



Resource Guide to the Sport and Sociological Theory

Introduction

Many researchers working within the sociology of sport draw on sociological theory as a framework for understanding the complex nature of sport. Sociologists of sport use social theory to be critical of common sense perceptions of sport as a pastime or a 'fun activity'. On the contrary, sport is a vital part of many people's lives, for some it is a career, for others it is something they invest time and money on. It is clear that as Dunning (1999) aptly suggests, 'Sport Matters'.

Those working within the sociology of sport have predominantly drawn on mainstream sociological theories to explain and explore the nature of sport. Within the sociology of sport, there are many competing sociological theories which have been useful for critically analysing sport. These competing theories have been drawn upon to explore a range of issues in sport, for instance, violence within sport, the relationship between sport and gender, commercialisation within sport, social exclusion, sport and race. In what follows, books and journal articles are listed which identify key sociological theories that have been used to inform and develop a sociological understanding of sport.

Annotated Bibliography

The section identifies key work on the sociology of sport and sociological traditions within sport. Each section explores one sociological theory and suggests key texts written from that sociological tradition.

Introductions to Sociological theory and Sport

Coakley, J. and Dunning, E. (2000). *Handbook of Sport Studies*. London: Sage Publications.

Part one of this text explores sociological theory with a chapter on all the main theories and their application to sport.

Coakley, J. (2007). *Sports in Society*. US: McGraw Hill, Publications.

Now in its ninth edition this popular undergraduate textbook devotes Chapter Two to discussing sociological theories and their application to sport. Good introduction chapter for students and those who are beginners to the subject.

Dunning, E and Malcolm, D. (2003), *Sport: Critical Concepts in Sociology*. London: Routledge.

Several volumes within this text, extremely comprehensive. Covers the majority of social theories and research within the area.

Giulianotti, R. (2004). *Sport and Modern Social Theorists*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

An excellent edited text with individual chapters on traditional theorists such as Marx and Durkheim, but also with more modern theories such as Baudrillard and Bourdieu and their application to sport.

Houlihan B. (2008) *Sport and Society: A Student Introduction (2nd edition)* London: Sage Publications

A very broad text, but which offers some interesting chapters to spark debate. Good introductory chapter on sport and social theory.

Jarvie, G. and Maguire, J. (1994). *Sport and Leisure in Social Thought*. London: Routledge.

An introduction to the many sociological theories and their application to sport. A comprehensive discussion of sociological theory and sport, applicable to undergraduate and post graduate students.

Jarvie G. (2006) *Sport, Culture and Society* London: Routledge

Very accessible text that investigates the relationships between sport, culture and society. The book is divided into four sections covering 1/ The broader context of sport 2/ Sport, globalisation and other communities 3/ Sport, identities and alternative lifestyles 4/ Sport, social division and change.

Tomlinson A. (2007) *The Sport Studies Reader* London: Routledge

Conceptualises and introduces key theories of the sociology of sport. The Sport Studies reader is divided into nine themed sections with each section containing an introduction and discussion of the theme, suggestions to aid critical and interpretive thinking, and recommendations for further reading.

Functionalism and Sport

Although this theory is often viewed as outdated, the ideas of functionalism are often found in sport policy and in particular in labour government policy etc, using sport as a tool for reducing crime, increasing social exclusion etc. Those utilising functionalist theories, such as Durkheim, Parsons and Merton to explore sport were particularly evident in 60's / 70's.

Loy, J. & Booth, D. (2004). 'Social Structure and Social Theory: The Intellectual insights of Robert K Merton'. In Giulianotti, R. (Eds). *Sport and Modern Social Theorists*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

An interesting chapter on the sociology of Robert Merton and its subsequent application to sport.

Loy, J., Pherson and Kenyon, (1978). *Sport and Social Systems*. London: Longman Higher Education.

Lever, J. (1984). *Soccer Madness*. Chicago: University Chicago Press.

A clear example of a functionalist perspective on sport, her examination of Brazilian football emphasises one of the key concepts of functionalist sociology, the belief that spectator sport brings people together.

