

Dunleavy, Aidan O., Miracle, Andrew W, and Rees, C. Roger, eds. *Studies in the Sociology of Sport* Ft. Worth, Texas Christian University Press, 1981. Theberge, Nancy, and Donnelly, Peter, eds. *Sport and the Sociological Imagination*. Ft. Worth, Texas Christian University Press, 1982.

Together this pair of paperback volumes houses some 49 papers presented by members of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport at that fledgling organization's second and third annual meetings (1981-82). As fellow workers toiling in the sports studies vineyard, the work of sports sociologists should be monitored by sports historians. After all, there are many avenues to understanding and the affinity between those of history and sociology has long been recognized. Ideally one could envision a convivial relationship like that of the mythical Spratts for licking the platter of human understanding clean.

Yet sad to say, the two disciplines seem to have diverged over the past few years, for which both disciplines are to blame. In general sociologists have come to be viewed by outsiders as embracers of empirical, numbers-crunching micro-studies done up in jargon-mongering, obfuscating packages. And historians, whose ranks include similar dedicates, are often rapped by sociologists for being qualitative researchers with naive notions of groups and group processes.

But sports historians would do well to shed their blinders and thumb through each of these books in search of insights. In so doing one will get no help from an index as neither book supplies such a crutch. But one can profitably follow the topical organization of each book. In the earlier volume, *Studies in the Sociology of Sport*, the listings include "Sport, Culture and Society," "The Formal Organization of Sport," "Involvement in Sport: Process and Outcome," "Perceptions of Sports Involvement," "Effects of Participation in Sport," "Impact of Sports Participation on Youth," and "Curriculum Advances in the Sociology of Sport." If these sound forbidding, one can adopt the crutch of looking at the summaries of most articles. Seemingly, sociological informa-

tion declaiming calls for summaries which in this case is a helpful custom as it often saves one from having to wade through tortuous prose.

Actually few books of readings ever turn out to be the strings of pearls envisioned by their editors. *Studies in the Sociology of Sport* might better be likened to a string of marbles. Reading the articles with an eagle eye for help in furthering the sports history enterprise, this reviewer found a few blue agates among an otherwise humdrum collection. Among the better articles was one dealing with children's competitive sports as "agents of socialization" for adult life participation in a corporate America; another on the embattled values of feminism and patriarchy in physical education; and another on little league football programs as agents of socialization. The latter study had its author disdaining the quantitative method of research in favor of anthropological style field studies of such leagues and their participants.

Among the humdrum were a trio of studies on major league baseball. One dealt with baseball as America's national pastime and took for granted the notion that baseball was once nearly unanimously regarded as America's national pastime; in conclusion the author discovered that this claim is overblown. Another, dealing with baseball managers as team leaders seemingly assumes that managers are necessarily leaders. In pursuing his study of managers as leaders it was pointed out that managerial success "includes many criteria," that some durable and good players become managers, but for a pitcher to become a manager he had to have a truly great career, and that the length of a manager's career was heavily dependent upon his getting off to a good start in his first assignment. And a third essay, on reference group theory and the economics of professional sport, revealed some limitations on sociological predictability. Reflecting on the 1981 baseball strike, the author suggested that fans were becoming intolerant of plutocratic players. However, any idea that attendance might slough off was banished by the attendance marks of the subsequent five seasons since the 1981 strike. Yet another humdrum effort sought to pin down the value of sportsmanship. Among the findings, sportsmanship was described as a variable American idea. Much depends on the level of competition; high levels of professionalism alter the idea of sportsmanship. Sportsmanship, fair play, and ethical behavior are judged to be quite complex and further research forays into sportsmanship should have researchers questioning athletes on their personal views of sportsmanship. So what else is new?

The second volume, *Sport and the Sociological Imagination*, followed the lofty theme of the third meeting of NASSS. As articulated by the late, great sociologist C. Wright Mills, the driving ideal of a sociological imagination as part of the equipment of any intellectual is one of the most heartening ideas to come out of sociology. As a committed classical sociologist, Mills scorned the abstract theorists, the bureaucratic ideologues, and the abstract empiricists (numbers crunchers) whom he said dominated sociological research. As a classicist, Mills urged sociologists to take a large scale approach to the study of social behavior. History, biography, the comparative method, the study of

values, the exposure of bad myths, and interdisciplinary cross fertilization all loomed large in Mill's scheme of things. These were the tools of the great classical sociologists and Mills urged all students to use them; to do so would make every man his own methodologist which is a leitmotiv of his sociological imagination. Thus equipped, the ideal sociologist (and thinker) would untangle social issues, study value biases, and shed light on society and its institutions.

For sports sociologists to rally around such radical thinking promised much, but the twenty-two papers organized into seven sections ("Sociology, Sport and Popular Literature," "Feminist Analysis and the Study of Gender in Sport," "Sport and Social Problems," "Sport and Social Policy," "Sports and Careers: Sport in the Life Cycle," "Sports and Careers," "The Characteristics of Sports Participants") offer little of the "Promise" of Mill's sociological imagination.

As with the first volume so in this one the promised string of pearls becomes an uneven string of marbles. Repeatedly the articles, after their authors genuflect to Mills's great ideal, lapse into their numbers crunching micro-studies. But here and there some baubles sparkle. In his keynote address, Allen Guttman faults sports sociologists for ignoring historical scholarship and urges them to get with sports history, sports literature, and foreign sports studies. Likewise, Alan Tomlinson urges sports students to study the works of the new breed of sports journalists, some of whom write as gifted exponents of sociological imagination at its best. Sport historians also would profit from reading Helen Lenskyj's piece on women runners. Well grounded historically, the article exposes the wrongheaded ideologies that long worked to bar female participants. Students of professional sports will profit from reading Arthur Johnson's article on the uneasy partnership between the 49 North American cities and their major professional sports teams. Likewise sports historians should read articles by Stephen Lerch and Edwin Rosenberg for keen insights into the issue of post career adjustments of professional athletes; most intriguing is their idea of a "social death and rebirth process" which athletes undergo upon the termination of playing careers.

Articles such as these show Mill's sociological imagination at its most promising. In the opinion of this reviewer, sports students of every disciplinary stripe need a Mills bomb tossed into their ranks periodically. Reading *Sport and the Sociological Imagination* prompts this reviewer to suggest that sports students read Mill's *The Sociological Imagination*. To do so can only strengthen one in his resolve to be his own methodologist.

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