports, one they won’t get on a Disney-owned network or cable channel.

New Materials

An expanded introductory chapter (chap. 1) includes new sections comparing the sociology and psychology of sport; discussing the relationship between sports and cultural ideology; and introducing the concepts of gender logic, race logic, class logic, and character logic to help students understand dominant ideology. There is a completely new approach to defining sports and a new section on “what gets to count as a sport in a culture.”

This edition includes expanded coverage of critical theory and feminist theories (chap. 2), along with new examples of research guided by

critical theories and interactionist theories. An updated table compares all the theoretical perspectives.

The chapter on youth sports (chap. 5) has been completely rewritten. There are new materials on privatization and the increased emphasis on the performance principle in youth sports, on families and parent-child relationships, and on gender and youth sport participation.

There is expanded coverage of deviance issues (chap. 6), including a new analysis of the connection between positive deviance and negative deviance in sports; the focus in this section is on binge drinking and sexual assault. There is a revised analysis of substance use in sports, with an emphasis on new “legal” substances, including DHEA, creatine monohydrate, and other substances now available in health food stores.

This volume provides expanded coverage of gender and aggression in sports (chap. 7), a section summarizing ethnographic research on boxing, and new material on pain and injury, and on violence and media coverage of sports.

I have expanded the chapter on gender (chap. 8) to incorporate the findings of new research on equity and gender relations, and included new material on changes in the dominant gender logic related to sports.

The chapter on race and ethnicity (chap. 9) includes new information on the concept of race and on how meanings associated with skin color impact sports and sport participation patterns. The chapter provides an updated analysis of racial ideology and sports, new information on ethnicity and sport participation, and new information on the use of Native American images in sports.

The chapter on social class and class relations (chap. 10) has been completely rewritten, with a new emphasis on inequality. I’ve included new materials on who has power in sports and how sports are used to transfer money from the public sector to the private sector of the economy. The chapter contains new analyses of the intersections of class, gender, and race/ethnicity in

sports; new discussions of class segregation among sport fans in new luxury stadiums; updated information on social class and sport participation; and a new section on sport participation and social mobility.

I have completely rewritten the chapter on the economy (chap. 11). It contains new economic data, as well as new discussions of the consequences of commercialization, the use of sports by corporations, and the globalization of sports through the media. The chapter offers a new discussion of the reasons cities give public money to billionaires for new stadiums, new data on the legal status and incomes of athletes at all levels of participation in revenue-generating sports, and new tables on franchise values and revenue streams for team owners.

In the chapter on the media (chap. 12), I have included new information on the growth of media coverage, the media and globalization, and the use of media sports by transnational corporations. There is also a new analysis of media-driven forms of global sport celebrity.

The chapter on politics (chap. 13) has been rewritten to deal with the entry of major corporations into transnational relations. In this chapter, I present an analysis of the growth of media sports and the advertising needs of transnational corporations, along with new coverage of the Olympics as an international event, new coverage of the relationships between sports and national identities, and new material on politics in sports.

The chapter discussing education (chap. 14) contains updated NCAA information and new material on the experiences of intercollegiate athletes. There are new data on gender equity and on economic issues in intercollegiate sports.

The chapter on religion (chap. 15) includes updated information on how religious organizations use sports to promote religious beliefs, and how athletes use religion in their lives.

In the chapter on the future (chap. 16), you will find new material on alternative sports, and on athletes who resist organized, competitive, commercialized sports.

New boxed sections throughout the text discuss topics such as the following: sports as contested activities, the sport ethic in Nike ads, the new professional women's basketball leagues, and athletes as agents of change in society and in sports.

New Suggested Readings

Each chapter is followed by completely updated references to books and articles that provide analyses of topics raised in that chapter.

New Photographs and Cartoons

There are 88 new photos and 20 new cartoons in this edition. The use of photos, cartoons, tables, and figures has been carefully planned to visually break up the text and make reading more interesting for students (and instructors!). I've spent many weeks taking and selecting photos and reviewing cartoons directly related to the content of each chapter.

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL AND TEST BANK

An instructor's manual and test bank has been developed to assist those using *Sport in Society* in college courses. It includes the following:

Chapter outlines. These provide a quick overall view of the topics covered in each chapter. They are useful for organizing lectures, and they can be reproduced and given to students as study guides.

Test questions (multiple choice). These questions have been designed to test the students' awareness of central points made in each chapter. They focus on ideas rather than single, isolated facts. For the instructor with large classes, these questions are useful for chapter quizzes, midterm tests, or final examinations.

