

Blacks in Sport: Sociological Issues

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This paper reviewed the history of the sociology of sport focusing on the major questions that have been investigated in the field. It attempts to assess why these questions and not other questions were addressed. In so doing, it demonstrates that the field of the sociology of sport has not been value free.

With this assessment in mind the paper turns to a review of the research questions surrounding Blacks in sport, and especially the issue of Black dominance in sport. The paper demonstrates that most of the explanation of this phenomenon either characterizes Black dominance in sport as a genetic-physical phenomenon similar to idiot-savante or noble savage, or environmentally induced and therefore physical. The paper calls for an investigation of Black dominance in sport as a mental phenomenon. It makes a preliminary theoretical examination of the performance of Blacks in basketball as a reflective and not just a reflexive activity. The paper concluded by suggesting new questions for the field based on this example and sketched the outline of an appropriate methodology for certain sports as a reflexive activity.

Players on the Stage: Sport in Contemporary American Theater

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American writers have taken advantage of sport in nearly every genre. In fiction, Ring Lardner, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Clair Bee, Matt Christopher, Frederick Exley, Zane Grey, Peter Gent, Mark Harris, Bernard Malamud, Gilbert Patten, Philip Roth, Irwin Shaw, John R. Tunis, John Updike, Patricia Nell Warren, Robert Coover, Barbara Gregorich, David Ritz, and Donald Honig only begin the list and yet their fiction throws before us an amazing variety of techniques and purposes and audiences. Eric Soloman has called the 1970s and 1980s “The Golden Age of Sports Fiction” and Professor Soloman can marshal an impressive roster to put on the field. If anything, nonfiction has an even greater claim to space on the sport literature bookshelf. Lardner, Grantland Rice, Tunis, Red Smith, Dave Anderson, Jim Murray, Roger Kahn, Roger Angell, Thomas Boswell, Frank Deford, Donald Hall, begin an impressive line-up. And the poets—there are so many poets who find sport as a rich source of action and metaphor that it is almost impossible to know where to begin—from Walt Whitman to James Dickey to John Updike again, Marianne Moore, May Swenson, Gary Gildner, Randall Jarrell, James Wright, and Edward Field. However, when we get to the remaining literary art form, drama, it becomes a bit more difficult to see the field, much less make out

the players. Sport, curiously, has been used only sporadically by American playwrights. An occasional character such as Willie Loman's son Biff happens along or *Damn Yankees*, that retelling of the Faust legend, is staged, or an ambitious failure, such as *The First*, a musical that tried to sing and dance Jackie Robinson into the major leagues, is produced. There are, however, some excellent plays that have used sport as a focal point. August Wilson's *Fences* (1986), Jason Miller's *That Championship Season* (1972), and Joe Mantegna's (and the Organic Theatre Company's) *Bleacher Bums* (1977) variously and powerfully indicate sport's broad applications to the theater. This may be an indication, or at least a hopeful sign, that we may see even more players on the American stage.

The Development of Soccer in Canada: A Social and Historical Perspective

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It is somewhat ironic that soccer, the "world game" has failed to establish itself as a premier sport in North America where sport is a vital part of North American culture.

In Canada, there appears to be many historical, geographical and cultural factors which have impeded the development of soccer in this country and prevented it from usurping or at least joining the ranks of the "big time sports".

Canada's immense physical size and it's harsh winters are definitely barriers to soccer's development but one must also look at historical and cultural factors to fully understand the problems that soccer has faced in Canada.

The fact that soccer has failed to date in the USA and the dominance of American culture in Canada, combined with the fact that the very patient nature of the game of soccer may be incompatible with the fast pace of North American society where instant gratification is demanded and expected, are obstacles to the acceptance of soccer by Canadians.

From a historical perspective all of the current "big time" sports in North America were established on this continent although they may merely be variations of foreign games. Thus soccer faces a problem in that it is asking Canadians to accept the game in it's current status, which is that of a foreign sport. The ethnic influence and the ethnic stigma attached to soccer in Canada has helped the game emerge from it's grass roots in this country but also impedes it from being accepted by the Canadian public as a truly native sport.