

# 1 ☐ Theories of Society & Sport

## 2 ☐ Social Theories

- ♣ Theories are general views on how the world works, in a sense *ideologies*
- ♣ Theories involve a combination of
  - Description - what to, how to
  - Reflection - what is important
  - Analysis - causes, connections
- ♣ Theories have practical implication because they help us make choices
  - In a sense *ideologies* but ....

## 3 ☐ Personal vs. Sociological Theories

- ♣ Social theories are like ideologies but
  - Personal theories are ideologies
- ♣ Different
  - Not because *not* biased
    - All theories are biased
    - Must presume things about society
  - Different because explicit
    - Makes bias explicit
    - Exposes to criticism (by design)

## 4 ☐ Six (5?) Major Social Theories

- ♣ Identified in Text
  - Functionalist theory
  - Conflict theory
  - Interactionist theory
  - Critical theories
  - Feminist theories
  - Figurational theory

## 5 ☐ Functionalist Theory

- ♣ Society is an organized system of interrelated parts
- ♣ Sports are studied in terms of their contributions to the system
- ♣ Research "focuses on positive outcomes for individuals and society"  
[text]
  - But also how sports can be disfunctional
  - Aspects of deviant behaviour

## 6 ☐ Functionalist Theory (cont.)

- ♣ Popular because assumes that shared values and agreement are the basis for social order
- ♣ Those with power and influence often prefer it because it emphasizes stability and equilibrium in society
- ♣ Media coverage often are based on the same assumptions as functionalist theory

## 7 ☐ Using Functionalist Theory

♣ **How sports promote social integration**

- Development and growth of organized sports
- Sport participation and individual development
- Combat deviance though:
- Elite programs as rôle models for the young

8 ☐ **Weaknesses of Functionalist Theory**

- ♣ **Overstates the positive consequences of sport in society**
- ♣ **Assumes that all social groups benefit equally from sports**
- ♣ **"Does not recognize that sports are social constructions that privilege or disadvantage some people more than others" [text]**

9 ☐ **Weaknesses of Functionalist Theory?**

- ♣ **Assumes all groups benefit equally?**
  - In the overall picture
    - What's good for 'society' must be good for all its members
    - Argues that inequalities are good for society
- ♣ **"Does not recognize that sports are social constructions"?**
  - No, just that society constructs
  - Not individuals, groups

10 ☐ **Conflict [Marxist] Theory**

- ♣ **Society is determined by economic relations**
  - Class relations
  - Exploitation
- ♣ **Sports promote capitalism**
- ♣ **Research: how does sport perpetuate capitalism?**

11 ☐ **Conflict Theory (cont.)**

- ♣ **Those with power dislike because argues that power is source of problems in society**
- ♣ **Many people dislike because it argues that the social order is the problem**
- ♣ **Seldom used in sports discourse because it portrays sport as part of the problem, not solution**

12 ☐ **Using Conflict Theory**

- ♣ **Focus on class inequality and how it distorts sports**
- ♣ **Tries to show how athletes and spectators are exploited by capitalists**
  - Alienation of athletes and spectators
- ♣ **Argues that sports not for profit can benefit people**

13 ☐ **Weaknesses of Conflict Theory**

- ♣ **Assumes that all social life is "economically determined"**
- ♣ **Ignores the importance of gender, race & ethnicity, age, & other factors in social life**

