

How can a  
sociological approach  
to examining sport  
and leisure help us to  
underst...

[Health & Medicine](#), [Sex](#)



In order to answer the question above I will use a number of references and through my own finding by reading around the subject area I will critically evaluate the theories that inform the understanding of sport and leisure in this current day society. Anthony Giddens provides a general definition of Sociology. " The study of human groups and societies, giving particular emphasis to the analysis of the industrialized world. Sociology is one of a group of social sciences, which also includes anthropology, economics, political science and human geography. The divisions between the various social sciences are not clear-cut, and all share a certain range of common interests, concepts and methods. ". (A. Giddens 1989) But many can argue that you cannot define sociology, as there are no barriers that it cannot cover under the Term Sociology. Participation rate of sporting activities can be compared to show the differences, patterns and trends of the participation according to gender. A survey By the General Household survey (GHS, 1996) showed that " 77% of adult women (aged 16+) take part in sport at least once a year and 56% take part at least once a month. " In Comparison to men " 87% of men take part on an infrequent basis at least once a year and 71% take part on a more frequent basis". This shows that one of the key findings is that men play more sport than women on average. And this is a historical trend that shows that femininity has limited the number of opportunities that are available for women to play sport, in comparison of the number of opportunities that are available to male sporting players, due to the smaller demand for gender specific sports for example, A women's Football league is not as developed as the male

equivalent in the same geographical location weather that's at a local level or national. Another Key finding was that institutional barriers may also limit the number of opportunities for women to take up roles in a sporting organisation or allowing the development of women's sport. This can be due to a feministic view that don't allow equal opportunities and show a divide between male and female sports. According to Sue Tibballs (" Women in Sport Audit", 2007-2008 P1) " As 51% of the population, women offer a huge space for sport to grow. Yet, the low representation of women at a senior level, and the low share of investment and media profile that women's sport enjoys , puts that possible future growth at risk. This is not just an opportunity cost in terms of new participants, consumers and sporting success stories" In terms of sports teams again there can be an underrepresentation of women in coaching roles and administrative roles. According to NCAA women's team sports in 2006, 33% of women's soccer coaches were female, " (Sagas et al., 2006) In terms of interactionist theory the effect of being coached by male coaches may significantly impact the progression of the own development thinking that they may not be able to take up roles that their coaches currently have. In terms of Administrative roles, " Just four of the 35 English and British NGB's Surveyed have a female Chief executive. " Sue Tibballs (" Women in Sport Audit", 2007-2008 P1) The Trivialising of Women's sport has affected the multiplier effect through to the amateur level, for example the difference between the achievements of a Professional male sports team in comparison to a Professional female sports team. They are not perceived as equal achievements. E. g. Male Football

Premier league Title winners / Female Football Premier League title. Other barriers faced by female athletes, Is the Perception that women cannot be involved in a traditionally male dominated sport. For example Women's boxing is a sport that has seen feministic views stopped the participation of females in this sport, Until the 20th Century where it was recognised as a sport that females could professionally compete in. E. g. Barbara, Buttrick who was the first Official Female World Champion. A Neo-Marxist approach to Sport and gender argues that Sport can be a mirror of capitalist society due to the commercialisation of modern day sports involving structure and a basis on which a capitalist system of production can occur. And that the modern day people are trapped by the basis on which the sport was founded as the ideology has not or cannot change. (Hargreaves: " Sporting Female": 1994 P17) " But the tendencies towards reductionism in economic perspective produce exaggerated accounts of a complete correspondence between sports and the mode of production, as if people are unavoidably trapped by the structural conditions of capitalist sports" The extensive comparisons between sport and gender show that traditionally the Marxist mode of production can be used to maintain the consistent ideology that forms the basis of capitalism. (Hargreaves: " Sporting Female": 1994 P17) States " Brohm, Hoch and Vinnai were three of the first theorists to look in some detail at the relationship between sports and sexuality. They argue that sexuality is mediated in sport; that sexual repression is necessary for the survival of capitalism; and that the machismo ethos of sports, by bonding men together, is fundamental expression of male power and domination over

