

Kelly, John R. *Leisure Identities and Interactions*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983, Pp. x, 205. Index, notes. \$29.95

Sport historians would find it beneficial to keep abreast of the latest research in closely allied fields. Unfortunately, the tremendous proliferation in the literature within our own field, as well as within these other areas of study makes this task increasingly difficult. For those historians interested in knowing what is going on in the area of leisure studies, but who have not had the time to examine the growing number of scholarly articles on this subject, John R. Kelly's *Leisure Identities and Interactions* is an outstanding starting point. Kelly's work, the first text in the new Leisure and Recreation Studies series, is more than a review of the latest research on leisure. It is an attempt to integrate the recent scholarship into a framework which explains the centrality of leisure to human development and social relationships.

Kelly's work begins with the assumption that leisure "is a complex rather than simple phenomenon, multidimensional rather than monothematic" (p. 6). Within this context, he seeks to demonstrate that leisure cannot be conceptualized as an entity with certain specific properties or that leisure is something that occurs within a defined time or place. Instead, Kelly argues that leisure "is processual with freedom as well as structure" (p. 167). While leisure is process rather than form, leisure experiences are characterized to a relatively high degree by all or most of the following dimensions: (1) it is relatively free, accompanied by a minimum of constraints; (2) satisfactions are primarily intrinsic; and (3) it is playful, in the sense of being self-contained, having meaning within the occurrence.

Kelly's thesis is that leisure may be more fruitfully understood by examining it within the framework of a dialect between personal (existential) freedoms and socio-economic and cultural forces. Kelly examines several sociological theories and discusses how they influence the study of leisure behavior. Differences naturally exist between these varying approaches, but they generally accept the centrality of social structure and institutions as a key determinant to leisure behavior. While Kelly recognizes that "leisure is not segmented and unconnected to institutional roles," he argues that "neither is it wholly determined" by them (p. 198). He notes that an accumulating amount of evidence exists to indicate that traditional structural variables do not predict leisure participation. Consequently, leisure behavior needs also to be analyzed from the perspective

of the actor and needs to consider the participant's interpretation, consciousness or intentions. It is the mixture of the existential and the structural, Kelly concludes, that provides the basis for comprehending the meaning of leisure.

Historians might be disappointed that little of Kelly's work deals with the historical development of leisure and how it has changed over time. Nevertheless, the study raises suggestive questions, if indirectly, about the nature of historical research on sport. It is for this reason that I found Kelly's discussion of "Life Course Changes," (Ch. 3) and "Leisure and the Family," (Ch. 5) particularly interesting.

Kelly notes that leisure is an expression of the changing roles and identities that take place through the life cycle. "When leisure is defined in relation to social networks rather than as some leftover period of time," he notes, "then every major shift of roles would be expected to impact leisure" (p. 56). What follows is a discussion of three major life course periods and how they impacted on leisure behavior and expectations. While shifts in the meaning and modes of leisure during the life cycle seems almost self-evident, sport historians have totally ignored this important theme. While they have noted that sport had different class and ethnic meanings, within groups the emphasis tends to be monolithic without discriminating between the eight and eighty-year old person.

Kelly's work also indicates that the family plays the preeminent role in establishing leisure behavior, expectations and roles. His conclusions derive from several communal studies on varying size cities both in the United States and the United Kingdom. The work reveals the importance of the family in the leisure activities of middle class families, but increasingly among working class families as well. The recent research, Kelly asserts, clearly undermines the older assumption that leisure was determined by work. The safest generalization that can be made about the work-leisure connection, Kelly notes, is that they "are more and more independent rather than interdependent" (p. 43).

Kelly's work unfortunately straddles the critical historical question of whether the recent realization of the importance of the family and the less significance of work in determining leisure behavior is a reflection of historical change or the product of more perceptive and/or different research questions and methods. While historians will need to explore this theme in greater detail, Kelly sensitizes us to the need to move beyond examining sporting and leisure attitudes in terms of whether they were congruent or compensatory with work, and focus on other variables such as family and community.

*Leisure Identities and Interactions* was not designed as an introduction to the study of leisure. Since the author is concerned mainly with examining various theories and approaches to the analysis of leisure, the narrative does not always flow smoothly, particularly for those unfamiliar with this subject. Nevertheless, sport historians will find reading Kelly's thought-provoking work well worth the effort.