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Sport

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Sport is an embodied, structured, goal-oriented, competitive, contest-based, ludic, physical activity. Given the multitude of sport forms and the vast variety of specific sports, ranging from rural, primitive athletic folk games of old, to new urban, hi-tech, extreme sports, this definition is unlikely to satisfy one and all. It does, however, (1) highlight the major social characteristics of modern sport; (2) suggest the specification of the embodied structural properties and social processes underlying the social development of modern sport; and (3) provide a set of common features for examining the magnitude and complexity of sport as a social phenomenon at different levels of analysis, including sport as a unique game occurrence, sport as a particular type of ludic activity, sport as an institutionalized game, sport as a social institution, and sport as a form of social involvement (Loy, 1968).

Specific Characteristics of Modern Sports

Sport Is Embodied

The degree of physicality varies by sport, but the body constitutes both the symbol and the core of all sport participation (Hargreaves, 1986). The essence of embodiment in sport is that sporting activities involve many kinds and degrees of physicality, including physical activity, physical aggression, physical combat, physical exercise, physical presence, physical prowess, physical recreation, physical sexuality, physical training, and physical work. In short, sporting bodies represent a range of desiring bodies, disciplined bodies, displaying bodies, and dominating bodies.

Sport Is Structured

There are at least four ways in which sport is highly structured. First, all sports (whether informal or formal) are *rule governed* by either written or unwritten rules. Second, most sports are *spatially circumscribed* by the sites of their venues, whether they be arenas, courts, fields, pools, rings, rinks, stadiums, or tracks. Third, most sports are *temporally circumscribed* as illustrated by designated time periods such as innings, halves, and quarters; or number and time of bouts and rounds; or allocated attempts within a specific time period. Indeed, to prevent indefinitely long sporting encounters sports have instituted tiebreakers, "sudden death" playoffs, and "shorter versions" of selected sports (e.g., one-day cricket matches). Fourth, modern sports tend to be *formally administered*, whether by local clubs, universities, professional teams, or sport federations.

Sport Is Goal-Oriented

Individuals, teams, and organizations are typically goal-directed in sport situations, especially in terms of the perennial over-riding goal of winning. Athletes and coaches alike continually attempt to achieve various standards of excellence. And numerous forms of self-testing and contesting take place in all sporting encounters. The sporting media constantly stresses the theme of being number one in terms of games won, points earned, medals obtained, rank on the money list, most career victories, or number of Grand Slam titles.

Sport Is Competitive

A key feature of all forms of sport is physically playful competition. Such competition may be between individuals or teams, and may involve either an animate object of nature (e.g., a bull in a bullfight), or an inanimate object of nature (e.g.,



climbing the highest mountain in the world), or it may be focused on competition against an “ideal standard” (Loy, 1968). A spectator typically perceives three basic forms of competition (McPherson, Curtis, and Loy, 1989: 16): First, *direct competition* where two opponents, either individuals or teams, directly confront one another, as, for example, in boxing or football. Second, *parallel competition* wherein participants compete against one another indirectly by taking turns as in bowling or golf; or contesting in separate spaces, as for example, separate lanes in swimming events or track sprints and hurdle races. Third, there are forms of competition which are largely *competition against a standard*, such as trying to make a qualifying time for an Olympic running event, or attempting to set a world automobile speed record on the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah.

Sport Is Contest-Based

Many, if not most, sporting encounters are contests, that is, competitive activities characterized by two or more sides (individuals, teams, or larger organizations), agreed upon rules, and criteria for determining the winner, with a nonreciprocal outcome. As defined below, most sport contests are either agonal games or sporting matches.

Sport Is Ludic

Even the most highly professionalized forms of sport possess some play-like elements. Two ludic or play elements inherent in all sports are *artificial obstacles* and *realized resources*. Individuals and groups are confronted in daily life by obstacles they must attempt to overcome. Unfortunately, individuals and groups often do not have the required resources to cope adequately with the specific obstacles that they confront. Contrarily, in the context of sports, individuals and groups artificially create obstacles to overcome, be it a hurdle in a steeplechase or the height of a pole vault. And, unlike real-life situations, individuals and teams in sport situations are typically provided with the needed resources (e.g., coaching, equipment, training, etc.) to cope with their artificially created obstacles.

