

Issues and Controversies



JAY J. COAKLEY

FOURTH EDITION

Sport in Society

ISSUES AND CONTROVERSIES

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University of Colorado
Colorado Springs

FOURTH EDITION

with 80 illustrations



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To **Nancy, Dennis, and Danielle**
for reasons having nothing to do with this book

PREFACE

Purpose of the text

The fourth edition of *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies* has a twofold purpose: first, it is intended to provide a sound introduction to the sociology of sport; and second, it is designed to raise questions and promote systematic, issue-related thinking among students. I have organized information pertaining to the most curiosity-arousing questions in the field. Each of the chapters in the book focuses on a particular issue; each issue is discussed in light of contemporary thinking in the sociology of sport. Although the concepts and source materials are not limited to those in sociology, the discussion of each issue is grounded in a sociological approach to both behavior and social situations. Therefore the emphasis is on the relationships between sport and the social contexts in which it exists.

For whom is it written?

Sport in Society is written for students taking their first look at the relationship between sport and the social world. The content of each chapter is presented so that it can be understood by beginning college students in either physical education or sociology. Sociological concepts and the organization of sport are both explained at a level that does not presume prior courses in the social sciences or prior experience in sport organizations. Since the book is organized in terms of an "issues approach," the content of many chapters is also useful for those concerned with policy-related matters and those interested in improving sport experiences for themselves and others.

Changes in the fourth edition

Nearly 40% of the fourth edition of *Sport in Society* has been rewritten. A new chapter has been added

on Deviance in Sport, and other chapters have been reorganized to reflect changes and new developments in the sociology of sport. Over 200 new references have been included in this edition. As editor of the *Sociology of Sport Journal* through 1989 I have been in close touch with the latest studies and theoretical developments since the publication of the third edition. This has enabled me to use the most recent contributions to the field as a basis for this revision.

New chapter organization

The chapters in the fourth edition of *Sport in Society* have been reordered to fit the teaching approaches used in many sociology of sport courses. However, I have made a special effort to present materials so the chapters could be read in any sequence desired.

New chapter on deviance

Recent events in international and collegiate sports have raised the question of whether deviance is getting out of control in sport. This question is the focus of Chapter 6. Nearly half the chapter is devoted to a detailed analysis of the use of performance-enhancing drugs by athletes.

New materials

A discussion of feminist theory has been included in the chapter on the use of theory in the sociology of sport. And the theory chapter has been reorganized to emphasize the application and use of theoretical perspectives. The chapter on race and sport from the third edition has been changed to a chapter on intergroup relations in which racial and ethnic issues are discussed. The use of team names and mascots based on stereotypes of Native Americans is discussed. Extensive new materials have also been added to the chapters on the economy and politics. The government-sport connection is explored in de-

tail, with examples drawn from both capitalist and socialist countries. The chapter on interscholastic sports has a new section on the day-to-day experiences of men and women athletes in big-time inter-collegiate sport programs.

New photographs

Nearly three dozen new photos have been used in this edition. The use of photos and cartoons has been carefully planned to visually break up the text and make reading more interesting for students (and instructors!). I spent many days taking and selecting photos directly related to the content of each of the chapters in the fourth edition.

Instructor's manual and test bank

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

CHAPTER OUTLINES. These can be used to get a quick overall view of the topics covered in a particular chapter. They are useful for organizing lecture materials for classes, or they can be reproduced and given to students as study guides.

TEST QUESTIONS (MULTIPLE CHOICE AND TRUE-FALSE). These questions have been designed to test the students' awareness of the 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 require the student to demonstrate comprehension by applying material from one or more sections in the chapters. None of these questions asks the student to simply list points or give definitions.

CLASS PROJECTS. Projects are to be used in conjunction with standard classroom materials. Although for the most part they are simple, they are useful starting points for in-class discussions leading to an understanding of chapter content.

REFERENCES TO AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS. For those who enjoy the luxury of audiovisual budgets there is a list of suggested films in the final section of the manual. However, note that it is difficult to find films with good sociology of sport content.

Acknowledgments

This book is a composite of ideas coming from a variety of sources. Thanks must first be extended to the students in my courses on the sociology of sport. They have always provided the feedback necessary to develop and qualify much of the material covered throughout the book. Special thanks is also deserved by Robert Hughes, my colleague at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. He has always given me constructive feedback and helped in the development of my ideas.

