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The Relevance of Systematic General Theory in Sport Sociology

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スポーツ社会学における体系的一般理論の意義

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(要旨)

本研究の目的は、体育・スポーツ社会学の現状と問題点の把握、そしてその一層の発展のための方法論的課題の指摘である。

確かに、スポーツ社会学は近年急速に飛躍・拡大し、例えば研究者数の増加、研究領域の拡大と多様化、大規模調査の増加、多様な統計技法の適用、等々が指摘される。だがそれらの変化は決して発展を意味するものではなく、まさに“栄養不足で死に傾しつつある理論、一方膨大な資料を飽食し消化に悩まされている調査”が研究の現状である。本研究ではこの現状を次の二つの視点から批判的に検討した。

- 1) 経験主義・実証主義の陥穽……従来の調査至上主義的傾向を、ハンスン、ポパー、ゼターバーグらの主張に基づき検討し、従来のような実態調査は個々の断片的データの無限の集積のみをもたらし、個別領域での個別的な経験の一般化以上には発展しえず、蓋然性の高い一般化的命題の導出は不可能であることを指摘した。それらは所謂「瑣末的あるいは素朴経験主義」といえよう。
- 2) 論理主義・歴史主義の陥穽……従来の多くの理論的研究では、思弁的精神と構成的精神の区別が曖昧であり、統一的・思弁的な説明原理・思考様式が採用された。その主要な思考法は、本質主義・歴史主義・優越要因説・決定論・自然法思想と呼ばれるものと共通する。現状の克服のためには、要因の作用様式と要因の分析範囲の一般性を保証する、仮説性を自覚したモデルビルディングが必要であることが指摘される。

上記のように、スポーツ社会学の方法論的装置は全く貧弱であり、諸変数を記述・説明する分析的諸概念や概念図式はなく、まして経験的一般化水準における命題や論理的モデル、等々は全く欠如している。このような現状においてはスポーツ社会学における体系的一般理論の構成が不可欠である。つまりそれは、一定の観点から事象を類別し選択し抽象化し、諸研究を方向づけ、意味づけ、統合するところの仮説構成体として機能すると同時に、演繹的分析理論として実証可能な個別的一般化命題の導出をも可能にする。本研究では、特殊理論・中範囲理論・一般理論の関連性と意義を検討すると共に、最後に体系的一般理論の構築のために、(1)普遍法則ではなく準不確定的・蓋然的決定論への立脚、(2)本質主義や歴史主義ではなく方法論的名目論への立脚、(3)決定論的優越要因の追求ではなく諸要因の相互連関関係を定式化する概念図式と分析モデルの構築、(4)思弁的直観と区別されるところの経験主義的アプリオリズムあるいは分析的リアリズムへの立脚、等々の必要性が指摘される。

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(1) The Condition of Sport Sociology in Japan

The number of sociological presentations made in every Annual Meeting of Physical Education for 1950 to 1969 are listed in Table 1 and 2 (Kageyama⁵⁾). In Table 3 are presented these data for the period from 1970 to present. From these figures, we are able to see various changes in the focus of research in sport sociology leading to the present state of the art. Overview of the data allows for several general tendencies to be drawn out in relation to sport sociology, not the least of which is reflected in the tremendous strides forward made in the sociological study of sport in Japan since 1950.

From his tables, Kageyama⁵⁾ has indicated several features related to the condition of sport sociology. He suggests that :

(a) Sociological research has been identified with empirical research and/or social survey methods.

(2) Most of the research is of the survey type and not analytically interpreted.

(3) Researchers on community sport has increased as compared with sport in schools and at job sites.

(4) Finally, he has pointed out the necessity of analytical research and its accumulation, and the introduction and application of strict research techniques.

