

# Chapter One

## Modernization or Hegemony: Two Views on Sport and Social Development

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### Introduction

When Canadians consider the history of sport, they most often think about famous sports personalities from the past, changes in rules or styles of play, or the history of specific leagues, teams, and clubs. For a long time this was the only kind of sport history being written. Over the past twenty years, however, sociologists and historians have begun to write a different kind of sport history, one that focuses more broadly on the changing *social* aspects of sport in Canadian society.

The growing interest in the social history of sport in Canada has parallels in other western societies, and a substantial international literature has developed in the subject. This literature has provided considerable insight into how and why sport in western countries has developed in the ways it has. Most of these insights have been derived from a very simple idea: that the primary focus of any adequate social or cultural history of sport should be on relationships between sport and broader social determinants in the society at large.

Industrialization and urbanization are often singled out as the most notable of these social determinants. Modern sport has been widely viewed as a cultural by-product of the technological and social changes associated with the development of an urban and industrial society (see, for example, Betts, 1974). These changes are said to have undermined the basis for older "pre-industrial" forms of sports practices while creating the conditions necessary for the emergence of modern sport.

Yet, beyond reference to technological pressures, few writers have been either specific enough or detailed enough about the precise ways in which industrialization and urbanization have transformed sport in western societies. As Adelman (1986) has noted, too often the concepts of industrialization and urbanization have been used merely as abstractions whose apparent influences on sport are treated as self-evident. Furthermore, there often seems to have been a confusion of cause and effect in discussions of industrial development, and the comparative impact of industrialization as opposed to urbanization is rarely sorted out. Adding up all the little bits of causation seemingly associated with the impact of industrialization and urbanization on sport can tell only part of the story. Any fully developed analysis of the social development of sport in western societies should be more broadly theorized.

A number of recent historians and sociologists have been sensitive to the need for a broader theoretical analysis of sport and social development (Dunning, 1973; Dunning and Sheard, 1979; Guttman, 1978; Adelman, 1986). These writers all emphasize how the understanding of sport as a simple reflection of technological innovation, or of seemingly related changes in social organization, has proven to be extremely limiting. They offer a more complex analysis of sport in the context of the transformation of pre-industrial to industrial societies.

The ideas and theoretical arguments which have most influenced sociological and historical writing on the social development of western sport have an important coherence and a common origin. They are expressions of a "general theory of industrial society," many of whose assumptions and central concepts have been almost taken for granted in contemporary sociology and historiography. These assumptions and concepts need to be examined critically; as well, a complementary, and in some cases alternative, set of ideas from which to analyse the emergence of modern sport in western societies should be introduced.

### **Industrial Society and the "Modernization" of Sport: the Theory of Industrial Society**

This general theory of industrial society is not a conception that can be tied to any one author. Rather, as Anthony Giddens (1977, 1982) has suggested, it is a composite of ideas stemming from many sources and expressed in quite different ways by various social

theorists and historians. At the risk of excessive simplification, however, it is possible to characterize the model of social development associated with this "theory."

According to the theory, an older type of society existed prior to industrialization and its organizing structures and values were quite different from our own. Based primarily upon agrarian production, it featured a less specialized division of labour than that which exists today. This type of society could be termed "traditional society" because its social order was heavily based on tradition, superstition, and religious ritual. Family and community, labour, leisure, and religion were all highly interconnected features of localized cultural expression and it was often difficult to uncover any boundaries between them. The administration of social life was highly decentralized and tied to a clearly delineated and paternalistic social hierarchy. People were born into this hierarchy and rarely moved beyond their predetermined place within it. The dominant values in this social formation emphasized collective duties and obligations rather than individual "rights" and there was a tendency to view the existing order as a natural expression of how human beings should live.

Industrialization, the argument runs, emerged out of this context due to some combination of new ways of thinking about society, innovations in technology, and changes in the demographic composition of pre-industrial societies. Experimentation and the attempts to understand and control nature gave cultural support to a rational scepticism which helped to undermine the powers of religion and sacred ritual. The extension of this rational scepticism from the analysis of nature to the analysis of society helped pave the way for the idea that social order was made by humans rather than being something natural and inevitable. If it was possible to alter and control the natural world, then, presumably, it was possible for people to alter and control the social world as well. Innovations in technology and new, more secular religions helped to expand the continuing breakdown of tradition. New markets and trade routes were opened up as a result of technological improvements in transportation, production, and warfare; as well, a growing "middle" class of merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans began to emerge as a new social force.

The emergence of new occupations that were not tied to the land, coupled with new forms of technology in production, led to increased complexity and specialization in the division of labour and the beginnings of greater centralization of economic and administrative functions in towns. Related to this, the

argument continues, people who had to earn their living by selling or making products began to resent the absence of individual rights in social and political life. New individualist philosophies which valued the free market began to emerge, and groups began campaigns to entrench individual "freedoms," such as the right to own property, freedom of speech, and freedom of representation, in the emerging structures of the modern liberal-democratic state. Meanwhile, the introduction of full-scale industrial production fuelled the expansion of new opportunities and initiated a generalized population movement from countryside to city. The developing urban-industrial society became less localized, more cosmopolitan, and the values of individual autonomy and achievement began to take precedence over, and ultimately came to replace, older values of social ascription. Industrial technology also produced unprecedented material affluence and created a separate and expanding sphere of "leisure time" in western societies.

