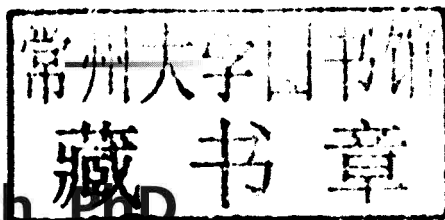


# **SOCIOLOGY** **of** **SPORT** **and** **SOCIAL** **THEORY**

**EARL SMITH**

editor

# **SOCIOLOGY** **of SPORT** **AND** **SOCIAL** **THEORY**



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# Preface

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**S***ociology of Sport and Social Theory* provides a new look at the core theories, theories of the middle range, and microlevel theories in the discipline of sociology with applications to various issues in the study of sport.

Sociology is the study of how human beings behave in their social interaction with other individuals, in groups, in relationship with institutions, and in interactions within social networks. Sociology of sport involves the study of sport institutions that regulate sports (e.g., the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the International Olympic Committee, the National Basketball Association). It also involves the application of sociology to the study of teams, individuals who participate in sports, coaches, and the relationships between these individuals and institutions, as well as their relationships with institutions outside of sport, including government bodies, health systems, and the economy.

The goal for this book, then, is to address a wide range of theories, topics, and issues at the forefront of both scholarly and public discourse as they relate to the study of sport. The focus is twofold: to provide committed scholars and their students with (1) a new and different way of thinking about traditional and contemporary sociological theory and (2) a new and different lens for examining issues typically studied by sport scholars.

In order to accomplish this goal, the book pulls together material from some of the leading scholars who have researched issues related to sociological theory and sport. For example, the book offers a Weberian analysis of sport, a demonstration of how C. Wright Mills' theory of the sociological imagination can provide a lens for an athlete-author to use in analyzing athletic events, and my own chapter explaining the dominance of golf phenomenon Tiger Woods and his incredible mastery of the field of the world's greatest golfers—something that begs for analysis yet to be provided—by using reversal theory as a systematic way to explain Woods' career. Each essay explores a traditional or contemporary social theory and examines its utility for understanding some aspect of the institution of sport. This text provides scholarly research focused on contemporary issues (e.g., violence in sport, Title IX, coaching, religion, the commercialization of sport) that often receive treatment in popular media outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *USA Today*.

For the sociologist of sport, these scholarly essays examine topics typically covered in the subdiscipline but addressed here through a theoretical treatment that is broader and, indeed, unique. The subdiscipline of sport sociology has a well-developed literature that *describes* various issues related to sport and society, but it has not been as successful in analyzing these phenomena through the critical lenses provided by various traditional and contemporary sociological theories. Since this volume includes essays framed by the core theories in sociology, as well as contemporary theories in the discipline, it exposes readers to a theoretical treatment of key issues in the study of sport.

For the general sociologist or social theorist, this text provides applications of theory—both traditional and contemporary—that are often not seen in other theoretical texts. The subfield of the sociology of sport has held marginal status in the larger discipline of sociology. Yet many of the issues that sport sociologists study are the same as those studied by other subdisciplines in the field, including work, violence, gender, race, age, and commercialization. Furthermore, many sociologists are sport enthusiasts, and perhaps physically active people, who have never considered studying this topic. Thus, the opportunity that this text provides to consider how mainstream and contemporary social theories can be applied to an understudied set of issues will necessarily broaden any reader's understanding of theory.

We sometimes forget, especially some 40 years after the fact, that the subdiscipline known as the sociology of sport, often derided for its atheoretical underpinnings, did indeed have a loftier beginning, even though it was not well sustained. In 1969, John W. Loy Jr. and Gerald S. Kenyon published an edited volume titled *Sport, Culture and Society*. It was well received as the first attempt to bring some organization to a disorganized amazement of journalistic accounts, book chapters, and articles describing the growing importance of the institution of sport in American society. Loy and Kenyon's book was highly credited by Harry Edwards, who four years later published his doctoral dissertation as *Sociology of Sport*, one of the first single-author monographs on the subject of sport by a social scientist. While Edwards' book cannot be said to be the first or the only theoretically framed examination of sport and society, the dissertation<sup>1</sup> which led to the book publication represented one of the first systematic efforts to utilize social theory to empirically examine the world of sport and identify sport as a microcosm of society.