Discussion/essay questions. These questions can be used for tests or to generate classroom discussions. They are designed to encourage students to synthesize and apply materials in one or more of the sections in each chapter. None of the questions asks the students simply to list points or give definitions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has evolved out of ideas coming from a variety of sources. I first must extend my thanks to the students in my sociology of sport courses. They have provided constructive critiques of my ideas and opened my eyes to new ways of looking at sports as social phenomena. Special thanks also go to the colleagues and friends who have influenced my thinking and provided valuable source materials over the past four years, especially Robert Hughes, Nancy Coakley, Peter Donnelly, and Bob Pearton. I thank also Jackie Beyer, for *New York Times* articles, Kimberly Gunn, for coverage and photos of the 1996 Atlanta Games, and Jean Babrick, for her critical comments on the revision manuscript.

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Jay Coakley

Contents

1 The Sociology of Sports: What Is It and Why Study It? 1

About This Book 2
About This Chapter 4
What Is the Sociology of Sport? 4
Why Study Sports as Social Phenomena? 8
What Is the Current Status of the Sociology of Sport? 15
What Are Sports? 18
Summary: Why Study Sports? 27

2 Using Social Theories: What Can They Tell Us About Sports in Society? 29

Theories in Sociology 30
Theories about Sports and Society 31
Using Sociological Theories:
A Comparison 54
Summary: Is There a Best Theoretical
Approach to Use When Studying
Sports? 57

3 A Look at the Past: How Have Sports Changed Throughout History? 61

An Opening Note on History 62
Sports Vary by Time and Place 63
Games in Ancient Greece: Beyond the Myths
(1000 BC to 100 BC) 64
Roman Sport Events: Spectacles and Gladiators
(100 BC to 500 AD) 66
Tournaments and Games during the Middle
Ages: Separation of the Masters and the
Masses (500 to 1300) 67
The Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlighten-
ment: Games as Diversions
(1300 to 1800) 69
The Industrial Revolution: The Emergence of
Standardized Sport Forms
(1780 to the Present) 72
Summary: Looking at Sport at Different Times
and in Different Places 84

4 Sports and Socialization: Who Plays and What Happens to Them? 87

What is Socialization? 88
Becoming Involved and Staying Involved
in Sports 90
Changing or Ending Sport Participation 93
Being Involved in Sports: What Happens? 96
New Approaches to Sports and
Socialization 102
What Socialization Research Doesn't
Tell Us 112
Summary: Who Plays and
What Happens? 113

5 Sports and Children: Are Organized Programs Worth the Effort? 116

Origin and Development of Organized
Youth Sports 117
Major Trends in Youth Sports Today 120
Different Experiences: Informal, Player-
Controlled Sports Versus Organized,
Adult-Controlled Sports 123
Three Questions About Youth Sports 128
Recommendations for Changing
Children's Sports 137
Prospects for Change 140
Summary: Are Organized Youth Sport
Programs Worth the Effort? 141

6 Deviance in Sports: Is It Getting Out of Control? 144

Problems Researchers Face When Studying
Deviance in Sports 145
Defining and Studying Deviance in Sports:
Three Approaches 148
Research on Deviance Among Athletes 159
Performance-Enhancing Substances: A Study of
Positive Deviance in Sports 166
Summary: Is Deviance in Sports Out
of Control? 176