Within this framework it has been possible to depict the social development of western sport as a manifestation of a broader transformation from "traditional" agrarian to "modern" industrial societies. Accompanying the movement from one type of society to another, the argument runs, has been a parallel movement between fundamentally different types of sports practices. As this has occurred, traditional sports practices in pre-industrial societies have been replaced by the new world of modern sport.

### ***Social Characteristics of "Traditional" and "Modern" Sport***

What are the allegedly typical characteristics of "traditional" and "modern" sport? In recent years, several extremely useful inventories have been compiled (see, for example, Dunning, 1973; Guttman, 1978; Adelman, 1986). Different writers have emphasized some characteristics more than others, but overall there appears to be widespread agreement on the differing features of "traditional" versus "modern" sport.

Traditional sport, it is often said, tended to be periodic, unorganized, localized in specific communities, and governed by differing and often competing rules. There were no widely agreed upon ways of playing, no controlling organizational bodies, and little sense of sport as an institutionally distinct activity. Rather, traditional sport, as either a "folk" or "elite" recreational pastime, was closely interwoven with established conventions of ritual and

social hierarchy (e.g., the social class structure and paternalistic authority) as well as the daily and seasonal rhythms of domestic and agrarian production, entertainment, and religious festivals.

"Modern" sport, by contrast, appears to be fundamentally different — a measure of its association with the broader social transformation of western societies. Modern sport is vastly more organized, highly structured, and regulated than was sport in the past. Unorganized, periodic, and localized forms of individual and community-based expressions of pleasure, entertainment, physical prowess, and ritual display have been replaced by an elaborate system of regionally, nationally, and internationally scheduled activities. As this has occurred, sport at the highest levels has become more specialized, bureaucratized, and oriented to the values of individual achievement expressed through the pursuit of "the record." Sports participation generally appears to have become more popularized and accessible as a form of leisure activity and it has developed an *institutional* character all its own. Related to this, modern sport has come to figure prominently in a vast array of contemporary social, political, and economic objectives such as education, health promotion, political image-making, and the pursuit of profits through mass entertainment.

The concept of institutionalization is not strictly limited to applications of the theory of industrial society and it is not always mentioned in conventional discussions of the "typical" characteristics of modern sport. However, the concept can be indirectly associated with many of the key features usually noted by writers in their discussions of the transition from "traditional" to "modern" sports forms and practices. Sport in the past was closely interwoven with other prominent features of social life, including other institutions. But the development of a distinct institutional character to sport itself, as a whole and seemingly coherent field of social and cultural practice, clearly appears to be a uniquely modern phenomenon.

Sociologists have used the word "institution" to refer to distinctive patterns and rules of conduct that persist in a recognizably similar form across wide spans of time and which represent established and widely accepted ways of doing things in society (see Giddens, 1982:10, and Gruneau, 1976b:20–21). The institutionalization of modern sport can be usefully understood as a process whereby one particular set of patterns and rules of conduct has gradually emerged to define and regulate our contemporary sense of *what* sport is and *how* it should legitimately be played. Over the past hundred years in particular, one dominant

way of playing has tended to be seen as *the* way of playing, and certain recreational and contest activities have come to be defined as legitimate sport while others have not.

Three subprocesses are often noted as central features in the institutionalization of modern sport: codification, organization, and legitimation. Codification simply refers to the process whereby sports pastimes have gone from informal regulation by local and, in many cases, oral traditions, to a system based on written rules that have a more universal acceptance. The emergence of modern sport is often said to have been dependent on a movement from local variations in rules, games, and styles of play to more universal and widely accepted practices. Formal organizations, such as clubs, leagues, or national associations, have been the primary vehicles for this transformation. The codification of rules required the establishment of formal bodies that could act as the custodians of sports regulations and provide "proper" channels for their modification. It was also necessary for these organizations to legitimize particular practices in an attempt to build public support for particular ways of playing.

### ***Modernization and the Forces of Rationalization***

But *why* did all this occur? The answer to this question lies in the sources of change identified within the theory of industrial society as a whole. The emphasis here is on the combined role of ideas, attitudes, and technological innovation. Modern societies are only made possible in this theory by the *breakdown of tradition*. Pre-industrial social life based on ascription and backward-looking tradition can only be superseded by the development of a new "rational" industrial order based on achievement.

The clearest expression of these arguments in the sports literature can be found in Guttman's highly influential book *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (1978). He argues that the transformation from traditional to modern sport can be viewed as one of many cultural expressions of the expansion of the scientific world view in western societies. According to Guttman, this world view helped to undermine the ritualistic tie between sport and tradition. It also underlay the development of a new kind of rationality in sport — a rationality that culminated in the creation of sports organizations, and in the emergence of modern instrumentalities (politics, economics, etc.) in the field of sports practices.

Guttman's analysis draws its strength from a perspective that looks beyond the immediate causal impact of technological innovations in production, and the accompanying growth of cities, on the social development of modern sport. Guttman's reliance on a two-stage model of development between distinct social types, and the emergence of new forms of rationality in industrial societies, owes a debt to several classical social theorists, most notably the German sociologist Max Weber. But there is also a loose compatibility here with a number of other important assumptions often lodged in the cluster of ideas which make up the general theory of industrial society described earlier.

### ***Background Assumptions and Contingent Arguments***

These assumptions are usually linked to five major types of argument. Writers whose work can be related to the general theory of industrial society often advance at least some (but not necessarily all) of the following notions (this discussion adapts some of the ideas discussed in Giddens, 1982).