The 15 chapters of this book attempt to build on the careful work of Edwards and others who birthed the subdiscipline and to expand the discussion far beyond the narrow group of theoretical paradigms that have typically been used by sport sociologists. These essays build on the traditional theories that any first- or second-year sociology student is familiar with (conflict theory and structural functionalism), as well as on the theories of race and inequality that, beginning with Edwards, form the theoretical toolbox most widely drawn upon by scholars of sport, and as such the chapters in this book expand our repertoire by considering the utility of feminist theory, social capital theory, relational theory, and theories of religion—just to name a few.

This book is organized in three parts. Part I looks at three of the greatest sociologists of the 20th century. Part II includes chapters that focus on what Merton (1965) refers to as theories of the middle range, including urban sociological theory and secularization theory. Part III covers theories of inequities and examines issues such as Title IX, race, masculinity, and at-risk girls. Finally, part IV explores micro-level theories including symbolic interactions or dramaturgy and reversal theory.

<sup>1</sup> Note that Professor Harry Edwards, the newly minted PhD from Cornell University, wrote his doctoral dissertation under preeminent theoretical sociologist Robin M. Williams Jr.

Useful features of the text include the following:

- Each chapter begins with a quick overview of the relevant theory. The overview covers leading proponents of the theory and quickly describes its basic tenets.
- At the end of each chapter, suggested research ideas are provided. These ideas can help future sport sociologists use the theory described in a given chapter to examine other sociological issues.
- Each chapter is also accompanied by an annotated list of additional resources that will be of particular value to students as they learn more about sociological theories and the sport topics discussed.

My intent for this book is to take what is best from the past and add to it in order to show progress made as we move into the future of sport sociology and theory.

# Acknowledgments

This book resulted from a special type of teamwork—teamwork from afar, as the late Robert K. Merton, doyen of sociological theorists, might have put it—on the part of scholars not only from across the United States but also from Canada, Great Britain, and the Caribbean.

Whatever measure of success this book finds, I am very appreciative of the yes that I received from everyone, and I want especially to thank the authors here: Robert Beamish, Bonnie Berry, Teresa Blake, Cheryl Cooky, Benny Cooper, Bryan Denham, Eric Dunning, Angela Hattery, Rhonda F. Levine, Roy McCree, Charles Mellies, Mark Nagel, Ian Ritchie, Kimberly Schimmel, Richard Southall, Nancy Spencer, and David Yamane. Their pioneering work makes a sound contribution not only to this volume but also to the project of elevating the subdiscipline of the sociology of sport to a new level of excitement and scholarly contribution.

I am also grateful to Myles Schrag at Human Kinetics, whose willingness to think critically helped in the development of this volume, and to Amanda Ewing, also at Human Kinetics, for her careful shepherding of this book through the maze of the production process.

Finally, this book is dedicated to all of the sport scholars who came before, on whose shoulders this book stands.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is, of course, a paraphrase of the famous statement, “If I have seen farther it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” The phrase is most famously attributed to Sir Isaac Newton, writing in a letter to Robert Hooke (February 15, 1676), but sociologist Robert K. Merton found that the aphorism originated with Bernard of Chartres in the 12th century. See, especially, Merton’s *On the Shoulders of Giants* (1965).



# Introduction

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It is rare to find an entire book devoted to the sociology of sport and social theory. Several sport scholars have written books about sport, globalization, violence against women in sport, and other important topics by utilizing, where necessary, some aspect of theory that has been a part of the sociology of sport since its inception as a field of inquiry in the 1970s (Dunning 1999; Edwards 1973; Loy 1992; Loy and Kenyon 1969; Maguire and Young 2002; Smith 2007). Few of these books, however, include a variety of theoretical perspectives in their analyses of sport. In order to address this neglect on both sides of the equation, this book constitutes an attempt both to bring theory into discussions of sport and to bring empirical examples from sport into discussions of theory.