My appreciation also goes to the publisher's reviewers. Their suggestions were crucial in the planning and writing of this new edition. They include the following:

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Many of the photographs in this edition were selected from the files of the Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph. Thanks go to Ralph Routon and Scott Smith for their support in my search for appropriate photos.

Finally, my gratitude goes to Nancy, Danielle, and Dennis Coakley. They not only provided me with useful information and feedback but also gave me regular reassurance that there is much more to life than the sociology of sport.

Jay Coakley
Colorado Springs

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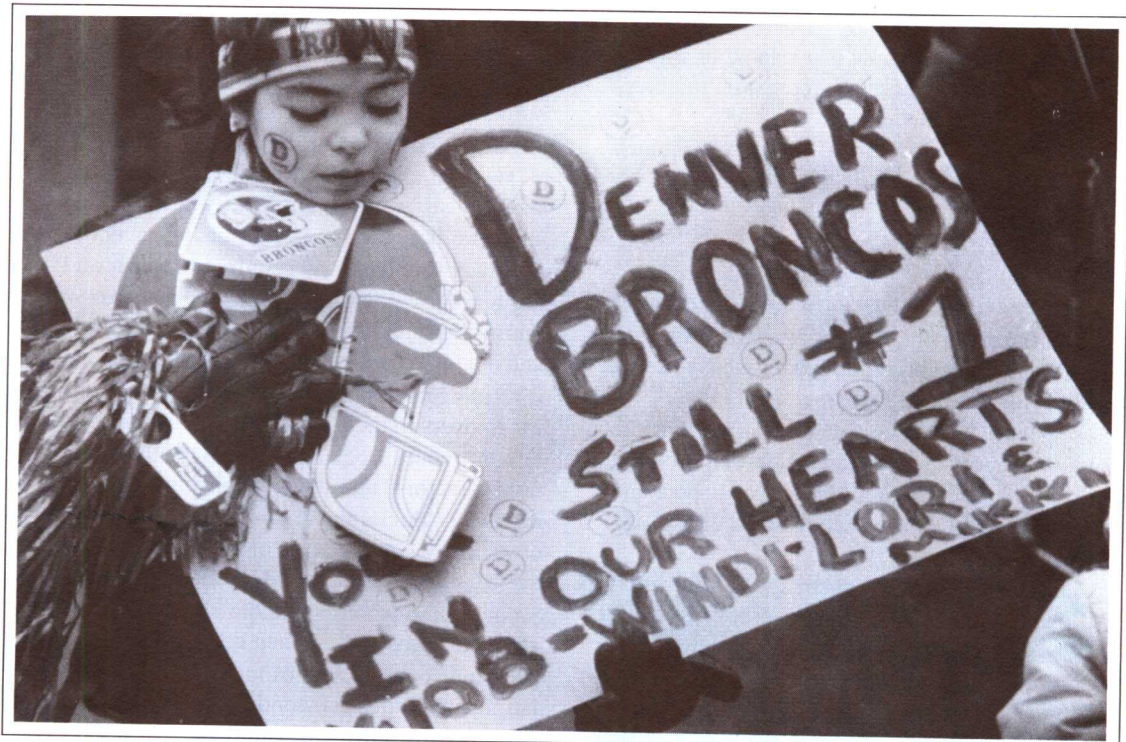
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Chapter 1

THE SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT

what is it and why study it?



Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph and Jerilee Bennett

The more I learned . . . studying various cultures and countries . . . [the] more apparent it became that all societies in all periods of history have needed some kind of public entertainment, and that it has usually been provided by sports.

James Michener, Author (1976)

. . . 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)

If sociology seeks to understand human behavior it is difficult to ignore the extent to which sport-related activities and organizations serve as the settings for behavior across a wide range of different societies.

Sociology of Sport Journal (1984)

sociology is the study of systematic investigation of society (for more people)

This book contains sociological analyses of 16 widely discussed issues related to sport in society. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the sociology of sport as a subfield of physical education and sociology and explain what is meant by the term *sport* as it is used in the following chapters.

