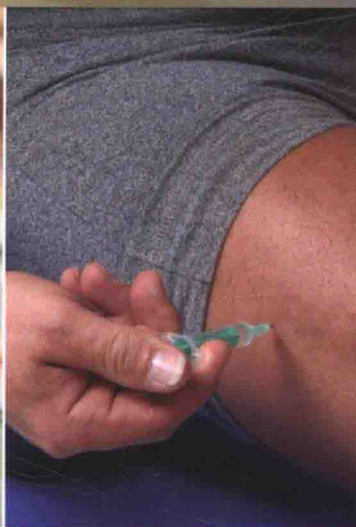


SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SPORT

The Games Outside the Games



David Karen and Robert E. Washington

This is an ideal text/reader for the sociology of sports. Karen and Washington's introductory chapter is a remarkably clear exposition of why the complex institution of sports can be so well understood by learning to ask sociological questions. Throughout the volume the questions the authors raise about sports are given historical form and empirical answers. The articles are all on target and superbly organized in the book's analytical sections. Sports fans rarely agree on anything, but they will be captivated by these readings. So will sociologists and their students.

—William Kornblum, *Sociology, Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY)*

From classic social theorists to contemporary journalists, *Sociological Perspectives on Sport* offers diverse readings that represent key perspectives defining the field today. Readers are compelled to take sport seriously as a site of cultural, political, and economic production and resistance. This book should be required reading for both students and experts in the sociology of sport.

—Cheryl Cooky, *Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Purdue University, and President-Elect of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport*

The editors of this important book deserve credit for doing four things superbly: assembling the very best sports writing by an all-star team of authors; categorizing this vast material according to central topics ranging from class and race to politics and economics; framing each of these clusters with their own erudite introductory exposé; and presenting all of this in accessible language that makes this book not only a great learning experience but also a page turner.

—Andrei S. Markovits, *Comparative Politics, University of Michigan, Co-author of Sportista: Female Fandom in the United States*

Sociological Perspectives on Sport: The Games Outside the Games seeks not only to inform students about the sports world but also to offer them analytical skills and the application of theoretical perspectives that deepen their awareness and understanding of social processes linking sports to the larger social world. With six original framing essays linking sport to a variety of topics, including race, class, gender, media, politics, deviance, and globalization, and 37 reprinted articles, this text/reader sets a new standard for excellence in teaching sports and society.

David Karen is Professor of Sociology at Bryn Mawr College. In addition to his interest in sports, he also studies social inequality, the sociology of education, and social movements. He has been elected to four consecutive terms as a School Director in Upper Merion Area School District.

Robert E. Washington is Professor of Sociology and Africana Studies at Bryn Mawr College. His areas of scholarly interest are sociology of sports, race relations, social deviance, and the sociology of culture. With David Karen, he co-edited *The Sport and Society Reader* (Routledge) and *Sport, Power, and Society* (Westview).

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David K
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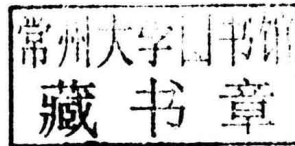


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The Games Outside the Games

David Karen and
Robert E. Washington



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Contemporary Sociological Perspectives

Edited by *Douglas Hartmann*, University of Minnesota and *Jodi O'Brien*, Seattle University

This innovative series is for all readers interested in books that provide frameworks for making sense of the complexities of contemporary social life. Each of the books in this series uses a sociological lens to provide current critical and analytical perspectives on significant social issues, patterns, and trends. The series consists of books that integrate the best ideas in sociological thought with an aim toward public education and engagement. These books are designed for use in the classroom as well as for scholars and socially curious general readers.

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Watching T.V. Is Not Required: Thinking about Media and Thinking about Thinking by Bernard McGrane and John Gunderson

Violence Against Women: Vulnerable Populations by Douglas Brownridge

State of Sex: Tourism, Sex and Sin in the New American Heartland by Barbara G. Brents, Crystal A. Jackson and Kate Hausbeck

Sociologists Backstage: Answers to 10 Questions about What They Do by Sarah Fenstermaker and Nikki Jones

Surviving the Holocaust: A Life Course Perspective by Ronald Berger

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Sociological Perspectives on Sport: The Games Outside the Games by David Karen and Robert E. Washington

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SERIES FOREWORD

This innovative series is for all readers interested in books that provide frameworks for making sense of the complexities of contemporary social life. Each of the books in the series uses a sociological lens to provide current critical and analytical perspectives on the best ideas in sociological thought with an aim toward public education and engagement. These books are designed for use in the classroom as well as for scholars and socially curious general readers.

