

sport,

culture and society
a reader on the sociology of sport

SECOND EDITION

JOHN W. LOY, JR.

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preface

A decade ago, in the preface to the first edition of *Sport, Culture and Society*, we drew attention to the fact that sport had made substantial inroads into our various social institutions, whether they were economic, educational, political, familial, or religious. Since then, sport has become even more pervasive, from the witnessing of a single high performance event by hundreds of millions, to the rapid growth of the "sport-for-all" movement.

On the scholarly side, the level of scholarship has been raised, and the range of subject matter broadened. The results remain uneven, however, both nationally and internationally. Moreover, just as sport itself tends to mirror society, the sociology of sport has a tendency to reflect sociology. That is, areas of inquiry and questions of method, which became part of mainstream sociology during the period, were paralleled in the sociology of sport. For example, sport issues such as discrimination and social control were particular manifestations of larger social problems addressed by the parent discipline. The result however, is a much more diverse body of literature, with many contributions reflecting new levels of theoretical and methodological sophistication.

Such developments notwithstanding, progress has not been as great as envisioned by many in the late 1960s. In a recent analysis* of why this

has been the case, some factors were identified, the most important of which was the lack of a sufficiently large "critical mass" of sport sociologists and all that implies for any academic specialty. That is, with only a small number of active scholars, the scope of the subject matter and the extent to which theoretical and methodological alternatives are employed are limited; this in turn, has an impact upon the literature, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Although advancement may have fallen short of the ideal, and despite retaining less than a third of the material from the first edition, selecting the content for this revision was not without difficulty. While we believe worthy representatives of our conceptual framework have been chosen, some excellent writings could not be included. Although different approaches can be seen in the readings reprinted, our preference was for the work of the more productive scholars whose thrust has been theoretically based empirical work. To draw the reader's attention to other approaches, as well as to provide a list of closely related studies, some of which were too long to be included, we have provided a *Further Readings* section following each part of the text.* Compared with ten years ago, however, we feel less of a need to be comprehensive with respect to either developmental or bibliographic material since several readers and textbooks have become available to the student.

With respect to uses of this reader, we believe it can stand alone as a resource volume for

* Loy, J. W., McPherson, B. D., and Kenyon, G. S., *The Sociology of Sport as an Academic Specialty: An Episodic Essay on the Development and Emergence of a Hybrid Subfield in North America*. Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 1978.

* In addition, the student should scan the references cited in each of the papers included in this reader.

those desiring an introduction to the sociology of sport, either independently, or as part of a first course in the subject. Alternatively, it could supplement a textbook on sport sociology. For this reason, we have structured the Reader to parallel closely the form of our own book, *Sport and Social Systems*,[†] written especially to provide a comprehensive analysis of the major problems receiving attention and the results of theoretical and empirical inquiry into sport phenomena.

As in the aforementioned text, we have used the *social system* and its basic components as an organizing framework for the readings. Human social behavior, including that within sport milieus, whether it involves two individuals or an entire society, is organized and structured into systems varying in structure, composition, complexity, and function. Consequently, the interests of sport sociologists range from the traits of individuals (e.g., athletes) and how they interact in face-to-face groups (e.g., teams), to the relationship between sport and the characteristics of major social institutions (e.g., the family, the school, the economy, and the mass media). The former we refer to as *micro-social systems*; the latter as *macro-social systems*.

Thus, we have separated the reader into three parts: Part One—"The Sociological Analysis of Sport"—contains two sections; the first includes statements on the sociology of sport as an academic specialty; the second addresses conceptual problems in the sociological study of sport. Part Two—"Sport and Micro-Social Systems"—comprises three sections dealing with sport groups, sport organizations, and sport subcultures, respectively. Part Three—"Sport and Macro-Social Systems"—consists of four sections; the first three address the relationship be-

tween sport and socializing, regulative, and cultural institutions; the fourth contains contributions to the literature on the relationship between sport and institutionalized forms and processes of social stratification.