Hartmann & Depro (2006). 'Rethinking Sports-Based Community Crime Prevention, *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 30, 2, 180 -196.

Although this paper does not explicitly use functionalist sociology, the authors implicitly demonstrate functionalism by suggesting that programmes such as midnight basketball can reduce crime rates in inner city areas. I use this paper with students to explore the concepts of functionalism in sports policy.

Stevenson, C. and Nixon, J. (1972). 'A Conceptual Scheme of the Social Functions of Sport', *Sportwissenschaft*, 2, 119-32.

A classic text of functionalist and the 'functions' of sport.

Marxism, Neo- Marxism and Sport

Although Marx himself did not write on sport, many theorists working within the sociology of sport have adopted Marx's theories to help explain the relationship between sport and capitalism.

Bairner, A. (2007).' Back to Basics: Class, Social Theory and Sport', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 24, 20-36.

A contemporary journal article that argues the necessity of exploring class relations within the sociology of sport. Bairner offers an excellent overview of Marxist theories as well as comparing these to neo-Marxist theories and Bourdieu's theory of class relations.

Brohm, J-M. (1978). *Sport a Prison of Measured Time*. London: Ink Links

A classic, if not outdated Marxist text on sport.

Clarke, J. and Critcher, C. (1985). *The Devil Makes Work.... Leisure in Capitalist Britain*. London: Macmillan.

A classic text on leisure and class struggle.

Gruneau, R. (1983). *Class, Sports and Social Development*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Another classic text on sport and class.

Hargreaves, J. (1985). *Sport, Culture and Ideology*, Cambridge: Polity.
Although adopting a neo Marxist perspective within this book authors offer a understanding of sport and class relations.

Jarvie, G. & Maguire, J. (1994). *Sport and Leisure in Social Thought (Chapter: Classical Marxism and Beyond)*. London: Routledge.

A more modern overview of Marxist work related to sport. The authors offer a critical overview of Marxist perspectives in sport.

Morgan, W.J. (1994). *Leftist Theories of Sport*. Urbana: Univeristy of Illinois Press.

Rigauer, B. (1981). *Sport and Work*. US: Columbia University Press.

Another classic Marxist text. Rigauer explores how sport resembles work and how players in capitalist markets have become commodities to be bought and sold.

Feminisms and Sport

Sport feminists have been instrumental in developing a critical analysis of sport and gender. The number of texts on feminisms and sport has continued to increase over the years. Here I have listed some of the key texts in this area.

Castelnuovo & Guthrie, S. (1998). *Feminism and the Female Body*. London: Lyenne Rienner.

Excellent chapter on feminist theories in sport.

Flintoff, A. and Scraton, S. (2002). *Gender and Sport: A Reader*. London: Routledge.

Excellent section on theorising sport and gender. Overview of many of main theories of sport, liberal, radical, socialist, post feminism.

Hargreaves, J. (1994). *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports*. London: Routledge.

Chapter 2 offers an excellent overview of feminist theories and their application to sport.

Hargreaves, J. (2004). 'Querying Sports Feminism: Personal or Political'. In Giulianotti (eds) *Sport and Modern Social Theorists*. London: Routledge.

This chapter by Hargreaves looks at the development of feminisms within sport. In particular she compares new post feminist theories to traditional second wave feminism.

Hall, A. (1996). *Feminism and Sporting Bodies: Essays in Theory and Practice*. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.

Excellent text on the complexities and debates within sport feminisms.

Heywood, L. & Dworkin, S. (2003). *Built to Win: The Female Athlete as a Cultural Icon*. London: University of Minnesota Press.

Fantastic text that interweaves theory and research on gender within sport.

Markula, P. (2005). *Feminist Sport Studies: Sharing Experiences of Joy and Pain*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Good introduction and discussion of the contribution of feminisms and feminist theory in understanding the gendered nature of sport.

McCaughey, M. (1997). *Real Knockouts: The Physical Feminism of Women's Self-Defence*. New York: New York Press.

Interesting discussion about feminism and feminist research.