David Karen and Bob Washington's book on sport, *Sociological Perspectives on Sport: The Games Outside the Games*, is an exciting addition to our series. Though much maligned and sometimes ignored in the academy, sport is clearly one of the most prominent, complex, and revealing institutions of the modern world. A quick look at any newspaper, cable television package, or list of global brands or internationally known celebrities will tell you that. Fortunately in recent years, a vast and sophisticated new body of research and writing has emerged to help us unpack and understand sport's complex social structure as well as its broader role and significance in contemporary social life.

In this volume Karen and Washington provide a rich, wide-ranging sampling of the most important and exciting work in this field. They have chosen these pieces carefully, and edited them closely so as to provide a comprehensive and yet accessible representation of this scholarship. Moreover, their innovative six section organizational scheme and penetrating framing essays provide an indispensable roadmap to this work and its various component parts.

In a landmark lecture delivered in the early 1980s, Pierre Bourdieu described the sociology of sport as trapped in a "golden ghetto." According to the great French sociologist, those folks who love sport are typically unwilling or unable to be critical of it, while those who have the tools to be more analytical—that is, most of us social scientists—generally refuse to take sport seriously as a social form and force. Karen and Washington's wonderful, wide-ranging collection helps us realize that Bourdieu's depiction has now been rendered a half-truth at best. Our hope and expectation is that this volume will not only provide inspiration and guidance for the next generation of sport scholars, it will help all social scientists—as well as those outside of the academy—better appreciate the social structure, cultural significance, and public impact of sport in our constantly changing world.

Douglas Hartmann
Jodi O'Brien
Series Editors

PREFACE

This is a comprehensive text/reader that provides an integrated approach to understanding the linkages between sport and society. It goes beyond standard anthologies by providing not only a unique conception of the field but a concise and compelling introduction of sociology's basic concepts—for example, social class, race/ethnicity, gender, deviance, and community—applied to the world of sport. And, it goes beyond standard textbooks by including a range of well-written, insightful articles on a variety of topics on sports/society. Laying out a broad view of the “games outside the games,” the book is organized into six Sections—each reviewing the relevant literature and presenting multiple perspectives in response to key analytical questions.

The book opens with an introductory essay that provides both a brief overview of the sociological study of sports and a discussion of the analytical perspective that informs our approach to the field. In contrast to earlier sociologists who regarded sport as an insignificant social activity, we view it as a unique and significant social institution. It is unique because, at the level of the individual contest, it is transparent (its performances are open to public observation and assessment) and it embodies meritocratic principles (selecting the most talented players in order to achieve optimal outcomes). Based on these two attributes of competitive sports, which are linked directly to their sociological significance, we argue that these sports not only exemplify the highest normative development of meritocratic practices of fair competition in contemporary societies, but that they also influence the subsequent normative development of those practices in other institutions. Further, because they operate in this way, they play the role of legitimating a *limited* conception of fairness that is entirely consistent with ideologies of justice in contemporary capitalist democracies.

Seen from this perspective, we believe it is hardly coincidental that the familiar sports expression—“level playing field”—is invoked often in informal discourse as an overarching metaphor for fairness. Sports tend to become our normative frame of reference for assessing all competition. Hence, we argue that competitive sports matter sociologically—not simply because they are entertaining and popular, but because they exemplify norms of fair competition and social justice that influence our perceptions of other institutions (e.g., political, economic, educational, etc.). In the United States, for example, this was perhaps most dramatically demonstrated by the racial integration of major league baseball and other major sports a decade before the civil rights movement and subsequent legislation outlawing racial segregation. So, sport played the role of a leading institution in the struggle against racial exclusion even as it reinforced a narrow conception of distributive justice.

Building from insights about the meritocratic attributes of sports, we explore how professional competitive sports—governed by equitably enforced rules—is shaped by gatekeeping controls at three levels: standardizing access to teams and leagues; regulating team resources that determine player movement; and broadening opportunities for talent development. Overall, based on this broader perspective on fairness, the *ideal* competitive sport consists of the best players, selected and coached by teams that have relatively equal resources, drawn from a population in which all individuals have every opportunity to develop their potential. This conception of sports, as we will show, opens for inquiry the influences on sports of the “games outside the games”—especially, the societal opportunity structure and the power relations that sustain it—which is a major theoretical focus of this text/reader.

