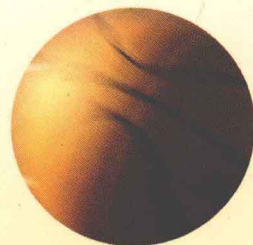
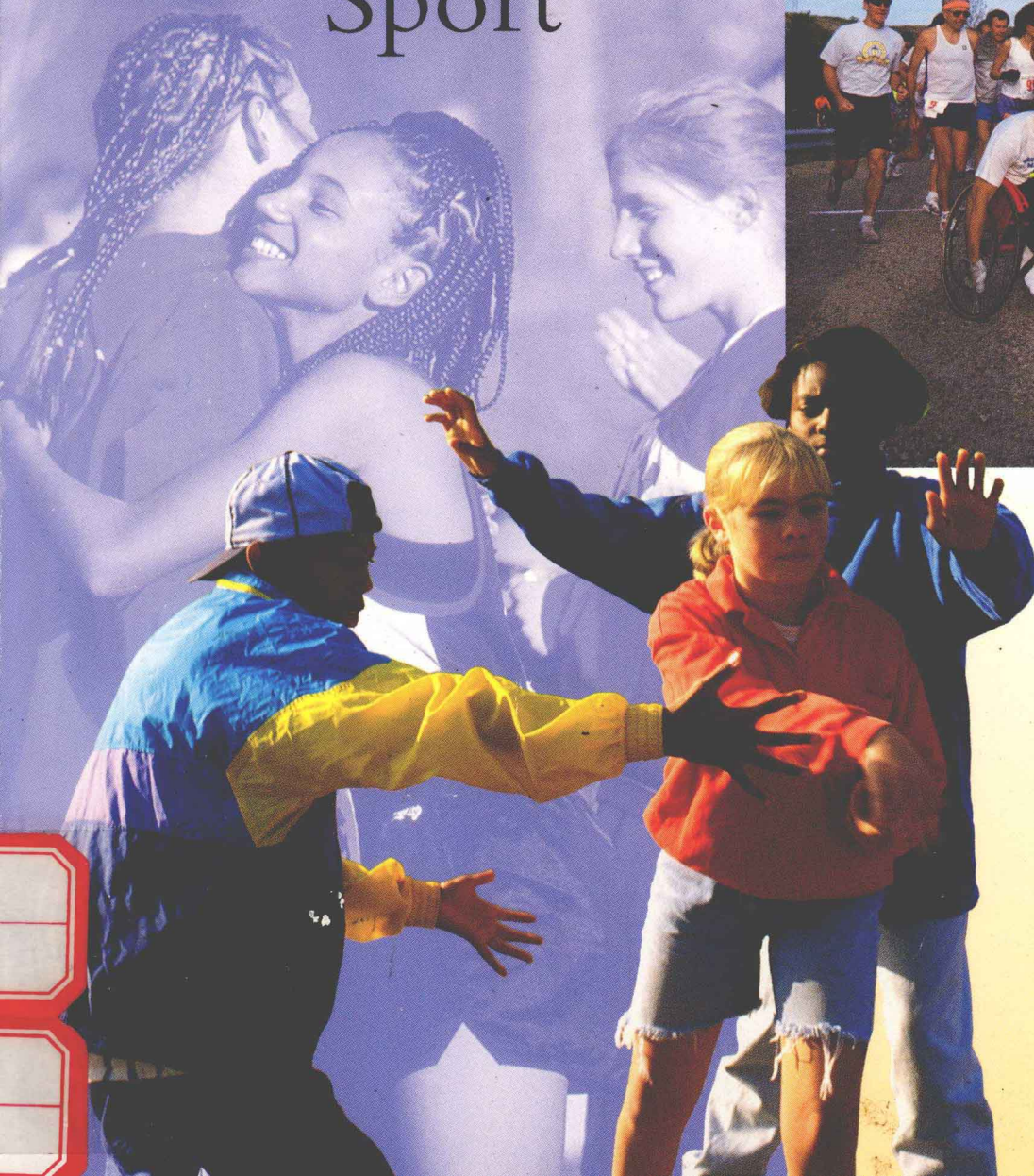


