



Sport, Theory and Social Problems: A Critical Introduction

Eric Anderson

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- What impact does sport have on the lives of ordinary people?
- How does sport help to perpetuate inequalities in society?
- What can social theory tell us about the role of sport in society??

At their origin competitive sports were institutionalized in Western cultures for the privilege of white, heterosexual men. Over time sport has become more open to categories of people traditionally marginalized in society: women; those from lower social classes; gay men; people of colour; and those differently abled. However, focusing solely on increased social inclusion in sport masks significant problems with both the culture and structure of sport. This critical textbook examines social exclusion in sport and analyzes the socio-negative attributes associated with competitive, institutionalized sport, for all who play.

Focusing on sport at non-elite levels, this book explores the lives of everyday citizens who play and examines how inequality and social deviance are structured into the social and sporting system. Each chapter uses a key social theory to address a particular social problem in sport, such as learned obedience to authority; the acceptance of pain and injury; the adoption of hyper-masculine, homophobic and sexist attitudes; the teaching of in-group/out-group; and the use of sport as a false mechanism for social mobility. By concentrating on real sport, and through the use of startling vignettes illustrating the experiences of real people, this textbook develops the critical senses, social conscience and theoretical understanding of all students of sport and anybody for whom sport is part of their everyday life.

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