

A Theoretical Model For The Analysis Of History of Sport in Canada

by

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(Maxwell L. Howell Address)

Little concern has been expressed by sport historians over the focus and structure of sport history. Some interest was evinced in this question in the early 1960's by the History of Sport Section of the College Physical Education Association. These early concerns apparently died out in the mid 1960's, to be taken over by Dr. M. Howell at the University of Alberta. This paper is a logical continuation of the 'work of Howell and Lindsay.

In the past, sport historians have been concerned with defining history of sport rather than the more pertinent question of what it should be trying to achieve. History should be trying to advance knowledge. Knowledge, basically is gained when there is a reduction of uncertainty or we find out something we did not know before. This knowledge, however, must be pertinent; it must provide new insights into the nature and functioning of society.

The central concern of this paper is, therefore, to conceptualize a theoretical structure for the analysis of history of sport focused on society. The model is multidimensional. Time, space, and environment are basic elements but only society will be considered in this paper.

Sport per se forms the nucleus of this structure and the first level of discourse. An in-depth analysis of sports per se, their nature and form are indispensable to an understanding sport in society. The critical concern, at this and all other levels, is not the actual focus of the individual study but the conceptualization and delineation of the problem, and the clear analysis of its relationship to societal growth and development.

Sport in society. First, the analysis of sport as an institution focuses upon a sport institution per se and its role or function in society. Second, sport in an institution is concerned with the wide variety of institutions or groups which promote sport. Third, is the function of sport in an institution or in society.

Sport and society, as the term suggests, focuses on the interrelationship between sport and basic societal elements such as social class, ethnicity, and values. By examining

the relationship between sport and these elements, insights into the nature of both sport and society may be gained.

Finally, at the highest level of the hierarchy is what I term Basic Societal Problems. Obviously, sport history cannot solve any societal problems but it may help throw light on to the problem. In terms of Canada, certain basic critical issues are immediately evident. First, the very nature and existence of Canadian culture are of critical concern to this young country always aware of its own lack of identity. Secondly, the exact relationship of French Canada to English Canada has been a perennial item in the side of Canadian unity. Thirdly, the impact of urbanization and industrialization on the whole pattern and structure of life provides many studies for sport historians. An analysis of these questions using sport as the central focus will add to our understanding of the problems.

In conclusion, the main function of this model is to provide a framework within which all sport historians may find a place. Perhaps more important still is the call for a more critical, rigorous evaluation of exactly what we are doing and why, when we undertake any particular piece of research.

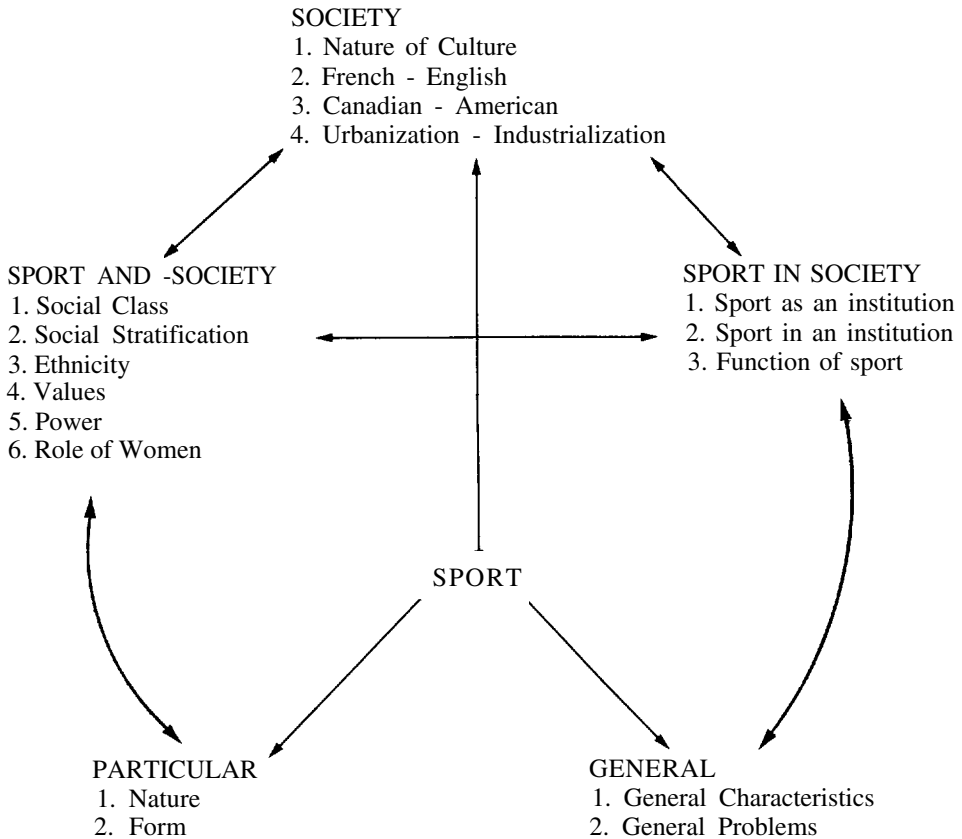


Fig. 1 Theoretical Model for the Analysis of History of Sport in Canada.