Sociology of North American Sport

SIXTH
EDITION



D. Stanley Eitzen
George H. Sage

Sociology of North American Sport

SIXTH
EDITION

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To Our Grandchildren:

*D. S. Eitzen's grandchildren are Christopher,
Nicole, Jacob, Zachary, and Cooper;
G. H. Sage's grandchildren are Tyler,
Garrett, Lucas, and Elise*

Introduction

Sport takes place in social settings and has a profound influence on the social life of large numbers of people of all ages, but the study of sport from a sociological perspective has not been prominent. Academic fashions are changing, however, and in the past decade the tools of sociology—its perspective, theories, and methods—have been increasingly employed in studying sport. As a consequence, a cumulative and systematic body of knowledge is beginning to take form. The literature has grown rapidly, beginning with anthologies and culminating in full-blown texts and periodicals. Also, international conferences on sport sociology have stimulated worldwide sociological study of sport, and this subject has had a prominent place in the convention programs of physical education meetings as well as of national and regional meetings of sociology associations. Finally, sport sociology classes are now commonly offered by sociology and kinesiology/physical education departments throughout the nation.

Purpose of This Text

Three goals guide our efforts in writing this book. In the analysis of the sport structure in societies, our first goal is to analyze sport critically and in so doing demythologize sport. Thus, the reader will understand sport in a new way. She or he will also incorporate implicitly the sociological perspective in his or her repertoire for understanding other parts of the social world.

Our second goal is to impress on our readers in kinesiology/physical education and sociology the importance of including the sociology of sport as a legitimate subfield in each of the two disciplines. We hope that this book will convince kinesiology/physical education students of the importance of social forces upon sports activities and organizations. Although the

mechanical and physiological factors of sport are important, the social milieu in which participation is embedded is crucial with respect to who participates, when, where, and the consequences of such participation. Sport involvement is more than making use of the levers of the body and using strength and endurance to achieve the objective. To sociology students, our message is that sport is a social activity worthy of serious inquiry. It is a substantive topic as deserving of sociologists' attention as those standard specialties: the family, religion, and politics. Not only is sport a microcosm of the larger society, but sports phenomena also offer a fertile field in which to test sociological theories.

Our final goal is to make the reader aware of the positive and negative consequences of the way sport is organized in society. We are concerned about some of the trends in sport, especially the move away from athlete-oriented activities toward the impersonality of what we term "corporate sport." We are committed to moving sport and society in a more humane direction, and this requires, as a first step, a thorough understanding of the principles that underlie the social structures and processes that create, sustain, and transform the social organizations within the institution of sport.

All of the chapters in this edition have been revised and the content updated. We have tried to incorporate the salient research and relevant events that have occurred since the publication of the last edition of this book.

The focus of the first two editions was on sport in American society. Although that emphasis remains, the focus in the third, fourth, fifth, and now sixth edition has been broadened to include sport in Canadian society as well. There are many parallels with sport and society in these neighboring nations, as well as important differences that we will note where appropriate. Finally, we have made a special effort in this edition to incorporate race and gender throughout the text.

Organization

In chapter 1 we describe the focus of sociology as a discipline and identify the different analytic levels employed by sociologists. We identify and contrast the two major sociological theories on their interpretation of sport. Next we show how sport provides an ideal setting for utilizing certain sociological instruments and methodologies and affords a setting for the testing of sociological theories.

The phenomenon of sport represents one of the most pervasive social institutions in North America, and in chapter 2 we discuss the relationships between technological, industrial, and urban developments and the rise of organized sport. This chapter has undergone a complete revision for this edition.

The major theme of this book is that sport is a microcosm of society. Salient social values are identified in chapter 3, and we discuss how sport reflects and reinforces the core values, beliefs, and ideologies of the society.

For millions of people, involvement in sport begins in youth sports programs. In chapter 4 we describe how children are socialized into sport, and we discuss some of the consequences of these sports experiences.

Sport and education are inexorably intertwined in society. Chapter 5 examines interscholastic sport, focusing on the social sources responsible for the promotion of sports programs, the consequences of school sports programs, and the problems surrounding school sport.