One decade has passed since Kageyama reached these conclusions. There is no doubt that this rapid and varied growth in the field has occurred in less than ten years. For example, it is

Table 1
Sociological papers presented at the Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society
of Physical Education from 1950 to 1969 (by Kageyama⁵⁾)

	Sociological Papers	Total Numbers	%
1950	6	61	9.8
1951	6	99	6.1
1952	8	150	5.3
1953	13	183	7.1
1954	9	173	5.2
1955	16	237	6.8
1956	17	269	6.3
1957	16	255	6.3
1958	16	277	5.8
1959	27	340	7.9
1960	38	346	11.0
1961	22	431	5.1
1962	30	408	7.4
1963	36	422	8.5
1964	28	304	9.2
1965	45	445	10.1
1966	55	555	9.9
1967	61	672	9.1
1968	66	754	8.4
1969	53	826	6.4
total	568	7207	7.9

Table 2
Classification of Sociological Papers by Content from 1950 to 1969 (by Kageyama)⁵⁾

	1960-64	1965-69	N(%)
1. Research on P. E. in School			
General problems P. E. in school	0	4	4
P. E. in university	0	12	12
P. E. in high school	0	1	1
P. E. in elementary & junior high school	0	1	1
Teachers in school	2	8	10
Clubs in school	2	20	22
Sport program	1	0	1
Consciousness on P. E., Sport & Recreation	2	8	10
Students' everyday-life	7	5	12
Growth & physical fitness	1	1	2
Special students	1	0	1
(total)	21	64	85(19.5)
2. Research on Sport in Society			
Sport in community	18	33	51
Sport in job sites	14	10	24
Family sport	1	3	4
Children	1	9	10
Women	4	11	15
Workers	3	6	9
Sport facilities	4	15	19
Sport population	7	1	8
Sport policy, administration	0	5	5
Sport club, school	0	15	15
National Game of Sport	0	6	6
Olympic Games	0	4	4
Commercial sport, Mass communication	3	6	9
Amateurism	0	1	1
Sport instructor	2	1	3
Growth, development, fitness	3	2	5
Sport athlete	4	7	11
Sport consciousness	3	6	9
Sport organization	7	4	11
(total)	74	145	219(50.3)
3. Research from pure sociological views			
Small group	37	38	75
Social process	2	0	2
Social class, stratification	2	4	6
Social change, history	13	6	19
Socio-economic research	3	1	4
(total)	57	49	106(24.4)
4. Research on Methodology	4	6	10(2.3)
5. Others	3	12	15(3.4)
Total	159	276	435(100)

evident that the number of researchers has increased remarkably, that many research techniques have been applied, and that the range and subjects of research have expanded. However, I do not believe that radical and fundamental changes have occurred in our field in this past decade. The growth and changes eluded to above may not be directly indicative of theoretical development in sport sociology. Examination of these tables leads me to conclude that the significant characteristics of most research are that each study "stands alone" with little conscious relation to work of others, and that most factual research is concerned only with singular generalizations.

In addition, we have to examine various magazines for physical education and sports, in particular the Research Journal of Sport Sociology. Although some exceptions do exist, we may say that most research consists of either private opinions and/or moral judgements about special topics and issues related to sport, or summaries of governmental data, or ideological

Table 3
Sociological papers presented at the Annual Meeting of Japanese Society
of Physical Education from 1970 to 1979

		1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Content of papers	Basic theory of sport sociology	1	1			3	3	1	1	2	4
	CULTURE, SOCIETY										
	principle, culture, nation	1	1		1	1		4	2	3	6
	cultural & social change			1			1		1	1	2
	social stratification	6	4			1	3	3	2	3	3
	policy, administration	1	2	3	3	5	5	4	6		
	organization, facility	8	4		1	1	3	2	3	1	8
	education, school teacher	11	3	7	5	8		5	2	3	1
	region, urban, rural, family	3	4	4	2	8	9	10	4	8	2
	economy, working, job-site	3	3	4	1	3		2	3	1	1
	mass-media				3	2	1	2			1
	STRUCTURE										
Content of papers	general, principle		1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	manner, rule, value	1		5	1			1	1	2	
	group	10	4	1	3	1	1	4	3	7	4
	event, athlete	8		2		2	1			3	1
	Soc. Psy.										
	morale, cohesion	1	2	2		2	2		3	2	1
	personality, attitude	7	6	4	5	4	9	5	10	14	5
	Others	1	3		2		2	2		2	3
The number of researchers	one	13	10	18	8	13	9	16	12	14	17
	two or more	48	28	18	20	30	33	30	31	39	25
Methods & technique	philological	3	3	10	4	6	6	5	8	8	11
	verificative	7	7	7	1	6	2	10	8	11	3
	social survey	51	27	19	21	28	34	30	26	30	27
	others		1		2	3		1	1	4	1
(A) The number of sociological papers		61	38	36	28	43	42	46	43	53	42
(B) The ratio of (A) to total papers		8.6 %	6.8 %	6.7 %	6.3 %	8.0 %	7.3 %	9.2 %	7.4 %	9.8 %	7.0 %

