MONTEZ DE OCA

DISCIPLINE AND INDULGENCE

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL, MEDIA, AND THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE DURING THE COLD WAR

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Critical Issues in Sport and Society

Michael Messner and Douglas Hartmann, Series Editors

Critical Issues in Sport and Society features scholarly books that help expand our understanding of the new and myriad ways in which sport is intertwined with social life in the contemporary world. Using the tools of various scholarly disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, history, media studies, and others, books in this series investigate the growing impact of sport and sports-related activities on various aspects of social life as well as key developments and changes in the sporting world and emerging sporting practices. Series authors produce groundbreaking research that brings empirical and applied work together with cultural critique and historical perspectives written in an engaging, accessible format.

For My Family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On the evening of October 17, 1998, while en route to a seminar at New York University, I entered a subway station to catch a northbound train. While hurrying across the platform to a waiting train I did not realize it was heading toward Yankee Stadium for the first game of the 1998 World Series. As I approached the train two young men popped their heads out and beckoned me to their car, and the one nearest to me then heartily pounded my back as I entered. These two men were part of an unusually boisterous group of fans clad in "official" Yankees wear that had taken over the subway car and renamed it "Yankee Train!" As weary commuters entered Yankee Train, the group repeatedly exploded in a ritual celebration that included back slaps, cheers, and high fives.

What was most striking was the way in which the men used their bravado, the train's shared civic space, and a wider sense of Yankeedom to perform a masculine identity. As the train lurched into motion, two of the members performed a special cheer: the first one shouted "O!" to which the second replied "Neill!" This call-and-response chanting increased in pitch, volume, and speed ("O"–"Neill," "O"–"Neill," "O"–"Neill") until the first participant climatically purred "O'Neill!"—a reference to the Yankees' star right fielder Paul O'Neill. A single member of the group, wearing a replica Derek Jeter jersey, performed another ritual whenever the train pulled into a station. The Derek Jeter fan would melodically chant his ego ideal's full name two or three times from the doorway before shouting the oath, "I love you Derek!" Although I was stunned, I appeared to be the only one among the otherwise reclusive New York commuters who was agog by this inversion of normative social behavior and the way in which a group of men reaffirmed their heterosexual masculinity through homoerotic rituals and oaths. To everyone else, they just seemed like "boys" having fun. It was after all Yankee Train rolling toward the World Series after a long drought, and perhaps I am too much of a Mets fan. In any case, a sport sociologist was born on that October evening.

I began this endeavor with a simple question: what is the relationship between spectator sports and individual identity? Under the guidance of Toby Miller and Anna McCarthy, I began to complicate that question and ask it in turns of U.S. history. How has sport been used to support tendencies toward territorial and economic expansionism in U.S. history? These questions took on greater urgency during the early days of the Global War on Terror. Before long, I felt the questions were outgrowing a narrow broadcast history, and the project became a cultural history of American football during the early Cold War. There

just seemed to be something about the Cold War that made football meaningful and desirable to so many Americans.

As the project grew at the University of Southern California, no one played a more significant role in helping, guiding, and encouraging me than Michael Alan Messner. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Mike, who has been a mentor, muse, collaborator, confidant, and above all else a friend. Many other people at USC helped me along the way, including Barry Glassner, Mary Dudziak, Lynn Spigel, David James, Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, Elaine Bell-Kaplan, Jon Miller, Merrill Silverstein, Neil Gross, and Macarena Gómez-Barris. I owe thanks to Ellen Summers and Lisa Douglas, who helped me at the NCAA library. A group of close friends also helped me along the way, so thanks go to Jose Prado, James Thing, Robert Hollenbaugh, Cheryl Cooky, Melanie Heath, Rigoberto Rodriguez, and Belinda Lum.

After a few years of rest, I picked this project up again in earnest at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. At UCCS Katherine Mack and Stephany Spaulding have been of indescribable help; their support made this book possible. Other colleagues who have helped me along the way include Jerome Hodos, Tabatha Farney, Michael Forbes, Christina Wagner, Nancy Davis, David Newman, Jonathan Nichols-Pethick, and Christopher Bondy. Douglas Hartmann, David Andrews, and Mary McDonald have been wonderful supporters. Peter Mickulas at Rutgers University Press has invested trust and guidance in me. In addition, Yoke-Sum Wong and David Katzman have also provided invaluable feedback.

