Sociology and Sport

Why apply social sciences to sport?

- Time
- Business
- Culture

- Microcosm of Society
  - High degree of competitiveness
  - Emphasis on materialism
  - Pervasiveness of male dominance
  - Unequal distribution of power
  - Deviance is part of the picture
# Spectator Numbers--1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th># of Spectators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MLB</td>
<td>70,372,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Football</td>
<td>37,491,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Basketball</td>
<td>35,419,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro. Basketball</td>
<td>21,801,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro. Football</td>
<td>19,742,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro. Hockey</td>
<td>17,265,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>202,090,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is Sport?

Definitions:

- Coakley: institutionalized competitive activities that involve rigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills by participants motivated by personal enjoyment and external rewards
- Competitive physical activity guided by established rules

- Levels of sport
  - Informal Sport
  - Organized Sport
  - Corporate Sport
  - Pseudo-sport
Sociological Perspectives

- What is Sociology?
  - “the scientific approach to analyzing and explaining human social organization.”

- Culture and Social Structure
  - Norms
  - Values
  - Status
  - Roles
  - Social Institutions
  - Organizations

- The Sociological Imagination
Functionalist Perspective

- Society is social system made of interdependent parts that are linked together to create the whole
  - Functions (Manifest): intended
  - Latent functions: unintended consequences
  - Dysfunctions: unintended negative consequences
Critical Theory

- Emphasizes disharmony, disruption, instability, and conflict between groups
- Marxism:
  - Sports exploit
  - Sports can inhibit social change
    - Reinforces capitalist dogma that anyone can succeed if they work hard enough.
    - "Opiate of the masses."
    - Provides false hope to oppressed members of society that sport is avenue to social mobility and prosperity
Symbolic Interactionism

- The Social Construction of Reality
  - Symbols
  - Rituals
  - Participant interactions
  - Subcultures
  - Argot
Feminist Theory

- Emphasis on the experiences of women and gendered nature of social structure
  - Patriarchal system
    - value of masculine vs. feminine characteristics
    - gendered roles
  - Feminist areas of research
    - under-representation of females in media
    - trivialization of female athletic accomplishments
    - “homophobia”
Evidence in Social Sciences

- Evidence is generally systematic, not anecdotal
- Evidence is empirical
- Evidence is best understood in terms of *probabilities*