THE POSSIBILITY OF SPORT SOCIOLOGY!

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Preamble

I am very pleased to be in Japan and to have the opportunity to visit your beautiful country. I am especially honored to be a guest speaker at The First Conference of the Japanese Society for the Sociology of Sport. I wish to give special thanks to professor Saeki for inviting me to your conference and for the wonderful hospitality that he has shown me. I look forward to meeting several old friends at this conference and I hope that I can make many new friends as well. I shall try to meet every one of you during the course of this conference.

I have prepared a rather long paper and I shall leave copies with you. However, if you and the translators will forgive me, then rather than trying to formally read my paper to you, I would like to informally ‘talk through’ my paper with you. And I shall try to clearly emphasize my major points using slides with Japanese headings and subheadings.

Problematics of Sport Sociology

To begin, I first want to say that I was struck by the ironic note of the theme that I was invited to lecture on today, namely, “the possibility of sport sociology.” On the one hand, it can be argued that the sociology of sport has become a well established academic specialty in the last twenty-five years, and, therefore, the possibility of sport sociology may be taken for granted. On the other hand, it can equally be argued that the sociology of sport remains a marginal area of specialization in both physical education and sociology, and, therefore, the possibility of sport sociology may be considered problematic.

With some ambivalence I shall attempt to avoid the Charybdis of certainty and the Scylla of uncertainty as I address the issue of the possibility of sport sociology. My aim is to stress each side of the equation, thereby creating a tension-balance that may stimulate debate about important issues related to the emergence and development of the sociology of sport.

As many of you no doubt know, my first effort to suggest a possibility of sport sociology was a paper published with Gerald S. Kenyon in 1965 titled: “Toward a Sociology of Sport”, and subtitled: “A Plea for the Study of Physical Activity as a Sociological and Social Psychological Phenomenon.” I mention the subtitle of our paper to note that we considered both the nature of sociology and the nature of sport in very broad terms. Our article could have just as well been titled: “Toward a Social Science of Physical Activity.” Given the fading differences between the various social sciences, and granted the difficulty in drawing significant distinctions among such categories as aerobics, exercise, sport and physical recreation, the latter title might have been the more appropriate one.

In any event, we did little more than make a plea for the study of the social significance of sport and suggest several areas for future inquiry. However, as a quarter of a century has past since we made our call for a sociology of sport, it is perhaps worth reviewing our early list of possible research areas, which included: (1) computer simulation, (2) game situation laboratory, (3) interdisciplinary studies, (4) social model development, (5) cross-national and cross-cultural studies, (6) game theory, (7) the significance of sport and physical activity as leisure pursuit, and (8) social change and sport.

I think that it is fair to say, that with few exceptions, sport sociologists have virtually ignored computer simulation, game theory, social model development, and game situation laboratories during the past twenty-five years. Further, cross-cultural and cross-national studies are the exception rather than the rule; and since most sport sociologists have focused on elite forms of sport, there is a relatively small body of literature related to the significance of sport and physical activity as leisure pursuit. Finally, I note that it is only in recent years that interdisciplinary studies of sport have gained prominence and that a few leading scholars have focused on problems related to social change and sport. In short, with respect to the avenues of inquiry that Kenyon and I suggested a quarter of a century ago, the possibility of sport sociology remains problematic.

Seven years following my initial article with Kenyon I made a more formal case for the
sociology of sport (Loy, 1972). In brief, I argued that sport: (1) provides ideal situations for testing formal theories and propositions; (2) offers suitable contexts for developing social theories and generating theoretical hypotheses; and (3) "is such a pervasive social phenomenon, intruding upon nearly all aspects of daily life, that it deserves sociological attention in its own right" (Loy, 1972, p.52). On the negative side, it is difficult to think of any concepts, propositions or theories generated by sociological studies of sport that have been generalized to other areas of sociology. On the positive side, several formal theories and many theoretical propositions from general sociology have been tested in sport situations. Moreover, with in the last two decades nearly 10000 sociological studies of sport have been conducted annually. However, one can find few "research traditions" among these thousands of investigations and it is difficulty to argue that sociological studies of sport have produced any substantial bodies of cumulative knowledge. In sum, with respect to the generation of substantive sociological knowledge the possibility of sport sociology remains problematic.

With Jeffrey O. Segrave I addressed the concern of generating cumulative knowledge in a review article on research methodology in the sociology of sport (Loy & Segrave, 1974). Although our observations are now over fifteen years old, we pointed out that sport sociologists: (1) "lack agreement as to what is (or should be) the primary focus and interests of inquiry" (p.290); (2) lack consensus regarding the utility of knowledge, for what purposes and for whose use (p.291); and do not concur as to what kind of science sport sociology should be. In essence, with respect to core questions of methodology such as knowledge of what, knowledge for what (whom), and knowledge from what, the possibility of sport sociology remains problematic.

Finally, by way of introduction, I refer to an article I wrote a dozen years ago with the assistance of Gerald S. Kenyon and Barry D. McPherson on the emergence and development of the sociology of sport as an academic specialty (Loy, Kenyon & McPherson 1980). I began the article by noting that in order to become fully institutionalized an academic specialty must achieve an identity and must be perceived as a legitimate area of inquiry. I made the case that in terms of both patterns of publication and patterns of social organization from 1965-1980 the sociology of sport had attained an identity as an academic specialty. However, I contended that "the sociology of sport ha(d) yet to be perceived as a legitimate subfield within either physical education or sociology owing to factors associated with critical mass, academic status, and ideological orientations" (p. 106). I suggest that while the identity of sport sociology has become even stronger in the last decade, the legitimacy of the field still remains problematic in both physical education and sociology.