Sport, as defined and described above, represents a particular type of ludic activity and thus

is closely related to the social phenomena of play and games.

Sport Is Substantive

Modern sports are, in part, constituted by material culture. They are organized or played in connection with material elements such as specific equipment, official venues, specialized playing surfaces, training devices, performance measurement technologies, apparel, symbolic artifacts, prizes and trophies, ephemera and detritus, and memorabilia (Hardy, Loy, and Booth, 2009). Experiences are linked with properties of equipment; the size, weight, and design of equipment often are officially specified and intentionally modified to create new physical possibilities. Equipment and apparel is also linked with the gendering of sports (Hargreaves, 1994; Hart, 1981).

Material specifications apply to venues and playing surfaces, some of which are given special meaning as in the cases of Olympia, Chichén Itzá's ball court, England's Wimbledon, Japan's Ryōgoku Kokugikan (sumo venue), Brazil's Maracanã (Estádio Mário Filho), and Beijing's Bird's Nest (China's national stadium).

Memorabilia, long cherished by dedicated fans, are now widely collected, commercially assessed, auctioned, and sold at prices that rival those paid for great works of art.

Common Characteristics of Ludic Activities

Like play and games, sport is ancient, ubiquitous, and diverse.

Antiquity and Ubiquity

Play precedes culture and humankind: some mammals exhibited play activity about 65 million years ago. Human play is a universal activity found in all institutional sectors of society. Similarly, games, at least games of physical skill, have been found in all societies, past and present (Chick, 2004). Although games are not as old as play, archaeologists have discovered gaming artifacts that are several centuries old. Today, board games like chess and new electronic video games are pervasive throughout the world.





In turn, sports are at least as old as the first recorded Olympic victor in Greece in 776 bce. Although sports are particularly characteristic of modern societies, and while the phenomenon of sport is not found in all past societies, many contemporary sport forms have long cultural traditions and historical legacies.

During the past century sport has become a social phenomenon of great magnitude and complexity, having both positive and negative consequences for individuals and groups throughout the world. The ubiquity of sport is illustrated by Boyle's (1963: 3–4) observations about American sport in the early 1960s. He explains that sport pervades all spheres of social life and influences everything from values, status, and race relations to business, fashions, and ideas about heroes. The pervasiveness of sport in society today is best indicated by the mass media that covers sundry forms of sport throughout the world on a daily basis.

Diversity

There seems to be an infinite number of play forms worldwide. And there are hundreds, if not thousands, of different game forms throughout the world. In turn, the great variety of sports throughout history and in very different cultures and diverse geographical regions of the world amply attests to the diversity of sport. Moreover, it is evident that modern sports have diverse historical roots and social derivations.

First, some of our contemporary sports are derived largely from relatively primitive, fundamental movement activities such as climbing, diving, kicking, jumping, running, swimming, throwing, vaulting, and weightlifting. Many events of our modern Olympic Games are based on such basic fundamental movement activities.

Second, several forms of modern sport have their roots in early survival activities and often represent transformations of work practices to play practices. Noted examples of such sport forms are fishing, hunting, skating, sledding, and skiing. Sporting activities such as dog racing, horse racing, pigeon racing, and rodeo events may also be assigned to this category, as they represent the transformation of human use of domestic animals for work to purposes of play.

Third, still other forms of sport today represent modifications of ancient martial arts and military exercises. Readily recognizable examples include archery, boxing, fencing, javelin throwing, and wrestling.

Fourth, less directly, but no less importantly, a number of modern sports have distant roots in ball games, dances, and ceremonies associated with the religious practices of traditional, pre-literate societies. Lacrosse is perhaps the most prominent example of a modern sport having its origins in religious ritual.

Fifth, some contemporary sports are the patent result of individual invention. Classic examples are basketball (invented by Canadian James Naismith in December 1891 while a student at the YMCA Training College in Springfield, Massachusetts) and volleyball (invented by William G. Morgan in 1895 while serving as physical education director at the YMCA in Holyoke, Massachusetts).