critiques. In other words, as we shall see in a later chapter, many researchers have failed to distinguish between theoretical and evaluative positions, between practical and cognitive positions, between logical and empirical analysis, and between objective facts and subjective beliefs. In addition, explanations cited were primarily dependant upon speculative and intuitional methods. There has been little deliberate effort to formulate a conceptual framework for sport. In this sense, most of this research is substantive research or philosophies of sport, and does not involve theoretical modes of analysis depicting the major variables and their possible relations.

No research in sport sociology would incorporate all these views. Many more reasons could be offered to explain the present state of sport sociology. Here, we are treating the subject in a general way and there are many cases where these assumptions do not apply. In addition, much important literature has accumulated over the past few decades. To what extent are K. Kageyama's propositions inadequate today? I think his conclusions are generally valid. In particular, as R. Sugawara¹⁵⁾, complains in a biting evaluation of the trend in sport sociology, "the accumulation of data through acceptable techniques does not alone give us adequate sociological analysis and research". This assertion also will be important for us.

It is not difficult to see that sport sociology is wanting in its substantive knowledge and in the formulation of the insights that it does have. To what is this lack of progress due?

As we have just seen, theoretical "malnutrition" and surfeit of facts has serious consequences for the maturation of sport sociology as a discipline. With our gaze fixed steadily on the particular problems requiring solution, we are less likely to see the relations of each significant problem in the sport context to related questions and to social phenomena in general. In summary, I want to suggest that the lack of more reliable knowledge stems directly from an immoderate neglect of systematic general theory in sport sociology.

(2) Fallacies of Empiricism and Positivism

As mentioned above, many sport sociologists have been captive of a view of science as the objective collection and classification of facts and the relating of these into singular generalizations. As a result, there is now a vast and still growing inventory of research monographs, each of which may have meaning in its own right and each of which reports the facts about a particular sport phenomenon; but the general relationships between these studies have yet to be vigorously pursued. In addition, whether and why the data so collected really belong together, other than due to the fact that they are vaguely related to social variables on sports, is seldom asked. In this view, therefore, the essence of sport sociology as a science lay in the collection of objective data, the "hard facts" about sport phenomena.

It is a matter of course that scientific knowledge must be well-grounded in facts. What does need emphasis, however, is that in and of themselves facts do not enable us to explain or understand an event. As we shall soon see, facts must be ordered in some way so that we can see their connections. In other words, we can indicate the misunderstandings and fallacies about the relations between theory and facts, and between substantiation and theory in sport sociology.

R. N. Hanson²⁾, a philosopher of science, clearly defined the relation between facts and theory, and the epistemological meanings of theory in *Patterns of Discovery*. He proposes that observation depends on theory and observation is interpreted by theory, whereas traditional logical positivism suggests that theory depends on facts and observations. In his view, the movement of the earth brings forth geocentrism and/or heliocentrism according to different points of view. Variability in observers' theory and framework results in different observations.

Therefore, observing is the theory-loaded action, and facts themselves imply theory. In the strict use of the term "fact" there is no pure fact which lacks relations with theory.