In summary, the emergence and development of sport sociology over the last two-dozen years has resulted in well established patterns of publication and social organization which give the field a clear identity and favorably reflect on the possibility of sport sociology. Yet, for a variety of reasons, sport sociology is not viewed by many social scientists as a truly legitimate area of intellectual inquiry which reflects unfavorably on
the possibility of sport sociology. Granted this state of affairs, I wish to devote the rest of my lecture today to suggesting theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches that I believe are necessary to follow if the sociology of sport is to be perceived as legitimate, and if the possibility of sport sociology is to be realized.

First, I direct attention to the social development of sport and emphasize the socio-historical determinants of sport. Second, I focus on the social significance of sport and treat sport as a relatively autonomous socio-cultural system. Third, I make a plea for the analysis of bodily practices in sport situations. Fourth, if time permits, I shall offer some tentative suggestions concerning theory development in sport sociology.

**The Social Development of Sport**

My first major premise today is: if sport sociology is to be a possibility, then sport sociologists must achieve an adequate understanding of the growth, development and form of modern sport. Such an understanding requires knowledge of the characteristic features of contemporary sport, the social origins of modern sport, the primary processes of ludic institutionalization and the factors associated with the social production of sport. Let me briefly outline some of the selected features, factors and processes that I believe need to be considered for a fuller understanding of the social development of sport.

**The Nature of Modern Sport**

A working Definition. For purposes of discussion today, I "...formally define sport as a structured, goal-oriented, competitive, contest-based, ludic physical activity" (McPherson, Curtis & Loy, 1989, p.15). As such, sport sets standards of excellence, involves both self-testing and contesting, and demands the demonstration of physical prowess.

Central Characteristics. I propose for your consideration that the phenomenon of sport in society has five distinguishing features, namely, it is: (1) social, (2) ancient, (3) diverse in its forms, (4) ubiquitous, and (5) consequential. These features, of course, are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, sport is consequential in large part because of its social nature, long history, great variety, and pervasiveness in society. Let me illustrate this point by briefly describing each identified characteristic in turn.

The Sociality of Sport. First, sport is social. Sport involvement is patterned in character; and it reflects regularities in human behavior within the contexts of structured, goal-oriented, competitive, contest-based, ludic physical activities. The consequentiality of the sociality of sport is connoted by Gruneau's(1983, p.50) contention that: "sport ought to be seen as constitutive social practices whose meanings, metaphoric qualities, and regulatory structures are indissolubly connected to the making and remaking of ourselves as agents (individual and collective) in society."

The Antiquity of Sport. Second, sport is ancient. Although sports are particularly characteristic of modern societies, and while the phenomenon of sport is not found in all past societies, most dominant, contemporary sport forms have a long cultural tradition and historical legacy; as for example, the Modern Olympic Games. The consequentiality
of the antiquity of sport is that: “Modern societies still contain important residual sport practices, styles and traditions” (Gruneau, 1988, p.19). Further, in order to fully comprehend the enabling and constraining conditions of sport involvement, we must turn to the past and “situate our study of ...sports in the context of understanding the historical struggle over the control of rules and resources in social life, and the ways in which this struggle relates to structured limits and possibilities” (Gruneau, 1983, p.5.).

The Diversity of Sport. Third, sport is diverse in its forms. The great variety of sports throughout history and in very different cultures amply attest to the diversity of sport. The consequentiality of the diversity of sport is founded on the fact that varying sport forms represent “structured possibilities” based on sets of “expanding and contracting abilities” confronted by “expanding and contracting opportunities” (Gruneau, 1983, p.51). Further, such structured possibilities “specify the power of agents, varying between agents and over time for any given agent’ ” (Gruneau, 1983, p.51).

The Ubiquity of Sport. Fourth, sport is ubiquitous. During the present 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 consequentiality of the ubiquity of sport is illustrated by Boyle’s (1963, pp. 3-4) observations about American sports in the early 1960s: “Sport permeates any number of levels of contemporary society, and it touches upon and deeply influences such disparate elements as status, race relations, business life, automotive design, clothing style, the concept of the hero, language and ethical values.”

The Consequentiality of Sport. Fifth, as already indicated, sport is consequential. The sociality, antiquity, diversity, and ubiquity of patterns of sport involvement justify viewing sport as a significant social institution. As a sociological concept the term institution:

denotes an aspect of life in which distinctive value-orientations and interests, centering upon large and important social concerns...generate or are accompanied by distinctive modes of social interaction. Its use emphasizes “important” social phenomena, relationships of “strategic structural significance” (Schneider, 1964, p.338).

Although it is an admittedly moot matter, I suggest that the ‘most important social phenomena’ emphasized by patterns of sport involvement are those of social differentiation and social discrimination. I further suggest that the ‘most strategic structural relationships’ emphasized in sport situations are power relations in general; and age, class, gender, race and bodily relations in particular. As Gruneau(1988, p.22) has pointed out:

In sport, there are three notable measures of the “power” of different social groups: (a) the capacity to structure sport in preferred ways and to “institutionalize” these preferences in sports rules and organizations; (b) the capacity to establish selective sports traditions; and (c) the capacity to define the range of “legitimate” practices and meanings associated with dominant sports practices.
The power of selected social groups for influencing sport can best be seen in analyses of the social development of sport. But we must recognize that there are different points of view on sport and social development.

Theoretical Perspectives

Gruneau (1988) contrasts two major perspectives of sport and social development which he calls modernization and hegemony, respectively. For present purposes I shall refer to two similar views as 'the institutionalization of sport' (i.e., the modernization thesis) and 'the social production of sport' (i.e., the cultural hegemony thesis).

