

Research Committee 25

Sociology of Sports

Sociology of Sports is one discipline which was and is close to my heart. Being one who has played sport, and then one who traversed in the field of Sociology, it was my dream to see that Sociology of Sports as a discipline gets focused attention. The sociological perception of sports is based on three fundamental themes:-

- ▶ 1) sport is a social institution worthy of sociological examination like the more traditional institutions of politics, religion, economy, marriage/family, law, health/medicine education, and science;
- ▶ 2) Sport is a microcosm of the larger society and as such reflects and reinforces the foremost philosophy; and
- ▶ 3) Several institutional links between sport and other societal institutions make it impossible for changes in one sphere not to have deep effects in all spheres.

The importance of Sports Sociology can be readily gauged by the global attention it has been receiving for the past some years, and this importance has increased vigorously at least during the past two decades. These commitments reinforce the importance of sport and play as a basic human right for all children and youth. Sport can add significantly to global, national and local efforts to give children a healthy start. Sport can help those who haven't received a good start, and equip youth with the information, skills, personal and social resources, and support needed to make key life transitions successfully. It is important to note, however, that much of the facts supporting sport's potential come from developed countries.

The aims of the sociology of sport are:

- ▶ to critically examine the role, function and meaning of sport in the lives of people and the societies they form;
- ▶ to describe and explain the emergence and diffusion of sport over time and across different societies;
- ▶ to identify the processes of socialization into, through, and out of modern sport;
- ▶ to investigate the values and norms of dominant, emergent and residual cultures and subcultures in sport;
- ▶ to explore how the exercise of power and the stratified nature of societies place limits and possibilities on people's involvement and success in sport as performers, officials, spectators, workers or consumers;
- ▶ to examine the way in which sport responds to social changes in the larger society;
- ▶ to contribute both to the knowledge base of sociology more generally and also to the formation of policy that seeks to ensure that global sport processes are less wasteful of lives and resources.

This Research Committee seeks to critically examine common sense views about the role, function and meaning that sport has in different societies. By challenging 'natural' and taken-for-granted views about sport, sociologists seek to provide a more social and scientifically adequate account that can inform both the decisions and actions of people and the policy of governments, NGO's and sport organizations.

Relationship to Practice:

- ▶ Sociology of sport, as noted, seeks to contribute to our understanding of sport and also to inform policy that will make the sports experience less wasteful of lives and resources. Sociologists of sport have sought to achieve this latter aim in several ways.
- ▶ by offering expert advice to government agencies, public enquiries and commission reports on areas such as drugs, violence and health education.
- ▶ by acting as an advocate for athlete's rights and responsibilities.
- ▶ by providing research for groups who seek to challenge inequalities of gender, class, ethnicity, age and disability, particularly with respect to access, resources and status.
- ▶ by promoting human development as opposed to performance efficiency models within physical education and sport science.
- ▶ by encouraging better use of human and environmental resources and thus ensuring that there is a sporting future for generations to come.

Although, as in sociology more generally, there are several different perspectives from which to examine the relationship between sport, cultures and societies, sociologists of sport do have certain assumptions in common. For example, sociologists, whether they examine the 'micro' or 'macro' aspects of sport, seek to embed their research in the wider cultural and structural context.

Sociology of Sports was warranting a beginning in the field of Sociology in India for long. Despite the potential of sport development to highlight broader social complexities, Sociologists in India remain disinterested in the area (and sport generally) as avenues of legitimate study. Yet, sport development programs provide Sociologists opportunities to know and engage with body politics, questions of structure & agency, social transformation and sustainable livelihood. Much work in this area has been done in many other parts of the globe, but here (with due regards to one and all), to repeat, Sociologists seem to be somewhat disinclined. Given the huge and tremendous potential of our country in sports, it demands attention of all the policymakers, and the role of Sociologists thus assumes great significance. In the context of India, there is a dearth of research on the social metrics associated with youth and children's development through sports. Therefore, the complex nature of the relationship between youth sports and their personal growth cannot be captured by using just one kind of data or one set of statistics. A large number of studies necessitate commentary, in addition to evidence-based research.

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