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DISCIPLINE AND INDULGENCE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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1 • INTRODUCTION

ON SELECT SATURDAY mornings, our fall ritual began in the parking lot of Kentucky Fried Chicken on Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley, California. A bucket of golden fried chicken and a jug of Dr Pepper went into a bag that my father and I carried across the University of California campus to Memorial Stadium. Measuring and metering of time as we relocated ourselves in space was central to the ritual. The expedition was timed so that we arrived in the stadium just at noon to watch the boys stretch, jog, and cut crazy patterns on the grass as they warmed up for the one o'clock game. Our postgame walks down the hill gave us time to reflect upon the games and gave my father the opportunity to teach me the requisite knowledge of a competent fan. I learned the difference between a four-three and a three-four defense, when to run a draw play or a blitz, and that Jim Brown was the greatest running back ever. But the knowledge shared was more than simply technical and historical knowledge that I was later quizzed on. For instance, I learned that American Indians like us do not stand up during the national anthem, what to eat when Mom was not around, and, more generally, how to engage intellectually with mass culture. Watching football involves more than sitting with your eyes and mouth open since it is a performance situated in the fabric of social life.[1] Despite walking farther to the game than the average fan and boycotting the national anthem, my father and I participated in a larger social process that ties football fans across the nation together on Saturday afternoons. Watching football allowed us to build a shared history, language, and set of values available in good times and bad.

College football is a social institution with its own history, lore, values, norms, rituals, and traditions. In the early Cold War (1947–1964), the period under consideration, college football games were, for the most part, performed simultaneously in regions across the country on Saturday afternoons.[2] Since individuals, families, and friends have their own private traditions, experiences, and memories as they participate in the time-space of the national culture, people

personalize a general process. Personalizing, or adhering to a national culture in a variety of divergent ways, allows fans to experience a broadly shared lifestyle as their own. For instance, my father's tradition of sitting during the national anthem allowed us to express agency while participating in an obligatory, overtly patriotic and militaristic moment that we disliked. This means that at the same time that we consciously stood out among the crowd in the stadium, we also integrated ourselves into an imaginary community of resistant American Indians as well as an imagined community of patriotic Americans. So although few of the thousands of people we encountered in stadiums around the country felt the need to express agency in the same way as us, they were simultaneously making their own individual investments and creatively producing their identities in a national process. Personalizing a general process allows participants of a national culture to exercise agency by producing themselves as subjects at the same time that they integrate themselves into the organization of society (Gruneau 1983/1999). *Discipline and Indulgence* explores this duality of experience—the way that the general, external, and objective is experienced uniquely, internally, and subjectively.

In the process of researching and writing *Discipline and Indulgence* I came to wonder why I chose to study college football during the early Cold War. Of course, I chose a topic that excited me, but still I asked myself, why the fascination with football? After all, it is a pretty silly game that can foster antisocial behaviors (see Burstyn 1999; Card and Dahl 2010; Curry 1991, 2000; Finley and Finley 2007; Gems 2000; Messner 2002; Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt 2000; Messner and Stevens 2002; Miller 2009; Miller et al. 2006; Sabo 2001; Sabo, Gray, and Moore 2000; Trujillo 1995). Only later did I realize that in many ways those Saturday afternoon rituals animate much of this book. In part, researching *Discipline and Indulgence* kept me in touch with a childhood and a relationship with my father long since past. But beyond the search for a lost time, sense, and feeling is an important subnarrative of my anecdote. I became a football fan so that my father and I could develop a shared sense of identity. Cheering for the Golden Bears of California in Memorial Stadium created a space of manly bonding and enabled me to develop a sense of "Americanness"—albeit as a hyphenated American. While I like to think of this as an identity handed from father to son, my father did not learn the game from his father. He became a football fan as part of an Americanization program carried out in a New York State boarding school for American Indians.[3] Football was used in boarding schools to instill an Anglo-American masculinity in Indian boys so that they could develop a desired sense of manhood and assimilate into "American civilization" (Adams 1995, 184–185; Oriard 1993, 233–235; also Powers-Beck 2001). Our Saturday ritual and its repetition of steps within a rigidly structured leisure schedule is one residual aspect of the forced assimilation program my father experienced. Refusal to

recognize the imperialist state during the national anthem at the same time that we participated in it is another.