(1) The transformation from pre-industrial to industrial, or traditional to modern, societies has been an essentially progressive movement in history and the "modernization" of sport can be understood in these terms. Despite numerous ongoing problems (e.g., violence, drug-taking), it is argued that modern sport has opened up many opportunities not previously available in pre-industrial societies (e.g., the best athletes are more skilled than ever before, sport has come to embody unprecedented degrees of international co-operation).

(2) A continuing democratization of sport is widely noted as one of the most important consequences of the development of industrial societies based on values of individual achievement. The breakdown of social ascription in modern society at large has meant increased sports opportunities for poor people, women, and minority and ethnic groups. It is sometimes argued as well that upward mobility in sport (e.g., for black athletes) has actually contributed to the broader democratizing tendencies of modern life.

(3) The social development of modern sports forms and practices tends to be viewed from this perspective as a "rational adaptation" made by voluntary actors, associations, and municipal governments to the stresses and strains associated with the broader transition from pre-industrial to industrial societies. Urban industrial society allegedly created new functional "needs" for the

rational organization of games — needs which were met by the emergence of sport as a modern institution.

(4) Major social conflicts in sport were simply a transitory feature in the emergence of fully modern sports forms and practices. Most of these early conflicts — for example, over the legitimacy of “blood sports” such as cockfighting or bear-baiting, or later, over amateurism and professionalism — were simply growing pains in the “maturation” of modern sport. These conflicts often had a notable social class element but in modern industrial societies where class conflicts are seen to have become effectively eliminated, sport no longer has relevance as a sphere of class conflict.

(5) Reliance on arguments associated with the general theory of industrial society tends to lead inevitably to the supposition that the fundamental characteristics of sport are basically similar throughout modern industrial societies.

One of the implications that stems from this last argument is the suggestion that variations in sport in different societies can be explained by the differing ways in which tradition and modernity are intermingled in social life. The most technically advanced societies, however, are generally depicted as the least “traditional,” and it is in these societies, we are told, that one can find the most modernized or “developed” forms of sports expression. Modernization can easily be understood as equivalent to “westernization” in this formulation, and a contrast has often been drawn between “developed” western industrial societies and the so-called “underdeveloped” societies of the Third World. From this perspective, there has been a tendency to assume that the dominant structures and meanings of sport in technologically advanced societies will inevitably provide the model for sport in supposedly “underdeveloped” societies.

### Limits and Problems of Industrial Society Theories

#### *Descriptive, Cultural, and Evolutionary Biases*

Sociologists and historians have used various concepts and ideas associated with this theory of industrialization in many different ways and with various levels of sophistication. Some of these concepts and ideas — the “rationalization” of sport, for example — have been extremely useful and have generated significant insights into the social development of modern sports forms and practices. Furthermore, individual research studies variously associated with this perspective (not always consciously) have

provided invaluable historical detail on a broad range of issues and events.

Yet, it is not at the empirical level where the most caution needs to be exercised when assessing ideas and concepts commonly associated with the general theory of industrial society. Rather, the real problem lies in the underlying assumptions and explanatory categories of the theory itself. Many of these assumptions and categories are highly problematic. At best they can be said to have directed attention towards certain key research questions at the expense of other equally important ones. At worst they have tended to become fused with the most hollow of liberal clichés about the voluntary and consensual foundations of life in the west, the extent of social progress and equality, and the alleged problems of “underdevelopment” elsewhere in the world.

In order to discuss some of these problems, this chapter will focus initially upon the two-stage model of development from “traditional” to “modern” society that provides the descriptive core of the theory of industrial society. This model offers a description of social change by abstracting the seemingly definitive or dominant features of an earlier and quite different type of social formation, and contrasting these with the dominant characteristics of contemporary social life. As discussed earlier, the same strategy can usefully be employed with respect to the identification of fundamental differences in the characteristics of sport within these social formations. The virtue of this technique lies in its ability to focus attention upon major epochs or phases in human history and to convey the central organizing features of these phases in a simplified manner. It also allows the comparison of individual societies with the abstracted “ideal type” in order to determine, and then to explain, the amount of similarity or divergence between them.

But people often forget that they are simply working with an analytic model. The model tends to be taken at face value as an essentially “known” set of conditions. In such cases, all that remains is for historians and sociologists to track the passage of social development from the one apparently known state to the other — for example, from traditional to modern sport. This approach often lends itself to an overemphasis on the descriptive “mapping” of changes rather than their explanation. It may also result in overlooking extremely important differences *between* the characteristics of sport at varying moments in the history of specific societies and those of the abstract models of “traditional” and “modern” sport.

To illustrate this, the example of sport in both Canada and the United States as “typically” modern activities will be considered. One of the seemingly modern characteristics of sport in each case is the prevalence of large bureaucratic organizations that are often geared towards meeting political goals. But a focus on the similarities between these organizations and goals may result in overlooking their striking differences. For instance, Canadians have generally been much more willing to tolerate extensive government involvement in sport over the past thirty years than have Americans. As a result, the types of bureaucratic organizations in sport, and their formal connections to the state, differ markedly in the two cases, as do the political goals that are often in question.

Even if these differences are recognized, the general theory of industrial society explains them with respect to variations in degrees of “traditionalism” and “modernity” in each country, or with respect to different cultural values. This is a seriously inadequate view because it fails to identify the fundamental differences in the political and economic histories of each country, especially with regard to Canada’s cultural and economic dependency on the United States (see Kidd, 1982). Canada’s colonial history and dependent relation to more powerful economies and cultures have always created pressures for high levels of state involvement throughout various aspects of the society, and have sometimes led to a perceived “underdevelopment” of certain features of Canadian cultural life. An emphasis on cultural and value differences as an explanation of this is meaningless if taken out of the context of shifting political/economic determinants.