women. " So this traditional dominance over women could relate to the domination of men in sport its self, as well as men showing their dominance over women by controlling the governance of sporting organisations. And also it can be argued that men use sport as a way of regulating the stereotype of male sexuality and power that comes from dominance over women. Whilst Marxist theory is based as a humanist theory it can have limitation as it does not always account for changes in situation which would have changed the Ideology or the resistance of human nature. According to a Structuralist Marxist, The theory of reproduction can explain how dominating cultures and social relations can be reproduced and mirror. They say that " A major implication of theories of social reproduction is that social structures inevitably ensure that the dominant culture, class and power relations are reproduced and there is a ' structural causality' in the way the whole society works" (Hargreaves: " Sporting Female": 1994 P18-19) so using this theory we can understand the historical reasoning's behind the trends of participation in gendered sporting, by understanding that in theory the trends from 50 years ago will mirror the trends of today. " In sports, it is claimed, people learn rules and meaning unconsciously so that culture is automatically reproduced in a way which serves the needs of capitalism. " (Hargreaves: " Sporting Female": 1994 P19) Feminism is a theory of that applies that being of female gender influences social stance, life chances and political power. And in contemporary society this can be shown by inequality. One of these inequalities is the media representation that female sports and athletes get in comparison to male sports. According to Sue

Tibballs ("Women in Sport Audit", 2007-2008 P4) "Just 2% of articles and 1% of images in the sports pages of national newspapers are devoted to female athletes and women's sport" This under representation of women's sport in the media does not allow for highflying role models to be represented, offering little for inspiring young female athletes and sports women. Feministic stereotype is that women don't like watching sport full stop, but this is not the case it is often these sports that get a limited amount of media coverage, In these cases it is just often through interactulism that these people get into these sport; In most cases this would be a parent or through a friend, because otherwise the , For example "Team sports featuring only men have, not surprisingly, a male dominated audience. However, the traditional view that women just aren't interested in watching sport doesn't play out. Athletics, skiing and tennis all have a fan base with almost a 50: 50 split, whereas swimming equestrian, gymnastics and ice skating all achieve a fan base that is predominantly female. But none of these sports are specifically women only, but all are generally individual sports" Sue Tibballs ("Women in Sport Audit", 2007-2008 P4) Sport Socialization can play a big role in the trends and participation of certain Genders within the sporting model. "The term 'sport socialization' refers to the complex processes by which individuals are encouraged to participate in a sport or physical activity. " H. Jefferson- Lenskyj ("Women, sport and physical Activity" 1994 P7) In the case of Sport Socialization this may provide a basis that both male and females can be compared under the same conditions. But in reality they cannot be compared without taking into

account feministic views. As argued by H. Jefferson- Lenskyj (" Women, sport and physical Activity" 1994 P7) " This ' Female deficit' Model upholds traditional male values and attitudes in sport as the ideal. Female perspectives are judged by the male standard and found lacking, and women are blamed for having the ' wrong' attitude. " In the case of some sports that have been predominately and historically male sports the barriers for a female gender to participate in this sport, will be view by the male members as being out of depth and intruding into ' Their' Sport. This view by men is feministic and can often bring into question the reasons why females may participate in these sports, which may result in the question of a female's sexuality. (H. Jefferson- Lenskyj 1994) In conclusion there are a lot of theories that can be used to compare the sociological reasoning's behind the gender trends that occur in our society, but a lot of these theories can be useful, others can be out dated and limited on the relevance in modern day society as they can be 80 years old and society has changed a lot in that time and so too has sport and the way that women and men are viewed. Interactionism theory can be very relevant in understanding the trends of modern day sporting society. On the other hand the participation of women in sport and leisure shows that in the last 30 years the number of women has been increasing, More on the Leisure & fitness side, rather than in traditional sport such as football, rugby and cricket. Although the number of women participating in these traditional sports has increased. The rate of participation of Predominantly Female sport are still on the rise. The Barriers to women that have occurred in the past 30 year seem to be lowered, with

the better acceptance of women in admin and high level roles in the large sport governing bodies. And along with the increased promotion of Female Elite athletes and Sportswomen, which will provide the basis for ideology by young inspired female athletes. Where future generation will have a better acceptance of women in sport; not just in female dominated sports but in male dominated sports. Words: 1819 References Anthony Giddens, Student resources glossary, Available at: [http://www. polity. co. uk/giddens6/students/glossary/s-z. asp#s](http://www.polity.co.uk/giddens6/students/glossary/s-z.asp#s) , Accessed date (23rd may 2012)

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