SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT

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Social Identities and Sites of Sport

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SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT

Introduction: Social Identities and Sites of Sport

Richard Giulianotti

The focus of this volume is on substantive sociological issues regarding social identities, practices and sites within sport. We focus on sport with respect to social experiences and interrelations; the social identities of spectators; the body and embodied practices; risk-taking; human geographical and urban issues; and, the media representation of sport, particularly with regard to athletes.

We begin with three articles that explore the themes of social participation, learning and capital within sport and physical activity. Fitness and health clubs represent one of the fastest-growing aspects of the sport and leisure industries over the past two decades. The article by Nick Crossley provides an ethnographic study of a health club, and focusses particularly on the members' meanings, motivations and corporeal identities. Rejecting the various 'grand theories' on 'body projects' that might be applied to explain gym work (cf. Bourdieu 1984; Giddens 1991), Crossley argues instead that various subjective understandings and objective processes lead gym-goers to pursue their 'past glories' physically, and to become fitter and healthier in the context of personal and public concerns about weight-gain, obesity and fitness.

The article by Richard Light draws us to consider the processual and 'learned' social aspects of sport participation. Light's strongly qualitative study of an Australian surf club reveals how learning works in formal and incidental ways, for example, as members learn to life-save, patrol beaches and fund-raise, as well as pick up general social skills. Introducing concepts such as 'community of practice' and 'situated learning', Light demonstrates that learning in sport and non-sport settings is a complex, open-ended and multi-faceted process (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998).

The concept of social capital has been very widely developed and applied by social scientists, particularly since the 1990s, to explore how social networks promote social cooperation, cohesion and 'mutual advantage' among members (Field 2008: 14; cf. Bourdieu 1984; Coleman 1988–89; Portes 1998;

Putnam 1995). Much of this literature has examined social differentiation, trust, political interest or participation, and the decline of community cohesion. In recent years, the concept has been employed to explore social networks and communities within sport (e.g. Burnett 2006; Jarvie 2003; Numerato 2008; Persson 2008). The article by Ørnulf Seippel, which is included here, applies social capital to assess the contribution of voluntary sports organizations to the wider civil society. Drawing on statistical data from Norway, Seippel demonstrates that involvement in sport organizations has a positive impact upon the building of social trust and in increasing levels of political engagement.

We turn next to explore the social identity and practices of sport spectators. Fandom has been one of the most widely researched subjects within sport studies since the 1970s. Particular attention has been given to relationships between sport clubs and fans, the impact of commercialization on spectators, spectator-related violence, and the construction of distinctive fan subcultures (including violent ones) (see, for example, Dunning et al. 1988; Giulianotti 2005; Giulianotti et al. 1994; Marsh et al. 1978; Robson 2000).

The article by William Kelly examines, largely through ethnographic research, the cultural identity and practices of Japanese baseball spectators, specifically those fan clubs (ōenden) which follow the Hanshin Tigers. Kelly's study spotlights the complex, paradoxical or contradictory positions of fan clubs with respect to the wider sport system, for example, in their dual 'insider' and 'outsider' relationships with clubs, or in their mixing of 'choreographed' and 'spontaneous' practices during play. Kelly's highly nuanced analysis also moves us well beyond rather basic assumptions regarding Asian culture and society – as oppressively collectivist and hierarchical – to underscore instead the creativity and unpredictability that is apparent among the fan clubs and indeed among social agents within any sphere of popular culture.

The next article, by Gary Armstrong, turns our attention to football hooliganism – a subject that has received substantial exploration by sociologists of sport, and which has featured some hostile exchanges between rival scholars (cf. *Sociological Review*, 1991). Armstrong's work has provided arguably the most detailed and ethnographic analysis of hooligan formations; in particular, this work has served to dispose of earlier theories which had tied spectator violence to the 'uncivilized' lower-working class (cf. Armstrong 1998; Dunning et al. 1988). His article in this volume draws on fieldwork with the 'Blades' – a group of self-identifying hooligans who follow the English club, Sheffield United – in order to examine their violent exchanges with fans of Leeds United over the course of several seasons. His analysis reveals the Blades as a loose supporter formation with participants drawn from diverse backgrounds; whose collective identity is built around subcultural values of camaraderie, honour, shame and reputation; and, whose principal motivation is to humiliate rather than seriously injure their opponents.

As globalization became a more significant theme in sociology during the 1990s, so the focus of some sociologists of sport turned to investigate the transnational aspects of fan identity (cf. Farred 2002; Giulianotti 1999; Giulianotti & Robertson 2007; Hognestad 2006). The article by Richard Giulianotti, which is included here, sets out a four-fold model of contemporary spectator identities by thinking through the impact on sport fandom of various global processes, notably in regard to commercialization, mediatization and postmodernization. Although it has been developed primarily through research into world football, Giulianotti's four-fold model may be utilized to explore the diverse forms of spectator allegiance in many other sports.