Sixth, other modern sports represent a continuum of development from informal (if often brutal) play, to formal competitive play, to athletic folk games, to recreational and representational sports. For example, it may be reasonably argued that selected forms of folk football (Elias and Dunning, 1986) led to the development of soccer (Chick, 2004), which led in turn to the development of rugby (Dunning and Sheard, 1979), and in turn to the development of intercollegiate gridiron football (Riesman and Denny, 1951), and finally the emergence of both American and Canadian versions of professional gridiron football.

Although modern sports may differ markedly from their original folk forms they nevertheless possess significant residual sporting traditions, styles, and practices (Ingham and Loy, 1993).

Basic Differences of Ludic Activities

On the one hand, physically competitive play, agonal games, and elite sports are similar in that they typically involve competition between two or more sides, with agreed upon rules, criteria for determining the winner, and the outcome largely based on the display of superior physical skill. Because they share the same basic features, play, games, and sport are often treated as one and the



same. For example, tennis is considered a sport, but we play a game of tennis, and the person who wins the most games and takes the most sets wins the match. A tennis match is, of course, a contest, like a boxing match or a wrestling match. And tennis matches are an official sport of the modern Olympic Games.

On the other hand, play, games, and sport differ in degree, if not in kind, in terms of formalization, reciprocal activity, and nonreciprocal outcome. *Formalization* refers to the formal structure of ludic activities in terms of social, spatial, and temporal organization as well as the rules that govern them. Play is generally informal in terms of both structure and rules, whereas most games are more highly structured and have more formal rules. In turn, sports are extremely structured, with some having large volumes of published official rules.

Reciprocal activity denotes the degree of interaction among rival participants and the degree of sociability among both playful friends and foes. Informal competitive play ranks high in terms of reciprocal activity; face-to-face games involve at least moderate degrees of interaction; while sports tend to show the lowest degrees of sociability, especially among opponents at the elite and professional level.

Non-reciprocal outcome refers to the degree to which the end result of a ludic encounter is zero-sum, with only one winner or side taking all. Among play, games, and sport there is an inverse relationship between reciprocal activity and nonreciprocal outcome. Traditional play places little emphasis on nonreciprocal outcomes, most games give moderate emphasis to such outcomes, while nearly all sports clearly stress the importance of nonreciprocal outcomes. The most extreme examples of nonreciprocal outcomes are found in terminal contests such as bullfights, cockfights, dogfights, and, most critically, war.

Specific similarities and differences among play, games, and sport are denoted by the following definitions of ludic action and typology of ludic activities.

Definitions of Ludic Action

Ludic, from the Latin term *ludus*, refers to any play-like and/or game-like expressive activity.

Agonal, from the Greek term *agon*, refers to any contest involving struggles of physical prowess. *Physical prowess* denotes the display of athletic ability in terms of varying degrees of skill (accuracy and co-ordination), strength, speed, and stamina (endurance). *Play* is a voluntary, expressive activity, which is both uncertain and unproductive, characterized by spontaneity, pretense, and nonlinearity, which focuses on process rather than product, and which can be initiated and terminated at will. *Competition* denotes active efforts by individuals or groups to reach a goal, to achieve a superior position, or to win a prize or title. *Physically playful competition* represents earnest struggles for supremacy in agonal games or sporting matches. *Contests* are competitive activities characterized by two or more sides (individuals, teams, or larger organizations), agreed upon rules, and criteria for determining the winner, with a nonreciprocal outcome. *Matches* are contests between opposing individuals. *Sporting matches* typically involve individual demonstrations of physical superiority in terms of speed, strength, stamina, accuracy, and co-ordination (Weiss, 1969). Although some team sports may be called matches (e.g., cricket matches and soccer matches) they are classified here as agonal games. *Games* are playful contests whose outcome is determined by physical skill, strategy, or chance, employed singly or in combination. *Agonal games* are games whose outcome is largely determined by the demonstration of superior physical prowess in combination with superior tactics and strategy. *Sports* represent institutionalized agonal games or sporting matches.