Finally, a major objective of the first edition was to whet the academic appetite for the study of sport from the perspective of the social sciences. While we hope the second edition will serve this purpose as well, we believe it also represents a reasonable expression of the state of the art, though restricted to North America for the most part. Nevertheless, we sincerely hope that the advances made in the future will necessitate a third edition long before another decade elapses. Or, put another way, we would like to think we will have come a little closer to that "some day" described by Wector over 40 years ago:

Some day. . . . He will show us how cricket, with its white clothes and leisured boredom, and sudden crises met with cool mastery to the ripple of applause among the teacups and cucumber sandwiches, is an epitome of the British Empire. Or the bull-fight with its scarlet cape and gold braid, its fierce pride and cruelty, and the quixotic futility of its perils, is the essence of Spain. Or that football with its rugged individualism, and baseball with its equality of opportunity, are valid American symbols. . . . Most of these things have been felt or hinted before, but their synthesis has never been made.*

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[†] Loy, J. W., McPherson, B. D., and Kenyon, G. S., *Sport and Social Systems*. Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1978. (Each chapter includes an extensive bibliography on each of the topics covered in this reader.)

* Wector, Dixon, *The Saga of American Society: A Record of Social Aspirations, 1607-1937*. New York, Charles Scribner and Sons, 1937, p. 428.

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PART ONE

the sociological analysis of sport

Although the first edition provided a brief historical basis for an emerging sociology of sport, since then more thorough analyses have been published,* obviating the need to detail such material here. Nevertheless, an introduction to the literature of any field is enhanced by a "setting of the scene." Thus, *Section One: Sociology of Sport*, contains articles addressed to characterizing the sociology of sport as an academic specialty. The readings in *Section Two: Sport as a Social Phenomenon*, treat some of the conceptual issues underlying the serious study of sport from a social science perspective.

In the first article of *Section One*, Kenyon and Loy call for the joining together of a number of disparate initiatives into a systematic sociology of sport. The extent to which this has occurred fifteen years later, and the prospects for the future are reflected upon by McPherson in the paper that follows. The reader should note that there have appeared a number of critiques and alternative orientations to the theoretical and methodological positions taken in these contributions. For example, the limitations of a so-called "value-free" sport sociology have been argued by several writers (Melnick, 1975; Whitson, 1978), and likewise, alternatives to "bour-

geois sociology" have been presented by Eastern European observers (Erbach, 1966; Wohl, 1966, 1975).

As is the case with any emerging field, a number of writers have wrestled with the necessary but difficult task of clarifying concepts and stating orientations—the precursors of systematic inquiry. Devoting considerable space to the subject may seem trivial at first, but upon reflection, one realizes that the term "sport" has a variety of meanings and uses; from "good sport," "blood sport," and being "sporty," to "sports car," "sporting chance," and "sporting house." To illustrate, *Section Two* contains two analyses: in the first, Loy describes how the term "sport" takes on different meanings, depending upon the level of discourse. Thus, the meaning of "sport" depends upon whether it is a "game occurrence," an "institutionalized game," a "social institution," or a "social system." In the second article, Kenyon approaches sport from the perspective of individual involvement and endeavours to classify the several roles played in sport situations. Limitations of space prevent the inclusion of more writings on these topics, but the reader can obtain a taste of the problems as they are summarized in the two papers included, and by consulting the publications listed in *Further Readings* (in particular, see Caillois, 1961; Huizinga, 1955; and McIntosh, 1963). However, despite several attempts to conceptualize sport phenomena, most writers probably would agree that a universally accepted framework has yet to appear.

* For example, see Loy, J. W., McPherson, B. D., and Kenyon, G. S., *The Sociology of Sport as an Academic Specialty: An Episodic Essay on the Development and Emergence of an Hybrid Subfield in North America*. Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Association For Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 1978.

SECTION ONE
sociology of sport

toward a sociology of sport

GERALD S. KENYON and JOHN W. LOY

To declare that sport, during the present century, has become a cultural phenomenon of great magnitude and complexity is an affirmation of the obvious. Sport is fast becoming a social institution, permeating education, economics, art, politics, law, mass communications, and international diplomacy. Its scope is awesome; nearly everyone has become involved in some way, even if only vicariously. As a business enterprise alone it represents an annual expenditure by the American public of over \$20 billion. For the services of a single performer, \$400 thousand apparently is not too much to pay. Sport has become a potent social force with a capacity to create needs ranging from seats on the fifty-yard line to stretch pants in pastel colors.