Messner, M. and Sabo, D. (1990). *Men, Sport and the Gender Order*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Messner and Sabo are often referred to as male feminists within the sociology of sport. Their critical studies of gender and male sport offer a critical feminist approach to understanding sport and gender.

McDonald, M. (2000). 'The Marketing of the Women's National Basketball Association and the Making of Postfeminism', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 35, 1, 35-47.

I use this journal with students as it interweaves second wave feminist perspectives with post feminist ideologies and advertising within the WNBA. Students find the content interesting and this makes the theory of feminism more interesting and slightly easier for them to understand.

Theberge, N. (2000). 'Feminist Theories for Sport', in Coakley and Dunning (eds). *Handbook of Sport Studies*. London: Sage Publications.

Excellent overview of feminisms and feminist research within sport.

Thompson, S. (2002). *Sport Feminisms*. In J. Maguire and K. Young, (Eds.), *Theory, Sport and Society*. London: RSS.

Good overview of feminist theories.

Figurational Sociology and Sport

Spearheaded by Professor Eric Dunning and colleagues at the Centre for Research into Sport in Society at Leicester University there has been considerable research written from a figurational sociological perspective on sport. Recently the centre moved from Leicester University and is now at Chester University.

Colwell, S. (1999). *Feminisms and Figurational Sociology: Contributions to the Understanding of Sports, Physical Education and Sex/Gender*. *European Physical Education Review*, 5, 3(), 219-240.

An interesting discussion of feminisms and figurational sociology, exploring the possibility of feminisms informing figurational sociology within sport.

Dunning, E. (1999). *Sport Matters*. London: Routledge.

A masterful text on figural sociology and sport.

Dunning, E and Rojeck, C. (1998). *Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process: Critique and Counter Critique*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

An excellent overview of figural sociology, in particular, The Civilising Process and a debate about the merits of a figural approach to the sociology of sport. Chapter 10 in particular stresses how figural sociology differs to other sociological theories.

Dunning, E. (1996). On Problems of the Emotions in Sport and Leisure: Critical and Counter-critical Comments on the Conventional and Figural Sociologies of Sport and Leisure. *Leisure Studies*, 15, 185-207.

Interesting journal on the sociology of emotions and a figural contribution to the problem.

Dunning, E & Waddington, I. (2003) Sport as a Drug and Drugs in Sport, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*.

An interesting discussion of drug and alcohol use within sport, authors adopt a figural understanding to the issue.

Dunning, E. Malcolm, D and Waddington, I. (2004). *Sport Histories: Figural Studies in the Development of Modern Sports*. London: Routledge.

Covers a range of sports, cricket, gymnastics to name a few, explores their historical development from a figural perspective.

Green, K. (2003). *Physical Education Teachers on Physical Education: A Sociological Study of Philosophies and Ideologies*. Chester: Chester Academic Press.

A fascinating text on Physical Education teachers. Chapter 2 in particular lays out aspects of figural sociology and their application to understanding the relationships between PE and PE teachers.

Giulianotti, R. (2004). 'Civilising Games: Norbert Elias and the Sociology of Sport', in Giulianotti, (eds), *Sport and Modern Social Theorists*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

This is a chapter that explores the key concepts of figural sociology but also offers some harsh criticism of the theory and research in the field.

Malcolm, D. (2002). Cricket and Civilising Processes: A Response to Stokvis. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 37, 1, 37-57.

Excellent article on the merits of figural sociology in understanding the development of cricket.

Maguire, J. and Mansfield, L. (1998). "No-Body's Perfect": Women, Aerobics, and the Body Beautiful. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 15, 109-137.

Interesting discussion about figurational sociology and feminisms and an attempt to combine aspects of both theories to explore females' experiences of aerobics.

Murphy, P. Williams, J. and Dunning, E. (1990). *Football on Trial: Spectator Violence and Development in the Football World*. London: Routledge.

A lot of research completed by Dunning and Murphy is centred on football hooliganism as a social problem, this text explores the problem as well as discussing the merits of figurational sociology in helping to explain/ explore the problem of football related violence.