We turn next to five articles that explore the body in sport, with particular reference to the making of national identities and the boundaries of corporeal transformation. The article by Soon-Hee Whang examines sumo wrestling in Japan, and in particular, the ways in which the body of the athlete (or *rikishi*) is understood as signifying distinctive aspects of Japanese culture. For Whang, three themes centring on the *rikishi* are at play here: the body as receptacle, expression, and metaphor. The latter appears to be increasingly important, particularly in the context of sumo wrestling's internationalization, as the *rikishi* is portrayed as a 'naked ambassador' for Japan, his body symbolizing forms of national power.

The anthropologist Eduardo Archetti provided a superb body of work that examined the multifarious aspects of Argentinian sport and culture (see, for example, Archetti 1995, 1997, 1999). In the article included here, Archetti advances our understanding of the interplay between sport, the body and nationality by exploring how football and tango serve to embody particular constructions of Argentinian identity. The distinctive 'creole' (*criollo*) football style in Argentina has long emphasized individual agility and creativity, and has been embodied in recent times by the tango-like artistry of players like Maradona and Messi. Moreover, the dribbling style of *criollo* players was established in the 1920s and 1930s, at the same time as the tango underwent major transformation.

The issue of body modification has generated substantial discussion among social theorists (particularly feminists) and sociologists for some time (see Featherstone 2000; Haraway 1985, 1991). Analysis of this issue within the sociology of sport is likely to expand, given wider public debates on the role of technological interventions and the meaning of 'disability' in competitive sporting contexts (cf. Butryn & Masucci 2003a, 2003b). The case of the South African Paralympic runner, Oscar Pistorius, who competes against 'able-bodied' athletes, has provided one substantial reference-point for these debates in recent years (cf. Cole 2009). The article by Ted Butryn and Matt Masucci, which is included here, helps to open up this research terrain by exploring the qualitative experiences and identities of cyborg athletes within the environment of participation. Butryn and Masucci reveal the diverse and often paradoxical ways in which these athletes understand

the intersections between technology, nature and 'the human' through their sporting practice.

Doping is arguably the most contentious issue in world sport, and has had particularly serious consequences for elite-level track and field athletics and cycling. The establishment of the World Anti-Doping Authority in 1999 was intended to coordinate the policing and prevention of doping in sport. For social scientists, doping raises a number of critical issues regarding policy implementation, civil and human rights, and the influence of medicalization processes in competitive sport (Dimeo 2007; Houlihan 2002; Park 2005; Schneider 2004; Stewart and Smith 2008; Waddington 2000). The article by Barrie Houlihan, which is included here, explores a wide range of ethical, legal, institutional and policy issues in regard to sport's implementation of doping controls. Houlihan argues that the World Anti-Doping Code in sport is imbued by a 'passive' and technical conception of rights, and thus fails to protect the political and normative interests of athletes.

Disability in sport has received some insightful sociological analysis in recent years (see, for example, De Pauw & Gavron 2005; Thomas & Smith 2008). The rise of the Paralympic movement has been a catalytic force in advancing the sport participation of disabled people (Brittain 2009; Howe 2008). The article by Huang Chin-Ju and Ian Brittain, which is included here, explores the subjectivities and identity-constructions of British and Taiwanese elite disabled athletes. Chin-Ju and Brittain explore the interplay between personal and societal processes, as well as the role of contextual factors, in the construction of 'multiple identities' among disabled athletes. Notably, on these points, relatively few significant differences arise among the athletes with respect to their athletic disciplines or national-cultural backgrounds.

At first glance, the issue of risk appears to have become a major theme in sociological research since the early 1990s, as public fears over environmental degradation came to the fore, and as the work of German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992, 1995, 1999) was made available to international audiences. However, the subject of risk has an extensive history within social science, having been initially explored by the economist Frank Knight (1921), and subsequently in different ways by various analysts (e.g. Boyne 2003; Douglas & Wildavsky 1982; Luhmann 1993; Short 1984; Slovic 1987). Risk has been addressed by sociologists of sport in order to examine the applicability of different risk-centred theories to sporting disciplines, the rise of extreme sports, social stratification and risk-taking cultures, and the qualitative aspects of illicit risk-taking behaviours such as football hooliganism (cf. Coleman 2002; Donnelly 2004; Finn 1994; Giulianotti 1995, 2009; Laurendeau 2008; LeBreton 2000; Rinehart & Sydnor 2003).

The two articles included here, by Stephen Lyng and Robert Fletcher respectively, explore, in particular, the appeal of risk-taking sports to the professional middle-classes. Lyng develops his theory of 'edgework' to explain the lure of high-risk activities such as sky-diving. Through a blend

of the micro-sociological insights of Mead and the more structural dimensions of Marx, Lyng's theory captures the complex symbolic universe of edgeworkers and their endeavours to escape forms of over-rationalized, alienating labour. The article by Fletcher, draws particularly on Bourdieu to consider how risk-taking pastimes connect to the habitus of the young middle-classes. Fletcher argues that, for this particular class formation, risk-taking pastimes provide a partial escape from broader pressures to defer gratification and to pursue disciplined labour.