From this point of view, we can point out many misunderstandings and fallacies about research monographs in sport sociology research of the past. It is not right that we think the object itself or detailed survey produce theory. It is obviously impossible literally to describe a sport phenomenon regardless of how long we might take, or of what limits in time and space we have. There is an infinite level of detail possible about any sport phenomenon. The particular aspects of sport selected as descriptive the facts is determined by the prior interest, perspective or framework of the observers. This selection is made in the light of a frame of reference that fixes the order, pattern and relevance of the facts¹⁾. When raised to the level of consciousness, this frame of reference is what we call a theory. A fact is a particular ordering of reality in terms of a theoretical interest. In this sense, therefore, it would be true to say that facts are indeed collected within a "theoretical" framework. In other words, facts about sport do not produce theory of sport, but theory of sport produces facts about sport. Therefore, we should not think that the development of theories in sport sociology is the result of the collection and accumulation of data on sport, because these collections and accumulations are the outcome of theory on sport.

It is obvious from this perspective that the way of thinking in which research is regarding as the objective collection and classification of facts and the relating of these into singular generalizations leads only to the indefinite and disconnected accumulation of data on sport. As a result, we can get only singular empirical generalizations in particular fields, and the production of systematic generalized statements applicable to large numbers of particular cases in sports is not achieved. At the same time, to confine oneself exclusively to the description and analysis of facts is to hamper the understanding of these same facts in their broadest context.

It is important to note that, according to the classification of empiricism by T. Parsons¹⁾ and N. Komuro⁶⁾, the fore-stated factualistic tendency in the sociology of sport may be categorized as "trivial" and "ingenuous" empiricism, which lacks methodological minuteness and orientations toward theoretical generalization, and which depends upon researchers' critical minds. (Fig. 1)

There is today, in the sociology of sport, pervasive discontent with the condition of research. There is a danger, however, that self-questioning may be answered in purely

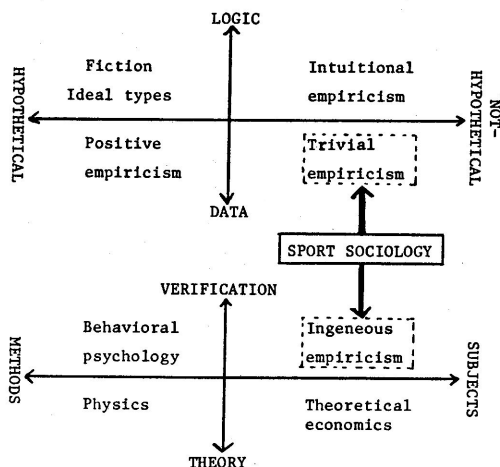


Fig. 1. Location of Present Sport Sociology in Factualistic Aspects

technical terms; suggested remedial measures may be confined to ways of collecting data, of using statistics, of describing sport phenomena, and the like.

As C.W. Mills⁽¹⁰⁾ pointed out, however, "so far as ideas are concerned, you seldom get out of any truly detailed research more than you have put into it. What you get out of empirical research as such is information, and what you can do with this information depends a great deal upon whether or not in the course of your work you have selected your specific empirical studies as check points of larger constructions".

In this sense, mere technical reformation are valuable in themselves, but they do not solve the major problem of obtaining reliable, socially useful knowledge about sport⁽²⁰⁾. Such measures will have meaning only if they are welded to a concurrent attempt to identify and relate the most significant variables found in sport as sociological phenomena.

In conclusion, the sociology of sport today is confronted with the need to recognize that sociological understanding of sport is ultimately possible only by clarifying the broad theoretical premises of research. We must discard previous tendencies to "add up" research to produce more significant results because of the lack of principle or theory guiding the selection of what are to be subjects of these types of studies.

Many other problems including the relations between 'descriptive terms' and 'variables'⁽¹³⁾, 'ordinary and theoretical propositions'⁽²⁰⁾, and 'observables' and 'construct'⁽¹⁹⁾, may be argued to exist in the theoretical and empirical methodology of current sport sociology. However, limitations in time and space preclude discussion of these at this stage.

(3) Fallacies of Historicism and Intuitionism

In the present state of sport sociology, as stated as before, there is empirical research only for the sake of research on the one hand, there is speculative and ideological research on the other. The latter might be argued to belong to "methodological Historicism and Essentialism" (K. Popper)^{(13),(14)}, or "Intuition Empiricism" (T. Parsons)⁽¹¹⁾, both of which attempt to discover and describe the true nature of things, (i.e. their hidden reality or essence) as the task of pure knowledge or 'science'.