Michael Messner (2002) argues that sport should always be understood on multiple levels, as interactive, cultural, and institutional. We can see through the anecdote about my father and me that sport is *interactive* in that people produce themselves by acting upon each other and sport is *cultural* by adhering to norms, conventions, shared meanings, and collective representations in specific settings. Another aspect of sport fandom that my anecdote reveals, visible in the KFC chicken, the stadium tickets, and the games' radio and television broadcast rights, is its commercial nature. Sports fans' desire for creative, agentic expression is constantly managed and contoured by *institutional and economic* imperatives, especially the need for capital accumulation. Therefore, *Discipline and Indulgence* is interested in how culture and the production of identities intersect with the political and economic organization of society. Ultimately, *Discipline and Indulgence* attempts to illuminate how individuals form and perform a sense of self or embodied subjectivity through sport participation within the imperialist history of the United States, which is to say that while we create our histories, we do so in social, historical, and institutional contexts larger than ourselves.

UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT BY LOOKING TO THE PAST

Discipline and Indulgence owes a tremendous debt to the administrations of George W. Bush and Tony Blair. In late 2001, the United States initiated the Global War on Terror, and the U.S. corporate media widely supported the military operations, including the "apolitical" world of sport. For instance, the National Football League (NFL), always a bellwether of reactionary politics in the United States, responded to the crisis by changing the logo for Super Bowl XXXVI from an innocuous symbol of New Orleans (the site of the game) to an overtly nationalistic symbol. The logo became a calligram that featured a map of the nation overlaid with the U.S. flag. It had "Super Bowl XXXVI" written across it and was encircled by the game's location and date. The Super Bowl's broadcast featured surviving past presidents reading speeches from Abraham Lincoln, and the rock band U2 presented a halftime music extravaganza honoring people killed during the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. And since 2002, we have witnessed an increased collaboration among the military, the media, and sport (Butterworth and Moskal 2009; Falcous and Silk 2005; King 2008; Kusz 2007).

The increased collaboration of the military, the media, and sport within the Global War on Terror illustrates a broader process of *militarization* in the early twenty-first century. Michael Geyer defines militarization as "the contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence" (Geyer 1989, 79). In other words, militarization largely emerges out

of civil society and produces a set of interlocking governmental and nongovernmental institutions as well as a system of thought that perceives war as a seemingly normal and logical aspect of life (Geyer 1989). As militarization develops, war becomes defined less in terms of interests than in terms of identities. Militarization turns into *militarism* when "war is not the continuation of social organization by other means, but [when] war becomes the very basis of social organization" (Geyer 1989, 80). Militarism can thus be understood as a set of values and beliefs in the efficacy of the military and the use of military force to solve issues of domestic and international policy that emerge out of a complex of political and economic institutions and that are generalized throughout a population to the point that militaristic values and beliefs become a banal aspect of everyday life.

In 1956, the eminent sociologist C. Wright Mills argued that following the Second World War the role of the military changed from being suspect in civil society to being a respected institution that directly informed political decisions. Mills found this troubling because military personnel are professionalized within a worldview that sees military force as a logical solution to nonmilitary problems. The military (like sport) claims to be outside of politics; however, military technicians were increasingly making decisions formerly made by civilian leaders. Mills saw the growing role of the military in the governance of society as reversing the historical relations of power between the two spheres of U.S. society. Furthermore, military technicians were increasingly being called upon to comment and advise on political and economic issues beyond just the military. The increasing importance and prestige accorded to the military led to what Mills called "military metaphysics," or an understanding of the world, reality, and human existence through a framework of militarism (Mills 1956, 202–276). Indeed, when standing for the national anthem and color guard becomes obligatory and when fighter planes flying over stadiums are celebrated, militarism has become a mundane aspect of national culture.

Militarism conceptually and materially links separate and distinct spheres of life to the military, war, and "national interest." For instance, recent scholarship demonstrates how the sport-media complex fosters cultural and institutional linkages between the NFL and the U.S. government's War on Terror as in the heroic-scandal-filled coverage of citizen-soldier-athlete Pat Tillman (King 2008; Kusz 2007).[4] So although football games are empirically distinct physical events from military battles, the militarization of U.S. society allows them to articulate together as interdependent elements in a larger institution of war (Jansen and Sabo 1994). They become emotionally linked in the popular imagination and in a larger imperialistic social formation via the sport-media complex (Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt 2000).