The purpose of the volume is to clarify for students, sociologists, psychologists, kinesiologists, and others who study sport how social theory can provide a suitable framework for understanding patterns that exist in the social world. It provides social theorists with examples and illustrations from the world of sport. One aim of the book, then, is to show American students how exciting the study of sport and theory can be when they are wedded together.

Eric Dunning has noted, in discussing (in chapter 2 of this text) the work of his mentor, Norbert Elias, that Elias stressed

*[t]he need in sociology for a constant two-way traffic between theory and research. Elias argued that theory without research is liable to be abstract and meaningless, and research without theory to be arid and descriptive.*

In a practical sense, the mission of the book is to present theory first and have authors apply the theoretical perspectives they utilize in their respective chapters to important empirical examples from the world of sport. I chose to approach this project in the form of an edited collection rather than a single-author work because a collected volume allowed me to draw upon some of the very best scholars of sport as well as top scholars of sociology who typically do not examine sport. Thus the goal of the book was achieved by presenting the same challenge—how to bring social theory to the study of sport—to the authors. I think readers will agree that they have risen to the occasion and provided a sound understanding of various sociological theories and of how these theories provide a framework for examining various phenomena in sports.

I have previously used the term *SportsWorld* (Smith 2007) to refer to the institutionalization of everything having to do with sport—for example, the ratcheting up of player and coach contracts; coast-to-coast travel for Little League and Pop Warner teams; multibillion-dollar contracts to televise contests and tournaments; and the outright ownership of athletes and their skills, as well as the insuring of their body parts. This process moves sport—contests, participants, fans, leagues—from the realm of the individual to the realm of the institutional, and in so doing it connects SportsWorld to other social institutions, including the economy, the system of higher education, and the criminal justice system. It is now driven by partnerships involving

hypercommercialism and exploitative mass media that dictates the scheduling of college contests regardless of colleges’ academic calendars and is bankrolled by the ever-expanding corporate world.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, SportsWorld is driven at all levels by the values associated with unrational capitalism.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Just recently, at the height of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, the U.S. government bailed out several megabanks to the tune of billions of dollars, only to see several of them spend taxpayer money on naming rights for sports stadiums. Citibank has paid the New York Mets US\$400 million to name the team’s new stadium Citi Field (I saw this for myself during a taxi ride from LaGuardia Airport on December 22, 2008). Additionally, the struggling American International Group (AIG) paid British soccer team Manchester United US\$125 million for the privilege of having its logo appear on Man U’s uniforms (Rood 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Unrational capitalism is a systemic problem with the capitalist mode of production. Decision makers are now making decisions that are no longer in their best interest. The best treatment of this phenomenon is given by economist Fareed Zakaria (2008).

Theory	Summary
Feminist theory	Aims to understand the nature of inequality; focuses on gender politics, power relations, sexuality. While generally providing a critique of social relations, feminist theory focuses largely on analyzing gender inequality and on promoting women’s rights, interests, and issues. Themes explored include art history, contemporary art, aesthetics, discrimination, stereotyping, objectification (especially sexual), and oppression. Patriarchy is conceptualized as a system of power and oppression valuing men and male activities and qualities over women and their activities and qualities. Feminists argue that gender is a core organizing principle of social life, existing across time and geography, and that it both creates and requires gender difference and thus essentializes masculinity and femininity.
Figurational theory	Figurational theory, or process sociology, focuses on relationships between power, behavior, emotion, and knowledge over time. Elias traced how postmedieval European standards applied to violence, sexual behavior, bodily functions, table manners, and forms of speech were transformed by increasing thresholds of shame and repugnance, working outward from a nucleus in court etiquette. The internalized “self-restraint” imposed by increasingly complex networks of social connections developed the psychological self-perceptions that Freud recognized as the superego.
Hegemonic masculinity	Consistent with traditional gender ideals, the hegemonically masculine male is independent, powerful, emotionally unexpressive, strictly heterosexual, unflinching in the face of adversity, indifferent to pain, and unwilling to compromise his core values.
Institutional logics	Determine what practices and symbolic constructions—which both constitute organizing principles available to organizations and individuals to guide the evaluation and implementation of strategies, establish routines, and create precedence for further innovation—are acceptable or unacceptable.
Interpretive social action theory	Sociology is a comprehensive science of social action that pursues universal truths about an infinitely complex world even though that objective is ultimately unattainable. Sociologists develop “pure type” concepts that focus attention on key aspects of social action. Science, as a form of social action, can itself be examined as a pure type. This analysis shows that science is limited in what it can prescribe as an ultimate ethical basis for social action, leaving the determination of social values to the political realm of social action. The key to moral conduct is the creation of a fully open debate within the political realm of societies.
Race, class, and gender theory	Focuses on ways in which power, privilege, and oppression are organized by race, class, gender, and other systems of domination (e.g., sexuality, religion, age, ability status).