In the five additional Sections, we focus on the ways that sport and society intertwine. Beginning with “Biases and Barriers” in the second Section, we explore the various ways that racial/ethnic, social class, gender, and disability have affected who plays which sport—and at what level. Highlighting the socially determined marginalization and exclusion that shape sports participation, we demonstrate the ways these barriers in sports have been supported and reinforced by key societal institutions.

We turn next, in the third Section, to address the generative issues of fandom and community galvanized by sports. Here, we explore the ways that sports, through allegiances to teams, often bond diverse individuals into groups with shared feelings of support and collective identity—which, in some contexts, may be expressed as fanaticism, bigotry, and antagonism that glorify wider social divisions. Expanding on this theme of sports teams as symbolic representations of social communities, we also focus in this Section on the role of the media as technological instruments that have not only increased dramatically direct fan access to sports contests, but also transformed the boundaries of sports communities in the modern world, with the result that it is hardly unusual to discover that professional teams, like Manchester United (soccer) and the Los Angeles Lakers (basketball), have fans in Africa, North America, and Asia. Closely related to this global development of sports communities, we also address the increasing linkages of sports media conglomerates to neo-liberal corporate capitalism, and its consequences for global sports broadcasts.

In the fourth Section, we focus on two of the most neglected topics in the popular sports media discourse—the political economy and the politics of sports. Here we expand on the above discussion of the corporate–media–sports complex that has emerged in sports in response to the enormous potential wealth generated by sports contests. Also, closely related to the growth of corporate sports media, we examine an array of sports–economic developments ranging from sports leagues’ economics and player labor union struggles to the expanding international sports labor market and player mobility. On a different note, we explore the often underreported and politically controversial issues surrounding the construction of professional sports teams stadiums at taxpayers’ expense, arrangements that reflect the enormous leverage professional teams often have over the cities where they play. Viewing this political theme from a somewhat different angle, we address the link between sports and politics, with particular emphasis on governmental interventions in sports and the often controversial political roles of athletes.

In the fifth Section, we examine perhaps the hottest and most complex phenomenon confronting the contemporary sports world, namely the problem of rule-breaking or deviance. Here, we explore not only varied types of deviance, extending from gambling

and fixing contests to illegal player recruitment and the use of prohibited performance-enhancing drugs; but, also, and perhaps most sociologically important, we examine the danger to sports posed by unchecked deviance. Viewing this deviance from the standpoint of meritocratic norms, we discuss the implications of sports deviance for undermining the core meaning of the sports contest as competition conducted on a level playing field. This Section considers both the operation of meritocratic norms as well as mechanisms of social control—negative sanctions—that deter deviance in competitive sports as key factors for assessing the level of a sport’s institutional development. Drawing from the insights of the meritocratic theoretical perspective noted above, we argue that those societies whose dominant competitive sports have attained high levels of institutional development are most likely to evidence high levels of meritocratic norms in their other major institutions. Our discussion of deviance in this Section includes issues of gambling, drugs, and violence.

Finally, we address sports globalization as a dynamic and complex process of expanding transnational organization. In this Section, we explore the early historical background of international diffusion of sports through colonialism, the growth of international sports competition through the Olympics and the more recent international expansion of professional sports leagues such as FIFA, and the unprecedented increase of player migration. We also examine the growing divide between the wealthy “haves” (sports enterprises in the global North) and poor “have-nots” (sports enterprises in the global South) and explore the consequences of this development for future directions of sports globalization. Throughout this Section, we address the many ways that competitive sporting events that occurred formerly within national settings are occurring now in multiple national settings. They are sponsored by transnational leagues and conferences, reflecting the diffusion of sports and the changing configurations of sports fandoms, resulting in the global diffusion of normative standards and cultural values.

PEDAGOGICAL GOALS

This text/reader aims to introduce students to a fascinating multidisciplinary field. By presenting coherent analytical essays and reading selections that illuminate the complex interconnections between sports and society, it addresses such phenomena as: the relationship between social movements and changes in sports; the social processes that sustain the institutional stability and integrity of sports; the role of sports in creating group identity and bonds of social community; the enormous growth of sports in modern society as sources of entertainment and wealth; and, perhaps most far reaching, the influence of sports on the development of meritocratic normative practices in other social institutions.

In short, this text/reader constitutes a unique undertaking. Combining the best features of textbooks and edited readers, it has the advantage of flexibility, which makes it suitable for a variety of course objectives and audiences. The framing essays will introduce analytical concepts and theoretical perspectives that the student will encounter in the reading selections. They will also demonstrate how to employ those concepts and theories. The reading selections have been chosen for their topicality, clarity, and excellent integration of theoretical and empirical material. Seeking not only to inform students about the sports world but also to teach them analytical skills and the application of theoretical perspectives that deepen their awareness and understanding of social processes linking sports to the larger social world, this text/reader aims to appeal to both undergraduates and graduate students.

