Sport

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Sport as a model

Anthropologists writing about sport, games, or play often begin by entreating readers to take these objects of inquiry "seriously"—that is, to consider their political, economic, or social stakes. Yet as sport saturates so many domains of contemporary life, including the economies of universities, few need to be convinced that sport is a central focus of concern and capital. There have been numerous compelling arguments to explain the peculiar mismatch between sport's ubiquity and importance in everyday life and global politics and its still marginal status in anthropology, a discipline ostensibly in tune with the sacred and mundane day-to-day processes of life-making around the world. For example, Alan Klein (2002) observes that sport has remained a marginal domain in anthropology precisely because it is a window through which scholars have appraised the more "serious" domains of economics, politics, or religion. Even in Clifford Geertz's celebrated essay on the Balinese cockfight ([1973] 2000), the central object of interest is not the cockfight itself but the nexus of social, political, and personal stakes played out through the arena of the cockfight. The cockfight, as game or sport, is thus part of a larger text through which one can read elements of greater, more "serious," consequence. What makes sport interesting for anthropologists is how social actors and analysts alike have taken it as a model of and for a dizzying variety of cultural forms. There are two dominant frameworks through which the consequentiality of sport has figured: (1) reinforcement: sport reveals or unmasks some aspect of social organization or values; and (2) transformation: sport transforms some aspect of social organization or values. In both, the meaning, function, or purpose of sport emerges in a story about its relationship to something else—nationhood, gender, race, class, power, and modernity, to list just a few.

Anthropological treatments of play most completely elaborate the "model for" quality of sport. "Play" engages cultural processes such as mimesis, framing, and social reproduction. Thus, rather than attempting to wring out "play" in order to make sport significant, the suggestion here is that we put sport back in conversation with the rich literature in anthropology on play in order to make sense of how powerful dichotomies such as nature/culture, body/mind, and self/collective frame the analytical and lived experiences of leisure as labor. This is not to argue that we eschew the profound political, economic, and social dimensions of sport in favor of analyses that stress frivolity or fun, either in their object or manner of exposition. Nor is the suggestion that we must view sport "in itself" rather than as a model of relations to other domains. Instead, one of the most powerful reasons to pursue anthropology of sport is to make explicit

how assumptions about "play" animate broader theories of culture, embodiment, and performance.

The perspective in this entry pertains primarily to cultural and linguistic anthropology. There have been four-field approaches to sport— for instance, see "Prehistory and Early History of Sport" in Blanchard 1995, 95–128, for an overview of Mesoamerican and North American archaeology of sport, and for a biocultural approach to sport, see the collection by Robert Sands (1999). Kendall Blanchard (1995) provides one of the only introductory textbooks to the anthropology of sport, an ambitious attempt to introduce anthropology and sport from a four-field perspective. The text is primarily organized according to an "evolutionary" perspective: Blanchard associates forms of sport with different scales of social organization. Its wide scope and target audience of undergraduates unfamiliar with anthropology diminishes its theoretical contribution. Blanchard develops his own work on Native American sports more thoroughly elsewhere. A theoretically engaging and ethnographically rich introduction to the cultural anthropology of sport remains to be written.

Sport studies more generally is characterized by a rich plurality of theoretical and methodological approaches, from disciplinary perspectives as diverse and sometimes overlapping as history, philosophy, psychology, performance studies, media studies, and gender studies, to name but a few. In contrast to some domains of culture, sport has also sparked a wide a range of literature for popular audiences. Popular writing on sport includes a variety of genres, including sportswriting commentary, memoir, and literary nonfiction. Writers of all stripes, from Ernest Hemingway, A. J. Liebling, Joyce Carol Oates, John McPhee, and George Plimpton to David Foster Wallace, have made sport captivating as literature. To write about sport, then, is to engage with this literary landscape. The relative dearth of anthropological accounts of sport has to do with the historically unprivileged status of leisure and play as objects of study and also with the reticence of anthropologists to write for popular audiences about popular culture. In recent years, anthropologists have begun to productively work against these unnecessary hindrances (see Starn 2011). Writing about sport is not a diversion but a chance to address one of the most significant symbolic and material organizations of political, economic, and social life. It challenges anthropologists to interact with a diverse set of interlocutors across disciplines, as well as social actors in domains of sport and public life for whom investments in sport vary considerably. The interdisciplinary and public audiences for sport analyses await richly textured ethnographic accounts, especially as they can introduce non-Western settings and forms of long-term engagement that clarify how sportive values and practices emerge through interaction.

