

PERSPECTIVES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPORT AND SOCIETY

I. Functionalism (Order Model)

A. Perspective -- organic analogy

B. Focus -- equilibrium, harmony

C. Social Functions of Sport - sport performs physical and social f's
but emphasis here will be on social f's
for participants, non-participants, and
society.

1. Socioemotional function -

2. Socialization occurs via: 1) "IC"; 2) modeling

a. belief that sport reinforces core cultural values

3. Integration

4. Political

5. Social mobility

6. Symbolic Immortality

D. Critique

1. negative aspects are underplayed
 - a. aversive sport socialization
 - b. ethnocentrism, e.g., Olympics
 - c. individual needs and society's needs may be different.

E. Nature of Social Institutions

F. Proponents

1. Durkheim, Spencer, Sumner, Parsons, and Merton

II. Conflict Theory

A. Perspective -- dialectic (order & disorder)

B. Focus -- disequilibrium, disharmony

C. Key Themes

1. Corporate Sport generates and intensifies alienation
 - a. product, e.g., time, distance, takes priority over process

- b. athletes become economic commodities--
- c. body is an instrument--drugs, computer technology
- 2. Corporate sport is used as a tool of coercion and social control
 - a. sport is an opiate--rephrasing Marxist notion that "religion is an opiate"--producing psychological escapism; therefore, the masses, via false consciousness, are controlled and not likely to rebel and/or protest
- 3. Corporate sport promotes commercialism and materialism
- 4. Corporate sport encourages nationalism, militarism, & sexism

D. Nature of Social Institutions

- 1. oppressive
- 2. sport is alienating, i.e., product not process oriented

E. Proponents

- 1. Simmel, Marx, Coser, Dahrendorf, and Hoch

F. Critique

1. overemphasis on capitalism
2. sport can be liberating and creative individual experience
3. sport can be integrative, not opiate

Table 1. Functionalism and conflict theory: a summary of their assumptions about the social order and their explanations of the relationship between sport and society

Functionalist approach	Conflict theory
<i>Assumptions about the social order</i>	
Social order based on consensus, common values, and interrelated subsystems	Social order based on coercion, exploitation, and subtle manipulation of individuals
<i>Major concerns in the study of society</i>	
What are the essential parts in structure of social system?	How is power distributed and used in society?
How do social systems continue to operate smoothly?	How do societies change and what can be done to promote change?
<i>Major concerns in the study of sport</i>	
How does sport contribute to basic social system needs such as pattern maintenance and tension management, integration, goal attainment, and adaptation?	How does sport create personal alienation? How is sport used to control thoughts and behavior of people, and maintain economic and political systems serving interests of those in power?
<i>Major conclusions about the sport-society relationship</i>	
Sport is valuable secondary social institution benefiting society as well as individual members of society	Sport is distorted form of physical exercise shaped by needs of autocratic or production-conscious societies
Sport is basically a <i>source of inspiration</i> on personal and social level	Sport lacks creative and expressive elements of play; <i>it is an opiate</i>
<i>Goals of sport sociology</i>	
To discover ways in which sport's contribution to stability and maintenance of social order can be maximized at all levels	To promote development of humane and creative social order so that sport can be source of expression, creative experiences, and physical well-being
<i>Major weaknesses</i>	
Assumes that existence and popularity of sport prove that it is serving positive functions	Assumes that structures and consequences of sport are totally determined by needs of political and economic order
Ignores possibility of internal differences and basic conflicts of interest within social systems and therefore assumes that sport serves needs of all system parts and individuals equally	Ignores factors other than capitalism in analyzing emergence and development of contemporary sport Focuses too much attention on top level spectator sport and overemphasizes extent to which all sport involvement is controlled and structured by power elite