Yet, as important as intellectual inquiry into the commercialization of SportsWorld is, there are also many other avenues for inquiry driven by a diverse range of theories—not simply those associated with capitalism or traditional social theory. This wider paradigm of exploration—into institutions such as religion, the criminal justice system, and urban development—is unique and sets this book apart from the mainstream examination of sport and social institutions.

The table in this introduction provides easy-to-follow information about the theories used in this book. It is my intention that readers, regardless of their background, will find something new and intriguing in this approach that weds theory to empirical examples from the world of sport. Though the authors of each chapter seek to use theoretical paradigms to answer empirical questions, in many cases they raise more questions than they answer, and this approach leaves readers with starting points from which to embark on their own examinations of the intersections of sociological theory and sport.

Proponents	Seminal work in sociology of sport
Claudia Card, Susan Bordo, Joan Acker, Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, Judith Lorber, Susan Griffin, Susan Brownmiller, Emily Kane, Mary K. “Mimi” Schippers, Patricia Hill Collins, Rebecca Walker, Jennifer Baumgardner, Patricia Yancey Martin, Charlotte Perkins Gilman	Messner, M. 2002. <i>Taking the field: Women, men, and sports</i> . Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Norbert Elias, Eric Dunning, Joseph Maguire	Elias, N., and E. Dunning. 1986. <i>Quest for excitement</i> . New York: Blackwell.
R.W. Connell	Kimmel, M. 2003. <i>The invisible sex: Masculinity in contemporary America</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press.
Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Margaret C. Duncan, Barry Brummett, Roger Friedland, Robert R. Alford, Richard R. Nelson, Sidney G. Winter, Richard M. Southall, Mark S. Nagel, John Amis, Crystal Southall, Marvin Washington, Marc J. Ventresca	Washington, M., and M. Ventresca 2004. How organizations change: The role of institutional support mechanisms in the incorporation of higher education visibility strategies, 1874–1995. <i>Organization Science</i> 15:82-97.
Max Weber, Anthony Giddens, Jürgen Habermas	Giddens, A. 2006. <i>Sociology</i> . New York: Wiley.
Bonnie Thornton Dill, Michael Messner, Patricia Hill Collins	Edwards, H. 1969. <i>The revolt of the Black athlete</i> . New York: Free Press.