Our approach aims to combine in one place all an instructor would need to provide a comprehensive representation of the major topics and issues characterizing the field of sport and society. By combining our original framing essays with the previously published articles, it introduces students to intellectual frameworks that transcend the common-sense interpretations of sports-relevant events, both on and off the field. Indeed, we hope that the format provides the flexibility that instructors need to present a deep understanding of the relationship between sport and society and a critical approach to the “games outside the games.”

Instructors: We have organized this book in a way that provides the opportunity to map its contents onto your current syllabi. Depending on the level of your class, you may choose to assign small sections of the framing essays for given class meetings along with an article from the associated readings in that Section. You may elect to assign for a given week an entire Section essay and then spend the next few weeks reading through the additional articles. Though the articles are organized in given Sections, many of them are quite relevant for other topical areas. For example, the article about the Green Bay Packers’ unique fan base and ownership structure (Chapter 14) is relevant to our fandom Section and our political economy/politics Section. In short, we hope that this book’s design appeals to a wide range of course needs and objectives.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the many years of thinking about how to develop a book that would meet the needs of our course on Sports and Society, we have relied heavily on our students’ feedback about the materials that have been most helpful and unhelpful in deepening their understanding of sport as a social institution. Our first debt is to them. Second, we wish to thank our research assistants—Hannah Smith and Sonia Giebel—for the breadth of their searching for *just* the right articles for this volume. A number of colleagues helped us arrange free or reduced costs for the publication of their contributions: Michael Messner, Ben Carrington, Doug Hartmann, Sherri Grasmuck, Loic Wacquant, Andy Markovits, and Malcolm Gladwell deserve mention in this regard. For reading, providing comments, and preventing some errors or, as one of them called it, some “real clunkers,” we thank Andy Markovits, David Swartz, Doug Hartmann, and Katherine McClelland. Barbara Burns and, especially, Karen Sulpizio (who also helped in the article searches) were very helpful during the last stage of manuscript preparation. Steve Rutter’s insight, encouragement, and vision for the project were key elements to the project’s initiation and ultimate success. His prodding (!) was, in the end, much appreciated. We thank Margaret Moore and Fred Courtright for their assistance with a range of organizational challenges. Elsa Peterson’s editing was a boon to the finished product. Also, a thank you to the reviewers:

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SECTION 2: BIASES AND BARRIERS IN SPORT: CLASS, RACE, GENDER, AND DISABILITY 19

This section summarizes different perspectives on social inequality and provides cogent introductions to sociological approaches to class, race/ethnicity, gender, and disability. Each of these concepts is linked to issues of participation in different sports and how these patterns vary cross-nationally. The focus throughout is on how dominant groups have the upper hand in using their superior resources to realize their interests in the sports field and beyond . . . but they don't always win!

1 Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste 44

PIERRE BOURDIEU

This excerpt is a demanding but rewarding contribution. It lays out how sport articulates with social class in the struggle for status distinction in the larger society. Though it is focused on France, readers should try to apply his ideas to their own society.

2 The Boys Who Beat the Street 54

LOÏC WACQUANT

Drawn from an ethnography of a boxing gym in Chicago, this excerpt makes the case that boxing requires a discipline and stability of life that is often unavailable to members of the "underclass." The gym is a working class space that is highly masculinized and demonstrably marginalizes women.