- 7 Aggression in Society: Do Sports Control or Encourage Aggressive Behaviors? 179**
- What Is Aggression? 180
Do Sports Control and Moderate Aggression in Society? 181
Do Sports Promote Aggression in Society? 188
Sports and Aggression Among Spectators 200
Summary: Cure or Cause? 208
- 8 Gender: Is Equity the Only Issue? 210**
- Participation and Equity Issues 211
Ideological and Structural Issues 232
Summary: Is Equity the Only Issue? 245
- 9 Race and Ethnicity: Are Skin Color and Cultural Heritage Important in Sports? 248**
- Culture, Sports, and the Meaning of Race 249
Racial Ideology and Sports: A Critical Analysis 253
Sport Participation Patterns Group by Group 268
The Racial Desegregation of Certain American Sports 276
Sports and Intergroup Relations 281
Summary: Are Skin Color and Cultural Heritage Important? 285
- 10 Social Class: Does Economic Inequality Matter in Sports? 289**
- Sports and Economic Inequality 290
Social Class and Sport Participation Patterns 298
Opportunities in Sports: Myth and Reality 306
Sport Participation and Occupational Careers Among Former Athletes 316
Summary: Are Sports Related to Economic Inequality and Social Mobility in Society? 322
- 11 Sports and the Economy: What Are the Characteristics of Commercial Sports? 325**
- The Emergence and Growth of Commercial Sports 326
Commercialization and Changes in Sports 333
Owners, Sponsors, and Promoters in Commercial Sports 339
The Legal Status and Incomes of Athletes in Commercial Sports 350
Summary: The Characteristics of Commercial Sports 364
- 12 Sports and the Media: Could They Survive Without Each Other? 367**
- Unique Features of the Media 368
Sports and the Media:
A Two-Way Relationship 371
Images and Messages in Media Sports 382
The Profession of Sports Journalism 393
Summary: Could Sports and the Media Live Without Each Other? 398
- 13 Sports, Politics, and the State: What Makes Sports Political? 401**
- The Sports-Government Connection 402
Sports and Global Political Processes 413
Politics in Sports 426
Summary: What Makes Sports Political? 433
- 14 Sports in High School and College: Do Varsity Sports Programs Contribute to Education? 437**
- Arguments For and Against Interscholastic Sports 438
Interscholastic Sports and the Experiences of High School Students 439
Intercollegiate Sports and the Experiences of College Students 448
Do Schools Benefit from Varsity Sports Programs? 457
Varsity High School Sports: Problems and Recommendations 461
Intercollegiate Sports: Problems and Recommendations 464
Summary: Are Varsity Sports Educational? 472
- 15 Sports and Religion: Is It a Promising Combination? 475**
- How Do Sociologists Define and Study Religion? 476

Similarities and Differences Between Sports and Religion 477	Specific Forecasts 512
Sports and Christian Organizations and Beliefs 482	Summary: The Challenge of Making the Future 517
The Challenges of Combining Sports and Religious Beliefs 493	
Summary: Is It a Promising Combination? 498	
16 Sports in the Future: What Can We Expect? 501	Bibliography 525
Major Sport Forms in the Future 502	Name Index 555
Future Trends in Sports 504	Subject Index 563



(Jay Coakley)

The Sociology of Sport

What is it and why study it?

A sport is defined, brought into being, by its rules. Sport is a method for administering play activity, a way to determine who should play and how they should play.

**John Wilson, sociologist,
Duke University (1994)**

Sports is an element of American life so pervasive that virtually no individual is untouched by it [The] United States is a nation made up of sports fans . . . [and] sports participants.

Miller Lite Report on American Attitudes Toward Sports (1984)

Sport signifies a great deal about ourselves and about different ways of living and in so doing contributes to the ongoing production of social life itself.

Richard Gruneau, social scientist, University of British Columbia (1988)

The study of sport can take us to the very heart of critical issues in the study of culture and society.

Elliott Gorn, professor of American Studies, and Michael Oriard, professor of English (1995)

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Most of you reading this book have experienced sports personally, as athletes or spectators or both. You are probably familiar with the physical and emotional experiences of sport participation, and you may have extensive knowledge of the rules and regulations of certain sports. You probably know about the lives, on and off the field, of high-profile athletes in your school, community, or country. And you probably have followed certain sports by watching them in person and on television, reading about them in the print media or on Web pages, or even listening to discussions of them on talk radio. The purpose of this book is to take you beyond personal emotional experiences, and beyond statistics and personalities, to focus on what we might call the “deeper game” associated with sports, the game through which sports become an integral part of the social and cultural worlds in which we live.

Fortunately, we can draw on our personal experiences as we consider this “deeper game.” Let’s use our experiences with high school sports in North America as an example. When students in high school play on a varsity basketball team, we know their participation may affect their status in the school and the way teachers and fellow students treat them. We know it may have implications for their prestige in the surrounding community, for their self-images and their self-esteem. We know that it may affect even their future relationships and opportunities in education and the workforce.

Building on this knowledge enables us to move further into this deeper game associated with sports. For example, we might study the cultural significance of the great importance we place on varsity sports and top athletes. What does that say about our schools and communities, and about our values? And we might study how varsity programs are organized and how they are related to the way many people think about masculinity and femininity, about achievement and competition, about pleasure and pain, about winning and fair play, and about many other things

important to those who endorse and promote the programs. We might look at the impact of new forms of corporate sponsorships on the organization of high school sports and examine what students think about the corporations whose names and logos are on buses, gym walls, and uniforms.

In other words, sports are more than just games and meets; they are also **social phenomena*** that have meanings that go far beyond scores and performance statistics. In fact, sports are related to the social and cultural contexts in which we live our lives; they provide stories and images that many of us use to explain and evaluate these contexts, as well as events in our lives and the world around us.