It is needless to say that speculative and constructive concepts and constructs are indispensable to understand sport phenomena. However, we should distinguish speculative minds from constructive minds. Although the former is poisonous, the latter is indispensable for us, because the latter functions in order to link various externally unrelated facts into structural-functional interrelations. In the same sense, it is important to distinguish theoretical from epistemological research, logical from empirical research, and objective from subjective propositions. These distinctions were very ambiguous and, therefore, promoted the confusion of research in the sociology of sport.

The necessity of the deductive and constructive way of thinking in the sociology of sport should be emphasized particularly because of the existence of subjective elements and the variety and complexity of situational factors in sport phenomena. However, it is this variety and complexity that make the construction of theoretical frameworks and verifying hypotheses yet more confusing, resulting in the introduction of speculative explanations which are substantive theories or philosophies of sport, and are not theoretical modes of analysis depicting the major variables and their possible relations.

For example, the models for explanation and recognition in past research in our field, were very insubstantive in many cases consisting of very few elements. Second, these models

were identified with the reality of sport phenomena. Third, concepts and constructs in these models were very speculative and therefore, lacked operational concepts and constructs. The lack of interest in scientific methodology and epistemology form the base of those non-scientific tendencies in the earlier research in sport sociology.

In relation to this, Leon Mayhew⁸⁾ points out that :

Science consists of a set of interrelated symbolic 'statements'. To speak of "facts" and "theories", "data" and "assumptions", is not to speak directly of the real world but of a set of descriptions of and propositions about the world. Scientific statement is inherently selective. The observable world is so rich in detail, so multifaceted, and so complex in its interrelations, and the bases of our interest in that world are so varied, that it is impossible to describe or explain even the smallest sector of "reality" in exhaustive detail. In sum, "science" is not another name for rational truth. It is a mode of discourse that proceeds to construct an integrated body of statements about the world according to a set of distinctive rules.

In addition, D. Willer and M. Webster assert that :

It is not that sociologists are studying the wrong things, but rather that they are studying them in the wrong ways. The position reflected in the above passages appears to argue that the establishment of abstract theoretical constructs is neither possible nor desirable at this stage of the development of sociology as a science. By contrast, we would argue that development of such constructs is essential to any progress, and that the present lack of theoretical success in sociology is due precisely to the belief that such constructs are an inappropriate area of interest.

Although there is insufficient space to discuss all of these problems in detail, I would like to examine three ways of thinking which characterize the integral and speculative methods mentioned above. It might be thought that these fallacies are not employed in the sociology of sport. However, that Huizinga's⁴⁾ theory has dominated the minds of researchers in our field in the past and to the present is indicative of the strength of these ways of thinking¹⁷⁾.

1) First, we can point to the employ of constructs of Dominant Factor Theory in the sociology of sport. This mode of thought attempt to explain extensive and various social phenomena by one or several factors, thus, related closely to Historicism or Intuitionism.

2) The second way reflects the concepts of Mechanical Determinism, which ignores the interrelations and mutual regulation between factors, and supposes apriori that a certain factor is the origin of all. When Dominant Factor Theory is related to Mechanical Determinism, we regard a certain factor as the essence or ultimate cause of events, i. e. sports. Therefore, this thought system relates closely to Historicism or Methodological Essentialism, etc. In short, these types of thought neglect many factors and factor-interrelations and as such, they are incomplete theories lacking in theoretical framework for interaction analysis.

3) From the third view, beliefs in natural and historical law predominate. Accordingly, it is supposed that the existence and change of social phenomena is controlled by external forces based on universal, natural and historical laws. Today, the belief in deterministic universal law had changed into the view of probabilistic law and empirical law, which function as operational propositions.

