Lecture 3: Sport and societal values

What are the dominant values in American society?

▶ What is a value?
  – "A culturally prescribed criterion by which individuals evaluate persons, behaviors, objects, and ideas as to their relative morality, desirability, merit, or correctness."
  – "conceptions of what is desirable; . . . the underlying assumptions by which individual and social goals are chosen."
  – Rokeach – terminal and instrumental values

▶ What are typically mentioned American values? Discussion.
  – Terminal values: success, materialism, progress, individualism
  – Instrumental values: hard work, continued striving, deferred gratification, competition, external conformity

▶ Sports values
  – Leonard, citing Edwards: the sports creed, or seven recurring value orientations in sport: character building, discipline, competition, physical fitness, mental fitness, religiosity, and nationalism
  – Others? Do you agree?

▶ Can we really agree on values?
  – How do values differ in different class locations, rural-urban, regional, ethnic groups, genders?
Lecture 3: Sport and societal values

- VIDEO: George Carlin. "Baseball vs. football"
  - Discussion. What does this say about the values underlying the two sports
    - Rural, old-fashioned values – baseball.
    - Urban, modern values – football.

- Dominant values in other cultures
    - Discussion. What are the differences between these two cultures as they are presented here?
      - Wa – team spirit and unity
      - Discipline and obedience; corporate ownership and mindset
      - Strategy more important than power
      - Role and treatment of gaijin – foreigners, mainly Americans
  - Evidence for differences in cultures around individualism - communalism, cooperation-competition, materialism
Lecture 3: Youth Sports

- Socialization into sport and socialization via sport
  - VIA: Participation (or non-participation) then has consequences for personality, skill, fitness, social relationships, etc.

- Socialization and development: theories
  - Two kinds of theories
    - those that postulate "stages" (development theories)
    - those that do not (socialization theories)
  - George Herbert Mead – not a formal stage theory
    - Play stage
    - Game stage
    - About rules
Lecture 3: Youth Sports

- Other approaches
  - the social learning perspective (Bandura) assumes nothing about the "readiness" of children to engage in various types of play.
  - The ethological perspective – assumes continuity between other animals and humans in forms of play.
- Studies of socialization via sport – focus on sportsmanship
  - Webb (1969)
    - his assumption was that "The transition from 'child's play' to games, and then to sport, involves increasing complexity and rationalization of the activities and increasing professionalization of attitudes."
    - By professionalization he meant "...the substitution of 'skill' for 'fairness' as the paramount factor in play activity, and the increasing importance of victory."
    - Findings: increasing importance of "success" and decreasing importance of "fairness" with age.
Gender differences in types of play and games

- Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg (1969) – "Sixty years of historical change in the game preferences of American children" (From 1896-1959)
- Janet Lever (1978) – based on children’s activity diaries. Differences:
  - Boys outside more
  - Boys’ play groups larger, more age-mixed
  - Boys play more competitive games
  - Boys’ games had more explicit goals; more often teams
  - Boys’ games more complex: more rules, more roles, more interdependence
  - Girls play in boys groups more than the reverse

Discussion:
- Why do these differences exist?
- What would different kinds of theorists say about them?
- Issues:
  - Does playing “bureaucratic” games and sports (with different people, different roles, for mal rules, etc.) socialize for the business world?
  - Does it teach a specific form of morality (impersonal and rule-centered rather than person-centered as suggested by Carol Gilligan)?
Lecture 3: Youth Sports

- Characteristics of organized sports for children in the U.S.
  - How does organized sports participation differ from informal sports participation?
    - Player-controlled games- groups of 2-12 kids
      - Characteristics of participants
      - kids are interested in four things
        (a) action, especially if it leads to scoring.
        (b) personal involvement in the action
        (c) a close score
        (d) opportunities to reaffirm friendships
        - "The informal games of children should not be romanticized"
    - Formal, adult-controlled games
      - Kids still interested in action
      - More emphasis on positions, rules
      - Differentiations begin between good and poor players
    - Comparison
Lecture 3: Youth Sports

- History of formal children's sport programs
  - For boys
    - 1903 New York City. The Public Schools Athletic League.
    - 1939 Little League Baseball
    - Football, basketball, soccer followed
  - For girls
    - Challenge to Little League in 1973 led to girls being admitted in 1974
    - Development of soccer leagues, etc. provide much more access – by 1980 over 1 million girls playing soccer
      - In 1971, 7% of high school varsity athletes were girls; in 1999, 41%
      - College change was 15% --> 42%
  - Problems in organized youth sports
    - Lack of adult comprehension of kids' abilities
    - Dropping out
    - Injury issues
Lecture 3: High School Sports

- High school sports
  - Discussion – you tell me about pros and cons of sports in high school
  - Problems
    - Injuries
    - Problems for athletes
      - Overemphasis and early recruitment, leading to "majoring in sports"
      - Solutions?
    - Problem for others:
      - Elitism – most students are closed out of sports
        - Fitness issues; dropping out of PE
        - Gender discrimination
      - Corporate sponsorship
      - Solutions?
  - VIDEOS:
    - Recruiting in grade school gyms (1993)
    - Friday Night Lights (1990)
    - High school girl plays football