People in the sociology of sport study the connection between sports and the social and cultural contexts in which they exist, as well as the deeper meanings and stories associated with sports in particular cultures. Then they use their studies to develop an understanding of (1) the society in which sports exist, (2) the social worlds that are created around sports, and (3) the experiences of individuals and groups associated with sports.

Sociology is very helpful when it comes to looking at sports as social phenomena. It provides concepts, theoretical approaches, and research methods for describing and understanding human behavior and social interaction as they occur in particular social and cultural contexts. Sociology gives us the tools we need to examine social life *in context*, in its “social location.” These tools enable us to “see” behavior as it is connected with history, politics, economics, and cultural life. In this book we will use sociology to “see” sports as a part of social and cultural life and to describe and understand social issues related to sports.

As we do this, it is important that we know what is meant by the terms *culture* and *society*.

*Social phenomena are occasions or events involving social relationships and collective action, and having relevance in the social lives of particular collections of people.

Culture consists of the “ways of life” people create in a particular society. These ways of life are complex; they come into existence and are changed as people in a society come to terms with and sometimes struggle over how to do things, how to relate with one another, and how to make sense out of the things and events that make up their experiences. The ways of life that we refer to as culture are not imposed by some people on others; rather, they are creations of people interacting with one another. And they consist of all the socially invented ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that emerge in particular groups as people try to survive, meet their needs, and achieve a sense of significance in the process.

Sports are parts of cultures. Therefore, sociologists often refer to sports as **cultural practices**. Like other cultural practices, sports are human creations that come into being as people struggle to decide what is important and how things should be done in their groups and societies. This is why sports have different forms and meanings from one place to another and why they change over time: people never come to once-and-for-all-time definitions of the ways things should be in their lives. For example, traditional martial arts and Sumo wrestling in Asia are very different in both form and meaning from individual sports such as boxing and wrestling in North America. And basketball's form and meaning has changed considerably since 1891, when it was developed at a YMCA in Massachusetts as an indoor exercise activity for men who didn't want to play football outside during the winter. Canadian James Naismith, who invented basketball as part of an assignment in a physical education course in the U.S., would not recognize his game if he saw Shaquille O'Neal slam dunk during the Olympics as a billion people watched on satellite television. It is important to know about these cultural and historical differences when we study sport as a social phenomenon.

As you read this book, keep in mind that sports have different forms and meanings from

place to place and time to time. This is the case because sports are **social constructions**. In other words, sports are activities that human beings give form and meaning to as they interact and live their lives with one another. Because sports are social constructions, sociologists study them in connection with social relationships and social, political, and economic processes. Thus, sociologists ask questions about why particular groups and societies have selected certain physical activities and designated them as sports, why sports are organized in certain ways, why different groups and societies associate certain meanings with sports and sport participation, and who benefits from the organization and definition of sports in society.

In this book, the term **society** refers to a collection of people living in a defined geographical territory and united through a political system and a shared sense of self-identification that distinguishes them from other collections of people. Thus, Canada and Japan are different societies, and they have different cultures, or ways of life. Canada and the United States are also different societies, but although they have different cultures, there are some important cultural similarities between them. Sports in Japan have forms and meanings that we can understand only in connection with Japanese history, society and culture. The same is true for other sports in other societies.

In summary, sports are cultural practices that differ from place to place and time to time. How they are defined, organized, and integrated into social life varies from group to group. The types of sports played in a particular group or society, the ways they are organized, the resources dedicated to sports and sport programs, the people who get to play sports, the conditions under which sport participation occurs, the individuals who sponsor and control sports, the rewards that go to participants, the definition of an “athlete,” and the meanings associated with sport participation—all are determined through social interaction. This means

that to understand sports we must view them as social phenomena. And the analytical tools sociology provides will help us do this as we discuss major issues related to sport in society in the chapters that follow.

ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

This chapter describes the sociology of sport as a subfield of physical education and sociology and explains what is meant by the term **sports** as it is used in the following chapters. Throughout this book I generally will use the term *sports* rather than *sport*. I do this to emphasize that the forms and meanings of sports vary from place to place and time to time. I want to avoid the inference that “sport” has some type of essential and timeless quality apart from the contexts in which people develop, plan, package, promote, program, and play sports activities.

This chapter focuses on four questions:

1. What is the sociology of sport?
2. Why study sports as social phenomena?
3. What is the current status of the sociology of sport as a field of study?
4. What are sports, and how are they related to similar activities, such as play, recreation, games, and cultural spectacles?