Chapter 6 is devoted to big-time intercollegiate sport. Although this level of sport is extremely popular, we focus here on the many problems that compromise the integrity of the educational mission of universities.

Chapter 7 analyzes two major social problems in sport—violence (participant and fan) and substance abuse/use by athletes. Included here are such topics as athletes' abuse of women, violence against athletes, and athletes with eating disorders.

In chapter 8 we explore the relationship between religion, one of the oldest universal social institutions, and sport, one of the newest. We trace the changing relations between the two institutions and show how contemporary sport has many of the characteristics of a religion. We also describe how religious agents and

agencies use sport to promote religion and how athletes employ magico-religious rituals, taboos, and fetishes in the hope of enhancing their performances.

Although the sport establishment publicly disavows any relationship between politics and sport, the fact is that the two are closely related. In chapter 9 we discuss the close ties between the two and show that there are several characteristics inherent in both institutions that serve to guarantee this strong relationship. In addition to updating, the topics of this chapter have been reordered for clarity.

Economic factors play an overriding role in much of contemporary sport. Not only have the growth of the economy and the emergence of unprecedented affluence, especially in the past two decades, influenced sports, but the enormous increase of interest in sport has had a dramatic economic impact. Chapter 10 describes the multidimensional aspects of economic considerations in sport. Emphasized in this chapter is the ongoing owner-player problem that results in strikes and lockouts.

There is a symbiotic relationship between sport and the mass media. In chapter 11 we review the social functions of the mass media and their relation to sport, the influence of the mass media on sport and of sport on the mass media, and the role of the sports journalist.

Sport is typically assumed to be an egalitarian and a meritocratic institution. In chapter 12 we examine these two assumptions as they relate to social class and social mobility. The analysis shows that these beliefs are largely myths.

Systematic and pervasive discrimination against African Americans has been a historical feature of North American society, but many North Americans believe that sport has been free of racism. Chapter 13 documents the historical and contemporary facts illustrating that sport has had and still has many of the same racial problems as the larger society.

The theme of chapter 14 is that the world of sport has been the exclusive domain of males and that sociocultural forces have combined to virtually exclude female sport involvement. We discuss how the opportunity structure is changing, yet problems of equity remain. Also included in this chapter for the first time are issues of sexuality as they relate to women and men athletes.

The final chapter speculates on the future of sport in North America. The basic theme in this chapter is that since sport reflects society, as the society changes, sport will also undoubtedly undergo some transformation. We discuss several current trends and possible future changes in society and discuss how each is likely to be manifested in sport changes.

Acknowledgments

The development of this edition has been a coordinated effort by both authors in that we have made contributions of one kind or another to each of the chapters. To expedite the writing of the chapters, however, a division of labor was necessary. D. Stanley Eitzen is primarily responsible for the chapters dealing with the sociological analysis of sport, sport and values, sport and education (interscholastic and intercollegiate), politics, economics, social stratification, and racism. George H. Sage is primarily responsible for the chapters on the rise of North American sport, sport and social problems, sport and youth, sport and religion, sport and the mass media, females in sport, and the future of sport. We had the advantage of having several conscientious reviewers who made a number of useful suggestions on the fifth edition:

Dr. Ralph Vernacchia
Western Washington University

Dr. Cynthia Pemberton
University of Missouri, Kansas City

Dr. Catriona Higgs
Slippery Rock University

Most of their suggestions were incorporated in our revision; some were not. Responsibility for the weaknesses that remain is shared by the authors.

About the Authors

We believe that our sports backgrounds and academic interests harmonize in such a way that we form a unique team for writing a book on sport sociology. Both of us are former high school and collegiate athletes. Eitzen has coached on the high school level and has been involved in various capacities in youth sports programs; Sage has coached at the youth, high school, and college level. We have conducted considerable research and published widely in sport sociology. Eitzen is known for his studies of racism in sport; his critiques of various aspects of the social organization of sport; and his anthology, *Sport in Contemporary Society*, now in its fifth edition. Sage is known for his studies of coaches; analyses of professional teams; his recent book, *Power and Ideology in American Sport*; and his anthology, *Sport and American Society*. Although Sage is a kinesiologist and Eitzen a sociologist, our approaches to the sociology of sport are remarkably similar.