Most of the recent research on sport, media, and militarism has taken September 11, 2001, as a rupture in modern history when "everything changed." For

instance, Kyle Kusz wrote, "[O]ne notable difference between the post-9/11 incarnation of White cultural nationalism and its dubious forbearers is that the post-9/11 version rests squarely and comfortably in the center of the American mainstream and does not seem to be regarded as an extreme ideological expression at all" (Kusz 2007, 81). Similarly, Samantha King argues that since 2001, "sport culture has moved beyond its customary role as an ideological support to the corporate state" and has become a structural element of the political economy of war (King 2008, 528). While situating contemporary sport media within the Global War on Terror has tremendous value for sport scholars, a dehistoricized approach to U.S. imperialism and the operation of militarism can mistake the current wars as a purely Republican problem rather than an outcome of the structure of U.S. society and history (Bacevich 2005). Indeed, sport was a key institution within civil society that was used to promote militarism and U.S. expansionism long before 2002 (Gems 2000).

For this reason *Discipline and Indulgence* examines sport media when U.S. militarism was in the process of ascendance, namely the early period of the Cold War (1947–1964). This examination of Cold War popular culture reveals that the militarization of civil society did not begin after September 11, 2001.[5] What *Discipline and Indulgence* reveals is that white cultural nationalism was solidly within the mainstream during the early Cold War. Moreover, because of the intertwined history of sport, media, and the state, sport culture was never merely "an ideological support to the corporate state" but rather part of the interlocking institutional nexus of Cold War militarism.

Discipline and Indulgence explores the relationship between sport and militarism during the early period of the Cold War through an analysis of college football in sport media. This approach is attentive to both the institutional structure and representational strategies of sport media during the early Cold War. Although the linkages between sport and militarism did not begin in the 1940s, focusing on the Cold War makes sense since it was a key moment in the "American Century" when the U.S. ascended to world hegemon. The early Cold War also saw the concomitant emergence of the military-industrial complex and the sport-media complex. Furthermore, the early Cold War and Global War on Terror are intense moments of anxiety, patriotism, conformity, and militarism that saw the rapid proliferation of new media technologies profoundly affect social life. Most importantly, the Cold War and the Global War on Terror are moments when military interventionism as a response to fear of external threats was used to expand U.S. political and economic force abroad as well as to neutralize opposition to expansionism at home.

Since *Discipline and Indulgence* focuses to such a degree on college football, with some focus on physical education, a reader may reasonably ask why it does not focus more on other sports, such as baseball, the "national pastime," or

the Olympics, that put the United States in direct competition with the Soviet Union. Certainly, there are many ways in which Cold War culture can be studied through sport (see Allison 1994; Beamish and Ritchie 2005; Domer 1976; Hunt 2006; Kemper 2009; Massaro 2003; Thomas 2002; Wagg and Andrews 2006). American Legion baseball, for instance, is a great example. The American Legion was a politically powerful anticommunist movement in the United States during the early to mid-twentieth century (Campbell 2010). The Legion established both youth baseball programs and adult teams that traveled the nation teaching the virtues of Americanism and anticommunism through baseball athleticism (Krause 1998; Nehls 2007). What made Legion baseball so powerful was the way in which this patriotic, anticommunist program affected national politics through grassroots cultural activism. But *Discipline and Indulgence* is a study of sport media during the Cold War and not a study of grassroots social movements. And while baseball was the national pastime, it was eclipsed during the early Cold War as the dominant spectator sport in the nation. Moreover, football was far and away the most significant and popular spectator sport in the United States, which gave most Americans a qualitatively and quantitatively different relationship with football than with the Olympics. Football's power was so significant at the collegiate level that the NCAA used it to cartelize during the television age of the 1950s (see chapter 5). And, as is argued throughout *Discipline and Indulgence*, the symbolism of football that harkens to technology, mass production, territorialization, and militarism is a more powerful metaphor for the Cold War than baseball's nostalgic imagery of the small town that never really existed (see also Gems 2000; Hoch 1972; Neilson 1995; Phillips 1969; Real 1979; Trujillo 1995; Weales 1959).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

This section provides a primer on college football and physical education prior to the period under study for readers unfamiliar with those histories. The emergence of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is addressed in more detail in chapter 5. This brief history, beginning in the nineteenth century, shows that in many ways football and physical education ran parallel in their development, even though one is a spectator sport and the other is participatory, before they intersected in the mid-twentieth century. What football and physical education have primarily in common is that both have been associated with building men and the nation. During the Cold War, football and other team sports were viewed as a useful form of physical education, and organized PE was seen as ameliorating excesses of big-time football.

Big-time, that is commercialized and professionalized, collegiate athletics began in the United States in the 1870s. Initially crew attracted the greatest