These definitions are summarized in the following typology of ludic activities:

1. *Nonplay contests* (e.g., deadly fights, duels, wars)
2. *Noncontest play* (e.g., drama, humor, music)
3. *Playful contests* (e.g., puzzles, riddles, spelling bees)
4. *Nonsport games* (e.g., bridge, checkers, chess)
5. *Sporting matches* (e.g., boxing, tennis, wrestling)
6. *Agonal games* (e.g., basketball, ice hockey, soccer)

The Fun Factor in Ludic Activities

Given the plethora of play forms in culture and the pervasiveness of games and sports throughout the world, one must ask why these ludic activities are so attractive and appealing for participants and spectators alike. Perhaps the primary answer is given in Huizinga's (1955: 3) assertion that *fun* is "the essence of play." He contends, however, that "the *fun* of playing, resists all analysis, all logical interpretation." Huizinga may be correct, but some sociological reasons can be given as partial explanations for why play, games, and sport are fun. For example, sociability, euphoric interaction, quest for excitement, and emotional dialectics may in large measure account for the fun factor in ludic activities.

Sociability

Simmel (1950) views sociability as the play-form of human association and proposes that the principle of sociability rests on maintaining reciprocity in the values offered and received in interaction. Henricks (2003) observes that, for Simmel, the distinctive characteristics of sociability are fourfold. First, sociability is simultaneously connected to and disconnected from everyday life. For example, in "real-life" situations, individuals must confront serious obstacles without the resources needed to overcome them, whereas, in ludic activities, individuals create artificial obstacles to overcome and all participants are provided the resources to meet the challenge of the obstacles adequately.

Second, the dynamics of sociability involve depersonalizing participants. The masks worn by gridiron football players, the costumes worn by participants at fancy balls or children on Halloween, and the personas assumed by professional wrestlers ensure the playing of distinctive roles while keeping personal matters to a minimum.

Third, sociability calls for co-operation and tactfulness. For an expressive configuration of positive affect to hold, the instrumental concerns and ego-demands of the participants must be minimized, equalized, or ruled as irrelevant (Ingham and Loy, 1973). As Goffman (1967) notes, in order to maintain the expressive frame of sociability, it is expected that participants will

make efforts to support the feelings and face of interaction partners, and that these efforts will be made spontaneously and without second thought because participants mutually identify with each other's emotions and feelings.

Fourth, sociability is fostered by the social equality of participants. For example, Loy (1968) notes that the contestants in a game act as if they were equals, and status distinctions related to income, occupation, education, and race are not considered relevant through the contest. Ingham (2004) observes that games are democratic, and sociability is sustained only when intrinsic outcomes are available to all participants and when extrinsic gains are perceived as shared.

Euphoric Interaction

Goffman (1961) refers to the pleasurable sociability provided by gaming encounters as "euphoric interaction." He argues that the bases of fun in games are twofold: an uncertain outcome and sanctioned display. "A successful game would then be one which, first had a problematic outcome and then, within these limits, allowed for a maximum possible display of externally relevant attributes" (1961: 68). Goffman's two primary bases of fun in games are an inherent part of the structural dynamics of modern sport. In order to ensure an *uncertain outcome* in sporting contests, a variety of efforts are made to establish equality between opposing sides. Efforts to establish equality of competition typically focus on the factors of age, gender, size, and skill. For example, youth sport teams typically represent age groups, and at the level of elite sport, men and women seldom compete against one another. Examples of controlling for size are restricting competition according to weight class for boxers and wrestlers, while examples of control for skill level are the handicap systems developed in golf and bowling to help equate the contestants. Chance also plays a role in efforts to ensure equality for purposes of ensuring an uncertain outcome, as, for example, flipping a coin to determine which team begins play, or randomly drawing a number for a lane in a running or a swimming event.

Sanctioned display is another important structural feature of sports for generating excitement. The display of bodily excellence in terms of

various forms of athletic ability and physical prowess provides pleasurable excitement to participants and spectators alike. However, too much extraneous display, in the form of taunting and other player antics, can greatly detract from the pleasurable excitement of a ludic activity. As Stone (1955) pointed out, play and display are precariously balanced in sport, and, once that balance is upset, the whole character of sport in society may be affected. Furthermore, the spectacular element of sport, may, as in the case of professional wrestling, destroy the game.

It is evident that Goffman believes that sanctioned display and a problematic outcome lend excitement to game encounters by creating tensions. Elsewhere he implies that a third element also generates tension in a game encounter, namely, "what is at stake." The value of the stakes that players compete for, in combination with the value of the stakes that players risk, adds excitement to any ludic activity. Gaming encounters with *high stakes* involve what Goffman calls "action," referring to engagement in activities that are consequential, eventful, and problematic, which are undertaken for what is felt to be their own sake, and wherein participants may put their very lives "at risk" (Goffman, 1967: 185). A world championship poker game or a bullfight are ready examples of ludic activities providing exciting tension because the stakes are high.

