Deviance in Sport


Deviance in Sport

- Defining Deviance in Sport
- Studying Deviance in Sport
- Deviance Among Athletes
- Deviant Overconformity in Sports
- Implications of Deviance in Sport
Deviance in Sport

- Difficulties associated with studying deviance
  - Deviance in sport can not be described by a single theory
  - Deviance in sport is not always congruent with deviance in society
  - Unquestioned acceptance of norms
  - Training and performance have become "medicalized"

Defining and Studying Deviance in Sport

- Three primary approaches
  - Functionalist Theory
  - Conflict Theory
  - Interactionist and Critical Theories
Functionalist Theory

- Deviance disrupts shared values
- Deviance-failure to conform
  - Departure from cultural ideals
    - Failure to learn and internalize cultural beliefs and norms
    - Conflicts and strains within society
  - Sport’s cultural ideals and norms
    - Improving skills, reaching goals, commitment
    - Deviance results from rejecting sport norms
- Problems with Functionalist Theory

Conflict Theory

- Deviance interferes with the interests of people with economic power
- Deviance-behavior that violates interests of people with power
  - Social order and norms are based on those who hold the most power
    - Violation results in deviance
    - Individuals without power are disadvantaged
  - Sport’s norms and rules represent those of power and ignore athletes
    - Athletes as victims that are forced to be deviant
- Problems with Conflict Theory
Interactionist and Critical Theories

- Deviance is based on social processes and power relations

- Deviance-ideas, behaviors and characteristics outside of the normally accepted range

- Continuum of deviance:
  - Underconformity-ignoring or rejecting norms
  - Overconformity-unquestioned acceptance
  - Normal range of acceptance falls between underconformity and overconformity

- Calls attention to Sport Ethic

Sport Ethic

- Norms accepted as the dominant criteria for defining an athlete
  - An athlete makes sacrifices for the game
  - An athlete strives for distinction
  - An athlete accepts risks and plays through pain
  - An athlete accepts no limits in the pursuit of possibilities
Deviant Overconformity

- Reasons for deviant overconformity
  - Athletes will do anything to participate as long as possible
  - Praise, accolades and rewards associated with overconformity
  - Drama and excitement
  - Establishment of strong bonds

Deviant Overconformity

- Common characteristics of overconformers
  - Low self-esteem
  - Eager for acceptance
  - Chance for achievement and establishing oneself
- Group demands and memberships
Deviant Overconformity

- Linkage between deviant overconformity to the sport ethic and deviant underconformity within society
  - Binge drinking, group crimes, harassment, coercing other to engage in deviant behavior

- Controlling deviant overconformity
  - Deviant overconformity is often advantageous for coaches, parents, sponsors, owners, etc.
  - Control requires a commitment to the establishment of acceptable limits

Deviance in Sport

- Deviance on the field and in sport settings
  - Cheating, gambling, point shaving, throwing games, fighting, performance-enhancing drugs, etc.

- Deviance off the field and outside of sport settings
  - Arrests, criminal activity, academic cheating, alcohol use and abuse, etc.
  - Athlete vs. non-athlete rate of occurrence
### Deviance Beyond the Athlete

- Coaches
- School and Sport Team Administrators
- Sport Team Owners
- Judges and officials
- Team managers and staff
- Media promoters and commentators
- Agents
- Parents
- Spectators

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### Performance-Enhancing Substances

- Expression of overcommitment to the sport ethic
- Difficult to define and ban
  - Legal (aspirin) and illegal (heroin) substances
  - Natural or synthetic
  - Harmless or dangerous
  - Physical changes, psychological changes, or both
- International Olympic Committee (IOC) definition
- Professional Sport Leagues, NCAA, High Schools
- Endless game of “hide and seek”
## Performance-Enhancing Substances

- Why do athletes continue to look to performance-enhancing substances?

### Drug Testing
- **Cons**
  - Ineffective
  - Violation of rights and privacy
- **Pros**
  - Health of athletes
  - Integrity of sport
  - Drug use is illegal and must be controlled

## Controlling Deviant Overconformity

### Recommendations
- Examine the nature of elite and high performance sports
- Rules and regulations
- Educational programs
- Code of ethics
## Deviance in Sport

- Definitions of deviance in sport
  - No one theory can explain deviance
- Deviance in sport vs. deviance in society
- Overconformity
  - Sport ethic
- Performance-enhancing substances
  - Drug testing
- Controlling deviant overconformity