

Jim McKay, *No Pain, No Gain? Sport and Australian Culture*. Prentice Hall, Sydney, 1991. Illus., glossary, notes, further reading, pp. 189.

This is a book which provides a broad ranging and critical analysis of sport as part of Australian culture. Indeed its message relates more generally to sport in capitalist societies. It starts from the premise that sport is an important and integral part of social relations, both shaping and being shaped by relations of power. Sport is focused on for the central role it plays in the maintenance of culture, values and social relations, particularly those of class, gender, race, nationality and ethnicity.

Starting from this premise of the central role of sport in cultural production and reproduction, the book focuses on economics, politics, and power relations. There are systematic analyses of the commercialisation of sport; media coverage and the images of sport and sportspeople projected therein; the current state of play of physical education; the significance of the drugs issue as a recent 'moral panic'; sport, nationalism and politics (the former Prime Minister Bob Hawke's eagerness to associate himself with the positive legitimation provided by sporting victories is highlighted); and extensive discussion of the position of women and non-dominant racial and ethnic groups. A detailed analysis of the America's Cup campaign, lots of examples of recent sporting events and good use of graphics and cartoons enliven the presentation.

McKay claims to take an interdisciplinary and antidisciplinary approach, something which he sees as central to cultural studies. Those not equipped to make fine distinctions between cultural studies and other approaches may just as usefully see his approach in more traditional terms, as involving a critical approach to sociological analysis. In the terms he uses himself (drawing on the work of Aronowitz and Giroux) in a useful section on intellectual work, his work aims to be both critical and transformative rather than hegemonic or merely accommodating.

The book should have general appeal but is specifically written as a text. It provides a glossary of key terms and, at the end of each chapter, a well chosen outline of additional reading. The final chapter sets out a program for encouraging students to confront and examine their taken-for-granted ideas about sport. It is probably that Jim McKay's book will not be read by those who might benefit most from its critical message. He points to the move within physical education and human movement studies to adopt a 'scientific' approach and avoid the study of sport in its social context. The focus of attention in these courses is on physiology and measurement, with a desire to be more closely aligned with the physical sciences.

Nonetheless, hopefully there still are courses devoted to sport, leisure, recreation and physical education which have not adopted a narrow and uncritical approach. Such courses will certainly be enriched by this book. The last chapter of the book includes an outline of an introductory subject McKay has taught himself. It has some useful tips on how to engage students and get them to reflect on sport in a serious and critical manner. Unfortunately this chapter is embryonic. It would have been more helpful to have a far more detailed set of proposals about how to confront the issue of sport. In my experience this has the potential to arouse considerable antagonism, which can readily trigger a closing of the mind. This demonstrates the symbolic power of sport and as we know, unmasking noble myths often results in a desire to shoot the messenger. Hence more systematic tips on how to deal with this would have been helpful indeed.

This short-coming points up a problem with the book more generally. Like many critical analyses of sport the book fails to convince about liberatory alternatives: a hard issue and one that is rarely dealt with satisfactorily.

Nonetheless the book makes an interesting and useful synthesis. It draws on a wide range of theoretical perspectives and a diverse and valuable range of data. Much of the data are from media coverage but there is also survey material, for example, about rates of participation of various groups. The contents should readily engage students. It certainly will prove valuable for courses concerned with sport and leisure. Perhaps it might also be considered as a basis for a general introductory course on sociology. All the key sociological issues are raised and sport does have an immediate interest that confronting inequality in a more direct manner can lack.

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