There is also a problem in that the language of modernization often harbours an implied evolutionary viewpoint — a subtle historicism which blinds us to the recognition that fundamentally alternative practices, new ways of playing, or new meanings for sport always have the potential to develop within any society — even modern ones. When considering a simple transition from “traditional” to “modern” sport it is easy to forget this. After all, what is it in history that comes after “modern”? Some writers have proposed the idea of “postmodern” societies, but there is an absurdity about this concept which largely undermines its usefulness (however, see Featherstone, 1985). The point here is that industrial society theory too readily conveys the impression that the development of sports practices in modern life is an essentially completed phenomenon. All that might be expected in the future are elaborations *within* the established and legitimated form.

### ***Alternative Categories: the Emergent, Dominant, and Residual***

The perception noted above is based on highly debatable premises. It greatly limits our capacity to conceive of *emergent*, perhaps even oppositional, ways of playing in modern societies, or to identify conflicts between *dominant* and emergent tendencies in modern sport. In some cases, it may also result in overlooking, or misconstruing, the importance of social and cultural continuities in sport. Modern societies still contain important *residual* sports practices, styles, and traditions. The term “residual” refers to sports practices, styles, and beliefs effectively formed in the past but which remain highly significant today. Some of these have largely become incorporated into more typically “modern” ways of playing (e.g., certain gambling and drinking practices and, more recently, older conceptions of “amateurism”). Others now exist only on the margins of the dominant institutionalized practices that define dominant conceptions of “legitimate” sport (e.g., “blood sports” such as cockfighting or pit-dog fighting).

Again, assuming that such residual practices are noticed at all, the temptation derived from the general theory of industrial society is to understand them simply as the lingering ghosts of tradition — archaic remnants of the “irrational” features of an older, more hedonistic, popular culture, or of a fading, more romantic approach to sports practices. With the continuing “maturation” of modern sport it is implied that these traditional remnants will slowly disappear. For example, such an argument could be invoked to explain how late nineteenth-century amateurism, with its romantic rejection of commercialism and its moral emphasis on gentlemanly behaviour, became transformed through sport’s modernization in the twentieth century.

Yet, these arguments and observations would all be misleading with respect to the changing complexities of *power* in the social development of sport in industrial societies. Talk of abstract social or institutional “needs” has tended to confuse the needs and interests of specific groups of people with those of the whole society (cf., Gruneau, 1976a; Hargreaves, 1982b). Furthermore, the idea of certain sports remnants of traditional life fading naturally into disuse in the face of the long march of modernization has often led researchers to overlook the socially produced pressures and limits that have actively pushed these practices to the cultural periphery.

### ***Sport, Power, and Cultural Struggle***

Tradition, of course, is an important factor to consider. It is not completely inaccurate to view the residual sports practices still found throughout modern industrial societies as manifestations of more "traditional" forms of life. However, it is necessary to add an analysis of the changing meanings and uses of popular traditions by differing social groups in the history of modern industrial societies. This analysis should also take up the issue of the changing dynamics between dominant, residual, and emergent social and cultural forms and practices at any given historical moment.

When this is done, it becomes virtually impossible to conceive of the history of sport as a series of rational or functionally necessary adaptations to change, or as the consolidation of a consensus rooted in the changing "normative structure" of society, or even as the fully determined "product" of the relentless forces of rationalization. The history of modern sport, as in all areas of popular culture, is a history of cultural struggle. To paraphrase Hall (1981:227), it is a history where some cultural forms and practices are driven out of the centre of popular life, actively marginalized, so that something else can take their place. In sport, the focus of these struggles has been the monopolistic capacity to define the dominant forms and meanings of sports practices and the "legitimate" uses of time and the body (cf., Bourdieu, 1978; Gruneau, 1983; Donnelly [forthcoming]).

Perhaps the most notable of these was the attempt throughout western capitalist societies to actively police and to "reform" the cultural practices of the new urban working classes. In Canada, for example, the beginnings of notable urban growth in Upper and Lower Canada during the first half of the nineteenth century were accompanied by a whole set of regulations over drinking hours, and types, times, and spaces for "allowable" recreations. Play in the streets was made illegal, certain types of violent sports practices such as cockfighting and bear-baiting were banned, and game-playing on Sundays was prohibited. In addition to this, alternative forms of supposedly more "rational" recreation were developed in schools, clubs, and voluntary associations (see Gruneau, 1983:93-108).

Yet older sports forms and practices did not die out. In some cases, compromises were made, in others older traditions were clung to and often took on an oppositional character in the face of new forms of authority (see, for example, Palmer, 1979, and DeLottinville, 1981-82). However, by the late nineteenth

century the *emerging institutionalized forms of sport* had become consolidated around the ideas of the moral usefulness of games, middle-class respectability, and gentlemanly propriety. Rational recreation had expanded to include a Victorian ideology of athleticism with its roots in the class-based traditions of the British public school. However, at the very moment that the amateur code established its dominance through a network of clubs and associations, it was itself challenged by a set of contradictory pressures and by emergent commercial sports forms which provided alternatives to the socially restrictive traditions of amateurism (for a discussion of contradictory pressures within amateurism, see Gruneau, 1983:108-123).