The answers to these questions will be guides for understanding material in chapters 2 to 16.

WHAT IS THE SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT?

This question is best answered at the end of the book instead of the beginning. However, you should have at least a brief preview of what you will be reading for the next fifteen chapters.

Most people in the sociology of sport agree that the field is the subdiscipline of sociology that studies sports as parts of social and cultural life. The focus of much of the research and writing in this field is on what many of us refer to as “organized, competitive sports.” The people who do this research and writing utilize sociological concepts, theories, and research to answer questions such as the following:

1. Why have certain activities (rather than others) been selected and designated as sports in particular groups?
2. Why have sports in particular groups and societies been created and organized in certain ways?
3. How do sports and sport participation get included in our personal and social lives, and how do they affect who we are, how we are connected with other people, and how we define those connections?
4. How do sports and sport participation affect our ideas about our own bodies, about what is “natural” and “unnatural,” about masculinity and femininity, social class, race and ethnicity, work, fun, ability and disability, achievement and competition, pleasure and pain, deviance and conformity, aggression and violence?
5. How are the organization and meanings of sports connected with social relations, material conditions, and the dynamics of power in groups and societies?
6. How are sports related to important spheres of social life, such as family, education, politics, the economy, the media, and religion?
7. How can people use their knowledge about sports and what sports could and should be as a basis for changing them to make social life more fair and democratic?

What Are the Differences Between the Sociology of Sport and the Psychology of Sport?

One way to understand the sociology of sport is to contrast it with another discipline that also studies sports. Let’s take psychology as a comparison discipline.

Psychologists study behavior in terms of attributes and processes that exist *inside* individuals; they focus on motivation, perception, cognition, self-esteem, self-confidence, attitudes, and personality. Psychologists also deal with interpersonal dynamics, including communication, leadership, and social influence, but they usually

discuss these things in terms of how they affect attributes and processes that exist inside individuals. Therefore they might ask a research question like this: “How is the motivation of athletes with certain personality characteristics affected by different leadership styles used by coaches?”

Sociologists study behavior in terms of the social conditions and cultural contexts in which human beings live their lives; in other words, they focus on the reality *outside and around* individuals. Therefore, sociologists deal with how people form relationships with one another and create social arrangements that enable them to survive and exert some control over how they live their lives. Sociologists also ask questions about how behavior, relationships, and social life are related to characteristics that people in particular groups define as socially relevant. This is why they often deal with the social meanings and dynamics associated with age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and social class. A sociologist might ask a question like this: “How do prevailing cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity affect the way sport programs are organized and who participates in sports?”

When it comes to the application of their knowledge, psychologists focus on the personal experiences and the personal troubles of particular individuals. Sociologists focus on group experiences and social issues experienced by entire categories or groups of people. For example, when dealing with burnout among young athletes, psychologists most likely would look at factors that exist *inside* the athletes themselves. Since stress has been identified as an “inside factor” related to burnout (Smith, 1986), psychologists would focus on the existence of stress in the lives of individual athletes and how stress might affect motivation and performance. They might use strategies to help individual athletes manage stress through goal setting, personal skills development, and the use of relaxation and concentration techniques.

Sociologists, on the other hand, would be likely to focus on how sport programs are

organized and how athletes fit into that organization; they also would concentrate on athletes’ relationships with parents, peers, and coaches. Since burnout often occurs when athletes feel their lives are so controlled by others that they have no power to make the decisions they feel are important in their lives (Coakley, 1992), sociological intervention probably would emphasize the need for changes in the way sport programs and athletes’ relationships with others are organized. Sociologists would suggest changes in “outside factors,” such as the conditions and context in which sport participation occurs. They would design these changes to empower athletes and give them more control over important parts of their lives.

As you can see, both approaches have potential value (see Gould, 1996). However, some people may see the sociological approach as too complex and too disruptive. They may conclude that it is easier to change individual athletes and how athletes deal with external conditions than to change the external conditions in which athletes live their lives. This is one of the reasons those who have power and control in sport organizations have not widely used sociological approaches. These people are often hesitant to use any approach that might lead to recommendations calling for shifts in the way they exercise power and control within their organizations. Parents and coaches also might be wary of approaches that call for changes in the structures of their relationships with athletes, especially since they have developed those structures for reasons they think are important!

Using the Sociology of Sport

The insights developed through sociological analyses are not always used to make changes in favor of the underdogs (the people who lack power) in society. Like any science, sociology can be used in many different ways. For example, it can assist people in positions of power as they try to control and enhance the efficiency of particular social arrangements and organizational