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Theory	Summary
Reversal theory	This psychological theory addresses the flexibility and changeability of individuals. It focuses specifically on individuals' motivation and capacity to change, depending on circumstances.
Secularization theory	Achieved paradigmatic status in the sociology of religion in the 20th century. Scholars built on the ideas of sociology's founding theorists to understand how religion is transformed in the modern world. Yamane stresses the <i>double movement of secularization</i> : the broad movement in the history of the West toward a decline in the scope of religious authority vis-à-vis secular authorities, and the persistence or reemergence of religious organizations under the secularized conditions established in the first movement. We can see how sport as a social institution has been largely secularized, so that religious groups seeking to be involved in sport are constrained to work in ways that articulate with and are accommodative of the reality of a secular society. At the individual level, we may find some people who integrate their religious beliefs and athletic practices but will find that for most people religion and sport offer separate, even competing, roles.
Social reproduction theory with emphasis on social and cultural capital	Seeks to explain how inequality and the class structure are generationally reproduced. <i>Social capital</i> refers to how social networks can provide resources that help in attainment of upward mobility. <i>Cultural capital</i> refers to the general knowledge, experience, style, and self-presentation one has acquired through the course of life that enables him or her to succeed in certain social settings to a greater extent than do those with less experienced backgrounds.
Sociological imagination	Requires a capacity of mind that enables users to perceive connections between their personal biographies and historical conditions in which they live. Mills believed that the sociological imagination was our most-needed quality of mind, felt that one's intellectual journey was incomplete without coming to grasp the articulation between biography and history, and advocated keeping a file or journal to organize and document one's intellectual journey.
Sociology of science	This body of theories, which study the social context within which science is produced, hold in common the contention that what is considered scientific "fact," as well as what is considered worthy of scientific study in the first place, are reflections of the social environment.
Structuration theory	Argues that social structure is always both constraining and enabling. <i>Structure</i> refers to the "rules and resources, or sets of transformative relations, that are organized as properties of social systems" (Giddens 1984, 25), as well as the "institutionalized features of social systems, stretching across time and space" (185). Structure shapes the production and reproduction of social interactions, and through social interactions social structure is reproduced. This is what Giddens refers to as the "duality of social structure."
Symbolic interactionism and dramaturgy	Through the use of outward and visible social symbols, we influence our society in hopes of being viewed in a favorable light. These symbols (e.g., clothing, body size) hold symbolic meaning (e.g., power, success). Through our interaction with other societal members, we create an image, if not a reality, of ourselves and our place in society in a process often thought of as impression management. We can think of this process as playing a part in a play (hence, <i>dramaturgy</i> ).
Urban political economy and urban regime theory	Urban development is fraught with conflict concerning the use of space. The burdens and benefits of urban development are unequally distributed, and politics and human agency matter in the economic and development outcomes of cities.

It is no longer necessary to argue that sport is an important institution in modern society (Smith 2007). That fact has been well established, if only by the heavy multimedia support for all types of sports, from beach volleyball to motocross racing to the annual Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. In North America, we are blessed each year with a growing number of intercollegiate football bowl games, professional football's Super Bowl, and March Madness, also known as the National Collegiate

Proponents	Seminal work in sociology of sport
Michael Apter (psychologist)	Apter, M. 2006. <i>Reversal theory: Motivation, emotion and personality</i> , 2nd ed. Oxford, UK: Oneworld.
Robert Bellah, Peter Berger, José Casanova, Mark Chaves	Mathisen, J. 1992. From civil religion to folk religion: The case of American sport. In <i>Sport and religion</i> , ed. S. Hoffman, 17–34. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
James Coleman, Pierre Bourdieu	Bourdieu, P. 1978. Sport and social class. <i>Social Science Information</i> 17:819–40.
C. Wright Mills, Hans Gerth, Steven P. Dandaneau, Todd Gitlin, Norman Denzin, Laurel Richardson, Zygmunt Bauman, Carolyn Ellis, Robert Coles, Studs Terkel, Arlie Hochschild	Coakley, J., and P. Donnelly. 1999. <i>Inside sports: Using sociology to understand athletes and sport experiences</i> . New York: Routledge.
Robert Merton, Thomas Kuhn, Bruno Latour	Beamish, R., and I. Ritchie. 2006. <i>Fastest, highest, strongest: A critique of high-performance sport</i> . New York: Routledge.
Anthony Giddens, Alan Ingham, John Sugden, Alan Tomlinson	Giddens, A. 1984. <i>The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press.
George Herbert Mead, Harold Garfinkel, Erving Goffman	Fine, G.A. 1987. <i>With the boys: Little league baseball and preadolescent culture</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Harvey Molotch, John Logan, Clarence N. Stone	Reiss, S. 1989. <i>City games: The evolution of American urban culture and the rise of sport</i> . Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

Athletic Association (NCAA) women's and men's basketball championships. Media network CBS paid the NCAA the whopping sum of US\$6.3 billion across 11 years for exclusive television rights to the championship games between 2003 and 2013. This figure more than doubles the original deal CBS made with the NCAA in 1983 to exclusive broadcast rights between 1983 and 2002. CBS paid similarly for the rights to broadcast NFL games not only in the United States but also abroad as part

of the expansion of NFL audiences to Europe. Simultaneously, the NBA is having games broadcast throughout eastern Europe and Asia. Hence it is clear that sport is an important institution deeply embedded within our global culture, and it is critically important to analyze this growing institution and its relationship to other institutions.