Contemporary approaches to the anthropological study of sport, then, are less about constructing boundaries between this rich and variegated field of perspectives than about finding thematic threads to bind them together with the immersive and mobile perspectives that anthropology affords. Aside from a reliance on long-term participant observation fieldwork, a methodological tool shared to some degree with other disciplines such as qualitative sociology, one of the key cornerstones of the anthropological approach has been to bring holistic, cross-cultural critique to bear on questions of social difference. Sport studies have predominantly focused on athletes in Europe

and the United States. Part of this has to do with what "sport" has meant, as "modern" forms developing in Europe in the nineteenth century and diffusing outward in complex ways. This orientation is also a consequence of the linguistic and cultural limitations of English-language sports studies scholarship, which has privileged Europe and the United States for reasons of accessibility. Further, athlete-centric reckoning of sport's meanings, which focus on the exceptional individual as the key site of interest, reflect a narrow view of sport as coterminous with elite athletic performance. Anthropological accounts have the potential to describe broader patterns in the matrix of social actors in the field of sport: doctors, nutritionists, chemists, coaches, media personae, local, national, international institutional actors, governments, sponsors, referees, and judges. A more inclusive view of the participants of "sport" requires that we engage with what the term "sport" designates. It is to this question that we turn next.

Sport, game, play

Because sportive forms are widely varied, there is some disagreement about how to accurately delimit the characteristics of sport and what the stakes of doing so might be. Sport-like games, physical activities, and competitions exist around the world but participants and analysts do not always assign them to the category of "sport" for historical, political, and social reasons. Even scholars who approach sport as ultimately springing forth from the human universal of "play" recognize "modern sport" as a historically contingent designation. The historical force of English and Western European formations has shaped sport's global forms. Sport is part of a larger historical arc of European influence in which leisure was positioned as opposed to labor. From this opposition, the amateur/professional distinction hinged on the issue of financial remuneration, just as the elite/mass sport distinction was a cypher for elite labor versus non-elite leisure. From the very beginning, "sport" was shot through with class dimensions. The historical development of the category of "sport" and its social meanings was connected to the rise of the modern European nation-state. In anthropological accounts of "sport," the designation has often included, tacitly or explicitly, an orientation to European models and traditions, even as it has described physical activities beyond European traditions (including "resistance" to European models). This is not to say that the term "sport" is inherently problematic or in need of revision but rather that it is necessarily bound up with genealogies of distinctions emerging from and focused on England, Europe, and the United States.

If pressed to give a definition of sport, what does one say? Positing robust, useful analytical distinctions between "sport," "game," and "play" is notoriously challenging. Put simply, the boundaries between "sport" and other forms of activity are blurry, whether one's perspective is historical, social, political, or economic. Sports historian Allen Guttmann has presciently remarked that "quibbles about the definitions of sport are tedious" (2004, 1). Unfortunately, we must bear this tedium for the next several paragraphs, since it nonetheless plays a role in how the domain of "sport" has or has not been marked off from its social, political, and historical surround. That is, positing or erasing distinctions among sport, games, leisure, play, and recreation is part of the

preliminary work of establishing the framework for making sense of any given practice. Allen Guttmann (2004) proposes a schema in which he defines sport as consisting of physical contests of competitive games, which are a form of organized play. He divides "play" into spontaneous versus organized (games). Within organized play (games), there are noncompetitive and competitive games (contests). Within competitive games (contests), there are intellectual contests and physical contests (sports). Guttmann's framework is useful insofar as it orients our attention to sport as a subset of play based on physical, competitive contests, even if these divisions are difficult to make in practice. He defines "modern sport" not by chronology but according to a set of interrelated structural characteristics: secularism, equality, bureaucratization, specialization, rationalization, quantification, and the obsession with records (Guttmann 1994, 2–3). Along with these dimensions, scholars often define modern sport by its high degree of standardization, regimentation, codification, and commoditization.