Despite the magnitude of the public's commitment to sport, as a social phenomenon it has received little serious study. The ubiquitous presence of sports has largely been taken for granted by social scientists and physical educators alike. A clear description, let alone explanation of this social force, is largely nonexistent. Many of its manifest and most of its latent functions have been ignored. For the physical educator, sport provides a medium for pursuing educational goals. For almost anyone else it probably serves quite different purposes. In neither case is its social significance understood. Therefore, we urge the development of a

"sociology of sport" as a division of an academic discipline such as that recently described by Franklin Henry.¹

THE NATURE OF SPORT SOCIOLOGY

If sociology is the study of social order—the underlying regularity of human social behavior—including efforts to attain it and departures from it,² then the sociology of sport becomes the study of the regularity, and departures from it, of human social behavior in a sports context. Since we see the social psychology of sport as having much in common with its sociology, we include the content and method of the former within the realm of our subdiscipline.³ Thus, if social psychology is "an attempt to understand and explain how the thought, feeling, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of other human beings,"⁴ then the social psychology of sport is the study of individuals in social and cultural settings associated with sport. Just as exercise physiology deals with something less than the whole of physiology, the concern of a psychosociological study of sport is with something less than the whole of social psychology or sociology.

A psychosociological inquiry into sport and physical activity requires a concern for such concepts as *basic social units* (including individuals, groups, institutions, societies, and cultures), *primary social psychological attributes* (such as interpersonal response traits, motives, attitudes, and values), and *fundamental social processes* (socialization, social control,

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social conflict, social stratification, and social change).

For an illustration of the significance of this framework, we refer to the work of Roberts and Sutton-Smith,⁵ an anthropologist and a psychologist collaborating to study the role of games in various societies. They have shown that the types of games played reflect values inherent in a particular culture and at the same time serve to teach certain cultural values and attitudes. For example, with respect to child rearing practices, obedience training is associated with a culture stressing games of strategy, responsibility training with games of chance, and achievement training with games of physical skill. Thus Roberts and Sutton-Smith argue that individuals in different cultures (basic social units) perceive games differently, depending upon the values and attitudes prevalent within a particular culture (primary social-psychological attributes) and that such games serve to relieve social conflict and consequently enhance socialization (fundamental social processes). It follows that such a framework could be useful for the study of the many social facets of sport.

We suggest, therefore, that the observational techniques and the theoretical rationale available to the sport sociologist could provide unique possibilities for viewing the social significance of sport. To illustrate, the classification of activities into such schemes as individual, dual, or team sports so familiar to the physical educator, or into factors such as intensity, frequency, and duration, so familiar to the exercise physiologist, will give way to classifications appropriate for a social context, such as Caillois' conception of games as competition, chance, drama (mimicry), and the pursuit of vertigo.

WHAT THE SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT IS NOT. Having briefly described what the sociology of sport *is*, we turn now to what it is *not*, in an effort to distinguish between the goals of science and those of education or physical education. The sport sociologist does not base his inquiries upon the assumption that "physical activity is good." Sport sociology, as we view it, is a value-free social science. It is not an effort to influence public opinion or behavior, nor is it an attempt to find support for the "social development" objective of physical education, as described in the writings of Hetherington, Williams, Nash, Oberteuffer, and others. The sport sociologist is neither a spreader of gospel

nor an evangelist for exercise. His function is not to shape attitudes and values but rather to describe and explain them. By taking such a position, in no way do we suggest that physical education ought to be value free; it must have its objectives, certainly. We *do* suggest, however, that the choice of both ends and means may be enhanced considerably by drawing from the findings of a well-developed sport sociology.

PREPARING THE SPORT SOCIOLOGIST.