The Institutionalization of Sport. On the one hand, sport can be analyzed in terms of its instrumental or industrial production wherein sport is viewed as a cultural commodity. Like other cultural commodities, sport is manufactured, packaged, marketed, exchanged and sold. To illustrate, professional sport leagues purport to produce a certain quality product with reference to a particular sport such as baseball; and they attempt to sell their product to the general public and to major television networks so that they can obtain financial support to reproduce and further market their product.

The analysis of the social development of sport from this perspective centers attention on how sport has become institutionalized in "advanced" (i.e., industrialized) societies. The social development of sport from early "elite" and "folk" forms to "traditional" forms, to "modern" forms is seen as a consequence of the modernization of society. Specifically, the institutionalization of sport is seen to be directly related to the technological and social changes in society that have occurred as a result of the industrialization and urbanization of society itself as a consequence of the maturation of industrial capitalism. Moreover, there is a tendency for the study of sport from this perspective to simultaneously stress the social structure and rationalization of sport; and to focus on the analysis of the structural elements or "components" of the cultural commodity of sport. Further, this perspective has an evolutionary bias implying that the social development of sport logically parallels the industrialization of society in a direct, vertical, linear and progressive manner (cf. Gruneau, 1988).

The Social Production of Sport. On the other hand, the social development of sport can be examined in terms of its expressive or social production wherein sport is viewed as a set of cultural practices. The analysis of the social development of sport from this perspective centers attention on the articulation of social structures of domination and subordination within sport in particular and within society in general. Specifically, the social development of sport is seen to be directly related to cultural hegemony. This concept was developed by Antonio Gramsci in the 1930s and refers to the whole range of processes through which dominant groups extend their influence in such away as to continually refashion their ways of life, and institutionalized modes of practices and belief, in order to win consent for the system and structure of social relations which sustain their dominant position (Gruneau, 1988, p.29).

As sets of cultural practices, sport always develops under given conditions, namely specific historical and social circumstances. Thus, the meaning of sport in a particular
society is greatly influenced by historical events and by the evolving economic and political organizations as well as the changing social values of that society.

In summary, the social development of sport can be studied from two perspectives. The first perspective examines the social development of sport in the context of modernization with industrialization and urbanization as the determining factors. Whereas, the second perspective examines the social development of sport in the context of cultural hegemony with specific socio-historical conditions and power relationships as determining factors. I suggest that these two relatively distinct perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive and that they each offer unique insights into the social development of sport. In concluding this part of my presentation I wish to highlight some of the major concepts associated with each of the two perspectives.

The Institutionalization of Sport

One cannot fully understand sport as a social institution without addressing the problem of institutionalization and the potential issue of deinstitutionalization. Specifically, one must answer the questions of how did sport become an institution, how is it maintained as an institution, how has it changed as an institution, and how might it be destroyed as an institution.

The sociological concept of institutionalization in its simplest sense refers to the global process whereby emergent social units and social activities become organized on a relatively permanent and enduring basis. A major outcome of the process in any particular case is that a way of doing becomes the way of doing. For example, most Americans have such a taken-for-granted attitude toward the game of baseball that it is difficult for them to conceive that the game was once played in a rather different manner, or to recognize that there are other forms of baseball played in the world today.

In general, modern sports are such commonly accepted aspects of our daily lives that we rarely ask how they came to be. Yet to truly understand modern sports we need to know how they evolved from rudimentary ludic forms, folks games, religious rituals, military exercises and early survival activities.

My personal approach to studying the institutionalization of sport is to focus on four social parameters and four related social processes (see Table 1). Specifically, I ask the following questions: (1) What is the social distribution of the sport? (2) What is the kind and degree of social participation in the sport? (3) What is the social thought about the sport? (4) What is the social structure of the sport?

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<th>Social Parameters</th>
<th>Social Processes</th>
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<td>Social Distribution</td>
<td>Diffusion</td>
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<td>Social Participation</td>
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<td>Social Thought</td>
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<td>Social Structure</td>
<td>Rationalization</td>
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Social Distribution (Cultural Diffusion). The first question forces one to try to determine the social origin of a sport in terms of a particular time and place, and to trace its pattern of cultural diffusion. Its fascinating to trace its pattern of cultural diffusion. Its fascinating to study and interesting to speculate as to why certain sports seem to have world wide appeal, while other sports are often restricted to national boundaries, and still other sports are only popular with certain regions of a country.

Social Participation (Democratization). The second question forces one to examine the number of people involved in a sport and the ways in which they are involved at different levels, and to analyze the degree to which a sport has become democratized (i.e., open to one-and-all regardless of age, class, education, ethnicity, gender, physical disability, race, etc.). A focus on the process of democratization in sport raises many issues and questions for serious study. For example: Why weren't women allowed as spectators at the original Olympic Games? Why were Jews barred from golf and country clubs in most of the United States prior to WWII? Why is there only one black head coach in the National Football League?

Social Thought (Legitimation). The third question forces one to analyze how a sport is perceived by different segments of the public, and to determine its degree of legitimation (i.e., the extent to which it held to be a proper and respectable activity in the eyes of the general public). A focus on the process of legitimation in sport directs our attention to why some sports are viewed as legal and others as illegal (e.g., cockfighting and bullfighting in North American); Why some sports are viewed as proper for men to participate in but not women (e.g., football and big-game hunting); and what reasons are offered to justify the importance of a sport (e.g., for education, entertainment, health, control of juvenile delinquency, etc).

Social Structure (Rationalization). The fourth question forces one to look at the social structure of sport in terms of its structural elements and cultural components. The keynote of modern sport in contrast to earlier sport forms is the degree to which it has become rationalized (i.e., characterized by efficient means and a calculating spirit). A focus on the process of rationalization demonstrates most clearly the nature of ludic institutionalization wherein what were formerly expressive non-utilitarian activities have been transformed into instrumental and utilitarian activities.