This chapter focuses on four questions:

1. What is the sociology of sport?
2. Why study the sociology of sport?
3. What is the current status of the sociology of sport as a field of study?
4. What is sport and how is it related to similar activities, such as play, recreation, games, and dramatic spectacle?

The answers to these questions will serve as guides for understanding the materials in Chapters 2 to 17.

What is the sociology of sport?

This question would be 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 sixteen chapters.

Most people in the field would agree that the sociology of sport is a subdiscipline of sociology that focuses on the relationship between sport and society. Its major goals are to understand the following:

1. The relationships between sport and other spheres of social life, such as family, education, politics, the economy, the media, and religion
2. The social organization, group behavior, and social interaction patterns that exist within sport settings
3. The cultural, structural, and situational factors affecting sport and sport experiences
4. The social processes that occur in conjunction with sport, processes such as socialization, competition, cooperation, conflict, social stratification, and social change

Unlike the psychology of sport, the sociology of sport is not directly concerned with issues related to motivation, perception, cognition, personality, and individual performance in sport. Instead, it is concerned with how the behavior of individuals and

groups within sport is influenced by social relationships, past social experiences, and the social settings in which sport activities occur. On a more general level it is concerned with the organization of sport itself and how that organization is created, maintained, and changed by people who have differing interests, opportunities, and resources.

A psychological approach focuses on factors within individuals, whereas a sociological approach focuses on the social settings in which people respond to and influence one another. Sociologists are concerned with how social settings are created by people, how those settings are organized, how they influence behavior, and how people change them through their own actions and relationships.

When a topic like violence in sport is studied, sociologists want to know why rates of violence among athletes and spectators change over time and why they vary from one country to another and from group to group within countries. They also want to know why violence is associated with some sports and not others and why some events become scenes for violence while others are peaceful. The search for answers to these questions focuses on historical circumstances, social conditions, political and economic factors, and the relationships of the people involved. Sociological research attempts to discover consistent patterns of violence across a variety of social settings and to find the connections among these patterns and the characteristics of the settings themselves. When connections are found, sociologists make suggestions about how social relationships and social conditions may be changed to control rates of violent behavior.

A psychologist, on the other hand, studies violence in sport by looking at the attitudes, emotions, perceptions, and response patterns of athletes and spectators as individuals. Questions are asked about how individuals perceive the actions of others and how those actions serve as stimuli for violent responses. There are also questions about how violent attitudes and behavioral tendencies are developed, how they become a part of a person's personality structure, and how they may be changed through conditioning or therapy.

Research in the sociology of sport sometimes

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creates controversy. This is because sociologists often call attention to the need for changes in the organization of sport and society. This often threatens some people, especially those in positions of power and control in sport and in society at large. These people are the ones with the most to lose if changes are made in social relationships and social organization. After all, their power and control have been achieved within existing social structures, and changes in those structures could jeopardize their positions. This leads them to favor approaches to sport that explain problems in terms of the characteristics of individuals rather than in terms of social conditions. If problems are blamed on individuals, solutions will emphasize better ways of controlling people and teaching them how to adjust to the world as it is rather than emphasizing changes in the way that world is organized.

The potential for controversy in the sociology of sport can be illustrated by looking at some of the research findings on participation in sport by women in many countries around the world. Research shows that married women with children have lower rates of participation than other categories of people. The reason for this is that these women don't have the resources or the opportunities to become involved in sports. They are short of free time; they don't have money for child care; they often lack transportation; there are few sport programs related to their interests and needs; and their husbands often expect them to be responsible for the needs of everyone in the family. It is easy to see the potential for controversy in the position that changes should be made to increase participation rates among these women. Recommendations for change would *not* focus on giving motivational talks to the women themselves. Instead, the recommendations would focus on the need for child care, for affordable opportunities to participate, for equal access to opportunities, for changes in the ways husbands and wives define their relationships with each other, and for legal changes enabling the daughters of these women to have the same opportunities as their sons.

As you can see, these recommendations are controversial. They call for community resources to be

reallocated on the basis of new priorities, for men to share the resources they use for their sport programs, for husbands to share in child care and homemaking, for the development of job opportunities for women so they will have the resources needed to make choices, and for political representatives to pass laws that redefine the rights of women. Such changes threaten those who benefit from the way things are organized now. This is why the sociology of sport is sometimes seen as too critical and negative. Studying the relationship between sport and society certainly can help us understand more about the world in which we live, but it also forces us to take a critical look at the social conditions that affect our lives on and off playing fields.