The sport/game distinction is contentious and analytically difficult. Considering activities like bodybuilding, chess, or mountain biking alongside one another calls into question the firmness of a sport/game delineation. In *Sports in the Western World* (1982), for example, William J. Baker uses sport in a broad sense to describe competitive contests and games, thereby stressing the commonalities in a historical account of sport in the Western world. Like other sports historians grounded in Western narratives, Baker traces sport's physical, economic, and political dimensions to Greece and describes historical phases of change. In doing so, Baker does not make a distinction between physical games and sport. Billiards figures in his account alongside boxing. There is not the space here to do justice to the vast social–historical research that has described the many dimensions of particular sport forms, from chess to sumo, nor to attend to accounts that have made arguments about historical periodization, developmental stages, and geopolitical and social currents that have molded contemporary practices or produced moments of significant friction. Suffice it say that one of the key axes around which historical literature has turned is the tradition/modernity divide. Many historians acknowledge the socially variable and constructed dimensions of both tradition and modernity, even as they use them to demarcate moments of distinction. Scholars (1) emphasize sport's distinctiveness and, in doing so, posit elements that differentiate sport in some way from other physical activities and from nonphysical games or contests; and (2) stress continuities among sport, games, play, and physical activity and, in doing so, posit elements that unify sport and other domains. These approaches are at times compatible—many historians see "modern sport" as distinctive in form, though arising from long-standing (if not universal) elements of humans and culture. Narrowing the meaning of "sport" to specify particular historical forms has the benefit of delimiting the ways that sport, as an ideological, economic, and political domain, has been distinct. Positing "modern sport" as distinctive has allowed scholars to consider how sportive practices have been contrastive, reflective, or transformative of other "modern" domains of physical practice. The label "sport," however, matters beyond creating analytic abstractions. The ramifications of defining an activity as "sport" are not purely academic but also are institutional, economic, and social. A few examples will highlight this.

Tony Hawk is one of the most influential skateboarders of all time. In his esteemed career as a "vert" skater, that is, one who does maneuvers or "tricks" on a half-pipe ramp, he was the first to successfully perform a "900," a maneuver in which the skateboarder does an aerial spin through 2.5 rotations (i.e., 900 degrees), an acrobatic feat of balance. Tony Hawk is also known for a series of skateboarding video games licensed under his name. From the comfort of one's console, one can control an avatar capable of completing skateboard tricks that even the real Tony Hawk would not be able to manage. "Extreme sports" such as skateboarding have increased in popularity for spectators and participants alike since the birth of the "X Games" in 1995, a large-scale sporting event arranged by ESPN to showcase motocross, inline skating, skateboarding, snowboarding, mountain biking, and other so-called extreme sports. At the X Games, there is a category called "eSports," which consists of professional multiplayer video game competitions. This includes games such as *League of Legends*. Professional *League of Legends* players refer to themselves as "athletes." To be an athlete typically denotes participation in a sport and suggests physical exertion or endurance. The physical demands of *League of Legends* or *Tony Hawk Pro Skater 4* aside, there is a more significant reason for applying the term "athlete" to video-game players: as of 2013, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services recognized professional players of *League of Legends* as "professional athletes," which simplified their visa process and allowed them to stay in the United States for up to five years. "Athlete" is thus a term of legitimation. To be sure, there is a difference between Tony Hawk and his avatar, between a casual player of *The Sims* and an internationally competitive professional gamer, but terms like "athlete" or "sport," whatever distinctions they highlight, are insufficient to capture these differences.