- ♣ Ignores the possibility that sport might empower people
  - ♣ Can produce functionalist arguments
- 14 ☐ **[Symbolic] Interactionist Theory**
- ♣ Society is created through social interaction
  - ♣ Sports are studied through the meanings, symbols, people create in social interactions
  - ♣ Research on how people experience sports, how identities are created
- 15 ☐ **Interactionist Theory (cont.)**
- ♣ Uses “interpretive research methods”
    - Social processes involved in becoming, being, and unbecoming an *athlete*
    - How people create, negotiate, identities as athletes
    - The meanings, symbols, people give to sports
    - The characteristics of sport subcultures
- 16 ☐ **Using Interactionist Theory**
- ♣ Change sports by changing the meanings we attach to sports
  - ♣ Trying to shape the meanings of events in sports
  - ♣ Question identity formation processes that involve the normalization of pain, injury, & substance use in sports
- 17 ☐ **Weaknesses of Interactionist Theory**
- ♣ Does not explain how meaning, identity, and interaction are connected with social structures and materials conditions in society
  - ♣ Ignores issues of power and power relations in society and how they impact sport, sport participation, and sport experiences
- 18 ☐ **Critical Theories**
- ♣ Society involves cultural production, power relations, & ideological struggles
  - ♣ Sports are social constructions that change as power relations change and as narratives and discourses change
  - ♣ Research focuses the meaning and organizations of sports, and on sports as sites for cultural transformation
- 19 ☐ **Critical Theories (cont.)**
- ♣ Assume that sports are more than reflections of society/capitalism, study
    - Struggles over the organization & meaning of sports
    - How dominant narratives, images are used to construct and give meaning to sports
    - How marginalized voices and perspectives are erased from the discourse of sports in society
    - How dominant narratives, images, and power relations can be disrupted to promote progressive changes
- 20 ☐ **Using Critical Theories**
- ♣ Use sports to challenge and transform exploitive and oppressive practices

- ♣ Increase diversity in sport
  - ♣ Challenge the dominant discourses, ideology, in sports
  - ♣ Challenge those in power in sports and society
    - Speak for the marginalized
- 21  **Weaknesses of Critical Theories**
- ♣ No clear guidelines for identifying and assessing forms of resistance and strategies for producing transformation
  - ♣ No unified strategies for dealing with social problems, conflicts, and injustice
    - Difficult to translate into practice
    - Difficult to translate into plain English
- 22  **Feminist Theories**
- ♣ Social life is pervasively gendered
    - Patriarchy
  - ♣ Sports are gendered activities based on masculine values and experiences
  - ♣ Research how sports reproduce patriarchy through physicality, sexuality, and the body
- 23  **Feminist Theories (cont.)**
- ♣ Feminist theorists study
    - How sports are involved in the production of ideas about masculinity and femininity
    - How women are (mis)represented in media coverage of sports
    - Strategies used by women to resist or challenge dominant gender ideology
    - The patriarchal structures of sports and sport organizations
- 24  **Using Feminist Theories**
- ♣ Challenge aspects of sports that privilege men over women
  - ♣ Expose and transform sexism and homophobia in sports
  - ♣ Use sports as sites to empower women and promote forms of sport that reflect the interests of women
    - Speak for women
- 25  **Weaknesses of Feminist Theories**
- ♣ Lack clear guidelines for assessing forms of resistance and the value of ideas and actions in producing social transformation
  - ♣ Assume that there is a unified "women's interest"
    - Many women argue that it is not their interest
- 26  **Figurational Theory**
- ♣ Society consists of patterns of interdependencies, figurations, among individuals and groups
  - ♣ Development of society/sports linked to the civilizing process

- External, violent, restraints are replaced by internal, self-regulatory, ones
- Sports become less violent, brutal, and more organized

## 27 **Figurational Theory (cont.)**

### ♣Sports are important because

- Development, the civilizing process exemplified in sport
  - Decrease in violence
  - Centralization or organization
- Are exciting activities that relieve boredom and control violence

## 28 **Figurational Theory (cont.)**

### ♣Research focuses on developing knowledge that presents valid pictures of reality

### ♣Those who use it are concerned with

- How social figurations emerge and change
- How modern sports emerged and became important in certain societies
- The complexities of global sports and local and national identities

## 29 **Using Figurational Theory**

### ♣Develop knowledge that may:

- Give rise to strategies for controlling expressions of violence, exploitation, and the abuse of power
- Increase access to sport participation among those who have lacked power through history

## 30 **Weaknesses of Figurational Theory**

### ♣Gives too little attention to problems & struggles that affect day-to-day lives

### ♣Understates the immediate personal consequences of oppressive power relations

### ♣Has not given enough attention to the experiences of women and the gender inequities that affect their lives

## 31 **What Theories are Best?**

### ♣Theories are tools that help us ask questions, collect and analyze information, and interpret the implications of the analyses

### ♣Our choice of theories is influenced by our goals and political agendas

### ♣The best theories are those that help us find ways to make the world more democratic and humane? [text]