In summary, the sociology of sport is concerned with the relationship between sport and society. It focuses on behavior patterns and social processes that occur in sport and explains them in terms of the structure of sport and the general social structures in which sport activities exist. It does not ignore individuals, but its purpose is to highlight the ways people are affected by the world around them and the ways people can and do change that world.



Why study the sociology of sport?

The most obvious answer to this question is that sport cannot be ignored because it is such a pervasive part of life in contemporary society. It does not take a sociologist to call our attention to the fact that during the twentieth century the popularity and visibility of sport have grown dramatically in many countries around the world. A survey of the mass media shows that newspapers in most cities devote entire sections of their daily editions to the coverage of sport. This is especially true in North America, where newsprint about sport frequently surpasses the space given to the economy, politics, or any other single topic of interest. Radio and television stations bring numerous hours of live and taped sporting events to people all around the world. Sport personalities serve as objects of attention—as heroes and antiheroes. Young people in many countries are apt to be more familiar with the names of

top-level athletes than with the names of their national religious, economic, and political leaders. For a large segment of people of all ages in industrialized countries, sport is likely to be included in their everyday lives through their involvement as participants or spectators, through their reading, or through their conversations with friends and acquaintances. The following quotes illustrate this point for three major countries:

[China] is gripped with the healthiest contagion of all: sports fever. An estimated 300 million people . . . have taken up athletics of one kind or another. . . . Fans queue for days to get tickets to major sports meets, little children aspire to become athletes, sports magazines rank among the nation's best selling publications and sports celebrities attract followings which rival those of the most popular actors and actresses (China Sports, 1984).

Each Soviet citizen enjoys the right to . . . go in for sports regularly. . . . At present more than 50 million people regularly play some form of sport in the Soviet Union. . . . More than 300,000 highly qualified specialists are working towards implementing the government's plans for the development of sports and physical culture in the USSR. . . . A broad network of sports clubs, sports schools, and mass sports competitions give every child the possibility to play his favourite sport (Kondratyeva and Taborko, 1979).

Sports is an element of American life so pervasive that virtually no individual is untouched by it. . . . About seven of every ten Americans either watch sports or sports news on television; read the sports section of the newspaper; read books or magazines on sports; or talk about sports with their friends *every day* (Miller Lite Report, 1983).

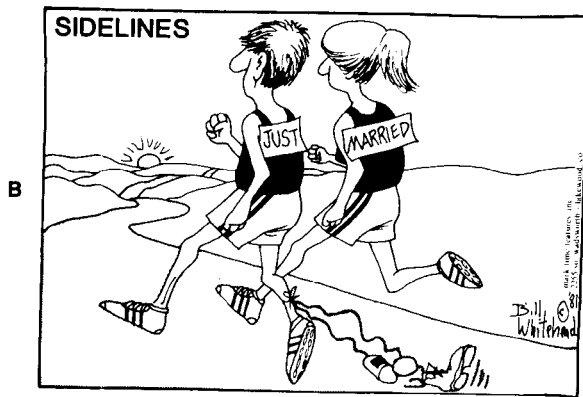
In most industrial countries sport is related to each of the major spheres of social life, such as the family, education, politics, economics, and religion. For example, in North America millions of children are involved in a variety of organized sport activities throughout the year. It is primarily their parents who organize leagues, coach teams, and attend games. *Family* schedules are altered to accommodate practices and games. These schedules are also affected by the patterns of sport involvement among adult family members. Watching televised sport events sometimes disrupts family life

and at other times provides a collective focus for family attention. In some cases relationships between family members are nurtured and played out during sport activities or in conversations about these activities.

At all levels of *education* sport has become an integral part of the experiences of North American students. Most schools in the United States and Canada sponsor interscholastic sport teams, and it is not uncommon for these teams to attract more attention than academic programs do among students and community residents. At the university level some schools even use their teams to promote the quality of their academic programs, making or losing large amounts of money in the process. In the United States some large universities have public relations profiles built on (or seriously damaged by) the reputations of their sport programs.