None of this occurred in any evolutionary way, nor did it simply turn on the emergence of new forms of rationality. The ongoing marginalization of certain traditional sports practices or their incorporation into more "respectable" and "useful" ways of playing, the constitution of the dominant forms and practices of sport around the concept of amateurism by the late nineteenth century, and the emergence of alternative commercial sports were all part of a broader process of cultural conflict and social change in Canadian society. Within this broader process, the specific struggles of men and women, social classes, and racial and ethnic groups, over different versions of how to live, how to work and play, and what to value, can be seen.

### **Capitalist Society, Hegemony, and the Commodification of Sport**

#### ***The Social Context of Cultural Struggle: Capitalist Society vs. Industrial Society***

Popular cultures have been an important arena in western societies within and through which various groups have actively constituted and reworked their relationships to each other, to "others," and to changing social conditions as a whole. But the most important point is that *the same resources have not been universally available in these negotiations and struggles*. In certain contexts, some groups have been *empowered* more than others and this has had implications for the creation of socially dominant cultural forms and practices and their preservation through the process of institutionalization.

This leads the argument back to the problem of power. Many writers whose work is influenced by the general theory of

industrial society tend to say very little about power. When power is mentioned it is often used as a synonym for "influence" or "authority." For example, power in sports organizations, and in society as a whole, is seen to reside in, and be expressed through, established and legitimated structures of bureaucratic decision-making. Coercion is the obvious contrast to this rather benign view of power and can be defined simply as the exercise of power to get what one wants even if others resist. But this definition lends itself to simplistic dichotomies such as, for example, the powerful and the powerless. Social life is rarely so neatly packaged, and sometimes the "powerless" have many more resources at their disposal than is commonly realized.

A much better way to understand power is to view it as the capacity of a person or group of persons to employ resources of different types in order to secure outcomes (cf., Giddens, 1977:347). 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 resources that have allowed particular groups to do this are socially produced. They are constituted in and through the logic and patterning of the formal and informal conventions which underlie broader structures of economic, political, and cultural life.

The primary disposition of power in industrial capitalist societies has often been understood with respect to differences between social classes. However, writers influenced by the theory of industrial society tend to talk less about class power than about socio-economic inequalities of opportunity and the process of "democratization" in sport. Class in modern industrial society is usually treated in this formulation only as a statistical abstraction; classes are said to have been replaced by a broader plurality of interest groups. That is why, the argument runs, the same kinds of class conflicts and inequalities are no longer being worked out in sport as in the early "transitional" years between pre-industrial and industrial social formations.

Yet, if "capitalist society" rather than "industrial" (or even "post-industrial") society is considered, it is possible to get a different view of this. Over a hundred years ago, Karl Marx argued that "capitalism" should be seen both as a form of economic enterprise and as a type of society involved in a distinctive process of development. Marx felt that capitalism was a distinct type of

society because other institutions, and social and cultural practices, supported the basic forms of capitalist organization. Furthermore, as Anthony Giddens (1982:43) reminds us, Marx presumed that the origins of capitalism, as a type of economic enterprise, were established prior to industrial development and that certain emergent features of capitalist enterprise had provided the stimulus for industrialization.

From a Marxist perspective, it is impossible for class domination and inequality to disappear in the face of "modernization" because capitalism is an *inherently* class-divided type of society. Modern class structures may be complicated by residual class elements from the past — or seemingly intermediary "middle classes" — but there is a fundamental cleavage in capitalist societies between capital and labour. The owners of capital and their agents (e.g., managers, professionals) and the "working classes" define the essential character of the society as a whole by virtue of their unique social relationship. They depend on one another, but in a fundamentally unequal way.

Marxist writers emphasize that wage workers need to sell their labour to survive economically and that they have little say over the organization of work or the uses to which their labour power is applied. Their bargaining power is also said to be limited by the threat of unemployment, and the entire political system, it is theorized, is structured in a way which gives institutional support to the class structure (see Miliband, 1969).

### ***Sport in Capitalist Society***

Some critics, inspired by the Marxist tradition, have argued that modern sport should be seen both as a reflection of capitalist social processes and class relations, and as an expression of class power, social control, and the dominant ideology (see, for example, Hoch, 1972; Brohm, 1978; Rigauer, 1981). Some of the major ideas developed in this literature can be summarized briefly as follows:

(1) Marxist perspectives on sport emphasize how the dominant class that came into being with the advent of industrial capitalist production processes was able to extend its influence over all other areas of life. This not only included such areas as education, philosophy, politics, science, and the arts; it also included "leisure" activities such as games and sports. Members of the dominant class came to enjoy high levels of participation in certain "elite" sports, and often belonged to exclusive clubs.

However, it is also argued that they helped create, and eventually monopolized, national and international sports organizations. More notably, the dominant class was instrumental in the creation and control of highly commercialized team sports which were then "marketed" as spectacle to the new working classes.

(2) A related argument suggests that modern sport is actively involved in the *reproduction* of class power and unequal class relations. Attention is often directed towards the role of sport as a forum for exercising discipline and social control in schools and communities. Sport is also said to function as a vehicle for political socialization (learning particular ways of thinking and behaving) which reflects and reinforces the value preferences and beliefs of the dominant class. As a result of this socialization function, and because of its capacity to glorify state leaders and state policies, sport has become highly attractive to the capitalist state. State programs in sport, moreover, are seen to be generally representative of capitalist interests.