Structural Elements and Social Processes. The process of rationalization is reflected in the changes of degree and kind in every fundamental structural element of as it is transformed from a largely informal, expressive activity to a largely formal, instrumental activity. For example, pre-modern sports like modern sports typically were characterized by organization, procedures, personal, equipment and athletic training; and often had some degree of sponsorship as well as a concern with records and meeting the needs of various clientes. However, largely as the result of the process of rationalization, within modern sports: organizations have become bureaucratized, procedures have become formalized, personnel have become specialized, equipment has become technologized, training has become professionalized, sponsorship has become
TABLE 2
SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE RATIONALIZATION OF SPORT

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Structural Features</th>
<th>Social Processes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organization (administration)</td>
<td>Bureaucratization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Procedures (regulations)</td>
<td>Formalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personnel (players, etc.)</td>
<td>Specialization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment (technology)</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training (education)</td>
<td>Professionalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship (patronage)</td>
<td>Commercialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clientals (audiences)</td>
<td>Spectatorship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Records (statistics)</td>
<td>Quantification</td>
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records have become quantified and the needs of spectators (consumers) often supersede those of participants in the decision-making process of modern sport. Table 2 outlines the major structural elements of sport and their related social processes underlying the macro-process of rationalization.

The Social Production of Sport

Although there is much merit to studying the social development of sport in terms of institutionalization, this perspective unduly emphasizes that sport is a by-product of extant systemic forces (e.g., industrialization and urbanization) and is in the final analysis economically determined (i.e., the 'modernization' thesis). One must recognize that sporting practices result from and constantly require the actions of human agents.

Sporting practices are dynamic on-going activities always in the process of change and transformation. Traditional sporting practices are constantly being modified; as for example, adjusting the "strike-zone" in professional baseball, using "instant replay" to assist officiating in professional football, and instituting the "three-point shot" in basketball. And new sporting practices are continually being created, including the invention of new sport forms such as Arena football, canine frisbee, free-style skiing, and tri-athlons.

The significance of sporting practices is that they are cultural practices and, thus, are involved with the production and reproduction of and the resistance to dominant social formations and power relations that exist in society. Viewing sporting practices as a subtype of cultural practices in general leads one to consider the body and sport as contested terrain wherein cultural hegemony in whatever form is not given but contested and won.

Dominant, Emergent, and Residual. As Raymond Williams has succinctly stated, the hegemony of the dominant culture "has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not all its own" (1977, p.112). On the one hand, a consideration of sport and hegemony provides a picture of the construction of the dominant culture. On the other hand, it offers
snapshots of residual and emergent alternatives to the dominant culture (cf., e.g., Whitson, 1984). In short, sport situations are proving grounds for contesting ideologies, meanings and values as well as preserves of power and privilege for dominant groups.

**Sport and Society**

In essence, the study of the social development of sport is an attempt to comprehend the relationship between sport and society. But as Ingham and I pointed out a decade ago in a paper on heroism, such an effort is “fraught with difficulties because, to date, there is no consensus among those in the sociology of sport concerning the function of sport in society” (Ingham, Loy & Swetman, 1979, p.1). Although I believe that our observation still holds true, a joint consideration of the modernization and hegemony views of sport and social development suggest three major theses regarding the relationship between sport and society, which I refer to as the reflection, reinforcement and resistance theses, respectively (see McPherson, Curtis & Loy, 1989, pp.23-25).

1. The Reflection Thesis. The reflection thesis holds that sport as a microcosm of society mirrors life at large. Within the institutionalization of sport perspective, sport is viewed as a by-product of extant systemic forces “and thus reflects a system’s material structures and ideological dimensions” (Ingham, et al., 1979).

2. The Reinforcement (Reproduction) Thesis. The second thesis is a stronger one in the sense of over-determination. This thesis holds that sport doesn’t merely mirror society but actively serves to reinforce and reproduce dominant power relations and social inequalities. Whether viewed from the perspective of institutionalization or hegemony, sport is perceived to “perpetuate extant systemic arrangements by vindicating the efficacy of a system’s material structures and the validity of the dominant group’s ideological claims” (Ingham, et al., 1979, p.1).

3. The Resistance (Transformative) Thesis. Finally, a cultural hegemony perspective of sport and social development suggests that counter-culture forces in sporting practices act as resistance to dominant group’s claims. And upon occasion “aids in the creation of new systemic arrangements by being line either to the contradictory experiences and claims of subordinate groups or to the aspirations of objectively determined, ‘transitional classes’” (Ingham, et al., 1979, pp.1-2).

In summary, the study of the social development of sport should provide keen insight in to the relationship between sport and society and, thus, greatly enhance the possibility of sport sociology. Let me now turn to a second rather large area of inquiry of significance for sport sociology.

**The Social Significance of Sport**

My second major premise today is: if sport sociology is to be a possibility, then sport sociologists must develop adequate sociological explanations for the social significance of sport as a relatively autonomous sociocultural system. For purposes of discussion today, I propose that sport is socially significant because it: (1) offers an ideal medium for collective representation; (2) generates experiences of pleasurable excitement and ecstasy; (3) has prestige as its major mechanism of control; and (4) provides suitable settings for
the display and demonstration of bodily excellence. Let me briefly highlight each of these fundamental features of sport in turn.

**Collective Representation**

The most recent and extensive analysis of sport as a medium for collective representation is that of Goodger and Goodger (1989). They make the case that: As symbolic systems that reflect the social nature, relations, and identity of the collectivities within which they are generated, sports cultures are capable of stimulating intense emotional involvement and powerful commitments among a wide range of adherents” (p. 267).

