Chu, Donald. *The Character of American Higher Education and Intercollegiate Sport.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989. Pp. 252. Notes, bibliography, index. $12.95 (paper).

"It is strong presidential leadership," author Donald Chu claims, "that is needed" to reform college athletics (p. 153). These "college leaders must now recognize just how immediately important is attention to athletic abuses that stain the image of higher education," says the physical educator from California State University, Chico (p. 208). His *The Character of American Higher Education and Intercollegiate Sport* both bemoans the lack of leadership in higher education to reform itself and calls for that same leadership to do an about-face to repudiate the "Big Lie," returning athletics to respectability in higher education.

Donald Chu, formerly of Skidmore College, takes on the difficult task of making sense out of the American century-long love of emphasizing competitive physical activity in institutions which are designed to focus on mental activity. In his attempt, Chu spends nearly one-third of the book on the "history" of how intercollegiate athletics reached the stage where athletes and athletics were used in degraded ways to attract both money and students to institutions of higher learning. When the abuses first became evident, he suggests, the "Big Lie" developed to rationalize the myth of the value of Big-Time college sport and of the student-athlete. The last two-thirds of the volume takes one through a variety of more current (sociological) sport questions related to character building, economic impact, racism and sexism, and unethical behavior. He concludes with a more optimistic view of reform if only the crisis of leadership in higher education could be resolved.

Donald Chu's heart is in the right place, it appears to me. He wants to have honest, not hypocritical, intercollegiate athletics. He believes in the true student-athlete who has the chance to become educated and graduate, while not being exploited, with the student actually coming first, the athlete second. He desires to rid college sport of racism and sexism. He proposes that faculty and administrators lead the way toward a purer form of athletics. He sees athletics continuing to play a role in helping to mold the collegiate community. And he urges intercollegiate athletics to reflect favorably upon higher education. All are apparently laudable goals. Yet, it is his strong biases to do good that get in the way of an attempt at value-free research to understand college sports. Choosing historical data based upon secondary sources to fit into his value-laden sociological mind-set does a disservice to both history and to intercollegiate athletics.

Chu's book is a fine example of the difficulty that confronts people who emphasize the sociological approach when confronting historical problems. He attempts to use sociological theory without having done primary historical research to give his study a stronger factual basis. This is not just Chu's problem, but that of historical-sociologists, who might be wise to follow the admonition: Historical facts should precede sociological theory.

He depends on secondary sources, but selectively uses his sources to "prove" his sociologically generated point of view. For instance, he claims that historically American college presidents could "rapidly and radically alter institutional programs and orientations with respect to academics and sports" (p. 25). He chooses William R. Harper and Robert Hutchins of the University of Chicago to "prove" his point because he has read an article in the *Journal of Sport History* on it by Hal Lawson and Alan Ingham. It is a fine article, but his use of "facts" appears wrong in the case of both presidents. Harper did not radically alter a program. Rather, he had initiated the program at the University of Chicago in the 1890s, principally copying what he had known at Yale, including an emphasis on Big-Time athletics which had reached the highest state in America at Yale. Hutchins clearly influenced athletics, but he certainly did not *rapidly* alter athletics at the University of Chicago, if rapidly means the dropping of football in 1939. It took over a decade for Hutchins to accomplish this-and he, in fact, did not ban football. The Chicago governing board did. If anything, the Hutchins case should help prove that college presidents can not radically and rapidly change athletic programs, the most visible aspect of most large universities. Had not the University of Chicago football team been losing all of its important games by as large scores as 85-0, it is highly unlikely that the Board of Trustees would have gone along with Hutchins' wish. A reading of the papers of the President of the Chicago trustees, Harold Swift, could have brought Chu to this conclusion, which might have radically changed some of his conclusions about the reform of college athletics.

The author might better have chosen as an example, Harvard's president Charles W. Eliot, who felt sure that presidents could *not,* (as Chu believed) "initiate or terminate sports programs) (p. 27). It was Eliot who declined an invitation to lead a reform of college football during the fateful year of 1905, responding that college presidents "certainly can not reform football, and I doubt if by themselves they can abolish it." Selectively choosing facts to fit a belief or ideology is not proper in history, nor should it be, in my way of thinking, in sociology.

Three additional problems lead one to question the value of this volume; errors of fact, jargon, and redundancy. The great educator, Thomas Arnold was headmaster of the Rugby School, not Eton (p. 52). Charles Eliot was president of Harvard, not Western Reserve University (p. 170). When possibly the two best known educators in English and American history are misplaced, it leads one to question less well-known statements of fact. The NCAA did not have an official policy related to athletic scholarships in 1935, (p. 136) when the Southeastern Conference began sanctioning them. What the NCAA had were recommendations which its member institutions were free to follow or not, for the NCAA believed officially in "Home Rule." That is, each institution was allowed to act for itself, or if it was in a conference, the institutions would follow conference policy.

Then, too, there is the problem of sociological jargon. While chiding faculty members for "befogging rhetoric of which academics are all too capable,"

(p. 5), Chu befogs with such pieces of sociological jargon as "task environment," "resource acquisition," "unobtrusive control," "rationally obvious futility," "domain consensus," "academic standards of leader choice," "extra-institutional groups," " 'input-out' model of student development," "unsatisfactory conscious rationalizations of obviously conflicting programs and goals ," and "tendency toward isomorphism with the environment." This is combined with a fair amount of redundancy and instances of convoluted syntax, videlicet: "The need to find some nonsectarian means of speaking to the historical character concerns of higher education, coupled with the resource requirements of the school and the avidity with which students, the media, and the public approached sport, and the freedom of the flexible charter of American higher education, encouraged educational leaders toward the formal incorporation of sport and its rationalization as character builder." (p. 175)

There is no question that Donald Chu has the courage to state what he believes to be wrong with sport in higher education and to indicate what he thinks needs to be done to bring about a greater integrity to athletics and higher education. Whether this volume will lead others to better understand the problem and take action is problematical.

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