D. Stanley Eitzen
George H. Sage

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Chapter 1

The Sociological Analysis of Sport in Society

“Good sociology should begin with the application of radical skepticism and criticism to one’s own society, to one’s place in it, and, by extension, to all social behavior. Sociology should, in short, be alienating.”

Pierre van den Berghe



The subject of this book is sport—an extraordinarily pervasive social phenomenon in North America. The sociological perspective is the analytical approach that we will use to examine this very important human activity. We begin with a brief description of the importance of sport in society, followed by an introduction to the discipline of sociology, and how the sociological approach aids in our understanding of sport.

The Pervasiveness of Sport

Social scientists are especially interested in sport because this phenomenon is so pervasive in the United States and Canada. While seemingly a trivial aspect of life, sport is important, particularly as society becomes increasingly leisure-oriented. Many millions of Americans and Canadians are vitally interested in sport. It constitutes much of their conversation, reading material, leisure activity, and discretionary spending. Over one-tenth of the *World Almanac* is annually devoted to sports. In fact, sports receive more coverage in the almanac than politics, business, or science. *USA Today*, the most widely read newspaper in the United States, devotes one-fourth of its space to sports. The sports section is, for many, the most closely examined part of the daily newspaper. Newspapers, in turn, devote more space to sports than to a variety of other topics, including business news, which should be of central importance in a capitalist economy. Evidence of sportsmania is also seen in the amount of television time devoted to sport, with some 15 percent of major network time devoted to sport, plus some cable networks providing twenty-four-hour sports coverage. Historically, the most watched television events are sports spectacles such as the Super Bowl.

Moreover, sport is big business with the gross national sports product estimated at \$60 billion. Television networks bid billions of dollars for multiyear rights to televise college basketball tournaments, professional sports, and the Olympic games. Each team in the 1996 Fiesta Bowl received \$12 million. Sports betting is staggering, with an estimated \$70 million bet legally and \$5 billion wagered illegally on just one event—the 1996 Super Bowl. Including all sports,

table 1.1 *Number of Spectators at Major Sports Events for 1992*

Sport	Number of Spectators
Horseracing (1990)	63,803,000
Major league baseball	56,852,000
College football	36,199,000
College basketball	
Men's	29,378,000
Women's	3,397,000
Greyhound racing	28,660,000
Professional football	17,784,000
Professional hockey (1991)	12,344,000

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1994*, 114th edition (Washington, D.C., 1994), p. 256.

gambling is likely some multiple of \$100 billion. Table 1.1 shows the very large amount of sports spectatorship in the United States. When these numbers are multiplied by the average cost of tickets, parking, and refreshments, the amount generated by sports attendance is huge. Similarly, with about half of the U.S. population engaging in regular sports participation (see fig. 1.1), the amount spent on sports related equipment is enormous (about \$50 billion just for recreational users).

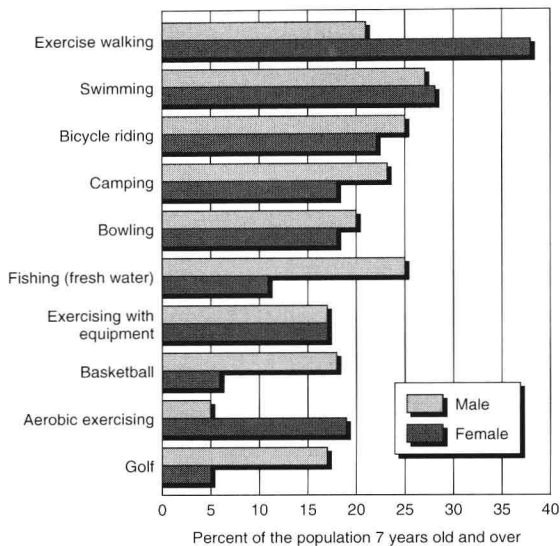
Although sport is an important component of society worthy of serious sociological analysis, all too often it has been relegated to popular commentators because academics have tended to ignore it as a frivolous activity. Traditionally, the leading sociological journals have published few articles on sport. We hope to demonstrate throughout this book that sport merits scientific and critical analysis. We will use the tools of modern sociology to analyze sport in society.

