“Examining Sport Sociology’s Place in Sport Communication/Media Academic Programs”

The influence of sport sociology on sport communication/media scholarship is substantial and entrenched. Whereas some seminal research was published in the 1970s and 80s (e.g., Duncan, Jhally, Kane, Messner, Real, Whannel, etc.), sport communication-focused journals did not exist until the last decade. Instead, the primary outlets for sport communication research were the three primary sport sociology journals, which still regularly publish scholarship in this area. But where do sport sociology, or even sport socio-cultural issues, fit in the foci and curricula of the rapidly-growing academic field of sport communication/media? This is concerning because nearly all of these programs (i.e., majors, cognate areas, minors, certificates) are housed in either (A) journalism/communications, which usually focus on teaching vocational skills, or (B) in sport management, which focuses more on business and leadership. This case study examines curricula, available syllabi and uses interviews with the coordinators of several major sport communication/media academic programs to analyze the importance placed upon and the impact of sport sociology in the teachings and learning outcomes of these programs. How these programs incorporate sport sociology will likely have a great impact on sport communication scholarship in ensuing decades due to the growth of stand-alone academic programs in this realm.

“Much More Than Meets the Ear: Media Discourse in Sport”

Creating a classroom environment that facilitates and supports discussions about sensitive topics can be challenging. For example, encouraging students to identify and explore the impact of racist or sexist media discourse is an important, yet often challenging, step toward encouraging active and engaged learning and social justice. Using sport as the context, this hands-on, interactive session will introduce a teaching strategy that attempts to encourage dialogue about the influence of mediated language on sport consumption and viewership and empowers students to take their learning out of the traditional classroom and into their homes, engaging family and friends in critical analysis of sporting culture. The goal for this presentation is to provide tools and materials for practitioners to use in their classrooms.

“What are We Teaching Students about Sexual Harassment and Assault?”

Sexual harassment and sexual assault on college campuses have gained a great deal of media attention during the past several years. More than 200 colleges and universities across the United States have been under investigation for Title IX violations because of these issues. Sport organizations and sport management programs in higher education have been found to be male-dominated, and organizations that are male-dominated in nature have higher levels of sexual harassment, incivility, and passive aggressive behaviors. Sport has been described as a space possessing a permissive rape culture due to its overtly masculine culture. The current research examined the extent to which undergraduate and graduate sport management students were exposed to education on sexual harassment and sexual assault in the classroom. Results indicated that less than 50% of students are exposed to education on sexual harassment (46.1%) or sexual assault (35.9%) in their sport management courses. Additionally, students who had received education on sexual harassment scored significantly higher on the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression Scale than those students who had received no training. These findings suggest faculty may need to begin questioning the quality and factualness of the education and training being given to students.
Senior administrative positions in professional and college sports are male dominated. Sport management programs in higher education are male-dominated as well as 66% of sport management programs had fewer than 40% female faculty members, and 81.39% of sport management programs had fewer than 40% female students. Issues between female faculty members and students may arise both in and out of the classroom in the form of sexual harassment and incivility by the student toward the female faculty member because of the minority status of women in sports. These actions are known collectively as contrapower harassment. This study examined contrapower harassment experiences of female sport management/studies faculty members. More than 75% of the respondents had experienced incivility, and nearly 15% had been the victim of sexual harassment. Participants indicated they encountered contrapower harassment on course evaluations as they were called derogatory terms, e.g. a “feminist Nazi bitch.” Other respondents reported frequently receiving inappropriate comments about their physical appearance on course evaluations. The findings have implications in regards to the curriculum, managing the classroom environment and students’ behavior in the professional workplace post-graduation.