

Broom, Eric F.; Clumpner, Roy; Pendleton, Brian; and Pooley, Carol A., eds. *Comparative Physical Education and Sport*. Volume 5. Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Books, 1988. Pp. 292. \$32.00.

This volume is a collection of twenty-seven papers presented at the Fifth International Symposium on Comparative Physical Education and Sport, held at the University of British Columbia in 1986. While providing a brief description of the symposium and an array of acknowledgments, the prefatory notes fail to highlight the central theme or purpose of the proceedings which might be assumed to parallel that of ISCPES: "to support, encourage, and provide assistance to those seeking to initiate, develop, strengthen, and conduct programs . . . throughout the world." Sadly, it is unlikely that this purpose will ever be met as long as books purporting to be comparative in focus perpetuate the problems of academic identity and methodological inadequacy which have plagued such study since its genesis. In the opening chapter Pooley recalls how, in reviewing abstracts for the symposium, the Scientific Committee was "amazed how misunderstood our field is" (p. 3). Ironically, despite being afforded a golden opportunity, that same committee has done little to clarify this misunderstanding through its generally poor selection of papers. Although the book is divided into four parts: Keynote Addresses; Sport; Physical Education; and Fitness, it might have been better organized into three sections entitled: Methodological and Comparative Studies; International and Area Studies; and Others.

*Comparative Physical Education and Sport* is remarkable for its lack of

“Comparative Studies.” Pooley’s well-written “The Use and Abuse of Comparative Physical Education and Sport” provides a necessary and important evaluation of the field. Despite his weak and tentative claims to a “scientific discipline” (which is doubtless intended to add credibility to an uncertain academic identity), Pooley successfully examines a spectrum of methodological questions that many of his co-contributors would have done well to consider in advance. While some authors effectively utilize methods drawn from the humanities and social sciences, most ignore the critical uniqueness of comparative methodology. The value of a systematic comparative analysis of two or more cultural groups [BETWEEN] is best demonstrated by Zeigler’s study of “Undergraduate Professional Preparation in Physical Education in the United States and Canada (1960-1985).” Utilizing Bereday’s four levels of analysis he shows the potential benefit that a more careful adherence to methodological considerations can bring. Despite the shortcomings of Bereday’s approach and the limited socio-cultural interpretation of data, Ziegler’s study serves as a fine model for future scholars to follow.

Although there are other comparative studies contained within this volume which might prove interesting to the reader, a common criticism is the authors’ general failure to discuss selected phenomena in their socio-cultural context. Surely, without consideration of such abstract concepts as beliefs, attitudes, values, and norms (factors which contribute toward the uniqueness of social, cultural, and national groups), together with a thorough appreciation of history, resources, communication, and technological advances, a comparative study becomes somewhat vacuous. Breadth of study remains a common pitfall in comparative study and one which is well-represented here. In choosing not to delimit their study further, Hardman et al. manage to precipitate more questions than they effectively answer. However, perhaps the greatest regret after reading this collection of papers is the glaring absence of stated, justifiable purposes. Where are the critical studies? Clearly the world of sport has created a host of socially significant problems and issues, so why must the reader be faced with such mundane matters as “The Reasons for Marathon Participation of British and Australian Non-Elite Runners” and “International Perspectives of Aerobic Dance”? Unfortunately, few of the studies attempt to uncover causal mechanisms, or present sound conclusions, let alone provide recommendations for reform which must certainly remain the singlemost important justification for comparative study.

The inclusion of so many descriptive “Area Studies” in this volume will further cloud the readers’ perception of the field. Better placed in any number of publications concerned with international physical education and sport, they focus upon the development of a chosen phenomenon within one nation. Chandlers’s extension of Eggleston’s (1965) now classic “Secondary Schools and Oxbridge Blues” together with Saunder’s examination of physical education, sport, and leisure curricula in British higher education may be of interest to sport historians. Regrettably I do not share this confidence with three other papers. In representing the East German Secretary of State for Physical Culture

and Sport, one must question the value of Buggel's diverse and superficial portrait of an apparent sporting utopia to an academic community. While wide global representation is desirable, academe has an obligation to objectively challenge and critically evaluate rather than subject itself to selectively prepared manuscripts, chock-full of sports trivia. Equally at fault, and similarly remiss of references, is Kudlorz's discussion of school sport in Poland although the author might be commended for his candid, though brief, acknowledgment of his system's shortcomings. Lest I be singled out for political bias, Sutcliffe's idealistic account of government intervention and the associated claims of democratization in British sport is limited and fails to adequately address the many problems that should be quite apparent to a member of the Sports Council. Each of these studies falls short in its promise, for comparison [WITHIN] (between the 1950s and 1980s) was all too often lost in a detailed description of development.

Among the "Other Studies" published in this volume are two valuable papers which, while offering no explicit comparison, clearly imply a need to search out cultural similarities and differences. Sport historians will likely find McIntosh's "Politics and Sport: Uniformity and Diversity" quite interesting for while the author offers little new in terms of data, he creatively uses his evidence to argue in favor of ongoing internationalization and standardization in sport. McIntosh effectively demonstrates that sport has crossed political, economic, religious as well as geographical boundaries to erode cultural uniqueness in favor of uniformity. Equally thought-provoking is Riordan's essay on "State and Sport in Developing Societies." He clearly reminds the reader that "We in the developed West must realize that almost all our debates on comparative sport are utterly irrelevant to the great majority of people in the world . . ." (p. 56). Highlighting the perceived hypocrisy between the high status afforded sport in some developing nations and the accompanying failure to address social ills, Riordan argues that rather than being something trivial and unimportant sport becomes necessarily related to hygiene, health, defense, patriotism, integration, productivity, international recognition, cultural identity and therefore nation-building.

A review of this book would not be complete without recognizing that several papers, some of which seemed compelled to include "comparative" in their titles, have no place within its covers. Unfortunately, the contents of these proceedings do not do justice to the exceptional quality and editorial scrutiny provided by the publisher. While a selective readership might glean valuable information from some of the chapters, it is more likely that those seeking a clearer understanding of the nature and justification of comparative studies will, with some exceptions, be disappointed. This book is, at best, a testimony of the need to abandon anecdotal area studies in favor of comparative methodological rigor and to specifically focus upon purpose; after all, unless one has a good reason to conduct comparative research, it is generally not worth doing.