

Sociology assignment

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Observation Assignment Angie Poirier – 3263440 RSS 2023 – Introduction to Sociology of Sport and Physical Activity November 8, 2010 Introduction Sports are cultural practices that differ from place to place and time to time. How they are defined, organized, and integrated into social life varies from group to group. To understand sports we must view them as social phenomena (Coakley & Donnelly, 2004). Viewing sports as a social phenomena means that one must realize that there are many topics to be questioned and viewed upon with an open mind.

For my observation I attended a hockey game in my hometown of Summerside, Prince Edward Island on September twelfth. It was between the Summerside Western Capitals and the Dieppe Commandos in the Maritime Junior Hockey League (MHL). While watching this game, I focused on not only the game being played, but also the entire surroundings in the atmosphere. I observed the event with a critical perspective and by doing so I realized that sporting events are not just games; they are social phenomena with many sociological issues. Who Was Involved There were many people involved in this Sunday afternoon hockey game.

There were coaches, athletes, referees, volunteers, arena staff and fans. The coaches, as well as the trainers for both teams were all male. Their roles were to provide guidance, lead their players and offer support to the team from behind the bench. They are responsible for the well being of the team and for bringing out the best in the players. Their roles are crucial. All of the athletes were young men ranging in ages of sixteen to twenty years old. They were all there playing because they chose to be; they tried out for this

elite team and wanted to be there because of their passion for the game, and it showed.

The role of the athlete is a simple one; it is to deliver. They are expected to give their best performance each and every game. Both teams on the ice played a very hard fought game. Players from both teams seemed to be enjoying themselves and playing hard. Despite the fact that the Dieppe Commandoes lost 4-2 to the Capitals, they shook hands at the end of the game very respectfully. The three referees for this particular game were also all males. The official's jobs were to keep the game under control, to make calls on penalties and to ensure fair play between both teams.

They are an authority figure in the game and they deserve respect. When taking a closer look at the people involved during this game, I noticed that there were many volunteers involved. The people at all of the doors taking ticket stubs and stamping hands were volunteers. The people working at the fifty-fifty tables were volunteers. The ushers walking up and down the aisles of seats were volunteers. Needless to say that they game would not have been a success without the assistance of volunteers. Along with volunteers, the arenas staff members made the game progress smoothly.

From the announcers, to the canteen staff, to the zamboni drivers the paid staff members of the arena plays a huge role in making game-day work without any problems. On this particular day there were one thousand and thirty two people in attendance. There was a wide variety of people in that number; male and female, young and old. The role of the crowd is to provide support for their team in many ways; encouragement, financially, socially

etc. They go because they enjoy the sport and want to be behind their community's team. Who Was Absent In my hometown, the Summerside Western Capitals are very popular.

The entire community supports the Capitals organization and what it stands for. It's what everyone does on a Sunday afternoon. Attending the two o'clock game every Sunday is a way of life. Since the hockey games are a family/community setting and everyone attends, this means that the only people who were absent were those who had prior commitments, couldn't afford the ticket or those who were not hockey fans in general. Even in the latter case, I know of many people who don't enjoy hockey but still attend the games for the social aspect and because everyone else goes.

One may think that since the visiting team was all the way from Dieppe that fans of the Commandoes would be absent, however there was a significant section of the bleachers that were all Commandoes fans. Race/Ethnicity Before being able to understand the race and ethnicity issues that were involved with this hockey game it is important to understand what is meant by race and ethnicity. Race refers to a group of people who are distinct from other groups due to their physical traits that were passed on from previous generations. Ethnicity is different from race because it reflects the cultural heritage of a group of people.

Race and ethnicity are characteristics of every person, and sports involve complex issues related to them (Coakley & Donnelly, 2004). Cultural beliefs about race and ethnicity influence social relationships and the organization of social life. Sports not only reflect this influence but also are sites where

people challenge or reproduce dominant beliefs and forms of racial and ethnic relations in a society (Coakley & Donnelly, 2004). By paying particular attention to the people involved it was easy to see many race issues arise during the game.

The players, coaches and referees that were on the ice were all Caucasian. The fact there was no race issues on ice surface level is something to think about in itself. In the stands was a different story. The crowd consisted of Caucasians, as well as African Americans and Asian. I personally thought this was a terrific thing to see, especially in such a small town setting. On an ethnicity level there was also some areas of discussion. The Dieppe Commandoes are a primarily French speaking team. The majority of their fans were cheering in their mother tongue; French.