In the *political* arena sport is often linked to feelings of national pride. Despite frequent complaints about mixing sport and politics, most North Americans have no second thoughts about displaying national flags and playing national anthems at sporting events. Political leaders at various levels of government have been known to promote themselves by associating with sport as both participants and spectators. In fact, it has become a tradition for U.S. presidents to make congratulatory postgame phone calls to the locker rooms of national championship teams. On the international level sport has become a hotbed of political controversy in recent years. And both the United States and Canada, as well as most other countries around the world, have used sport as a means to enhance their reputations in international political relationships.

The *economics* of most Western industrial countries have been affected by the billions of dollars spent every year for tickets to games, sports equipment, participation fees, athletic club membership dues, and bets placed on favorite teams and athletes. The economies of many local communities have been affected by the existence of major sport teams. In some countries tax dollars have occasionally been used to partially support those teams. In the United States there are universities that gross millions of dollars per week at their football games and



Family schedules are often altered to accommodate sports involvement. A, Sometimes participation disrupts family life; B, sometimes it provides a collective focus for family activities.

pay their athletes the equivalent of minimum wages. The major television networks in the United States are now paying the National Football League (NFL) \$500 million per year for the rights to televise games, and athletes in the major professional team sports have average salaries as high as \$625,000 (in the National Basketball Association). Advertisers have paid over \$1 million for a single minute of commercial television time during the Super Bowl, and they have paid well over a million dollars to have their corporate names associated with national teams and major events such as the Olympics.

There is even a relationship between sport and religion. For example, local churches and church groups in both the United States and Canada are some of the most active sponsors of athletic teams and leagues. Parishes and congregations have been known to revise their Sunday service schedules to accommodate their members who would not miss an opening kickoff in an NFL game for anything—not even their religious beliefs. Religious rituals are increasingly used in conjunction with sport participation, and there are a few large nondenominational religious organizations that have been created for the sole purpose of attracting and converting athletes to Christian beliefs. Other religious organizations have used athletes as spokespersons for their belief systems in the hope of converting people who strongly identify with sports.

In addition to being linked to the major spheres of social life in contemporary society, sport and sport participation in most countries have been given ideological support through the formation of belief systems that outline the positive consequences of sport for individuals and society. For example, it is popularly believed that sport builds character, provides outlets for aggressive energy, and serves as the basis for group unity and solidarity. In capitalist countries it is believed that sport involvement leads to the development of competitive traits; in socialist countries it is believed that it leads to cooperation and commitment to the group. Regardless of differences in political or economic systems, people in most countries tend to believe that sport is positively linked to their ways of life. This is especially true in industrialized societies, although many developing nations have promoted sport and sport involvement as means to develop individual character and enhance their reputations in the international political arena.

Now let's get back to our original question: Why study the sociology of sport? It could be said that studying the sociology of sport is important because it will help us learn more about human behavior and the settings in which that behavior occurs. Furthermore, sport offers a unique context for the study of social processes and relationships. Sport teams provide ideal settings for studying group interaction

and the inner workings of large organizations (Ball, 1975). The public nature of sport activities and events allows easy access to information on a variety of questions related to the sociological understanding of behavior. These are all good reasons for sociologists to be interested in studying sport. After all, the science of sociology is concerned with understanding everyday life, learning how behavior is influenced by the settings in which it occurs, and learning how people can change those settings through their own actions.

However, not everyone who studies sport as a social phenomenon is interested in learning general things about human behavior and social relationships. Some people have more specific interests. They are concerned more directly with learning about sport itself. Their involvement in the sociology of sport focuses on understanding the social organization of sport and learning how changes in organization lead to changes in the sport experience for both athletes and spectators. In many cases they are concerned with discovering the forms of sport organization that are most likely to benefit those involved. Their ultimate goal is to improve the sport experience for current participants and to make sport an attractive activity for those not involved. People with these specialized interests, whether they were trained in physical education or in sociology, generally refer to themselves as *sport sociologists*. They tend to see themselves as part of a subdiscipline in the larger field of *sport sciences*; they are more concerned with contributing knowledge to sport science than to sociology.

