

The Skeleton Key: Sport as Exemplary Domain for Integrative Explanation of Personal Attainments

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Sociology is often identified as a “perspective” or style of explanation, for which references to genetic differences represent the epitome of Not Sociology. Yet, everyone from the most casual fan to the most sophisticated sports scientists recognizes in sporting achievements an obvious role of physiological and other traits that are genetically influenced. Just as much is recognized that sporting triumphs are typically not just sheer physiological triumphs but represent longrunning investments in preparatory environments. Sports therein provide an easier site to consider ways that biology, psychology, and society intersect in human differentiation and attainment than other domains of human affairs in which discussions of biology—and especially genetics—are inevitably more fraught. As such, bio-psycho-social thinking with respect to sport might not just help illuminate phenomena specific to sport but may have more general usefulness for the social sciences. This argument will be advanced with references to a variety of sports, but perhaps most notably with respect to women's skeleton.