Waddington, I. and Malcolm, D. (2006). *Sport in Society: Special Edition*, 9, 4, 1743-0437.

Special Journal Issue on Figurational Sociology and in particular Dunning's contribution to understanding sporting issues.

Waddington, I. (2000). *Sport, Health and Drugs, A Critical Sociological Perspective*. London: E& F. N. Spon.

A masterful example of figurational sociology in exploring a specific social issue within sport.

Interpretive Approaches to the Sociology of Sport

These approaches adopt interpretative sociology to the study of sport, mainly this work uses Goffman's sociology to explore micro relationships within sport.

Curry, T. (1991). 'Fraternal Bonding in the Locker Room: a profeminist analysis of talk about competition and women', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 8, 119-35.

Ethnography of locker room 'talk' between male athletes, a fascinating and honest insight into the culture of the locker room.

Donnelly, P. (2000). Interpretative Approaches to the Sociology of Sport, in Coakley and Dunning (eds). *Handbook of Sport Studies*. London: Sage Publications.

Good overview to interpretative approaches within the sociology of sport.

Donnelly, P. & Young, K. (1988). 'The Construction of and confirmation of identity in sport subcultures', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 5: 223-40.

An interesting insight into identity and sporting subculture.

Giulanotti, R. (1995). 'Football and the politics of Carnival: An ethnographic study of Scottish fans in Sweden', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 30, 191-224.

Ethnographic research on football fans.

Hasbrook, C. (1999). Young children's social constructions of physicality and gender. In J.Coakley and P.Donnely, (Eds.), *Inside Sports*. London: Routledge.

Interesting chapter on gender relations in the context of school.

Klein, A. (1993). *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding Subculture and Gender Construction*. Albany NY: State University Press.

Klein masterfully explores gender construction within the subculture of bodybuilding.

Wacquant, L. (1992). 'The Social Logic of Boxing in Black Chicago: Towards a Sociology of Pugilism', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 9, 221-54.

Classis text on boxing in the US.

Post Modernist Theories and Sport

Although post modern analyses of sport are not in abundance, recently some sociologists have begun to explore sport utilising a variety of post modern theories/ theorists.

Andrews, D. (1993). 'Desperately seeking Michel' *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 10, 2, 148-167.

Andrew's uses the work of Foucault to explore new research within the sociology of sport that is utilising post modern theorists.

Andrews, D.L. (1998). 'Feminizing Olympic Reality: preliminary dispatched from Baudrillard's Atlanta', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 33,1, 5-18

Good discussion of the Olympics and Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality.

Andrews, D. (2000). *Posting Up: French Post Structuralism and the Critical Analysis of Contemporary Sporting Culture*. In Coakley and Dunning, (eds) *Handbook of Sport Studies*, London: Sage Publications

Good introduction/overview to post modernism and post structural theories and their current application to sport.

Bale, J. (1998). *Virtual Fandoms: Futrurescapes of Football*', in A Brown (eds), *Fanatics*, London: Routlegde.

Interesting discussion of surveillance in modern day sporting stadiums.

Blackshaw, T. (2002). 'The Sociology of Sport Reassessed in Light of the Phenomenon of Zygmunt Bauman', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 37, 2, 199-217.

An excellent article on the merits of Bauman's work and his applicability to understanding modern sporting and leisure lifestyles.

Cole, C. (2002) 'Body Studies in the Sociology of Sport', Coakley and Dunning, *Handbook of Sport Studies*, London: Sage Publications.

Cole discusses some of the theories of the body in relation to sport. Although not solely concentrating on post modernism most theories of the body draw on post modern theorists.

Giulianotti, R. (2004). *Sport and Modern Social Theorists*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Within this book, Chapter 13 explores Foucault and sport, Chapter 14 explores Baudrillard and Sport and Chapter 10 introduces students to Bourdieu.

Markula, P. & Pringle, R. (2006). *Foucault, Sport and Exercise*, London: Routledge.

Masterful and comprehensive text on Foucault's theories and their application to sport and exercise.