(3) Because of its role in social reproduction, sport is often viewed as a kind of ideological "product" of capitalist social relations (e.g., social classes) and productive forces (e.g., technology). As ideological forms, modern sport is seen to embody the values of hard work, discipline, and achievement demanded in a system of production geared to profit-making through the exploitation of mass markets. Modern sport currently dramatizes standards of hierarchy and success based on skill, celebrates commerce, and presents a false view of social progress based on the continuing assault on the record books. In a related way, it is argued, institutionalized sport reflects the rationalization process which has characterized the overall development of the capitalist labour process. Rationalization has transformed play into work and has created an artificial need for spectacle. As a result, it is argued, sports of all types are increasingly replete with the constraints characteristic of capitalist market operations: specialization, standardization, bureaucratic decision-making, over-reliance on technology, and the constant drive for efficiency and maximum production.

(4) Because of the reasons noted above, there has been a great emphasis on *alienation* in Marxist writing on sport. Although it is a complex concept, alienation can be loosely defined as an action or state of being in which a person, a group, or a whole society becomes alien (a) to the results or products of its own activity (and to the activity itself), and/or (b) to the natural world in which it lives, and/or to other human beings, and (in addition to any or all of the above) (c) to its own historically created human

possibilities. Sport in capitalist societies is often viewed both as an alienated activity on its own terms and as an overall manifestation of life in an alienated society. For example, it is often argued that, at the highest skill levels of sport, capitalist society has reduced athletic performances to simple objects of exchange value and commodity relations. Athletes are thus robbed of effective control over the expressive uses of their own bodies. At the same time, the excessive demand for (often violent) spectacle, and the obsessive pursuit of "leisure," can be viewed as a manifestation of a society where work has lost all meaning and the desire for political discourse has been replaced by the desire for escapist entertainment.

(5) The solution to these problems is said to lie with the eradication of capitalist social relations through the collective ownership of the means of production and the creation of a culture not tied to the values of possessive individualism and capital accumulation. In such a society, it is argued, "modern" sport will differ markedly from sport in industrial capitalist societies. Some writers have made this case in evolutionary language: sports practices in feudal society became transformed with the advent of new productive forces and capitalist social relations. Capitalist sport will become transformed in a similar fashion in the transition to socialism. The key model of development here is not seen as a transition from "traditional" to "modern" sport; rather, it runs from feudal sport, through capitalist sport, to socialist sports practices. Other writers in the Marxist tradition are more pessimistic about the inevitability of such changes in sport. They argue that the capitalist "consciousness industry" has effectively undermined any real basis for an oppositional class politics.

Marx's writing has been interpreted in many ways and there are often striking differences between various "Marxisms" in western countries. These differences are in evidence in the sports literature and, in this chapter, they have not been drawn out in any detail nor has it been suggested which of the above arguments have the greatest force and which need to be revised or discarded.

Some attention to these issues, however, is unavoidable. As a first point, it should be emphasized that the great strength of the Marxist tradition of writing on sport lies in its emphasis on power and ideology in cultural analysis — *precisely those areas which are least developed, or are discussed in highly problematic ways, in the theory of industrial society*. Furthermore, many of the insights about the *continuing* class character of modern sport

that are owed to the Marxist tradition have been an extremely important corrective to biases inherent in the modernization framework.

But in its evolutionary and most highly deterministic forms — or in versions which view culture in capitalist societies as *completely* co-opted by ideology — Marxist-inspired writing on sport has often proven to be one-dimensional and limiting. Consider just a few of these limitations. First, until just recently, there has been a tendency throughout Marxist writing on sport to employ one-sided and overly deterministic understandings of power and cultural practice. For example, the reduction of sports forms to simple economic or class determinations has led some writers to overlook the active and *meaningful* features of sport as cultural practices. Furthermore, Marxist writers have tended to pay so much attention to the appropriation of sport by the marketplace and to its containment by ideology and class interest that they have lost sight of the basis for its popular appeal. Many writers have also overlooked sport's role in various forms of resistance and opposition to capitalist processes and ideological discourses (cf., Hargreaves, 1982b; Gruneau, 1983).

It is not necessary to state the relationship between sport and class in capitalist society in such a reductionist manner. Sport is no more a passive reflection of capitalist social processes than it is of changes in technology or cultural values and beliefs. Rather, sport is better understood as shifting social and cultural practices which help to constitute particular ways of life. It is an expression of socially produced individual and collective wants, and choices of and capacities for entertainment, drama, excitement, or display, through competitive bodily practice. Sport signifies a great deal about ourselves and about different ways of living and in so doing contributes to the ongoing production of social life itself.

### ***The Labour Process and Commodification***

Despite the wide range of possible meanings in sport, it is important to understand how capitalist social relations have set limits and exerted powerful pressures on the constitutions of sport and society at varying historical moments. It may be too much to say that the dominant classes in capitalist societies have ever had a consistent or monolithic view of what sport is or ought to be (see the author's discussion of intra-class tensions in Chapter Three in Gruneau, 1983). Similarly, it seems a great exaggeration

to suggest that these classes have been completely successful in adapting every aspect of modern sport to their own uses, or even that sport has become fully transformed into an appendage of the capitalist labour process. But it is not so far off the mark to argue that (a) capitalist forms of production (e.g., private ownership of property, wage labour) have bestowed differential advantages to some groups over others in the making of modern sport and that (b) these forms have created strong pressures on the structuring of modern sports practices.