Quest for Excitement

While Simmel speaks of pleasurable sociability, and Goffman talks about euphoric interaction, Elias and Dunning (1986) analyze sport and leisure in terms of what they call "quest for excitement." They distinguish between "real excitement," such as that associated with seriously critical situations in everyday life, and "mimetic excitement," characteristic of sporting encounters. They propose that sport situations are structured in such a way as "to stir the emotions, to evoke tensions in the form of a controlled, a well-tempered excitement without the risks and tensions usually connected with excitement in other life-situations" (pp. 48–49). Elias and Dunning discuss a number of tension balances built into sport situations, which are designed to evoke tensions related to mimetic excitement.

They place particular emphasis on the controlled expression of emotions related to aggression, conflict, danger, risk, and violence.

With reference to the structural dynamics of team sports they stress the importance of "interdependent polarities" for generating tension balances in sporting encounters. For example, they cite the overall polarity between competing teams; and the tension balances between offense and defense, cooperation and competition within teams, and the external control by sport authorities versus the internal control of players (pp. 202–203).

Emotional Dialectics

The theorizing of Elias and Dunning about "quests for excitement" can be considered an important example of what Sutton-Smith (2003) has termed "emotional dialectics." As Goodger and Goodger (1989: 259) have summarized the work of Elias and Dunning:

It is not a case of there being a special type of relationship between the content of mimetic events and that of critical situations that they appear to resemble (for example, a sporting contest and a "real-life" struggle), but rather there is a relationship between affects simulated by mimetic events and those simulated by real-life events, the affects in the former resembling those in the latter in a "playful and pleasurable fashion."

In a somewhat similar vein, Goffman (1961) discusses "subversive ironies" and the "function of disguise" in his interactional analysis of "fun in games." Fun, he explains, occurs when participants abide by rules of irrelevance and are careful to conceal reality to the point that it does not disrupt encounters.

Like Huizinga, Sutton-Smith (2003) thinks the primary purpose of play is having fun. Further, like Elias and Dunning, he believes fun in play provides mimetic excitement. In turn, like Goffman, he believes play offers contexts for subversive irony and treats play as a parody of emotional vulnerability. In reference to what have variously been called involuntary emotions, reflexive emotions, or survival emotions, Sutton-Smith focuses on what he calls the six primary



emotions of anger, fear, shock, disgust, sadness, and joy. In proposing a dialectical hypothesis, he suggests that these emotions must be exercised (as in play) because they are fundamentally required for survival in the face of emergencies, but must also be constrained in the familial emotional contexts of contemporary social life. However, Sutton-Smith also recognizes that there are times when the expression of these emotions surpasses normative limits and results in “excessive noise, riots and hooliganism.”

The preceding account supports Goodger and Goodgers’ (1989) supposition that people have a basic, socially induced desire to experience “enjoyable excitement.” But Ennis (1967) observes that societies face a sociological challenge when determining how such a motivational state can be institutionalized when it is grounded in the sense that all institutional enclosures are being broken or transcended. Some insight into how society institutionalizes this motivational state is given in accounts of both ludic institutionalization and sportification.

Ludic Institutionalization

Ingham (1978) aptly calls the transformation of play and games to modern sport the process of ludic institutionalization. He suggests the process can be understood most clearly if it is viewed in terms of multidimensional continua in which play and sport constitute the polar extremes. This enables one to see that sport involves ludic activity that is, to relatively extreme degrees, regulated, formalized, instrumentalized, regimented, and estranged. In general, what have been variously called traditional games, folk sports, or folk athletics fall at the expressive end of the continuum; whereas, what has been variously called elite sport, top level sport, or professional sport falls at the most instrumental end of the continuum. However, even the most instrumental forms of ludic action possess some play-like elements; thus, modern sports can be placed on a truncated expressive-instrumental continuum. For example, “recreational sports” (e.g., street or playground pickup games), largely based on the principles of play, pleasure, and participation, represent expressive sporting activities; whereas “representational sports” (e.g., intercollegiate

and professional sport), largely based on the principles of performance, profit, and prestige, represent instrumental sporting activities.