Rail, G. (1998). *Sport in Post Modern Times*. US: State University Press.

Useful Mainstream Sociological Texts

Mainstream sociology introductory texts are often useful for a background on mainstream sociological theory and general application and development of theory.

Gamble (1999), *Icon Critical Dictionary of Feminism and Postfeminism*. Cambridge: Icon Books.

Useful to explore feminism.

Giddens (2006) *Sociology* Cambridge: Polity

A key sociological text, written by one of the key sociologists of today. This book is written in a lively and engaging manner, is accessible and jargon-free, but without oversimplifying complex issues.

Mennell, S. (1992). *Norbert Elias*. Dublin: University College Press.

A useful introduction to Norbert Elias and his work. Excellent chapter on the principles of figurational sociology and also Chapter 6 explores Elias research that is related to sport.

Mills, C.W. (2000). *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Original text by Mills that is reprinted, introduces students to Mill's seminal theory on developing a sociological imagination.

Stones, R. (2007). *Key Sociological Thinkers*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

An excellent comprehensive text that explores many of the key sociological thinkers from Elias to Bauman. Each chapter is written by an expert within the

area and also discusses contemporary research written from each sociological tradition.

JOURNALS

International Review for the Sociology of Sport

Published in association with the International Sociology of Sport Association. Published Quarterly. This is a long standing internationally recognised journal for the sociology of sport. It covers a wide range of articles and publishes both theoretical and empirical research papers.

<http://irs.sagepub.com/>

Sociology of Sport Journal

Members of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS) receive SSJ as part of their membership. Published Quarterly. Generally focused on North American sport, however the journal is far reaching in scope and covers a variety of issues within the sociology of sport.

<http://www.humankinetics.com/SSJ/journalAbout.cfm>

Sport in Society

Previously published as Culture, Sport, Society (1461-0981) until 2004. This is a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary forum for academics to discuss the growing relationship of sport to these significant areas of modern life. 6 Issues published a year.

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713634841>

British Journal of Sociology

Mainstream sociology journals often do not have many articles on sport. However occasionally they are useful for information on theories and they do sometimes feature sport related articles. Published Quarterly.

<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/loi/bjos>

Sociology

This is the official journal of the British Sociological association (BSA) and is acknowledged as one of the leading journals in its field.

<http://soc.sagepub.com>

Sport, Education and Society

An international journal exploring pedagogy but often has articles related to sociological theory or application of theory to research. Published Quarterly.

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713445505>

Journal of Sport and Social Issues

International journal exploring issues and research in sport. Particularly good for new researchers. Published Quarterly.

<http://www.sagepub.com/journalsProdDesc.nav?prodId=Journal200897>

Body and Society

A relatively new journal that began in 1995. Although a mainstream journal there are some interesting published articles on sport. Published Quarterly.

<http://www.sagepub.net/tcs/bin/main.aspx?page=BOD>

Theory, Culture and Society

An international recognised journal. This journal has a long history and excellent reputation on social theory. Generally mainstream sociology but does occasionally publish on sport and social theory. Published eight times a year.

<http://tcs.sagepub.com>

WEB SITES

The British Sociological Association (BSA)

Excellent information on sociology, ethics, research. Also there is a sport study group which is led by Dominic Malcolm and Grant Jarvie. Good resources, discussion forum and member area.

<http://www.britisoc.co.uk>

International Sociological Association (ISA)

Overview of the international aspects of sociology as a subject. Research committee on sport is part of the ISA.

<http://www.isa-sociology.org/>

International Sociology of Sport Association (ISSA)

Website gives information on the organisation, upcoming conferences, research within the area.

<http://www.issa.otago.ac.nz/about.html>

North American Sociology of Sport Association (NASS)

Good resources and information. Conference is held yearly.

<http://www.nasss.org/index.html>

Centre for Research into Sport and Society at Chester University (CCRSS)

Excellent resource and information on publications and links to other organisations and governing bodies.