We have many theories on play and sport including the Surplus Energy Theory, Preexercise Theory, Recapitulation Theory, Recreation Theory, Relaxation Theory and Instincts Theory. However, all of these theories and past ways of explanation in our field reflect one or more of the these ways of thinking outlined.

In sum, in order to improve on the present condition of sport sociology, we should abolish Historicism and Essentialism inclusive of Dominant theory and Determinism, and we should aim at describing and explaining how a thing behaves in various circumstances, and particularly, whether there are any regularities in its behaviour. In addition, we should adopt a way of thinking in which the interrelation mechanism is regarded as an indefinite and probabilistic relationship based on empirical and interaction analysis and not in terms of universal and historical relations. At the same time, we need hypothetical model-building involving both generality in the action pattern of factors and generality in the range of analysis of them.

Finally, I want to examine the more concrete problems of deductive and constructive research in the sociology of sport, although parts of the preceeding discussion bears relation to these.

First, we can indicate that study interests or focal points of research in our field have been limited regard to the individual as an action unit in many cases. As a result, most research failed to examine external and internal factors, and social, cultural and physical conditions. These kinds of research, therefore, were not dynamic and multi-faceted analyses.

Second, most analyses, generally speaking, were microscopic in nature, and were relatively limited to short-term longitudinal research. In other words, few explanations and/or propositions have emerged which are based on longitudinal and macroscopic analyses which consider the relations between various other social phenomena, and regard groups and regions as action units.

Third, and most importantly, we can say that much research regarded only such variables as needs, instincts and consciousness as motivating factor to sport action. Sport theories of the past took a serious view of subjective or psychological factors immoderately and one-sidedly. In other words, Existential Individualism was confused with Methodological Individualism. In addition, the frame of reference for explanation of sport action was based on simple psychological "Stimulus-Response" schema, and/or utilitarian "End-Means" schema. There were few explanations and analyses based on "Subject-Object" schema of sport action.

Finally, several problems may be outlined in terms of false assumptions made by researchers. These fallacies include the confounding of a definition (nominal def.) with empirical analysis (real def.) or meaning analysis (analytical def.), the fallacy of persuasive definition, the fallacy of reification and hypostatization of concepts, and other misunderstandings about formulations of conceptual framework⁽⁴⁾.

These approaches to research may be implicated in insuring that we do not learn too much sport and society.

(4) The Task of Sport Sociology

.....The Need for Systematic General Theory.....

Examination of the research literature in sport sociology reveals that the emergence of theories has been infrequent. Of course, if we were to interpret theories to mean speculation about sport phenomena, the sociology of sport has never suffered for lack of them. However, if in theories we seek tools for the analysis and reliable understanding of sport phenomena, it is apparent that scarcity prevails. And the more general or broader the kind of theory we seek, the greater the dearth.

In this chapter, I seek to show that useful knowledge about actual sport phenomena, an

understanding of the way people act in sport life, sustained attention to systematic general theory. Although some researchers are prone to challenge the possibility of obtaining the kind of generalizations required for the construction of mature theory, I will suggest that such knowledge is in principle well within the realm of achievement.

It is not difficult to see that the sociology of sport is wanting in its substantive knowledge and in the formulation of the insights it does have. As I have pointed out repeatedly, I think that the lack of more reliable knowledge flows directly from an immoderate neglect of systematic general theory. Namely, it is the absence of a theoretical orientation to provide the basis for the kind of understanding of data that researchers of sport seek. The sociology of sport is too little sensitized to the need for inquiring into the problems that stand in the way of the development of such a systematic general theory of sport. I shall argue that without a conscious understanding of the role of general theory and its possibility, the sociology of sport must remain fragmentary and heterogeneous, unable to fulfill the promise in its designation as a science. By and large, researchers in the sociology of sport have not considered it worthwhile to allocate even a small part of their collective energies to systematic and general theory. Not that they have neglected all kinds of theoretical thought. There are a few illustrations of an interest in theory as we have seen in the former chapter. But that research centers in synthetic theory whereas our discussion here relates to a generalized mode of analysis.