I note that as a medium for collective representation, sport expresses both consensus and conflict perspectives of social life. In the majority of cases sport stands as a conservative social institution and, thus, typically reflects the value systems of dominant groups; and reinforces social inequalities in terms of age, class, gender and race relations. Occasional, however, sport offers a collective representation of resistance for various oppositional groups (cf. McPherson, Curtis & Loy, 1989, pp. 23-25; Donnelly, in press).

Why sport serves so well as a medium of collective representation is explained by Seppanen (1984) in his sociological analysis of the Olympics. He shows how sport is a handy tool for external forces, especially foreign policy, for the following reasons:

First, it is inherently neutral. (p. 116)

Second, sport is an activity which attracts exceptionally high interest by offering thrilling experiences both to the athletes ... and to spectators... (p. 116)

Third, sport is a risk-free tool which is socially approved of and high amenable to societal control over style and content. (p. 116)

Fourth, sport is an easily understood activity, readily comprehensible to the public. (p. 116)

Fifth, sport gives the public an exceptionally good possibility for national identification through athletes representing their own nationality. (p. 116)

Sixth and finally, sport is the only activity in which the measuring and comparison of national achievements is made in an indisputable manner. (p. 117)

In sum, as Seppanen (1984, p. 117) concludes: “It would be unfounded to suppose that those in power would have left so malleable, so popular, so risk-free, so easily understood, and so unambiguous a tool unused.”

Without going into further detail, let me simply state that sport as a medium of collective representation may be viewed as a cultural system (cf. Loy, 1978); and may be defined in the same way that Geertz (1973) has defined religion as a cultural system, namely:

(1) a system of symbols, which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivation in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seen uniquely realistic. (p. 90)
Sport as a cultural system fulfills both expressive and instrumental functions. Reif (1966) has stated the more general case:

Every culture has two main functions: (1) to organize the moral demands men make upon themselves into a system of symbols that make men intelligible and trustworthy to each other, thus rendering also the world intelligible and trustworthy; (2) to organize the expressive remissions by which men release themselves, in some degree, from the strain of conforming to the controlling, symbolic, internalized variant readings of culture that constitute individual character (pp.232-233).

The first function stated by Reif relates to the use of sport as a handy tool for external forces, whereas the second function expressed by Reif relates to sport as an institution for release and the generation of excitement.

**Oust for Excitement**

A second major way in which sport acquires social significance is through the generation of experiences of excitement in general and ecstasy in particular. The most thorough treatment to date of the quest for excitement in sport is the treatise of Elias and Dunning (1986). In brief, they advance the argument that:

Within its specific setting sport...can evoke through its design a special kind of tension, a pleasurable excitement, thus allowing feelings to flow more freely. It can help to loosen, perhaps to free, stress-tensions. The setting of sport...is designed to stir the emotions, to evoke tensions in the form of a controlled, well-tempered excitement without the risks and tensions usually connected with excitement in other life-situations, a “mimetic” excitement which can be enjoyed and which may have a liberating, cathartic effect, even though the emotional resonance to the imaginary design contain, as it usually does, elements of anxiety, fear - or despair (pp.48 - 49).

There are, of course, many different aspects of sport that create excitement for participants and spectators alike, including: aggression, competition, conflict, physical risk, tactics and strategies, vertigo, and varying degrees of violence. Accordingly, different forms of sport produce varying degrees of excitement.

The most exciting sport forms provide the experience of thrills. Balint depicts three basic attitudes associated with the experience of thrills as follows:

(a) some amount of conscious fear, or at least an awareness of real external danger; (b) voluntary and intentional exposing of oneself to this external danger and to fear aroused by it; (c) while having the more or less confident hope that the fear can be tolerated and mastered, the danger will pass, and that one will be able to return unharmed to safety. This mixture of fear, pleasure, and confident hope in the fact of external danger is what constitutes the fundamental element of all thrills (Balint, 1959, p.23; cf. Goffman, 1967, pp.196 - 197).

I note, however, that even the gentlest and most passive of sporting pastimes are capable of providing a modicum of excitement; because they share in common with all ludic activities the elements of an “uncertain outcome” and “sanctioned display” (cf. Loy, 1968). Goffman (1961) has shown how these two elements in combination constitute the “fun”
basis of games. On the one hand, the uncertain outcome of sporting activities maintains the suspense for the full duration of a contest. On the other hand, the sanctioned display gives participants "an opportunity to exhibit attributes valued in the wider social world, such as dexterity, strength, knowledge, intelligence, courage, and self-control" (Goffman, 1961, p.68).

Representation and Excitement

To this point I have given two short accounts of the social significance of sport in terms of collective representation and enjoyable excitement. Recently, John and Brian Goodger (1989) have attempted to synthesize these two explanations by demonstrating that excitement enhances collective representation, and collective representation serves as a source of excitement. They conclude that:

Ultimately, both stem from deeply rooted human desires for excitement and understanding and find expression in cultural forms that are shaped by the interplay of these desires with human cognition and the social contexts in which they exist (p. 270).

Although I am in complete accord with their analysis of representation and excitement as two major sociological explanations for the social significance of sport, I think that at least two other, related, explanations need to be considered, namely, the pursuit of prestige in general, and the quest for bodily excellence in particular.

Pursuit of Prestige

Because sport emphasizes competition, excellence and merit, efforts to enhance prestige and to obtain honor are especially marked in the wide world of sports. Further, as both prestige and honor are based on processes of social evaluation and distinction, the social order of sport is mapped by a complex matrix of status hierarchies. Indeed, it is difficult to think of any other institutionalized sphere of activity that is so finely differentiated and so strongly stratified as that of modern sport.