The Discipline of Sociology

Sociology is the scientific discipline that describes and explains human social organization. The size of a human group under study can range from a couple to

Figure 1.1 Participation in ten most popular sports activities, by sex: 1992

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1994*, 114th edition (Washington, D.C., 1994), p. 248.



a church, from a family business to a corporation, from a community to a society. The sociologist is interested in the patterns that emerge whenever people interact over periods of time. Although groups may differ in size and purpose, similarities exist in their structures and in the processes that create, sustain, and transform their structures. In other words, although one group may form to make quilts for charity while another forms with the goal of winning football games, they will be alike in many important ways. We know, for example, that through recurrent interaction certain characteristics emerge: (1) a division of labor; (2) a hierarchical structure of ranks (i.e., differences in power, prestige, and rewards); (3) rules; (4) punishment for the violation of rules; (5) criteria for the evaluation of things, people, ideas, and behavior; (6) a shared understanding of symbols with special meanings (specialized language such as nicknames, gestures, or objects); and (7) member cooperation to achieve group goals.¹

Sociologists are interested not only in the underlying order of social life but also in the principles that

explain human behavior. Sociology is joined in this quest by other disciplines, especially biology and psychology. Biological explanations of human behavior focus on the structure (potentials and limitations) of the human body and the innate drives (hunger, thirst, sex, and comfort) that constrain humans. *Sociobiology*, by Edward Wilson, for example, presents the controversial but forceful argument that human genetic heritage explains much behavior, from the way human life is ordered in groups to the prevalence of violence.²

Psychological explanations of human behavior focus on mental processes and human behavioral characteristics. Psychology is helpful, for example, in explaining why particular individuals may be violent, self-destructive, criminal, humanitarian, saintly, prejudiced, alcoholic, or failure-prone.

Biological and psychological explanations are only partially useful, however, because they focus exclusively on the individual. The sociological approach, in contrast, stresses those factors external to the individual. These might be social conditions in the community or society such as varying degrees of unemployment, inflation, leisure time, urban blight, or restricted opportunities for minority groups. An extremely important external influence on human behavior is the understanding of meanings that the members of a social organization share. These shared meanings constitute *culture*. Under the rubric of culture are the standards used to evaluate behavior, ideology, customs, expectations for persons occupying various positions, and rules—all of which limit the choices of individuals, regardless of their biological heritage or their psychological proclivities. A final external source of control is an individual's *social location*. Each individual in society is—because of his or her wealth, occupation, education, religion, racial and ethnic heritage, and family background—ranked by others and by himself or herself. Placement in this complex hierarchy exerts pressures, subtle and blatant, on people to behave in prescribed ways.

Although sociology is typically superseded by psychological explanations, the goal of this book is to provide a purely sociological analysis and explanation of sport in North America. Such an inquiry, we hope, not only will be interesting and insightful but

also will introduce the reader to a new and meaningful way to understand the social world and the phenomenon of sport.

Assumptions of the Sociological Perspective

We have seen that human behavior is examined through different disciplinary lenses and that each field of inquiry makes important contributions to knowledge. Of the disciplines focusing on human behavior, sociology is commonly the least understood. The implicit goal of this book is to introduce you to the sociological ways of perceiving and interpreting the role of sport in North America. Let us begin by enumerating the assumptions of the sociological approach that provide the foundation for this unique way of viewing the world.³

1. Individuals Are, by Their Nature, Social Beings

There are two fundamental reasons for the assumption that humans are naturally social beings. First, children enter the world totally dependent on others for their survival. This initial period of dependence means, in effect, that each individual is immersed in social groups from birth. Second, throughout history individuals have found it advantageous to cooperate with others (for defense, for material comforts, to overcome the perils of nature, and to improve technology).