Another example comes from an ongoing debate in the United States about whether cheerleading is a sport. This debate circles not only around the status that the term "sport" confers but, more importantly, around whether Title IX of the US Education Amendments Act (1972) should apply to cheerleading, as it would, were it considered a "sport," qualify for financial support. In the early 2000s, the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches & Administrators (AACCA) released a position paper entitled "Cheerleading as a Sport" in which they trace cheerleading, defined as "primarily a support group that leads group yells at sports events," to the late 1800s and note that in recent years coaches and participants, feeling a lack of "funding and respect," thought that defining cheerleading as a sport would solve these problems. As it turned out, this led to a host of unexpected problems: "most states added the restrictions that go along with being a sport: transfer rules, limited practice time, fundraising restrictions, and limits on competition travel and participation in national competitions" (AACCA, n.d.). To work around these issues, and to avoid the stigma of being just another school activity, the AACCA officially proposed the category "athletic activity." Though this may seem trivial, this example reveals how the "sport" designation is a source of contention and of institutional concern—more than just "respect" is at issue with defining an activity as "sport."

In 2009, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that cheerleading was a contact sport, which meant that its participants could not sue in the event of an accidental injury. Hence, the designation of "contact sport" was a means by which to circumvent liability.

Each state works differently: the vast majority of states do not regulate cheerleading as a sport because to do so would mean, according to Title IX, that it would be "competitive" and hence would prohibit cheerleaders from cheering at local games since that would be a support role rather than a competitive one. Under Title IX, defining cheerleading as a sport would make it possible for cheerleading squads only to compete against other squads. In 2011, this led to the development of a new sport called "STUNT" which "removes the crowd-leading element and focuses on the technical and athletic components of cheer, including partner stunts, pyramids, basket tosses, group jumps and tumbling" (USA Cheer, n.d.). The USA Federation for Sport Cheering (USA Cheer), which is the national governing body for sport cheering in the United States, developed STUNT in order to meet the Title IX requirements for "sport." STUNT, which takes place in a competitive game format with four quarters, involves competition among teams that learn the same routines. In the mid-1980s, the National Cheerleaders Association created a form of competitive club cheerleading called "All-Star Cheerleading," which consists of cheerleading squads without any affiliation to schools, universities, or other sports teams. Hence, for All-Star Cheerleading, Title IX does not apply, since they cannot receive funding from educational institutions. Cheerleading organizations have had to contend with issues of funding, safety, and the competitive versus support dichotomy. These concerns have led to a variety of resolutions based on location (state) and level of participation (high school vs. college), including new forms of physical activity. The complex layers of embodiment, performance, and commoditization that characterize physical activities such as skateboarding, cheerleading, or playing *League of Legends* indicate that the analytical delimitation "sport" raises as many questions as it answers.

Play's historical streams

Attention will now be turned to a brief genealogy of the concept of "play" in anthropological perspective, as the play concept links early accounts of sport that focused on social order, typology, and evolutionary models of change to later paradigms that focused on ritual, performance, and embodiment. What we stand to gain from centering "play" in the analysis of sport is a sense of how axes of similarity and difference, leisure and labor, and structure and agency have defined the range of meanings attached to social forms. It is telling that the most strongly influential accounts of social life, including those from Karl Marx, Max Weber, Sigmund Freud, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Victor Turner, and Pierre Bourdieu, explicitly discuss leisure, creativity, and games in order to elucidate the central organizing principles of human life. Sport is compelling because it cannot be relegated to a single category of experience or analysis for which the consequences and meanings are predetermined. For reasons of space, developmental and psychoanalytic accounts of play will be left aside in order to focus on frameworks that describe its social meanings.

Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* argues for play as a crucial element in culture. Huizinga calls attention to the question of what play is "in itself and what it means for the player" ([1944] 1949, 2), a perspective absent or mentioned only incidentally

in predominant accounts of play at the time. For Huizinga, fun resists all logical interpretations and falls squarely in the realm of the irrational. Play itself is irrational, outside of truth and falsehood, beyond any moral function, superfluous yet essential, at once adornment and necessity. Part of the enduring value of Huizinga's seminal work is the insistence that we approach play as a central element of culture—the play factor is generative of "culture" itself. For Huizinga, play involves "stepping into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all its own" ([1944] 1949, 8). The separateness of play that brings everyday life to a standstill makes sport formally indistinguishable from ritual. Huizinga provides a heightened understanding of play as a transitional, temporary, and suspended zone, which carries with it certain moods and rites. In this way, Huizinga describes the fervor of a sportsman in the same terms as the violinist and priest—as governed by the play factor, a form of absorption in the temporal and spatial separation of an activity marked off from ordinary life.