Sport are often stratified for the manifest purposes of denoting levels of competition, experience, skill and/or age and sex categories. But such forms of stratification latently connote levels of prestige and implicit status hierarchies. I give seven examples illustrate this observation.

First, higher weight classes in boxing, wrestling and weightlifting are accorded greater prestige than lower ones. Second, the several belt categories in the martial arts reflect colorful and overt displays of prestige levels. Third, certain events in track and field such as the 100-meter dash, decathlon, and 1500-meter run are perceived as more prestigious than others; as for example, the 50-meter walk, hammer throw, or steeplechase. Fourth, the lengthy annual lists of money winners in professional bowling, golf, and tennis serve as finely-graded prestige rankings. Fifth, European soccer divisions and North American inter-collegiate athletic conferences constitute well established status hierarchies. Sixth, similarly in the specific American case, divisions of the NCAA and the annual national press rankings of the top teams in nearly all collegiate sports for men and women clearly connote status categories and prestige rankings. Seventh, I note that within nearly all
sports certain championships and tournaments carry more prestige than others; as for example, the "Grand Slam" events of professional golf and tennis, and the world championships and test trials in a variety of sports.

I am certain that a content analysis of the various forms of mass media devoted to the coverage of sport would clearly show that the overriding concern of athletes and sport teams alike is to be ranked number one. This concern is expressed in both verbal and non-verbal behavior of athletes and fans at every level of competition. In the context of sport, being first is everything and achieving second is often little better than being last.

Achieving top ranking is both a necessary and a sufficient for prestige accord. However, a number one ranking is only a necessary and not a sufficient condition for attaining "honor" and acquiring immortality in a sport context. Honor is given only to those athletes or teams who establish an enduring degree of superiority in their sporting successes; and/or who establish particular priority through their performances of an original athletic feat.

Most top class athletes only achieve fleeting fame as their sporting success has a rather short half-life. There are, however, a minority of elite athletes whose superior performances give them legendary status. We honor such memorable athletes by making them our folk-heroes, and we give them immortality by casting their statues in bronze and enshrining them in sporting halls of fame.

Athletes like scientists often achieve their legendary status by establishing priority which gives them lasting fame. The scientist who is first to publish a significant scientific discovery wins the trial race for a Nobel Prize; and the athlete who is first to set a remarkable record is listed on the honor roll of sport forever. For example, nearly everyone knows that Sir Roger Bannister was the first man to break the four-minute mile, but who can recall the names of those milers who have broken the barrier since.

Although record setting is the chief means of attaining honor and achieving immortality in sport, an athlete may also acquire long lasting fame by perfecting an unique skill that is named in his or her honor—not unlike a scientific law being named after its discoverer. For example, we have the inventive techniques and skills such as the Fosbury Flop in the high jump; the Axel, Salchow, Lutz and Walley in ice figure skating; and a variety of named moves in gymnastics, including the: Valdez(floor exercise), Shurlock(pommel horse), Koste(rings), Kasamatsu(vaulting), Healy Twirl(parallel bars), Stalder (horizontal bars), Korbut(balance beam), and Comaneci(uneven parallel bars).

My discussion of prestige and honor in sport could be extended in some detail. The preceding illustrations, however, will perhaps suffice to show that the process of prestige enhancement is a hallmark feature of modern sport and is closely connected to the quest for bodily excellence.

Quest for Excellence

Although seldom mentioned by social scientists, several humanists, including a few noted philosophers, have pointed to the pursuit of excellence as a primary source of motivation for sport involvement. For example, James Keating(1965) in an early
comparative analysis of excellence in academe and athletics, forcefully contends that:
"The very essence of the athletic endeavor lies in the pursuit of excellence through victory in the contest" (p.429). Further, in one of the most insightful analyses of modern sport, Paul Weiss (1969) makes a compelling case that: "Young men are attracted to athletics because it offers them the most promising means of becoming excellent" (p.17). Finally, I cite two observations from Hans Lenk concerning the quest of athletes to achieve bodily excellence:

Sporting action and performance requires personal and usually, at least in top level athletics, almost total devotion and engagement. "Concern for bodily excellence," to use Paul Weiss' nice phrase, is nothing to play at or with loosely. Athletic action and achievement requires spontaneity, serious engagement and self-victory (Lenk, 1982, p. 102).

Athletic achievements ... offer adventurous opportunities for gaining distinction in a basically uniform society, which nevertheless emphasizes individual values. The Olympic athlete thus illustrates the Herculean myth of culturally exceptional achievement, i.e., of action essentially unnecessary for life's sustenance that is nevertheless highly valued and arises from complete devotion to striving for a difficult goal (Lenk, 1985, p.166).

Lenk's observations highlight the social significance of sport in terms of dramatizing collective representations, generating experiences of enjoyable excitement, and providing contexts for the pursuit of prestige in general and bodily excellence in particular.

"Bringing the Bodies Back In"

My third major premise today is: if sport sociology is to be a possibility, then sport sociologists must direct their attention to the variety of significant bodily practices associated with sport involvement in particular and physical culture in general.

Given the concern for bodily excellence in sport, it is surprising that the body has received such limited attention by sport sociologists. I argue that the body constitutes the central, corporal core of sport and consequently deserves serious sociological study. As John Hargreaves (1987) has made the case (italics mine):

Although the degree of physical input varies from sport to sport, the primary focus of attention in sport overall, is the body and its attributes--strength, skill, endurance, speed, grace, style, shape, general appearance, and so on, are tested and displayed. Judgement, motivation, and aesthetic awareness are integral to physical performance, of course; but it is the body that constitutes the most striking symbol, as well as constituting the material core of sporting activity (p.141).

