SPORT SOCIOLOGY

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Learning objectives:

- to define the field of sport sociology
- to discuss the questions studied in this field
- to describe how information from this field is used
- to define the main theories in sport sociology
- to describe the preparation for entering this field
Reflective questions

Do you think sport is a part of your life?
(Think yourself)

Do you think sport is a part of social life?
(Think your community)
Some questions in sport sociology

1. Do minority athletes become more fully integrated into the dominant culture than do their non-athlete peers?
2. Are there any differences in the media representation of female athletes and male athletes?
3. What are the reasons of women’s low participation in sport in our society?
4. What are the reasons of football hegemony in our society?
5. How are children socialized through sport?
6. How are sport and politics interrelated?
7. How does social class affect sport participation?
8. Why some people play golf and some involved in weight lifting?
9. Do you think Olympics is open to all people? Is it a democratic platform?
Some questions in sport sociology

Do you think people can involve in all sport at all levels by their own will?

Do you think all people has a right to choose their sport by their own will?

- Can people from all social class involved in all sport at all levels?
- Can people from all religion involved in all sport at all levels by their own will?
- Can people from all sexual orientation involved in all sport at all levels by their own will?
Sociology and sport sociology

**Sociology:** a discipline that focuses primarily on social organization, social practices and social behaviors.

**Research areas:**
- social institutions (economics, education, family, media etc.
- social changes
- effects of economics, politics and culture on social change
Sociology and sport sociology

Sociology does not focus solely on individual rather has a comprehensive approach

Example: Violence in family

Example: Violence in sport
Sociology and sport sociology

Sport sociology

- Examine sport as a part of social and cultural life.

- Sociologically, sport is not seen as physical performance rather it is a cultural practices which is experienced by individuals who are living in a cultural and social contexts.
Sociology and sport sociology

Spor Sociology  x  Sport Psychology
Historical development of sport sociology

- Distinct field of inquiry in the late 1960s.
- *Sports in American Life* (1953) and *Man, Play, and Games* (1961) analyzed the role of play in culture.
Historical development of sport sociology

- **Journals**
  - *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* (1977)
Historical development of sport sociology

- Topics that have gotten the most attention are those related to social inequalities:
  - Gender, race, ethnicity, wealth, sexual orientation, and culture
- **1970s** focused on socioeconomic inequalities and class relations in sport.
- **1980s** focused on class and gender inequities in sport.
- **1990s** focused on exercise and societal conceptions of the body, racial and ethnic inequities, the impact of the media and politics on sport in different cultures.
Definition of sport

- “Sports are 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.”
  
  - Coakley

- Do you agree with this definition of sport? Why or why not?
Definition of sport

- Chess?

- Dance (Hall)?

- Volleyball which are playing by kids in school garden?

- Volleyball which are playing by elite athletes in Championships?

North America sport = competitive sport
Definition of sport

Sport as an institutionalised activity?

SportWorld: Sport participation is an institutionalised activity rather than an individual activity (Smith, 2007).

SportWorld has the rules of capitalism rather than voluntarism:

- Professional relationship between athlete and coach
- Professional agreement between sport organizations and media
- Professional agreement between athlete/coach and sport club
Theories in sport sociology

- Functionalist theory
- Conflict theory
- Symbolic interaction theory
- Critical theory
- Feminist theory
Functionalist theory

**Main assumption:** The main reason of the existence of social institutions is to serve to the maintenance of social cohesion.

- Society is seen as a kind of organism which consists of several social institutions which are interrelated.

- The functions of social institutions is to contribute to social integrity/cohesion.

- Social cohesion is achieved by teaching social values to individuals in socialization process.
Functionalist theory

Questions

- What are the roles of sport as a social institution?

- What are the roles of sport in socialization?
Functionalist theory

Questions:

- How do sport organisations contribute to social integrity?

- How does sport provide a platform for kids to learn social values?

- Göçmen bireylerin içinde yaşadıkları topluma entegre olabilmelerinde sporun bir işlevi var mıdır?
Functonalist theory

Weaknesses:

- ignorance of the social change
- overemphasis on the social integrity
- ignorance of the social conflicts
- ignorance of the individual differences
**Conflict theory**

**Main assumption:** Society includes social classes Toplum birbiriyle zıt özellikler taşıyan toplumsal sınıflardan oluşan bir yapıdır. Toplumsal uyumdan ziyade toplumsal çatışma vardır. (Karl Marx)

Burjuva sınıfı üretim araçlarına sahiptir, proletarya (işçi sınıfı) üretim araçlarından yoksundur.

Toplumsal gelişmeler ve değişimler burjuvalar ile proletarya arasındaki çatışmadan doğar.
Conflict theory

- Sport is controlled by people in position of power in capitalist society.

- Sport contribute to reproduction of social inequalities in society rather than social integrity.
Conflict theory

Professional sport
- coach – athlete - manager triangle
- exploitation of athlete
- Sporcular bedenlerine yabancılaşmıştır.

* Sport for all should be encouraged rather than professional sport which is based on competitiveness and commercialization.
Conflict theory

Questions:

- How does sport contribute to reproduce social inequalities in society?

- How does commercialisation affect sport?
Conflict theory

Weaknesses:

- Exclusion of factors other than capitalism in explaining the sport-society relationship

- Ignorance of the individual and social benefits of sport

- Overemphasis on the extent to which sport is controlled by people in position of power in capitalist society

- Ignorance of the fact that sport can be personally creative, liberating experience for individuals
Symbolic interaction theory

**Main assumption:** Both society and individuals are affecting each other. There is an interaction between society and individual.

Individuals can give different meanings to social life in the interaction process with other individuals.

- The concepts of meanings and identities are important!
Symbolic interaction theory

Sport is seen as a meaningful interaction between people

Belief that our identities are formed through interactions with people

Sport has a different meanings for individuals
Symbolic interaction theory

Questions:

- What types of interactions are seen in competitive sport?

- What are the characteristics of athlete identity?

- What are the meaning of sport for women?
  - personal freedom
  - social empowerment
  - psychological wellness
Symbolic interaction theory

Weakness:

- Ignorance of the social structure, power in society
Critical theory

Main assumption: Society consists of individuals and social groups who are identified with social and cultural differences and identities. There are both conflicts and negotiations between individuals and groups.

- Power / power relations are important!
Critical theory

Critical approach to sport.

Sport is not a field which characterized as a democratic environment for all people from different ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion and social class.

It is important to understand the experiences of individual who are in a disadvantaged position in sport.
Critical theory

Questions:

- How does social class affect sport participation?

- How does sport contribute to diminish social inequality in society?
Critical theory

Weaknesses:

- does not provide a clearly understood framework.
Feminist theory

**Main assumption:** Social life is organised according to gender relations and division of labor between woman and man.

There is a gender equality in society in favor of males.

Males has advantages in many aspects of social life.

To promote women’s position in society and improve gender equality, gender equality policies should be developed and applied.
Feminist theory

Sport is a social field which characterised by male hegemony both numerically and culturally.

Women and men have different experiences in sport.

There is a gender gap in the majority of sports at all levels and positions (coach, athlete, refree, managers).

The concept of gender is important!
Feminist theory

Questions:
- To what extent sport reproduce gender inequality in society?

- What types of gender equality policies should be developed to increase the number of women in management positions of sport organizations?

- How does sport socialize boys and girls differently?

- Are there any negative experiences of boys in sport?
What do sport sociologist do?

- Sport sociologist are almost always employed in academic positions in universities.

- Their primary job obligations are in teaching and in research.

- Researchers tend to specialize in areas such as gender and sport, religion and sport, politics and sport, violence and sport.