Some examples will illustrate these ideas. Harvey (1973) has noted how the drive to expand the sphere of capital accumulation throughout the nineteenth century created significant pressures for the "rational" ordering (for capital) of urban space. He even goes so far as to argue that the most distinctive feature of the modern city in capitalist countries was that *space itself became a commodity*. It is for this reason, Harvey argues, that the struggle over the uses of space and the whole ordering of the modern urban experience cannot be disentangled from class conflicts and relationships. If Harvey's arguments are accepted, it becomes impossible to view the close relationships between urbanization and the emergence of modern sport as a product of *industrial* development. The struggle over space for recreational use and for profit-making in western societies has involved processes that are *specific to capitalism as a social formation*.

Struggles over "rational" recreation and over "amateurism" were also implicated in the social production of distinctly capitalist forms of social and cultural organization. For example, the emerging structures of capitalist societies were partly consolidated through the demands made by the new buyers of labour power for a reconstitution of traditional ways of life compatible with wage work and timed factory production. It was in this context that certain "traditional" leisure practices suddenly became a "problem" and were subjected to regulation and "reform." Rational work discipline demanded equally rational leisure discipline!

Capitalist production processes also had the effect of separating further the spheres of home and work, production and consumption, throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Leisure became the time when labour was replenished physically and culturally, and it continued to offer choices for entertainment outside the constraints of the workplace. Yet, the choices available to people during "leisure time" were themselves largely shaped by the degree to which the new forms of

industrial work routine, cultural regulation, and urban living had destroyed more traditional forms of family and community life and their accompanying spaces, times, and opportunities for amusement. As a result, the time Canadians spent away from work became increasingly dependent on the marketplace as a source of personal gratification. This gave considerable impetus to the commodification of all forms of entertainment and popular cultural practice, and to the establishment of new hierarchies of consumption based on market position. Sport became one more site for capital accumulation and leisure expenditure. Facilities were increasingly provided by entrepreneurs for a fee, admission came to be charged for watching sports events, new labour markets for "professional" players opened up, and new markets were developed for sports equipment.

### ***Hegemony and the Changing Social Definition of Modern Sport***

As noted earlier, amateurism came to dominate the early institutional structure of modern sport in the late nineteenth century. The philosophy of amateurism was propagated from within these structures as the definition of what sport *ought* to be all about. It constituted a perception of sport as a form of respectable and "civilized" behaviour. Amateurism was also perceived to be useful as a cultural model for class conciliation. Males from the dominant and subordinate classes could supposedly be "brought together" as gentlemen on the playing field. Equally important here was the residual idea that true "gentlemen" were somehow above commercial considerations. Sport was an area where men might learn the lesson that "culture" was more important than commerce, fairness more noble than victory.

But this socially produced definition of sport was often at odds with people's real experiences. The ideology of class conciliation on the playing field could hardly dissolve real social divisions that were constituted through the capitalist labour process (cf., Cunningham, 1980; Gruneau, 1983). Furthermore, amateurism's emphasis on playing the game for its own sake, and its romantic denial of commercialism, were at odds with long-established commercial tendencies in popular culture and the relentless expansion of commodity production. The idea that there was something morally wrong with commercialized sports entertainment was simply unconvincing for large numbers of people.

Initiatives for leisure discipline, regulation, or reform have always had a contradictory character in capitalist societies. For every factory owner who bemoaned the lack of discipline at the workplace — or middle-class moral custodian who wanted to civilize the "rough" elements of the working classes — there seemed to be an entrepreneur prepared to market opportunities for pleasure, sociability, and escape. It is important to note here that most "consumers" were not prepared to accept excessively violent commercial recreations. The juxtaposition of a residual ideology of amateurism with the emerging structures of professional sport in Canada helped to secure an orderly audience for modern sports activities. Earlier forms of traditional gaming practice lost their rougher edges in their struggles and compromises with rational recreation and amateur traditions. Thus a new social definition of sport has become dominant within the institutional structures of sport in capitalist societies during the twentieth century. Sport has come to be widely understood as a completely open, achievement-based activity, conducted to further sports careers and reap economic reward. Also included is the notion that enjoyment in sport is tied to skill acquisition, that specialization is the basis of excellence, and that economic reward of some type or another is both justified and necessary at the highest levels.

This new dominant social definition of sports practice — and the full incorporation of professional sport as a part of sport's modern institutional structure — has become a constitutive part of the consolidation of capitalist *hegemony* in the modern world. The word hegemony refers to the whole range of processes through which dominant social groups extend their influence in such a way as to continually refashion their ways of life, and institutionalized modes of practice and belief, in order to win consent for the system and structure of social relations which sustain their dominant position (see Gramsci, 1971; Mouffe, 1979). Because no dominant social order ever completely exhausts or determines the range of possible available practices in cultural life, hegemony is an ongoing process. Social and cultural forms and practices, which are either residual or emergent, always pose a potential threat to dominant ones. So does the capacity to dream, to theorize, and to imagine a different world.

Dominant interests, however, tend to become centred in institutional life in ways that seek to *exclude* the full range of available human practice. This is what has happened with the institutional development of sport in western societies. "Modern" sport has emerged in its present form only through compromises and

struggles. Sports practices first became legitimated for the emergent dominant classes in capitalist societies by virtue of their "rational" incorporation into educational and reform agencies, sports clubs, and associations. This legitimation was dependent, however, on the reconstitution of the dominant meanings of sport in a way that separated it from politically dangerous or economically disruptive practices.

Amateurism developed as an ideological focal point in nineteenth-century sport because it was represented as the most rational, useful, and "civilized" model for organizing human physical contests. Certain men were able to employ the social resources that came out of their backgrounds in commerce and the professions to integrate amateurism fully into sport's emergent institutional structure.

