

BOOK REVIEWS

Richard Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development*. Champaign Ill., Human Kinetics, 1999. Pp. xxxi + 181. Notes, bibliography, index. (paper). US\$39.50.

Joseph Maguire, *Global Sport: Identities, Societies, Civilizations*. Oxford, Polity, 1999. Pp. x + 239. Notes, figures, biblio., index. £14.99.

These two books have been written by two of the best known academics within the sociology of sport. In this review, I critically evaluate and compare their relative merits. Of particular interest are the opposing positions that Gruneau and Maguire take on what they consider to be the appropriate departure points and theoretical commitments of sport sociology.

Gruneau's book is a reprint of his relatively brief original text, published in 1983. It contains four chapters that deal, in turn, with Gruneau's critique of prior sociological positions on sport; set out his theoretical position blending Raymond Williams and Anthony Giddens; explore the social history and political economy of Canadian sport; and synthesise the theory with evidence to point towards new research and theoretical agendas. The reprint includes a new foreword by Bob Connell and a fifteen page postscript by Gruneau. The contents of the latter are most usefully outlined and evaluated following a brief discussion of Maguire's book.

Global Sport is Joe Maguire's much awaited first, single-authored monograph. The text has eight substantive chapters and two rather short ones that serve as an introduction and a conclusion respectively. As expected, the book is predicated upon the figurational (or 'process') sociological standpoint of Norbert Elias and his followers, notably Eric Dunning. The two endorsements on the jacket are written by Dunning and another noted Eliasian, Stephen Mennell, which will hardly recommend the text to those with less than total faith in process sociology.

Many of the arguments and discussions within Maguire's book will be familiar to those with some knowledge of his previous work (including his substantial, collaborative engagements). The book's main claim to originality rests with his five-stage model of the emergence and global spread of sport. The model is actually outlined in the most truncated form (over barely ten pages); it is also very Anglocentric, and slips very carelessly between its discussion of 'Western', 'British', 'English', 'American' and 'European' interests and influences on sport. Moreover, the book regularly reminds us of Maguire's facility for relabelling specific social relationships or sociological problems (such as 'the media-sport complex' and the 'exercise gender-body complex'), which may aid consumption of these issues, but may yet leave us little further advanced in terms of understanding their subtleties.

Intriguingly, Maguire has a predilection for nice figures that may yet get him into hot water. The book has several schematic diagrams that seek to show how various factors interrelate within specific 'complexes', such as the 'exercise gender-body complex'. The results, however, look very similar to the pseudo-mechanical diagrams so beloved of 1950s structural-functionalism or cybernetic social theory (suggesting Elias's debt to functionalism is greater than tends to be acknowledged). To fill out these various inter-relating boxes, Maguire's diagrams tend to separate artificially specific institutions and social actors – an explanatory practice that one cannot imagine Elias performing given that it tends to undermine the figurationalists' greater mission: to emphasise the ontological 'interdependency' of all living phenomena.

Maguire (p.215) concludes that he has 'sought to map out common ground' between figurational sociology and other theoretical standpoints. He mentions Marxism, feminism and cultural studies without indicating exactly where the various standpoints might be most productively coupled and for what purpose. More disappointingly, he repeats a reflex hostility towards the postmodernists, though there are elements in this very broad range of conceptual standpoints that would share initial symmetry with matters figurational. For example, Elias's conception of human beings as social processes resonates well with the post-structuralist 'decentring' of the individual social actor.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the deconstruction of barriers between figurationalism and other schools has a long way to go. Indeed, on this point, there is clearly more work to be done by the figurationalists than by the others. Sport sociologists in the UK, North America and Australasia who have no deep commitment to Elias have had little problem in working some of the more useful aspects of his thinking into their various researches. Conversely, it is the Eliasians who hitherto have been least inclined to engage with other theoretical standpoints, except where the latter might serve on occasion to prop up the more compelling refutations of Elias's work. More routinely, one finds Eliasians consistently true to Elias's own style, acknowledging few, if any, other sociological schools with whom he surely drew upon and interacted. Maguire proves that he is knowledgeable about other perspectives within the general sociology of sport and globalisation debates. While this is sufficient to build a successful career, his book moves little beyond copious homages to Elias and reveals few deeper conceptual interests or diverse theoretical interdependencies.