2. Individuals Are, for the Most Part, Socially Determined

The assumption that individuals are socially determined stems from the first assumption of the sociological approach, that people are social beings. Individuals are products of their social environments for several reasons. During infancy, children are at the mercy of others, especially parents. These persons can shape the potential behaviors of infants in an infinite variety of ways, depending on their proclivities and those of the society. Parents will have a profound impact on their children's ways of thinking about themselves and about others; they will transmit religious views, attitudes, and prejudices about how other groups are to be rated. Children will be punished for certain behaviors and rewarded for others. Whether

children become bigots or integrationists, traditionalists or innovators, saints or sinners, athletes or nonathletes depends in large measure on parents, siblings, and others with whom they interact.

Parents may transmit to their offspring some idiosyncratic beliefs and behaviors, but most significantly they act as cultural agents, transferring the ways of the society to their children. As a consequence, a child is born not only into a family but also into a society, both of which shape the personality characteristics and perceptions of each individual. Sociologist Peter L. Berger summarized the impact of society on individual development, "Society not only controls our movements, but shapes our identity, our thoughts and our emotions. The structures of society become the structures of our own consciousness. Society does not stop at the surface of our skins. Society penetrates us as much as it envelopes us."⁴ The individual's identity is socially bestowed and is shaped by the way he or she is accepted, rejected, and defined by others. Whether an individual is attractive or plain, witty or dull, worthy or unworthy depends on the values of the society and the groups in which the individual is immersed. Although genes determine an individual's physical characteristics, social environment, especially an individual's social class location, determines how those characteristics will be evaluated. Suggesting that people are socially determined is another way of saying that we are, in many ways, puppets dependent upon and manipulated by social forces. A major function of sociology is to identify the social forces that affect us so greatly. Freedom, as Reece McGee pointed out, can come only from a recognition of these unseen forces:

Freedom consists in knowing what these forces are and how they work so that we have the option of saying no to the impact of their operation. For example, if we grow up in a racist society, we will be racist unless we learn what racism is and how it works and then choose to refuse its impact. In order to do so, however, we must recognize that it is there in the first place. People often are puppets, blindly danced by strings of which they are unaware and over which they are not free to exercise control. A major function of sociology is that it permits us to

recognize the forces operative on us and to untie the puppet strings which bind us, thereby giving us the option to be free.⁵

Accordingly, one task of sociology is to learn, among other things, what racism and sexism are and to determine how they work. This is often difficult, though, because we typically do not recognize their existence. Social forces may have prompted us to believe and to behave in racist and sexist ways.

To say that people are puppets is too strong, however. The assumption that individuals are shaped by their society is not meant to imply a total social determinism. The puppet metaphor is used to convey the idea that much of who we are and what we do is a product of our social environment. However, society is not a rigid, static entity composed of robots; there are nonconformists, deviants, and innovators as well. Although the members of society are shaped by their social environment, they also change that environment. Human beings are the shapers of society. This is the third assumption of the sociological approach.

3. Individuals Create, Sustain, and Change the Social Forms Within Which They Conduct Their Lives

Although humans are often puppets of their society, they are also puppeteers. In brief, the argument is that social groups of all sizes and types (families, peer groups, work groups, athletic teams, corporations, communities, and societies) are formed by their members. The group that interacting persons create becomes a source of control over them (i.e., they become puppets of their own creation), but the continuous interaction of the group's members also changes the group.⁶

Three important implications stem from this assumption that groups are created by persons in interaction. First, these created social forms have a certain momentum of their own that defies change. The ways of doing and thinking that are common to the group are accepted as natural and right. Although human-made, the group's expectations and structures take on a sacred quality—a sanctity of tradition—that constrains behavior in socially prescribed ways.

The second implication is that social arrangements, because they are a result of social activity, are imperfect.

Slavery benefits some segments of society by taking advantage of others. A competitive free-enterprise system creates winners and losers. The wonders of technology make worldwide transportation and communication easy and relatively inexpensive, but they also create pollution and waste natural resources. These examples show that both positive and negative consequences emanate from human organization.

The third implication is that through collective action individuals are capable of changing the structure of society and even the course of history. This process of humans coping with, adapting to, and changing social structures is called *social agency*.