In sum, the ludic institutionalization of sport is best understood in terms of the tension balances associated with the expressive and instrumental dimensions of sport. Current analyses of the sportification process reflect thoughtful examinations of the expressive and instrumental dimensions of modern sport.

Sportification

The transformation of modern sports from primarily expressive activities to largely instrumental activities reflects the process of sportification. More specifically, as Renson (1998: 53) notes: “Sportification is depicted as a universal hegemonic trend of standardization and globalization of sport practices.” The global sport monoculture of representational sport denoted by the concept of sportification is also reflected in Heinila’s (1998) concept of the “totalization of sport” and Donnelly’s (1996) concept of “prolympism.” Heinila (1998) argues that, due to the totalization process, international sport has been transformed from contests between individuals and/or teams to contests between nation-states that have unequal resources to produce elite athletes and teams. In a similar manner, Donnelly (1996) documents the articulation of professionalism and Olympism as the two dominant sport ideologies of the twentieth century. He demonstrates how these formerly very different alternative codes of sport merged into a single organic hegemony. Donnelly argues that prolympism is self-reinforcing, in that it marginalizes alternatives and becomes a standard against which other forms of physical culture are assessed.

Basic Questions and Social Processes

The degree of sportification of any particular sport can be usefully examined by answering four questions in terms of four related social processes: (1) What is the *social structure* of the sport? What are the kinds and degrees of *rationalization* characteristic of the sport? (2) What is the *social thought* about the sport? What are the



**Table 1** The sportification process.

<i>Social parameters</i>	<i>Social focus</i>	<i>Social binary</i>	<i>Social process</i>
Social structure	Efficiency	Expressive/Instrumental	Rationalization
Social thought	Efficacy	Legitimate/Illegitimate	Legitimization
Social participation	Equality	Inclusion/Exclusion	Democratization
Social diffusion	Equatorial	Export/Import	Globalization

Table 2 The rationalization of sport.

<i>Element</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Process</i>
Players	Personnel	Resource allocation
Rules	Regulation	Formalization
Equipment	Technology	Innovation
Skills	Training	Specialization
Strategies	Knowledge	Complexity
Outcomes	Records	Quantification
Spectators	Fans	Spectatorship
Administrators	Organization	Bureaucratization
Owners	Profits	Entrepreneurism
Rewards	Salaries	Professionalization
Rights	Equity	Unionization
Publicity	Media	Mass communication

ideologies and rationales put forth to *legitimize* the sport? (3) What are the kinds and degrees of *social participation* in the sport? What are the kinds and degrees of *democratization* characteristic of the sport? (4) What is the *social diffusion* of the sport? (5) What are the kinds and degrees of *globalization* of the sport?

These questions direct attention to specific social parameters, polarities, foci, and social processes that aid the assessment of the degree and kind of sportification for a particular sporting activity or sport form, as shown in Table 1.

Rationalization of Sport

The most fundamental characteristic of the monolithic social structure of elite international or representational sport is its instrumental rationalization. The totalization of international sport and the prolympism of representational sport indicate that for the principles of performance, profit, and prestige, virtually every basic component or element of sport has been

rationalized to the ultimate degree for reasons of efficiency and effectiveness. Examples of the key elements of representational sport and the specific processes underlying their rationalization are shown in Table 2.

Legitimization of Sport

Both recreational and representational sport have been legitimized in a variety of ways at various historical periods of different societies. Table 3 lists some of the selected rationales that have been used to justify the social significance of modern sports. As is also indicated in the table, modern sports must continually confront problems of delegitimatization, such as the use of illegal performance-enhancing drugs.

Democratization of Sport

A notable historical trend of the sportification process has been the increasing democratization



**Table 3** Legitimization and delegitimization of sport.

<i>Legitimization of sport</i>	<i>Delegitimization of sport</i>
Personal development	Blood sports
Social development	Bribery
Health and wellness	Cheating
Military preparedness	Doping
Community spirit	Drug abuse
National prestige	Gambling
Patriotism	Game fixing
Escapism	Hazing
Entertainment	Sexual harassment
Corporate profits	Violence

Table 4 Democratization of sport.