One has only to think of such matters as aerobics, exercise, physical exertion, injury, pain, blood doping, steroids, drug abuse, etc. to recognize that the body does constitute the core of sporting activity. But more importantly, as Hargreaves points out:

The body...constitutes a major site of social struggles and it is in the battle for control over the body that types of social relation of particular significance for the way power
is structured--class, gender, age, and race--are to a great extent constituted (1987, p. 140).

Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu (1978) has written:

that the social definition of sport is an object of struggles in which what is at stake, inter alia, is the monopolistic capacity to impose the legitimate definition of sporting practice and of the legitimate function of sporting activity--amateurism vs. professionalism, participant sport vs. spectator sport, distinctive (elite) sport vs. popular (mass) sport; that this field is itself part of the larger field of struggles over the definition of the legitimate body and the legitimate use of the body, struggles, which in addition to the agents engaged in the struggle over the definition of sporting uses of the body, also involve moralists and especially the clergy, doctors (especially health specialists), educators in the broadest sense (marriage guidance counsellors, etc.), pacemakers of fashion and taste (couturiers, etc.) (pp.826-827).

Bourdieu’s observations indicate how a focus on the body in sport entails a consideration of the full institutional matrix of society at large, and the differential power relations of various social classes.

In sum, both Hargreaves and Bourdieu demonstrate that the study of the body in sport provides important insights concerning power relations in society at large.

The significance of sports in relation to the way power is structured...is that they are uniquely endowed with the capacity for deploying the body in such a way as to represent and reproduce social relationships in a preferred manner (Hargreaves, 1987, p.142).

Perhaps the most evident example of how sports uniquely represent and reproduce social relationships in a preferred manner is the case of gender relations and the maintenance of masculine hegemony.

As Lois Bryson (1987) has observed, sport supports masculine hegemony in two major ways: “First it links maleness with highly valued and visible skills and second it links maleness with the positively sanctioned use of aggression/force/violence” (p.350). Bryson analyses how “sport crucially privileges males and inferiorizes women” in terms of four concrete processes: (1) male definitions of sport, (2) direct male control of sport, (3) males’ ignoring of women’s sport, and (4) males’ trivialization of women in sport.

Other recent analyses of gender relations in sport, especially with regard to the production and reproduction of male power and female powerlessness include: Gilroy (1989), Hall (1987, 1989), and Messner (1988, 1990). But these recent studies just touch the tip or the iceberg and similar analyses are needed in terms of age, class and race relations viz.-a-viz. the body in sport.

In summary, a focus on body practices in sport situations provide keen insight into power relations in society and, thus, the possibility of sport sociology would be enhanced if sport sociologists would direct their attention to “lived bodies” in the wide, world of sport. Indeed, I wish to conclude with the contention that for the sociology of sport “our body of knowledge is largely based on our knowledge of the body.”
John Loy教授とスポーツ社会学

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1991年3月、上智大学で開催された日本スポーツ社会学会の設立記念総会に、北米スポーツ社会学会会長のJohn Loy教授が招待され、「スポーツ社会学の可能性」と題して講演を行った。

スポーツ社会学は歴史の浅い、いわば若い学問領域である。スポーツ社会学の制度化の歴史は、1964年に国際スポーツ社会学委員会（ICSS）が設立されたことに始まる。それから10余年を経て、北米スポーツ社会学会（NASSS）が1980年に組織され、さらに10年後の1991年に日本スポーツ社会学会の設立に至っている。人間のライフステージに例えれば、20代後半の成人期にあたり、ようやく1人前の社会人として、これからの仕事が期待される時期と言えるだろう。

スポーツ社会学の研究者で、Loy教授の名前を知らない人はいないだろう。John Loyの名前が、初めて社会にでたのが、アメリカ体育学会の関連誌であるJOPERに、G.S. Kenyonとの共著で発表された「スポーツ社会学を目指して（Toward a Sociology of Sport）」（1965）であった。さらに、G.S. Kenyonとの共著で出版された「スポーツ・文化・社会（Sport, Culture and Society）」（1969）により、世界的に知られるようになった。

G.S. Kenyonは、Loyにとって博士課程の指導教官であったことは、二人の年齢があまり離れていなかったこともあり、意外に知られていない。この2人の論文は、当時、運動生理学全盛のアメリカ体育学会に大きなインパクトを与え、新鮮な風を吹き込んだ。特に、若い研究者予備軍に与えた影響は大きかった。

博士課程を修了したJohn Loyは、そのままウィスコンシン大学にG.S. Kenyonと共に残り、彼らのもとにスポーツ社会学を志す若者が集まった。ウィスコンシン大学スポーツ社会学研究室からPh. D. を取得して果立ったのは、元北米スポーツ社会学会会長で老年学の権威であるB. D. McPherson、元ICSS会長のAlan Ingham、2代目北米スポーツ社会学会会長で、アメリカ体育学会の女性研究者のリーダー的存在であるSusan Greendorfer、Sociology of Sport Journalの編集委員長をしているPeter Donnelly、S Jの編集委員でウィータルー大学のNancy Theberge、アイオワ大学のSusan Birrell、さらに北米スポーツ社会学の理論をリードするサインフライザー大学のR. Gruneauなど、後々のメンバーである。

筆者が、最初にJohn Loyの論文を読んだのは、筑波大学大学院生で修士論文に取り組んでいるときだった。社会化を修論のテーマに選んだことから、John LoyとAlan Inghamの共著であった“Play, Games and Sport in the Psychosocial Development of Children and Youth”（1973）だったが、それは“スポーツによる社会化”に関する内容で、非常に明快で示唆に富んだものであった。