To perform the functions of a sport sociologist obviously requires some preparation. Students of sport sociology, in addition to an interest in and understanding of sport, should have a strong background in the behavioral and social sciences, especially psychology, sociology, social psychology, and cultural anthropology. The exciting developments occurring in both the theoretical and empirical aspects of these fields make it essential that the student pay considerable attention to each. With the degree of mathematical thinking in the social sciences increasing rapidly, adequate preparation in mathematics and statistics is essential to understand certain theoretical models and data analysis procedures.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Although a work entitled *Soziologie des Sports* was published in Germany in 1921, few publications referring directly to sport sociology can be found. Up to the present, much of the writing, varying widely in scope and depth, has been largely descriptive in nature.⁶ Nevertheless, these writers have often provided cogent observations, suggesting hypotheses worthy of test. With the exception of some of Cowell's work,⁷ serious empirical study of sport sociology per se has not been popular. Few investigators from physical education have devoted a substantial period of their career to the subject. The work of others, such as sociologists, usually has been conducted in the broader context of use of leisure.⁸ While it would be false to assert that the sociology of sport has acquired a substantial subject matter, some work—both theoretical and empirical—does exist.

THEORETICAL EFFORTS. Theories of sports and games have long been of interest to social scientists. At the beginning of the century G. T. W. Patrick wrote on the "psychology of football." Numerous theories of play as means to certain social ends have been advanced. These theories came to be discarded when found

contradictory to evidence provided by empirical psychology. In the 1930's, however, Huizinga argued that play ought to be considered for its own sake, as an end in itself rather than a means to some other end. He showed how play pervades all cultural institutions. Although his work is frequently alluded to, little effort has been made to extend his theory and test the hypotheses it suggests. Another work linking sport and culture is that of Caillois who attempts to demonstrate that the health of a society is reflected in the types of games it encourages.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES. Much of the work cited by Roberts, Sutton-Smith, and co-workers was based upon empirical cross-cultural data. Their hypothesis that games model the major maintenance problems of a given society is illustrated using the highly competitive society of the United States, where sports and games permit youth to rehearse competitive roles without experiencing the adverse anxiety experienced by adults striving for success. Other studies include Weinberg and Arond's discussion of the occupational culture of the boxer; Grusky's treatment of managerial succession and organizational effectiveness in baseball; Riesman's description of the cultural diffusion of football and its bearing on ethnic differentiation and social mobility; and Stone's work, which offers a number of interesting hypotheses about the relationships between sport and socioeconomic status.

EUROPEAN INTEREST. Although workers in this country have been leaders in several aspects of the science of physical activity, it is interesting to note that at present the greatest interest in sport sociology seems to be centered in Europe. In addition to work cited elsewhere in this paper, a number of other essays and research studies have been published during the past few years.⁹

AVENUES FOR FUTURE INQUIRY

Sport sociology as an empirical science is in its infancy, but it need not remain this way. The interested researcher soon becomes aware of the numerous possibilities, first, by taking cognizance of the many theoretical models explaining group and individual behavior, and second, by taking advantage of such technical advances as electronic computers and multivarious methods of data reduction and analysis. For fruitful inquiry the relevant developments in other disciplines cannot be ignored any more than the cur-

riculum worker can afford to ignore concept learning, teaching machines, programmed learning, and team teaching.

Our consideration of the numerous possibilities for research has been a natural outgrowth of the thought associated with some modest studies under way at the University of Wisconsin. At present, work is in progress in four areas: the diffusion of innovations in American sport; the significance of physical activity for adults as a function of age, sex, education, socioeconomic status, and national origin; the development of models for the characterization of values held for physical activity; and cross-national studies of attitudes toward physical activity as a function of certain cultural and educational factors. It has been our further observation that many promising avenues of inquiry are opened by becoming familiar with general sociological theory.

THE USE OF SOCIAL THEORY IN EXPLAINING THE ROLE OF SPORT IN SOCIETY. The role of theory is the same for the sport sociologist as for the scientist in general. Theory provides a logical foundation for research, that is, it circumscribes and characterizes the phenomenon in question; it suggests significant hypotheses; it relates seemingly discrete findings by summarizing facts into generalizations and systems of generalizations; and it identifies gaps in knowledge. Perhaps most important, theory "by providing a rationale . . . introduces a *ground for prediction* which is more secure than mere empirical extrapolation from previously observed trends."¹⁰

Fortunately for the sport sociologist, several contemporary sociological theories are relevant for studying the many ramifications of sport in modern society. Although these may require slight modification by virtue of use in a sports situation, they should be applicable if there is regularity to human social behavior. For example, Parson's theoretical scheme differentiating four levels of structural organization—primary, managerial, institutional, and societal—permits analysis of any social system in terms of the functional problems such systems must solve in order to survive.¹¹ He labels these problems as adaptive, goal-attainment, pattern-maintenance and tension management, and integrative.