In *Man, Play and Games* ([1958] 1961) Roger Caillois builds on Huizinga's work on play. Caillois defines play as an activity that is free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules, and concerned with make believe. That is, for him, play consists in escaping the chaos of the "real world" to a parallel realm of "perfect situations" based on forms of equality. For Caillois, games discipline and institutionalize impulses that otherwise would be negative or destructive. In this way, they perform civilizing functions. The structures of play and reality are often identical, though they take place in incompatible domains. It is their very separation that makes the constant tension and antagonism between play and the "real" compelling. His primary contribution is a classificatory division of play into four main rubrics: *agôn* (competition), *alea* (chance), *mimicry* (simulation), and *ilinx* (vertigo). Caillois describes typological distinctions among activities as diverse as football, chess, roulette, performing the role of Hamlet, playing with dolls, riding a rollercoaster, enduring tickling, or competing to see how long one can stare at the sun. Further, he posits a continuum between two poles, *paidia*, consisting of a common principle of "diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety" (Caillois [1958] 1961, 13) on one end, and *ludus*, consisting of binding rules and conventions and hence requiring "effort, patience, skill, or ingenuity" ([1958] 1961, 13) on the other. *Paidia* is the spontaneous expression of the play instinct whereas *ludus* is the refinement, discipline, and enrichment of that instinct. From these distinctions, Caillois moves to an evolutionary account of how the predominance of certain combinations of the four main rubrics is indicative of a given culture's status and destiny. For example, in so-called "primitive" cultures, mimicry and ilinx dominate, whereas in complex or advanced cultures, agôn and alea reign. In this way, Caillois contributes to a longer tradition in anthropology, found in earlier writings by Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, James Mooney, Stewart Culin, Raymond Firth and others, of approaching the functions of play as signs of predominant organizing principles of culture in an evolutionary model. The enduring significance of Caillois's intervention is the way that he rigorously considers the formal organization of play as an element of culture. That play constitutes a parallel domain with various stakes and organizing principles both unites and stipulates the differences among a variety of seemingly incommensurable activities and engagements.

Gregory Bateson ([1955] 2000) went to the zoo and observed two young monkeys playing. To engage in play—that is, an interaction that was similar to, but not the same as, combat—suggests that the monkeys exchanged a signal ("this is play"). The metacommunication "this is play" framed how the monkeys interpreted signs. The bite and the playful nip differ not in form, but in framing. Games, as forms of play, are held together by consensus to participate in a frame. Whether games dramatize preexisting conflicts, generate new antinomies, or are completely severed from the "everyday," the generative potential of framing shapes the possible relations that obtain among sign and object. No wonder, then, that "games" have been the dominant metaphor in public and scholarly discourse on numerous domains of social life, from religion and politics to language and relationships. That creative potential unfolds within structured parameters is a central and seemingly self-evident conceit of the game metaphor. Games posit new rule-governed constraints in some relation to the parallel constraints of "everyday" life. Asserting that some domain of social life is "game"-like amounts to claiming that it operates according to semiautonomous governing principles, a degree of competition, and, most importantly, that it can be profitably approached by sussing out what is *really* going on rather than being fooled by what things *seem* to be. One must attend to the form and function of rules that suspend "everyday" interpretive schema along with the metacommunications inherent to those forms that both craft and signal the game's boundaries.

Later influential work in folklore and linguistic anthropological approaches to verbal art developed "performance" as a concept through which to explore the structure and participant frameworks of such parallel, temporary spheres of activity (Bauman 1977). This work stressed the emergent qualities of performance. Bauman challenged the notion that performance was deviant or parasitic on "serious" or "normal use" (i.e., the referential function) of language, which previously had dominated approaches to speech as social action. Within the study of play, then, we can apply an analogous turn: to see play not as parasitic upon "normal" or "ordinary" forms of social life but as constitutive of them. Recall, for example, that Huizinga defines play as distinct from what he terms "ordinary" life. The challenge for the anthropology of sport, as a subset of play, is to empirically determine the ways that participants frame the patterns and meanings of sport and, further, to inventory and compare the means through which social organization operates in sporting contexts. Theoretical approaches to play, taking a cue from analogous approaches in performance studies, can establish how play is constitutive of social life rather than cordoned off from it. The processes by which social actors create correspondences between frames of play and nonplay are thus as much part of the analysis as the internal configurations of any given sportive world. The result is a view of culture that integrates sport more fully into other social processes rather than viewing it as outside the real, serious business of life.

