Lecture 1: What is sport? Why do we play?

Introduction

Lecture 1: What is sport? Why do we play?

- What is "sport"?
  - Class discussion – how would you define sport?
    - On defining anything: ideal types
    - What are **your** criteria for categorizing things as sport?
    - Miller Lite report (years ago – in the 80's)

Auto racing	68%
Pool or billiards	53%
Chess	37%
Weightlifting	70%

    - Some quotes
    - VIDEO: George Carlin on what is sport

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- The difference between play, games, and sport– some definitions from sports sociologists
  - Play
    - It is free
    - It is separated in space and time
    - it is uncertain – outcome is unpredictable
    - it is non-utilitarian or unproductive – it is an end in itself
    - it may contain an element of make-believe.
  - Game
    - non-separate – there are goals for participating that originate outside the game itself (prestige, recognition, status, etc.)
    - it is not free -- there are rules, formal or informal, that the players must abide by
    - there is a seriousness about it – winning matters, and thus preparation is important
    - playing the game involves, at least for the time, collectivities that have meaning

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- Sport: three characteristics
  - The structure of the context in which the activities take place
  - The participants' orientations
  - The type of activity involved –
    - i. Spontaneity severely diminished
    - ii. Formal rules, structured roles
    - iii. Separation from rigor of daily life diminished
    - iv. Individual responsibility increased
    - v. Outcome becomes important to people not involved in the activity
    - vi. Goals complex; related to values coming from outside
    - vii. Activity consumes a great deal of time and attention, because of time preparation and seriousness
    - viii. Emphasis on physical and mental extension beyond the interest in the act assumes increasing dominance
- Other definitions

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- Why do we play?
  - Children's play – kinds of play
    - sensory play – running, jumping, splashing, mud
    - skill development – bike riding, throwing and catching, climbing, tumbling
    - dramatic play – making believe
    - formal games – starting with peek-a-boo, and getting more complex from there
  - Animal play – from Fagen, *Animal Play Behavior*
    - solo locomotor and rotational movements
    - developing locomotor or manipulative behavior repeated with slight variation
    - nonagonistic fighting and chasing maintained by social cooperation

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- Why do children play?
  - "Through play, children grow. They learn how to use their muscles; they develop the ability to coordinate what they see with what they do; and they develop a sense of mastery over their bodies. Through play, children learn. They find out what the world is like and what they are like. They acquire new skills and learn the appropriate situations for using them. They 'try out' different aspects of life. Through play, children mature. They cope with complex and conflicting emotions by reenacting real life in play. They make 'their lives more encompassable and endurable[Biber, 1971]'."
- Why do animals play? (According to Fagen)
  - "The central argument of this biological book on play behavior may be summarized, briefly and simply, as follows.
    - Animals risk time, energy, and injury to play.
    - They do so in certain environments and because play is important for development in those environments.
    - Through play, the cerebral cortex is stimulated to grow, to develop, and therefore to take a larger role in control of behavior, making that behavior more flexible.
    - Simultaneously, play experience produces adaptive modifications of effector structures, such as muscle, bone and connective tissue, used in that behavior.
    - Through play, animals acquire physical ability and develop social relationships." (Does this sound a bit like the human quote?)

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- Two current theories of play
  - 1. Play as competence motivation
    - Caused by a need to produce effect in the environment.
      - observing effects demonstrates competence and
      - results in feelings of effectance, which are pleasant
    - Effectance increases the probability of future tests of competence, through a reward function
  - 2. Play as information or arousal-seeking
    - Play is caused by the need to generate interactions with the environment or self that
      - maintains a flow of information through the organism and
      - thus maintains arousal near the optimal level for the individual
    - Assumptions:
      - a. Stimuli vary in their capacity to arouse
      - b. There is a need for optimal arousal
      - c. Change in arousal towards optimal is pleasant
      - d. The organism learns the behaviors that result in that feeling and vice versa.
  - 3. Relationship to Czikszentmihalyi (1975) ideas about "flow".

Lecture 1: What is sportsmanship?

- Your definitions and/or examples, positive and negative
- Hard to find a good definition
  - Lee and Cockman (1995) “Fair play and its related term ‘sportsmanship’ . . .
    - refer to patterns of behaviour in sport which are characterised by justice, equity, benevolence, and good manners while striving for athletic superiority." They also say,
    - "It embodies pro-social behaviour which goes beyond the bounds of conformity to rules and may be altruistic." and
    - Sportsmanship means "being of good disposition, accepting bad luck with the good, demonstrating positive behaviours toward opponents, and accepting defeats".
  - Shields and Bredemeier (1995) cite an ad hoc committee of the IOC which defined
    - *fair play* as requiring "as a minimum that [the competitor] shows strict, unfailing observance of the written rule. This will be the easier if [the competitor] appreciates the purpose of the rule and if [the competitor] recognizes that beyond the written rule there is a right spirit in which to engage in competitive sport. (P. 2)"
    - that *sports[man]ship* involves the simultaneous dedication to the internal goals of sport and a play spirit; only this conjunction will allow ethical behavior to be chosen when it conflicts with success strategy." (P. 24)
    - there are four critical processes that function together in the promotion of moral action in sporting situations: compassion, fairness, sports[man]ship, and integrity.
  - I don’t find any clear distinctions between these two concepts
- History and origins:
  - "The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton"

Lecture 1: Course Overview

- VIDEOS :
  - Unsportsmanlike conduct (CBS, 1995)
  - Where have you gone, Joe Dimaggio?
- The course: overview
  - A. Readings
  - B. Requirements
  - C. Personal Information Form
  - D. Choosing a Panel Topic