With such data in hand, it is necessary to develop a way to explain all of the events that take place under the rubric I have labeled SportsWorld. This is a task for sociological theory charged with providing a framework for analyzing these real world events, and part I of this book, "Great Theorists," begins this process.

While all of this might seem "irrational" in the current economic climate, Robert Beamish uses chapter 1, "Toward a Sport Ethic: Science, Politics, and Weber's Sociology," to help us analyze such phenomena through the lens provided by one of the fathers of sociological theory, Max Weber. According to Beamish, Weber worried that material goods would eventually gain too much power over the individual lives of men and women, and, for Beamish, the hypercommercialization of sport is a clear confirmation of Weber's fears.

Social theories are important not only because they exemplify critical thinking attached to important events but also because when we reflect on a theorist such as the late Robert K. Merton (1957, 1968)—who, with incredible range, could assess so many critical situations, making complex, life-changing events accessible—we begin to understand the incredible power of "theorizing." Theorists of the middle range, as Merton was, are noted for their ability to apply theory in practical ways that are accessible to wider audiences. Thus, several chapters of this book examine the ways in which these middle range theories can be applied to the institution of sport.

Part II, "Research Guided by Mid-Level Sociological Theories," treats theories that get at specific events affecting human lives. For example, Kimberly Schimmel argues in chapter 5, "Political Economy: Sport and Urban Development," that unless we empirically examine the economic impact of stadium building on cities, we might be duped, as so many are, into believing that stadiums bring economic development to American cities.

Part III, "Theories of Inequality," addresses gender, race, and social class and offers a range of perspectives allowing readers to examine both individual and group life chances. For example, a good deal of research has informed us of changes in the life chances for women in sport and has critically called out, when necessary, institutional malfeasance that short-shrifts girls and women in their quest for parity (Messner 2002). Yet so much of this work has been descriptive and atheoretical (e.g., Carpenter and Acosta 2008). In this book, Angela Hattery, a new voice in sport sociology and research on gender—trained as a sociologist, not in sport management or kinesiology—brings the theoretical tools of sociology to the study of gender and sport.

Whereas the chapters in part III use theories of inequality to examine patterns in differential access, the chapters in part IV, "Microlevel Theories," demonstrate the ways in which microlevel interactions can be examined so that patterns in these processes become visible, taking us, for example, into the issues addressed in chapter 14, Bonnie Berry's "Making It Big: Visible Symbols of Success, Physical Appearance, and Sport Figures." Berry's analysis uses the theory of symbolic

interactionism to illustrate how everyday things like clothes and hairstyles become imbued not only with symbolic meaning but—when the meaning attached is used to signify success—with power as well.

Another example appears in chapter 13, where I explore the world of golf and Tiger Woods' position as the most dominant player in a highly competitive field. I use relational theory, which provides a clearer lens than is offered by journalistic assessments, and a framework that allows us to see why, Sunday after Sunday, Woods dominates in a manner that is otherwise as unexplainable as it is unbelievable.

Readers looking for an explicit discussion of race and sport will likely notice that there is no chapter dedicated specifically to a discussion of race. Yet let me reassure readers that several chapters included here analyze race—along with social class and gender—and I would point interested readers specifically to the following three chapters: (1) Rhonda F. Levine's essay on the role of socialization on the athletic experiences of African American high school men, (2) my chapter on the relationship between race and the likelihood of arrest among high-profile athletes who commit acts of violence against women, and, for an international perspective, (3) Roy McCree's chapter, "Sport and Multiple Identities in Postwar Trinidad: The Case of McDonald Bailey." Finally, in one of my other books, *Race, Sport, and the American Dream*, I explicitly address the relationship between race and the institution of sport in the United States.

Though I could point out each and every chapter in *Sociology of Sport and Social Theory* and the contribution its author makes to the intersection of sport and social theory, the table presented earlier in this chapter does so exhaustively, and for me to reconsider each chapter in depth would be redundant. Thus it is my intention that after reading this introduction, readers—be they scholars of sport, scholars of theory, students, or sport enthusiasts—will be thirsty for more and will dive into the book looking for answers and questions that are seldom explored in this manner.



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