Institution, rhythm, and discipline

Given the growth of anthropological interest in the relationships between institutional structures and social forms, it is surprising that there is a paucity of anthropological

studies on the diverse and widely influential institutions governing and representing the many dimensions and levels of sport. The local or "micro" level of embodied practices, enacted between coach and athlete, or among the diverse coterie of sportive personnel, only makes sense within larger institutional and historical frameworks from which sporting standards and ideals have emerged. As in other sports, athletes training in weightlifting organize their preparation around the timing of events. That is, with the exception of novices, training parameters fluctuate depending on "peaking" for contests. This built-in programming parameter is one of many that affects the activities for a given day, week, or month of training. Ethnographic investigations of sport can complement engagements that have focused on the spectacle of competition in order to make sense of the rhythms, seasons, and other temporal arrangements that structure sportive practices.

For example, this author's research in Olympic weightlifting took place primarily in a training hall located in Tbilisi, Georgia. Over the course of a year of participant observation, the coach–athlete relationship emerged as central to discipline and sportive development (Sherouse 2016). This work emphasizes the importance of discursive practice in the cultivation of valued athletic states and hence offers reasons to attend to language and sport through long-term fieldwork. Even at this local "club" level, the international standards of sport reverberate profoundly. Athletes train in order to post the greatest possible total in two competition lifts performed with a plate-loaded barbell, the snatch and the clean and jerk. Gym competitions, in which youth lifters competed, most of whom are under the age of seventeen, modeled the conditions and judging standards of weightlifting competitions around the world. From the very beginning, coaches socialized young weightlifters to perform in a way consistent with a globalized version of weightlifting. The relatively low stakes of a gym competition at a local club afford more flexibility in judging than a high stakes international event. At gym competitions, lifters were occasionally granted a fourth attempt, whereas at larger, more competitive events, lifters are limited to three attempts. Gym competitions were didactic events rather than competitions in the stricter sense. Coaches used such events to instill competition standards in young weightlifters. One standard in competition is that athletes must hold the barbell overhead until judges issue a "down" command. Holding the weight above one's head until one receives a signal to release it was different from the typical flow of training, during which athletes typically do not wait for a sign that they had completed the lift. During gym meets, weightlifters are repeatedly reminded to wait for the "down" command to drop the weight from overhead, as releasing it prematurely would result in failed attempts in competition conditions.

In addition to globalized standards of sport that permeate practices at the national, local, and club levels, various other forms of standardization constitute technical dimensions of contemporary practices. First, competition in these two particular lifts, judged according to codified standards, is the result of a history of strength athletics, the pivotal developmental moment for which was the late nineteenth century. From 1928 until 1972, Olympic weightlifting consisted of three lifts: the snatch, the clean and jerk, and the clean and press. The press was eliminated in 1972 because of difficulties in judging. The elimination of the press as competitive lift altered the exercises that athletes performed in training. Other concerns, such as the rise of

Figure 1 Kulsoom Abdullah, taken by the IWF at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in South Korea, 2012, where she represented Pakistan.
Source: Reproduced with permission from © Kulsoom Abdullah.

women's weightlifting (beginning in the 1980s and as an Olympic sport starting in 2000), changes in weight classes, and ever-evolving doping controls also are integral in making sense of the shape of contemporary practices. Prior to 2012, the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) stipulated that during competitions, athletes had to wear outfits that did not cover the knees or elbows, since judging depended on seeing them. As a result of a petition by Kulsoom Abdullah, the IWF ruled that she could participate wearing a full-body unitard under the customary weightlifting uniform (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). This ruling was intended to create a more inclusive sport that would break down barriers to participation by allowing Muslim women to compete. Such developments in sport, which seem from the outside to be about attire, are in fact part of larger changes in the demographics of participation and reflect the complex interplay between institutional, political, religious, and national factors.