In summary, the sociology of sport deserves attention because sport itself is an important component of contemporary society, and sport always occurs in a social setting (McPherson, 1975). Furthermore, sport serves as the context for important everyday experiences, and it is related to every major sphere of social life within a society. It offers research opportunities for those interested in understanding social phenomena on a general level and for those interested in understanding the organization of sport for the sake of using their knowledge to change sport and maximize the benefits of sport experiences.

What is the current status of the sociology of sport?

The sociology of sport is a new field of study. Only since 1970 have physical educators and sociologists given serious attention to sport as a social phenomenon.

The reasons for this include the following:

1. *Recent increases in the social significance of sport.* Organized sports as we know them today have only recently become such a pervasive part of social life. It took the invention of television and increasing amounts of affluence in industrial society to make organized sports such a popular and visible part of contemporary life. Now that sport has become a fixture on the social landscape, both physical educators and sociologists pay more attention to it as a social phenomenon.
2. *The intellectual biases in Western culture.* In Western civilization clear-cut distinctions have traditionally been made between play and work and between physical and intellectual activities. Because of the strong influence of the work ethic, all forms of play activities were seen as nonserious. Therefore they were not given the attention that was received by serious, productive activities. Additionally, because sport was a physical rather than an intellectual activity it was viewed as a lower form of culture, and for that reason it was not seen as worthy of serious scholarly attention. Although attitudes on these issues have changed, these orientations still affect the status of the sociology of sport.
3. *Intellectual traditions in physical education and sociology.* The study of sport as a social phenomenon has seldom been defined as an activity that would benefit the professional careers of scholars. In physical education, research has traditionally focused on performance and motor learning. The social dimensions of the sport experience were usually taken for granted and not seen as worthy of serious attention. This meant that until recently sport sociology was considered irrelevant to the central concerns of physical educators. Among sociologists, a concern with sport was usually seen as more of a hobby than a serious career interest. These feelings

PUBLICATION OUTLETS FOR SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT RESEARCH

Journals devoted primarily to articles in the sociology of sport*Sociology of Sport Journal* (quarterly)*International Review for the Sociology of Sport* (quarterly)*Journal of Sport and Social Issues* (quarterly)*ARENA Review* (Newsletter of The Institute for Sport and Social Analysis, two issues per year)**Sport-related journals that often include articles on the sociology of sport***Journal of Sport Behavior**Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport**Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Quest**Journal of Sport Sciences**Canadian Journal of Applied Sport Sciences**Play and Culture***Journals that sometimes include articles related to the sociology of sport***Leisure Sciences**Journal of Leisure Research**Journal of Sport Psychology**Aethlon: The Journal of Sport Literature**Journal of the Philosophy of Sport**Journal of Sport History**Journal of Popular Culture**Journal of Human Movement Studies*

among sociologists have begun to change, but they still exist in some departments in both Europe and North America.

4. *The career considerations of scholars.* In the past there were few publishing outlets for research and writing on sport. The major journals in physical education and sociology were not receptive to articles on the sociology of sport; and before the early 1970s there were no journals in North America devoted to publishing work in the sociology of sport. Therefore the physical educators and sociologists whose careers depended on publication records were discouraged from devoting more than passing attention to sport as a social phenomenon. Now, however, there are a number of journals either fully or partially devoted to research on the sociological aspects of sport (see box above). As long as promotion and tenure committees define publications in these journals as worthy professional accomplishments, those doing work in the sociology of sport will not have their careers jeopardized for their interests. But these publications are sometimes seen as less worthy than tradi-

tional journals, especially in sociology departments.

Although the sociology of sport has grown considerably over the past 25 years, the field still does not have as many scholars as most other subdisciplines in either sociology or physical education. But many recent developments suggest that the growth of the field will continue. For example, both physical education and sociology departments are offering an increased number of courses on sport in society. Since they are usually popular courses, the sociology of sport is likely to stay a part of the curriculum. These courses are supported by a growing number of textbooks, books of readings, and special topics books—all of which have created awareness about the field.

Professional associations in both disciplines now sponsor regular sessions in the sociology of sport at their annual meetings. The North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, organized in 1978, is a professional association that has held annual meetings since 1980 and has sponsored the *Sociology of Sport Journal* since 1984. The Sport Sociology Academy, one of the 10 disciplinary academies in