Problems with the Sociological Perspective

Sociology is not a comfortable discipline, and therefore it will not appeal to everyone. Looking behind the “closed doors” of social life is dangerous. The astute observer of society must ask such questions as: How does society really work? Who really has the power? Who benefits under the existing social arrangements, and who does not? To ask such questions means that the inquirer is interested in looking beyond the commonly accepted explanations. Berger put it, “The sociological perspective involves a process of ‘seeing through’ the facades of social structures.”⁷ The underlying assumption of the sociologist is that things are not as they seem. Do school sports serve educational goals? Are athletes in big-time college programs exploited? Does participation in sport build character? Are sports free of racism? Are school sports sexist? Is sport a realistic mechanism of upward mobility for lower-class youth? Is success or failure the most common experience of athletes? To make such queries is to question existing myths, stereotypes, and official dogma. The critical examination of society tends to demystify and to demythologize. It sensitizes the inquirer to the inconsistencies present in society.

The sociological assumption providing the basis for this critical stance is that the social world is made by people and therefore is not sacred. A society's economic system, its law, its ideology, its distribution of power, and its sports institutions are all created and

sustained by people. They can be changed by people as a consequence. If we wish to correct imperfections in our society, then we must truly understand how social phenomena work and learn what changes will help achieve our goals. The central task of this book is to aid in such an understanding of sport in North America.

The sociological perspective is also discomfoting to many because understanding the constraints of society is liberating (traditional sex roles, for example, are no longer “sacred” for many persons). However, liberation from the constraints of tradition also means freedom from the protection that custom provides. The robotlike acceptance of tradition is comfortable because it frees us from choice (and therefore blame) and from ambiguity. The understanding of society is a two-edged sword, freeing us but also increasing the probability of our frustration, anger, and alienation.

A final source of discomfort is that the behavior of people is not always certain. Prediction is not always accurate because people can choose between options and because they can be persuaded by rational and irrational factors. The result is that even when sociologists know the social conditions, they can predict the consequences only in terms of probabilities. On the other hand, chemists know exactly what will occur if a certain measure of one chemical element is mixed with a precise amount of another in a test tube. Civil engineers, armed with the knowledge of rock formations, types of soils, wind currents, and temperature extremes, know exactly what specifications are needed to build a dam in a certain place. They could not determine these, however, if the foundation and the building materials kept shifting. That is the problem, and the source of excitement, for the sociologist. Social life is highly complex, and its study is beset by changes and uncertainties. Although the goal of the sociologist is to reduce the margin of error, its complete elimination is impossible as long as humans are not robots.

Units of Sociological Analysis

We have seen that sociologists are interested in social organizations and in how social forces operate to channel human behavior. The scope of sociology ranges from individuals sharing common social characteristics to small groups to society.

The Social-Psychological Approach

Some sociologists focus on human behavior rather than on social organizations. They direct their research to finding under what social circumstances people behave in predictable ways. Most commonly, research from this approach has focused on the behaviors and attitudes of people who share a common social characteristic or characteristics. For example, first-borns might be compared with latter borns on self-concept, accomplishments, or similarities with parents’ political or religious views. Similarly, persons from different social classes, ethnic groups, or regions might be compared on divorce rates, work histories, or political behaviors.

Social-psychological research has been popular among sport sociologists. Typically, studies have compared athletes and nonathletes on a number of dependent variables (i.e., variables influenced by the effect of the independent variable). The assumption is that the athletic experience makes a difference in political and religious attitudes and in values, psychological attributes, and character.⁸

The Micro Level

At the micro level, the emphasis is on the structure of relatively small groups (e.g., families, friendship groups, and such organizations as the Friday Night Poker Club, the local Nazarene Church, the African Violet Society, and the Pretty Prairie High School football team). Some of the research questions of interest at this level are: What are the principles underlying group formation, stability, and change? What are the most effective forms of organization to accomplish group goals? Under what conditions is member cooperation maximized? Under what conditions is member behavior least predictable?

Sports teams are especially useful research settings in which to test theories about social organization. Sociologists of sport have researched, for example, the organizational characteristics correlated with success (leadership style, leadership change, homogeneity of members). They have examined where in sports organizations racial discrimination is most likely to occur.

As a final example of the micro level, sport sociologists have researched sports teams to examine the important social processes of competition and