Less general theories applicable to the sport setting include those concerned with collective behavior, such as the recent and rather complete framework of Smelser.¹² Admittedly, a riot such

as that which occurred at a Peruvian soccer match in the spring of 1964 bringing death to several hundred persons is relatively rare. However, other forms of collective behavior associated with sports are quite common.

POSSIBLE RESEARCH AREAS. Other approaches which we believe warrant some investigation include the following:

1. *Computer Simulation.* The technological advances in computer design and application are more rapid than had been anticipated. Recent developments in computer simulation techniques¹³ could be applied to team dynamics, sport development and decline and spectator behavior.

2. *Game Situation Laboratory.* The development of a facility capable of simulating the environment surrounding the game would afford a compromise between the uncontrollable actual condition and the artificial conditions of the laboratory.

3. *Interdisciplinary Studies.* Instead of independent work by exercise physiologists, psychologists, sociologists, and sport sociologists, work in concert would yield knowledge heretofore unknown. As Roger Bannister recently pointed out, "maximum athletic performance cannot be explained by physiology alone."¹⁴

4. *Social Model Development.* The construction of models, both static and dynamic, could produce one basis for describing and explaining the significance of sport for individuals and groups. McPhee's "addiction model" represents one approach for predicting the course of "enthusiasms" or "passions" for a given pastime, intellectual or physical.¹⁵

5. *Cross-National and Cross-Cultural Studies.* Whatever laws that may be discovered and theories developed, the crucial test lies in their potential for generalizing to other countries and other cultures.

6. *Game Theory.* The application of the now well-established theory of games apparently has failed, to a large extent, to interest investigators studying sport.

7. *The Significance of Sport and Physical Activity as a Leisure Pursuit.* During the past few years considerable interest has been shown in the sociology of leisure, both in this country and abroad.¹⁶ Although a leisure use theory depends upon acquiring more data, a number of studies have been completed, and several national and international conferences held.

8. *Social Change and Sport.* Among the most

profound characteristics of contemporary Western civilization is the rapidity of social change, change in the nature of social institutions and social values. What is it about the "Great Society" that explains the Mets outdrawing the Yankees?

This list of potential research areas is not meant to be exhaustive, or to contain mutually exclusive subjects for investigation. Moreover, it will be noted that we are suggesting not only points of departure for future research but also some techniques of inquiry, many of which have only recently become available for practical use.

In summary, we have suggested that the explanation of the contemporary pervasiveness of sport requires a sociology of sport in the tradition of the social sciences. We have attempted to show what the characteristics of such a subdiscipline might be, drawing examples from studies both completed and proposed. With the vastness of sport today, together with its anticipated growth in the future, the potentiality of a sociology of sport becomes apparent. To become firmly established, however, will require well-prepared and dedicated workers using a value free approach to an often value charged subject matter.

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3. It is assumed that for most subsequent references to the *sociology* of sport, the *social psychology* of sport is implied also.

4. Allport, Gordon W.: The historical background of modern social psychology. In *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Vol. 2. Edited by G. Lindzey. Reading, Mass., Addison-Wesley, 1954, p. 5.

5. See Roberts and Sutton-Smith, p. 47.

6. For example, see Cozens, F. W., and Stumpf, F. S.: *Sports in American Life*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1953, for a well-documented account of the diversity of sport in the United States with frequent reference to historical developments. For more recent reflections on sport as a social institution, particularly from an international viewpoint, see McIntosh, P. C.: *Sport in Society*. London, Bowes & Bowes, 1958.

7. For example, see Cowell, Charles C.: The contributions of physical activity to social development. *Res. Q.*, May:286, 1960, a review of literature which includes five of his own research reports.

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16. For a summary of studies together with an extensive bibliography, see Larabee, E. and Meyersohn, R. (eds.): *Mass Leisure*. Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1958.

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