The main objects of systematic general theory are threefold: (1) to establish criteria for identifying the important variables requiring investigation in the sociology of sport; (2) to the relationships among these variables; and (3) to achieve these goals through a set of generalizations that hang together with greater rather than lesser logical coherence and interdependence¹²⁾.

Now, this systematic and general theory have the same meanings and functions with the "paradigm" which Thomas Kuhn⁷⁾ advocates. While he does not provide a particular clear cut definition, "paradigm" seems to refer to a theoretical system or perspective that includes; (1) an indication of what are important and researchable questions or problems; (2) general explanatory principles or answers to these questions; (3) models for conceptualizing and solving scientific puzzles; (4) criteria for what are appropriate data, methodologies, and instruments; and (5) an axiology (or value orientation), epistemology and ontology that underlie and ground all the above.

Thus, it is a paradigm, or a systematic general theory that structures the sport sociologists' activities his particular conceptualizations, specific problems he chooses to focus on, concrete ways he selects to solve these problems, and what he regards as true, probable, or fruitful. At the same time, this systematic general theory not only makes sense of facts, but enables one to perceive or conceptualize a fact or a phenomenon in the first place. In addition, this theory can help to unify and give meaning to apparently diverse kinds of research. It is a paradigm, or a systematic general theory employed as a deductive model that begins with a few postulates of empirical reference and, from these, deduces a series of narrower generalizations, and from these in turn stem singular generalizations capable of empirical proof¹⁷⁾.

Some sport sociologists might say that systematic general theory in our field is too remote to be taken seriously at present, and that we should concentrate energies on the construction of the body of "middle-range theories" advocated by R.K.Merton⁹⁾. Probably, the basis of this will be similar to Merton's critique of Parsons' theory. In brief, Merton pointed out that ground theoretical schemes were premature, for the theoretical and empirical groundwork

necessary for their completion had not been performed. However, various problems about middle-range theories can be pointed out.

1) He asserts that, by following a middle-range strategy, the concepts and propositions will become more tightly organized since theoretically-focused empirical research forces clarification, elaboration, and reformulation of the concepts and propositions of each middle-range theory. In addition, it consolidates the special theories into a more general set of concepts and mutually consistent propositions. But, it is difficult to see how the accumulation of middle-range theories brings about systematic general theory so directly. The way in which middle-range theories should be formulated to facilitate their eventual consolidation into a general theory poses a difficult analytical problem.

2) The middle-range theory originates in the complaint that results have usually been too abstract for immediate application to facts. However, theoretical insight would be too narrowly focussed if it had to direct its attention at the outset towards formulation of immediately verifiable generalizations. The need for empirical verification does not mean that at every stage in theoretical work we must be able to test our generalizations immediately. To demand that a theory be actually verifiable at each stage of its development would impose on it an unnecessarily severe task.

3) It is determined whether a certain theory is middle-range or not according to the purpose and level of research. The present systematic general theory could then become middle-range theory in the future. Middle-range theory will be able to be formulated not only in a micro to macroscopic fashion on the basis of special theories, but also from macro to micro on the basis of systematic general theory. At the same time, we should know that the verification of special propositions is more difficult than general theoretical propositions as Zetterberg has pointed out.

4) Finally, it is not strategically effective that Merton's criticism of Parsons' theory be applied directly to the sociology of sport, because there is not any systematic and general theory, or even such orientation in this field. In other words, I think that middle-range theories in the sociology of sport are premature, unlike general sociology, for the theoretical and scientific groundwork necessary for their completion has not been performed.

Logically, following the preceding argument should follow a tentative attempt to formulate a systematic general theory. It is clear, however, that such an undertaking falls far beyond the avowed limits of this paper. Therefore, in a final note, I shall state very simply some methodological aspects of the formulation of systematic general theory, as shown in Fig 2.