- 3 The Sports Taboo: Why Blacks Are Like Boys and Whites Are Like Girls 63
MALCOLM GLADWELL
While racial integration has progressed significantly over the past century, racialized thinking – the belief among many people that racial ancestry determines athletic ability – persists. In this chapter, Gladwell exposes the fallacy of racial explanations of black athletic dominance.
- 4 The Anatomy of Scientific Racism: Racist Responses to Black Athletic Achievement 70
PATRICK B. MILLER
In this chapter, Miller presents an analysis of racial discourse in sports. He focuses on the historical linkage between pseudo-scientific racial discourse and racist social policies.
- 5 Sport and the Italian American Quest for Whiteness 82
GERALD R. GEMS
Gems argues that the peasant backgrounds of Italian immigrants led them to forms of adaptation to the US that focused on physicality, including an orientation to sports – especially boxing (Marciano) and DiMaggio (baseball). As Gems explains, Italian-American assimilation differed from other groups' patterns.
- 6 Barbie Girls versus Sea Monsters: Children Constructing Gender 100
MICHAEL A. MESSNER
In this article about four- and five-year old boys and girls, Messner helps us understand how gender is performed in a specific context. He not only explains how gender is constructed and contested among these young children but his analysis suggests the role that sport plays in reinforcing “hegemonic masculinity” and its associations with competition and aggression.
- 7 Remaking Manhood through Race and “Civilization” 115
GAIL BEDERMAN
The outcomes of sports contests often have social significance beyond the events themselves. This broader significance has often manifested itself in American race relations. In this article, Bederman discusses the impact of Jack Johnson, the brash black American heavyweight boxer, whose emergence as the world champion posed a symbolic threat to the dominant ideology of white male superiority.
- 8 The Sanctity of Sunday Football: Why Men Love Sports 123
DOUGLAS HARTMANN
In this elegant, short article, Hartmann discusses the myriad ways in which masculinity and sport seem to achieve a kind of symbiosis. He demonstrates that this seeming symbiosis is anything but natural; it is socially constructed and dynamically contested.

- 9 Being ‘Good at Sport’: Talent, Ability and Young Women’s Sporting Participation 130

SHERYL CLARK

In this qualitative study of young girls in England, Clark finds that being identified as “good at sport” shapes identities in ways that have major effects on subsequent sports participation. Since “ability” in sport is associated with particular masculinities, young girls are marginalized in these activities with important consequences for subsequent participation.

- 10 An Iron Man: The Body and Some Contradictions of Hegemonic Masculinity 141

RAEWYN CONNELL

In this life-history of an “iron man,” Connell elaborates on the concept of hegemonic masculinity and show how it manifests itself in a particular time and place. Connell’s study of Steve Donoghue helps us understand the social construction of a champion athlete, with attention paid both to who Steve is as an individual (his relationships with parents, girlfriend, etc.) as well as how the structure of sport and its place in the larger society affected who Steve became as a man and as an athlete.

- 11 Transformed Identity: From Disabled Person to Global Paralympian 150

JILL M. LE CLAIR

This moving, qualitative, longitudinal study of swimmers with a disability focuses on how the athletes’ identities changed over time. In addition, Le Clair discusses the ways that organized sports for disabled athletes moved from a focus on the nature of the limitation to a broader, sports-based Paralympics focus.

SECTION 3: THE SOCIAL BONDS GENERATED BY SPORTS: FANDOM, COMMUNITY, AND MEDIA 165

This section focuses on sport as the source of social community in modern society. Illustrating the ways in which sport create feelings of belonging and unity among people of different class, racial and religious backgrounds, this section also calls attention to the powerful appeal of sport by presenting examples of fans emotional attachments to sport that sometimes conflict with the profit oriented decisions made by sport team executives and owners. It also explores some of the negative effects of sport loyalties expressed in fans’ interpersonal violence and racial bigotry. It concludes by examining the role of the media in transforming big time sport into a multi-billion dollar industry.

- 12 Joe Louis Uncovers Dynamite 193

RICHARD WRIGHT

This 1935 account highlights the excitement and pride that the African-American community displayed in the aftermath of a Joe Louis win over Max Baer in a heavyweight boxing match. Most important, Wright ends the article with the suggestion that under the right circumstances those feelings could be channeled into a political movement for social justice.

- 13 Something about Baseball: Gentrification, “Race Sponsorship,” and Competing Class Cultures in Neighborhood Boys’ Baseball 196
 SHERRI GRASMUCK
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- 14 Rooting the Home Team: Why the Packers Won’t Leave—and Why the Browns Did 220
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- 15 Football, Television, and the Supreme Court: How a Decision 20 Years Ago Brought Commercialization to the World of College Sports 227
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- 16 Money, Myth and the Big Match: The Political Economy of the Sports Media 232
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Rowe argues that the increased role of corporate media in sports has led to a dependence of large corporations on sports for generating revenue. He sees a continuing penetration of the media into the culture, sport, and entertainment industries.
- 17 Supporters, Followers, Fans, and *Flâneurs*: A Taxonomy of Spectator Identities in Football 249
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*Giulianotti develops a typology that distinguishes four types of fan orientations to sport. One is highlighted as a new development. He argues that the weakening social ties along with the increasing globalization of both sport and media have produced a new cosmopolitan-type fan (*flâneurs*) who exhibit transferable sport loyalties rather than a life-long attachment to a particular team.*
- 18 The Football-Fan Community as a Determinant Stakeholder in Value Co-creation 263
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