<http://www.chester.ac.uk/ccrss>

Teaching Sociology of Sport

Students always find social theory difficult. This is normally because as sport students few would have taken sociology and find the subject and the theory difficult to master. In particular I teach social theory in level 2 as I feel that it is too advanced for level 1 students. It is important to draw on examples from

popular culture, films, adverts, and recent sporting events to make the theories more applicable to their lives. For instance when discussing gender / feminism we watch films such as A Million Dollar Baby, GirlFight or Billy Elliot, these work as a platform for discussion for students.

In session one on the Level 2 sport and social theory module we begin by exploring how sport matters to different people and in different ways. In the lecture we touch on Mill's sociological imagination and then in the seminar I hand out the following snippets about people's lives and sport that the students explore in small groups then as a larger group.

Handout: Seminar 1:

Lakmini, 15 lives in Sri Lanka with her family, three brothers and two sisters and her mother and father. Lakmini's family lost their home in the tsunami and are living in temporary accommodation. Lakmini's goes to school but as soon as she comes home she helps her mother prepare the family meal, hand wash clothes, and looks after her young siblings. Money is tight in the family and although her brothers play cricket with old bats outside the home with friends. Lakmini longs to join them but knows her mother needs help. Lakmini is so busy helping in the family home that she does not play sport. At school she is a promising basketball player but is unable to commit to the sport as she cannot stay after school.

1. Does Sport Matter to Lakmini?
2. What might Lakmini's experience of sport tell us about other young females experience of sport?

All his life Peter,48, has watched football. He is a Sheffield united supporter and has supported this team since a boy. His father and uncle used to take him and his male cousins to the match every week. Peter, never misses a match and has been a supporter for 40 years. He now takes his seven year old to every match and they have the home and away kit. Peter hates to miss a match and even scheduled his wedding out of season so not to clash with fixtures. Peter played football recreationally but his real passion is watching the match. Peter's wife hates football but has got used to her husbands enjoyment of matches. During the football season she has accepted that football comes first and often has to attend friends' weddings and christening and parties alone.

1. How does sport matter to Peter?
2. What does Peter's experience tell us about the role of football in some men's lives?

Mr Brown has been in government for a few months. He is desperate to win support and for Labour to continue in power. He knows that sport can pull in the voters. Therefore he has introduced a new initiative, teaching respect through sport. He has enlisted the help of Beckham who will be the face of the project. Schools will teach basic skills such as manners through sport. Some funding will be available for schools but generally they will be expected to fund it through existing school funds. Brown has employed media experts to set up a launch day for the campaign making sure that top sports stars are there and seen to be involved with Brown. Brown is sure this will make him seem 'sporty' and 'cool'.

1. Why does sport matter to Mr Brown?
2. What does this snippet tell us as sociologists about sport and politics?

In this session students explore the fact that sport matters to different people in a variety of ways, this session is introductory and gets the students discussing key issues and beginning to consider issues sociologically.

Teaching Example 2:

During the sport and social theory module once we have done an overview of sociological theory then we explore one theory a week. Each week there is a lecture followed by a seminar whereby students have read a paper set by me the previous week. When students come to the seminar they work in small groups on the following handout and I go from group to group then we discuss responses as a whole at the end.

Handout:

Seminar on Feminisms

McDonald, M. (2000). 'The Marketing of the Women's National Basketball Association and the Making of Postfeminism', *International for the Sociology of Sport*, 35, 1, 35-47.

Summarise this Paper

What are the Key Points? (Try and pick at least one from each section)

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What perspective is the author writing from? HOW DO WE KNOW?

Why is WBNA considered post feminist by McDonald?

<i>Strengths of the Paper</i>	<i>Weaknesses of Paper</i>

This session is preceded by a lecture on feminisms and is useful. By using these work sheets with papers students begin the difficult process of exploring the practical application of theory to specific sporting situations. It also helps students develop critical skills by learning to pick out key points and offer a critique of these.

About the Author

Dr Philippa Velija is a lecturer in the Sociology of Sport at York St John University. Much of her teaching focuses on the sociology of sport strand within the sport studies degree.