<i>Opposing social categories</i>	<i>Discriminatory process</i>
Able v. Disabled	Ableism
Young v. Old	Agism
Class v. Mass	Elitism
White v. Black	Racism
Men v. Women	Sexism
Straight v. Gay	Homophobia
Rich v. Poor	Statusism

of modern sports. For example, the early modern Olympic Games were noted for their elitism, sexism, and racism. Today, few Olympic events are closely linked to social class per se, there is a marked increase of women participants and events in which they can compete, and many Olympic athletes, both male and female, are persons of color. Further, games and sports have been developed for special populations (e.g., the Special Olympics, the Paralympics, the Gay Games, and various "Senior" Games). Table 4 highlights the major forms of social discrimination that scholars, journalists, and cultural critics have addressed in the sportification process over time.

Globalization of Sport

It is difficult to determine precisely the general emergence of the globalization of sport, but as evidenced by the diffusion of British sports throughout the world, the development of international sport federations, and the establishment of the modern Olympic Games, by the beginning

of the twentieth century sport was already a worldwide phenomenon (McIntosh, 1971: 95). Today, we can find examples of nearly every different form of globalization within the world of sport, as shown in Table 5.

Counter-Reactions to the Sportification Process

Broadly viewed, a strong case can be made that the sportification process has or will result in a monolithic global sport culture. On the other hand, folk sports and forms of recreational sport survive in the face of powerful global economic and cultural processes. This illustrates that sporting practices are dynamic ongoing activities always subject to change and transformation in connection with local and global actions. For example, traditional sporting activities are constantly being modified as the conditions of play are negotiated through relationships and processes that involve a combination of players,



**Table 5** Globalization of sport.

<i>Forms of globalization</i>	<i>Sporting examples</i>
Economic globalization	IOC corporate sponsors
Political globalization	IOC host city bidding
Cultural globalization	Media empires and satellite telecasts of events
Global migration	International professional athletes
Global tourism	Sport ecotourism
Global slavery	Third world labor for sporting goods
Global terrorism	1972 Munich Olympic massacre; Athens spends est. \$1.5 billion on security for 2004 Olympic Games

managers, administrators, owners, media personnel, and spectators. All sports are historically produced and socially constructed. And while the most prominent cultural forms of sport embody systems of dominant meanings and practices, new sports and sporting practices are continually being invented which may generate forms of resistance and/or offer alternative structures and subcultures. In this sense, sports constitute contested cultural and social terrains.

A case in point is what are currently called extreme sports or variously known as adventure sports, alternative sports, action sports, panic sports, X sports, or whiz sports. These sports are typically characterized by risk, speed, and vertigo, and a desire by participants to maintain control of their bodies and physical activities without the intrusion of formalized administrative structures and hierarchical supervision. Many participants in such sports express a rhetoric and follow norms that are antiestablishment and often transgressional in their nature (Rinehart, 2004). These sports might be considered as modern folk sports, given their grassroots origins and local variations. At the same time, some of these new and alternative sport forms have been captured in the "iron cage of play" of the monolithic global sport culture. Their technology and popular appeal among young men and women with money to spend has attracted the attention of mainstream sporting bodies and commercial enterprises, including media organizations and sponsors. As some participants resist commercial co-optation and others maintain parallel forms of noncommercial, participant-controlled activities, there are questions to be asked about the dynamics of cultural production and transformation (Honea,

2004) and about sport as a game occurrence, a ludic activity, an institutionalized game, a social institution, and a form of social involvement. In this sense, sport constitutes a pervasive social phenomenon of great magnitude and complexity that continues to attract the attention of sociologists and other scholars.

SEE ALSO: Globalization, Sport and; Leisure; Play; Sport and Capitalism; Sport as Catharsis; Sport and Culture; Sport and Ethnicity; Sport, Professional; Sport and Social Capital; Sportization; Sports Heroes and Celebrities; Sports Industry.

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ABSTRACT

Sport is characterized as embodied, structured, goal-oriented, competitive, contest-based, and ludic in nature. The institutionalization of sport is highlighted in terms of the overall process of sportification with an emphasis on the underlying social processes of rationalization, legitimization, democratization, and globalization.

KEYWORDS

ludic institutionalization; sociology of sport; sport; sportification