その頃、John Loyは、G.S. KenyonとB. D. McPherson、Nancy Thebergeらと共に、カナダのウィータルー大学に移っており、北米スポーツ社会学の中心も、ウィスコンシン大学からウィータルー大学へと変わっていた。筆者は、彼女のウィータルー大学に留学する機会に恵まれたが、ウィータルーを選んだ一つの理由は、John Loyがスタッフとして教えていることにあった。

1979年秋、ウィータルーに着いた筆者はやがて、John Loyがその年の春にイリノイ大学へ移動したことを知られ、がっかりしたことを思っていた。しかし、毎週水曜日の午後に開かれていた
た「スポーツ社会学セミナー」には、イリノイから5時間もドライブして、John Loyが出席することもあり、彼のディスカッションを聞く機会ができた。

「スポーツ社会学セミナー」は、スポーツ社会学研究室のスタッフと院生、さらに客員教授やレジャー・レクリエーション学科のスタッフが参加し、毎回1人の発表者が最新の研究発表を行い、ディスカッションをするものであった。当時のウォータールー大学は、スポーツ社会学の文献情報検索センター（SIRLS）が設立され、スポーツの社会化に関する国際プロジェクトの中心であったことから、世界中から研究者の来訪が絶えなかったが、毎回のセミナーは非常に刺激に富んだ内容であった。

あるセミナーの夜、テニスをすることになり、ゲーム後にはもちろんビールで乾杯となった。そこで、Johnから（この頃にはfirst nameで呼ばせてもらえるようになっていた）意外な事実を見た。それは、G.S. Kenyonが彼のアドバイザーであったことがあるだけでなく、修士課程の専攻が、技と運動生理学であったことだった。日本でも1年間滞在したことのある友人のJim Hillenが、スポーツ社会学のマスターコースを修了してから、医学部博士課程に進んだ直後のこともあり、北米における大学教育の柔軟性を痛感させられた。

さてJohn Loyは、「スポーツ社会学の可能性」と題する論文において、「スポーツ社会学は、過去25年間において、学問領域として確立しただろうか？」と問いかける。もし、確立しているならば、スポーツ社会学の可能性は当然のことと考えられる。しかし、体育学と社会学の分野で、依然として境界の専門化に留まっているならば、スポーツ社会学の可能性もまた、問題視されることになる。

Loy（1979）は、かつてスポーツ社会学の発達段階を4ステージに分けた。そして、学問領域として成熟期である“スペシャリスト段階（specialty stage）”には到達していないと言った。その後、エッセイが発表されてから10余年後の本論の結論もまた、同様であった。その理由は、組織化とパブリケーションは整備されたものの、「質の高い研究者」と「学問的地位」、そして「イデオロギー志向」に問題があり、知識の蓄積に至っていないという厳しい評価である。

本論は、スポーツ社会学が学問領域として確立し、スポーツ社会学の可能性が実現されることを目指して、理論的パースペクティブと方法論的アプローチに関して書き下ろされた力作である。本論では、以下の3点のディスカッションが行われている。第1章は、歴史社会的要因を中心としたスポーツの社会的発達、第2章はスポーツの社会的意義、そして第3章はスポーツ状況における身体技法に焦点が当てられている。

第1章では、理論的パースペクティブとして、スポーツ制度化論と文化へゲモニー論を取り上げているが、2つのパースペクティブは相互補完的であるとし、さらに3つの命題を提示している。それは、反映論（reflection thesis）、強化論（reinforcement thesis）と抵抗論（resistance thesis）であり、今後、各問題の実証的な検証が期待されるだろう。

第2章においては、スポーツの社会的意義を「自律的な社会文化」という視点から、4つの特性を提起している。Loyによれば、スポーツは、（1）社会集団を代表する理想的な媒体であり、（2）“楽しさ”の興奮とエクスタシー経験を一般化し、（3）統制のメカニズムをもち、（4）身体的優越性の表現機会を提供することができると強調している。

第3章では、これまでスポーツ社会学において等間視されてきた“身体”（body）に注目し、Hargreaves の論文を引用しながら、多様な身体技法を分析することが重要であると述べる。特に、スポーツの世界における「生きた身体（lived body）」に着目することが、社会における権力関係の洞察に有効であり、スポーツ社会学の発展につながると述べている。
筆者が興味をもったのは、JOPER(1965)に発表した論文タイトルを、「身体運動の社会科学へ向けて」(Toward a Social Science of Physical Activity)にすべきであったかもしれないと、Loyが回想している点である。エアロビックダンスやエクササイズ、そしてニュースポーツといった多様な身体運動が、世界的な広がりをみせている今日では、これまでのLoyが定義した狭義のスポーツのコンセプトでは、それらを包括することができないという限界に直面する。さらに、スポーツ社会学はスポーツ集団や組織を研究対象とするマクロなアプローチが中心であったが、近年では、個人を分析単位とするミクロな研究に対する関心が高まっており、社会心理学や社会人類学、さらに歴史学や経営学による研究領域との境界がクロスオーバーしており、まさにポーダレス化を迎えているからだ。

Loyは、ウィスコンシン大学からウォータールー大学、イリノイ大学、そして1993年からニュージーランドへ移ることが決まっている。機能主義の立場からスポーツ制度化論を展開し、スポーツ社会学の体系化に大きな足跡を残した彼は、1980年代の後半から文化論と身体論に対する関心を広げている。ニュージーランドの大自然と素朴な国民性に囲まれ、どのような論文を発表していくのか、今から楽しみである。

＜付記＞

日本スポーツ社会学会の基調講演では、本論の要約が発表された。基調講演では、リー・トンプソン氏が通訳を務められ、正確で大変わかりやすく説明されたことを追記したい。