From my seat in the stands I could hear the players of the Commandoes speaking to each other in French as well. Gender Gender is a very controversial topic when it comes to the sport society. Sport is a social and cultural process in which social constructions of masculinity and femininity play a key role. Sport is traditionally associated with masculinity. In many societies, it is considered inappropriate for women to engage in sports, and women who do may be perceived as masculine. Conversely, men who do not engage in sports or who are not talented in sports may be labelled as unmanly (Sever, 2005).

Previously in history, women participating in sports were unheard of. As time went on, the participation rates of women increased for many reasons; new opportunities the Global Women's Rights Movement, equal rights legislation,

increased and improved media coverage of women in sport and expanding health and fitness movement (Coakley ; Donnelly, 2004). In the hockey game that I watched, it was primarily all males that were involved. All of the athletes, coaching staff and referees were men. The only women that were involved with the experience were some staff, volunteers and fans.

I am a certified personal trainer and as I sat and watched the game, I found myself wondering ‘ what if I was to apply for a Trainer job with one of the teams in the MHL? ‘ I then began to think what if a female was talented enough and wanted to try out for this team? All of these questions began to float through my head as I began to realize just how much of a male dominated sport that hockey is. Social Class Social class refers to categories of people who share a position in society based on a combination of their income, wealth, education, occupation and social connections (Coakley ; Donnelly, 2004).

Many people believe that sports and sport participation are open to all people and that inequalities related to money, position and influence do not spill over into the organized games we play and watch; but this is not true in the case of most formally organized sports (Coakley ; Donnelly, 2004). Social class can determine who decides to play and/or watch sports. From a financial income perspective, take hockey as an example; it is one of the most expensive sports to pursue as an athlete. Gear, registration and travelling expenses can add up to be a fortune.

On the other side of the coin, when teams charge admission to the games like the MHL does, it plays a role in who attends the games as spectators.

Unfortunately, not all people can afford to attend hockey games, so those who fall within a lower income category may or may not be able to attend the game even if they wanted to. From looking around the arena itself, there was a noticeable separation of classes. The box seats located around the top of the arena were only for wealthy people/businesses who could afford them. The average person paid their ticket price of ten dollars and was to sit throughout the stands.

Commercialization Sports have been used through history as forms of public entertainment. However, sports never have been as thoroughly commercialized as they are today (Coakley ; Donnelly, 2004). The commercialization of athletic sports, which is characterized by marketing the matches, building the patterns of management and administration along the lines of an enterprise and carrying material incentive strategy, not only promotes the athletic development but also brings certain side-effects (Niu, 2006). Sport has become a business. It is a major form of public amusement and entertainment.

Being in the atmosphere of the Maritime Junior Hockey League and really paying attention to this sociological issue made me realize just how much commercialization goes on. For example, ticket sales, advertisements, sponsorships and concession stands all point to the realization that in commercialization is very dominant in the MHL. It is safe to say that the MHL does not solely exist because of the love of the game; there is money to be made and money to be lost and it is because of this that major decisions regarding teams and players are made based on economic and entertainment factors.

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Conclusion As one can see, there are numerous issues associated with sports and their entities. It is important to understand that there are many sociological concepts and theories that are embedded in all sports. There is always more than what meets the eye and being able to look at the big picture is essential. Sport is the most dynamic activity in the world today, with the potential to contribute powerfully to a better world; the power and influence of sport is only just begun being understood (Coakley ; Donnelly, 2004). References Coakley, J. , ; Donnelly, P. 2004). Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies. McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited. Niu, Z. (2006). Study on the Side-effects of the Commercialization on Competitive Sports and the Strategy to Deal with Them. Retrieved November 5, 2010 from http://en.cnki.com.cn/Article_en/CJFDTOTAL-TJTY200601024.htm Sever, C. (2005). Gender ; Sport Mainstreaming Gender in Sports Projects. Retrieved November 5, 2010 from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/47/42/44896326.pdf> Grant Assignment Angie Poirier – 3263440 RSS 2061 Recreation and Sport Delivery Systems For: Evan MacInnis