All of this stands in contrast with the revised edition of Gruneau's book. Though routinely associated with the broad traditions of critical Marxism, Gruneau is an expansive intellectual keen to develop the more insightful contributions of other social theorists. Indeed, in his postscript (p.117), Gruneau easily defends himself from charges of sociological monotheism, identifying his interest in the work of Veblen, Mills, Giddens, Geertz and even Elias. Indeed, this is evidence of his commitment to a 'broadly synthetic approach to the study of sport that keeps history and theory, interpretive cultural analysis, and political economy together' (pp.114-5). Gruneau acknowledges that his original text contained some significant lacunae, most notably in relation to an adequate exploration of the mediation of sport and a consideration of Bourdieu's possible contribution to sport sociology. This latter omission is particularly curious given Bourdieu's long influence among Canadian sociologists (among whom Gruneau really belongs).

For Gruneau, the general test of a good theory is not only its capacity to avoid dualist thinking, or to avoid reifying structures and institutions relative to social actors, but also its capacity to allow for an engaged, critical standpoint in respect of its theorisation of power. In this case, the advantages and disadvantages of figurational sociology become apparent: avoiding dualisms and emphasising process, while still bedevilled by an unwillingness to confront and engage critically with power relations or structural dynamics in favour of 'reality congruence' (which can look like description to many of us). Indeed, to illustrate this excessive 'detachment', we may turn to Maguire's concluding comments. According to Maguire, the sociologist must be a 'hunter and destroyer of myths and the provider of relatively adequate reality-congruent knowledge'; this knowledge, he claims, provides citizens with the greatest form of empowerment. We will pass over how poorly the figurationalists respond when their own research is demystified (witness the ructions that followed critiques of

their hooliganism researches). We might note here, however, that knowledge is fine as long as it is free of social distortions and access to it is equal; and that we don't lose sight of the need for other resources to be more equitably distributed. A more interventionist sociology might help in this respect. In modern Britain, we still pass too many people shuffling through our copious public libraries for warmth while sleeping in doorways under piles of 'myth-destroying' newspapers,

In terms of market appeal, neither the Maguire text nor the Gruneau book fits too easily into a textbook category for sociology of sport courses. The cover designs are notably bland and uninspiring, suggesting the publishers abandoned luring in the general student market or the 'educated reader'. Gruneau's book is certainly the more useful as a teaching aid, its opening two essays having particular value. Alternatively, Maguire's work reads at times as a collection of essays and is too preoccupied with figurational matters for it to have much appeal to those working at least partially with other standpoints.

On balance, there is little doubt that Gruneau's book will continue to have a more lasting impact, offering a critical standpoint that remains highly relevant to contemporary sport, and confirming the value of an 'interdependent' theoretical approach towards sport's sociological investigation.

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John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson, *FIFA and the Contest for World Football: Who Rules the Peoples' Game?*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998. pp x + 294. Notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 07456 1661 5. £13.99.

Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (eds), *Football Cultures and Identities*, London, Macmillan, 1999. pp xi + 259. Notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 0333 73010 0. £15.99.

Richard Giulianotti, *Football, A Sociology of the Global Game*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1999. pp xvi + 218. Notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 07456 1769 7. £14.99.

As if mirroring Ruud Gullit's calls for new-age 'sexy' football (*World Soccer*, October 1998), scholars are now turning to soccer in a new wave of research in which every subject is fertile ground for sociological, political and historical research. The three works reviewed here are part of a recent plethora of material examining football and its global expansion. Each book takes a different approach to analysing the historical and contemporary globalisation of the world's most popular sport, with varying degrees of success.

World football has entered an interesting and lucrative epoch. Television now pours incredible sums of money into the sport, fuelling frenetic commercialisation and consumption. Salaries and transfer fees for professional players, particularly in Europe, are at all time highs, new competitions and fixtures have emerged, and the print and broadcast media provide saturation coverage. World football is undeniably big business but, as the three books under review point out, there are clear distinctions between the haves and the have-nots within the game.

In *FIFA and the Contest for World Football*, John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson focus on 'the organisational base of world football development, as manifest in FIFA's