Opposition to amateurism occurred against the background of a growing hegemonic "crisis" brought on by overproduction throughout western capitalist societies during the late nineteenth century. New industrial technologies had saturated traditional markets, and new markets for new commodities were desperately being sought in order to stave off recession and high unemployment. This "crisis" was solved temporarily by the development of mass consumer markets centred on products for the home and on commercialized leisure and entertainment opportunities. These responses to the "crisis," however, have put tremendous pressure on amateurism throughout the twentieth century and have increasingly pushed it to the cultural periphery. The new dominant social definition of sport has developed as part of the emerging hegemony and vested interests of consumer capitalism.

Many people take this current dominant social definition of sport for granted. It seems "natural" and legitimate. Yet, contradictory pressures in sport have not completely disappeared. Play and leisure in capitalist societies have deep-rooted features that maintain a constant contrast to the pressures of wage work, duty, and routine. Consumer societies sell commercialized pleasure, but pleasure-seeking itself is always a potential threat to "responsibility." Furthermore, certain forms of community sports activities continue to emphasize a side of sport that seems desperately lacking in the world of big money games and international athletic competitions between nation states.

It is fair to say that "fun runs" and local leagues, for example, are often quickly incorporated into dominant sports structures and meanings. But the desires for sociability and enjoyment,

which animate such practices, are never completely extinguished. Higher-level athletes are also often aware of the limits and possibilities of modern sport. A concern over athletes' "rights" or over forms of social inequality in sport demonstrates this awareness. Yet, one condition of hegemony is the great difficulty of coordinating such forms of opposition into any kind of coherent alternative to dominant structures and practices. It is far harder to talk about significant emergent tendencies in sport today than it was in the early or late nineteenth century. It is necessary to ask why this has happened and whether we are completely satisfied with the implications.

### Conclusions

Much more could be said about different theoretical frameworks within which to analyse the emergence of "modern" sport. For example, the issue of patriarchy — the domination of women by men — has scarcely been touched in this chapter. Yet, clearly there is an important story to be told here. One cannot examine the social development of sport and not be struck by the centrality of hegemonic conceptions of masculinity throughout western sport. Indeed, there is a continuity to this masculine hegemony which cuts across other fundamental social transitions in economic and cultural life. There is little in the theory of industrial society to aid in the understanding of this continuity. And, while the Marxist tradition better alerts us to sources of domination and their continuity in social life, Marxist writing, with few exceptions, has tended to maintain a huge silence on the question of gender relations.

Notwithstanding this and other limitations, work which maintains ties with the Marxist tradition has been highlighted in this chapter. It is not suggested that one should reject completely all of the concepts and ideas commonly associated with the theory of industrial society and its application to sport history. We are all compelled to some extent to talk about problems of "modernity."

Yet "modernization," as described in this chapter, can very easily become an ideological concept. It offers a partial explanation of the social development of sport as if it were a whole and complete analysis. Furthermore, many of the concepts and assumptions associated with modernization — and industrial society theories more generally — are closely interwoven with the ideological tenets of modern liberalism. These concepts and assumptions often

go unannounced and are presented as “objectivity.” The purpose of this chapter has been to suggest why such arguments must be treated with considerable scepticism. But beyond this, and at the very least, the concepts of capital accumulation, unequal class relationships and powers, commodification, and hegemony need to be fully considered in any adequate analysis of the social development of modern sport.

### Suggested Readings

Variations of industrial society theory as it applies to sport can be found in Allen Guttman (1978), *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports*, New York, Columbia University Press, and in Melvin Adelman (1986), *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press. For discussions of sport and hegemony, see John Hargreaves (1982), “Sport and Hegemony: Some Theoretical Problems,” in Hart Cantelon and Richard S. Gruneau (Eds.) (1982), *Sport, Culture and the Modern State*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press; Richard S. Gruneau (1983), *Class, Sports, and Social Development*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press; John Hargreaves (1986), *Sport, Power and Culture*, New York, St. Martin’s Press.

## Chapter Two

### The Growth of Organized Sport and the Development of Amateurism in Canada, 1807–1914

Alan Metcalfe

At the outbreak of the First World War, organized sport was being played and watched in villages, towns, and cities from Nova Scotia to British Columbia. It had penetrated the rural towns of francophone Quebec and the small hamlets on the North Thompson River, and had become a regular part of the activities of school-age Canadians across the country. This was a considerable change from the situation one hundred years earlier. The objective of this chapter is to provide an outline of the changes that occurred during this hundred-year period and to explain their significance. Is there anything that can provide some coherence to the history of the growth of organized sport? With respect to the forms and structures of sport and its particular Canadian pattern of development, the answer is yes. But in order to understand this pattern of development it is necessary to keep in mind that organized sport did not simply evolve by itself into the form we know today. Its growth was related to many factors that may be grouped under the structure/agency rubric, that is, organized sport, “as a distinct social practice [existing] in, and constitutive of, historically shifting limits and possibilities that specify the range of powers available to human agents at different historical moments” (Gruneau, 1983:140).

With the emergence of indigenous industrial capitalism in Canada, there was a reciprocal growth of capitalist social relations more in keeping with the new economic order. For organized sport, this meant that certain privileged ethnic and social groups could monopolize the scarce resources (e.g., leisure time and facilities) so that the resulting sports patterns bore the indelible print of their preferences.