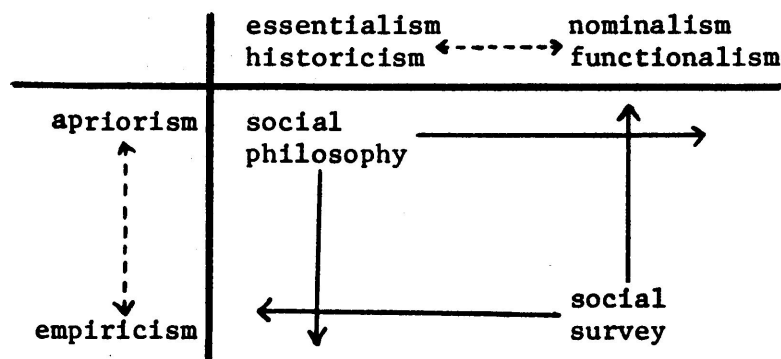


Fig. 2 The Methodological Variety of Sociological Approach to Sports.

1) We should reaffirm that every generalization is a theory, and that it is a statement of a relationship which is only probable and not certain nor final.

2) Therefore, we should not adopt methodological essentialism, intuitionism and historicism, which try to discover the reality and essence of things, but we should adopt methodological nominalism which sees the aim of a science in the description of the things and events of our experience, and in an explanation of these events.

3) At the same time, it means that we adopt functional and analytical ways of thinking. In other words, we should not try to discover a uni-dominant factor, but we should formulate a tentative conceptual and analytical model depicting and explaining the major variables and their possible relations with sport phenomena.

4) Although this formulation is inferential and constructive, we should conform to apriorism having close relations with empiricism, which is distinguished from simple speculative intuition.

We know there are various methods and ranges in the sociology of sport as shown in Fig. 3. However, we should allocate more of our energies to general, abstract, theoretical and macrocosmic methods and/or ranges in order to formulate systematic general theory in the sociology of sport.

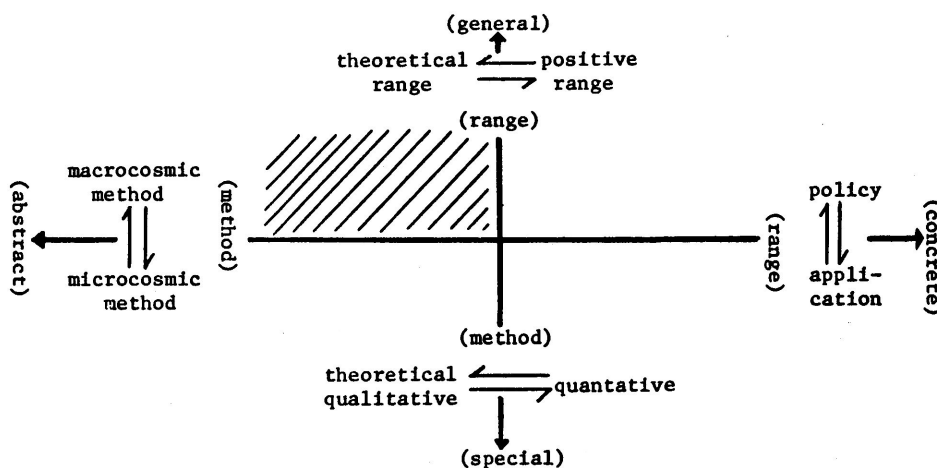


Fig. 3 The Relations of Methods and Ranges in the Sociology of Sport

(5) Conclusion

There is at present a vast and still growing inventory of research monographs, however most research "stands alone" with little conscious relation to the work of others. As a result, this reduces the sociology of sport to a low position on a scale of maturity in the social sciences and sport sciences. I think the absence of a theoretical orientation and the neglect of systematic general theory has resulted in the present lack of more reliable knowledge in the sociology of sport. From this perspective I have examined some major consequences that stem from this neglect of systematic theory, and a few of the problems involved in the construction of such theory have been outlined.

It would indeed be an astonishing feat if from the present relatively barren theoretical soil of sociology, a full-blown systematic theory were to arise. Nevertheless, awareness of the existence of even this improbable ideal helps to set the stage for the recognition and reception

of what be attained at this juncture in the evolution of sport sociology. Ideals give purpose and direction to more limited probabilities. If a systematic general theory is too remote to be taken seriously at present, this does not imply that all analyses at the level of general theory is beyond our grasp.

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