Nation and the transnational turn

Anthropological writing on sport has provided vivid demonstrations of the ways that embodied forms connect to politics. Sport has much to offer anthropology for gaining empirical traction on processes of transnational movement, economics, and

Figure 2   Kulsoom Abdullah in the gym.
Source: Reproduced with permission from © Kulsoom Abdullah.

politics at a variety of scales (Besnier and Brownell 2012). Transnational and "global" currents in anthropology of sport are particularly active. Scholars such as Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell, Thomas Carter, Noel Dyck, Hjorleifur Jonsson, and Alan Klein have contributed significant anthropological work in analyzing sport nationally, internationally, and transnationally through long-term ethnographic fieldwork and cross-cultural comparison. The "Sport and Society" series at the University of Illinois Press is a cross-disciplinary venue for scholarly work on sport. Two other book series have created venues for the elaboration of "global sport" and its significances. The University of California Press has series that began in 2014 called "Sport in World History" that aims toward bringing new scholarly engagements with the political and social dimensions of global sport to a broad readership. Similarly, Routledge has a series entitled "Sport in the Global Society" that began in 1997 and now has over one hundred titles. In 2010, the series was divided into two parts: "Historical Perspectives" and "Contemporary Perspectives." This was in response to a "surge" in quality scholarship in recent years on contemporary sport. While the series draws on a diverse set of approaches, including sociology, media studies, history, and cultural studies, to name but a few, there are very few accounts that take an anthropological perspective. These are two new relatively new venues in which scholars are actively formulating, assessing, and querying the political, economic, and social stakes of global sport.

In 2015, the Islamic State took many lives in Paris with calculated terrorist attacks that included strikes at the Stade de France while a soccer game was in progress. Terrorists found in sport a huge and vulnerable spectatorship, gathered together in peace. Around the same time in the United States, college football players at the

University of Missouri announced that they would refuse to play until the college president Tim Wolfe, who had failed to address racist incidents on campus, resigned. College athletes, realizing their economic and symbolic power to the university, wielded it by refusing to allow injustice to be perpetuated off the field. In March 2015, the American Anthropological Association adopted a resolution that "professional and college sports organizations [should] immediately denounce and abandon the use of American Indian nicknames, logos, and mascots, unless appropriate consultation [had] occurred with individual tribes and other indigenous stakeholders" (AAA 2015). Then there were horizons of concern about security, doping violation enforcement, corruption in construction contracts, and the emerging Zika virus that surrounded the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Although this entry has argued for a renewed connection between anthropology's historically rich theorization of "play" and contemporary scholarship that merges embodied, semiotic, and transnational approaches, it is crucial that we do not lose sight of the political, economic, and social stakes that sport holds. Caillois pointed out that "empires and institutions may disappear, but games survive" because they have the "permanence of the insignificant" (Caillois [1958] 1961, 81). That the seeming triviality and inconsequentiality of games and sport coexists with their ubiquity and durability is no paradox. The forms of consequentiality that play engenders are visible alongside, beyond, and through sport. This is why sport remains a vital model in and of culture.

The main task that anthropologists face in building an anthropology of sport is to collate three primary dimensions that have previously been studied separately: (1) the semiotic: sport as a system of signs; (2) the embodied: sport as a domain of experience, sensation, and perception; and (3) the institutional: sport as coordinated through powerful economic and political structures. Attending to the linguistic, sensory, and economic elements of sport enhances existing work on gender and nation. The lenses of skill and labor provide one way to perceive sport as an embodied system of signs with a variety of sensory and institutional positions.

SEE ALSO: Bateson, Gregory (1904–80); Cosmologies; Embodied Learning; Geertz, Clifford (1926–2006); Gender; Leisure and Recreation, Anthropological Study of; Modernity; Nature/Culture Distinction; Play; Techniques of the Body; Turner, Victor (1920–83)

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