We turn next to explore sociological issues that connect to the spatial and urban aspects of sport. The work of John Bale (1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1998) has been pivotal to the development of a human geographical understanding of sport, notably with reference to the social history of stadiums, emotional and social ties to sporting spaces, and the impact of the mass media and postmodernism upon sport environments. In this volume, the article by Chris Gaffney and John Bale, examines the sensorial aspects of sporting places with particular reference to stadiums. Gaffney and Bale consider how the stadium is experienced by spectators not just through the recognized senses (sound, sight, touch, smell, taste), but also through a 'sixth-sense', that is, the sensation of being in and part of the sport crowd or community.

A mixture of sociology, economics and human geography has been used by social scientists and other analysts to explore a recurring public issue regarding sport spaces: public-sector expenditure on sport infrastructures, particularly in the construction of elite-level sporting venues. In North America, much of the research into stadium-building has shown that civic investments in these projects typically benefit corporate interests and club owners rather than local tax-payers (cf. Delaney & Eckstein 2003; DeMause & Cagan 2008; Noll and Zimbalist 1997; Rosentraub 1999). Across Western Europe, many local authorities and governments have invested heavily in sport and cultural infrastructures since the mid-1980s, as key elements of urban regeneration policies, with the aim of improving commercial investment, local employment, health and tourism.

The article by Jason Smith and Alan Ingham takes a critical view of how sport connects to community-building at everyday level. Drawing on a specific case-study from the United States, as well as a wide range of social scientific approaches to urban studies, Smith and Ingham argue that where sport is subsidized by public revenues, it may serve to intensify social divisions rather than to bind communities.

The article by Chris Gratton, Simon Shibli and Richard Coleman, which is included here, explores how urban sport policies operated in the UK, notably in Sheffield and Manchester. The authors highlight differences between North American and European experiences of these policies, while leaving open the fundamental question of 'opportunity cost': the extent to which communities would benefit more from sport-related expenditures

being directed instead into other public services, such as education, health, or the criminal justice system.

Sociologists with research interests in urban affairs, crime and deviance have been at the forefront of studies into the 'night-time economy' (cf. Hobbs et al. 2000; Roberts 2006; Shaw 2010). Casinos, restaurants, cinemas, pubs and nightclubs are typically central to night-time economies that often derive from the culture-focussed, post-industrial redevelopment policies of city authorities. Sport would also appear to have a role to play here, as sport teams are flagships for cities, while evening sporting events may serve to draw thousands of spectators into entertainment districts. The article by David Rowe, which is included here, explores the position of sport within the night-time economy of Parramatta, a city located in the Sydney area of Australia. Rowe's findings indicate that sport has, in fact, been accorded a rather limited role to play in culture-centred regeneration strategies – a curious absence, which may reflect residual assumptions that sport does not fully qualify as a cultural field or practice.

The final set of articles to be explored here, focusses on the sport-related mediatisation of celebrity, national and subcultural identities. Celebrity athletes such as Tiger Woods, David Beckham, Michael Jordan, and the Williams sisters are increasingly important to how the sport industry, mass media, and general public come to experience, narrate and understand sport *per se*. The growing non-sport activities of sport stars serve to advance the collapse (or 'dedifferentiation') of structural barriers between sport and other fields, such as consumerism and politics. Moreover, sport celebrities provide symbolic mirrors and metaphors through which broader structural, societal and normative issues may be explored, for example, in relation to class, ethnicity and race, gender, and nation (cf. Andrews & Jackson 2001; Cashmore 2008; Farquharson & Marjoribanks 2006; Lechner 2007; Smart 2006; Whannel 2002).

John Harris and Ben Clayton, in their article which is included here, explore the complex and often contradictory representations of football's most commercially successful player, David Beckham. Although often presented as embodying dominant forms of English national identity and masculinity, Beckham does have complex, polysemic aspects, as reflected through strong counter-discourses on his 'non-conformity'. The article by Chris Hallinan and Toni Bruce focusses on the Australian Aboriginal Olympic champion, Cathy Freeman, and thereby provides an insight into the interplay of race, ethnicity, gender and nationality in the representation of sport. Hallinan and Bruce indicate that, while she may be presented as a hybrid athlete appealing to all communities, Freeman's successes may provide 'White Australians' with ideological ammunition to point towards 'equal' social status and opportunities for indigenous peoples. The article by Hugh O'Donnell provides a comprehensive, comparative analysis of the national discourses and stereo-types that are actuated by international media in the representation of specific sport stars and teams. O'Donnell's research reveals the full extent to which these national or regional typologies and stereo-types

are shared across very different societies. He emphasizes, however, the role of underlying power relations in shaping these typologies, so that 'core' nations and regions (notably in northern Europe) present positive sporting images and metaphors about themselves, for example, as cool, clinical, scientific, and methodical; while more peripheral regions (such as southern Europe or Africa) are left to understand themselves in more negative terms, for example, as unpredictable, lazy, slapdash and irrational. The final article, by Emma Poulton, explores the growth of 'fantasy football hooliganism' within the popular media, wherein images and narratives of fan-related violence are packaged through television programmes, films, magazines and books and sold into mainstream mass markets. Placed within the wider entertainment industry, Poulton indicates that such 'hooliporn' affords consumers a controlled, virtual and risk-free form of excitement and transgression.

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In the Gym: Motives, Meaning and Moral Careers

Nick Crossley

According to a recent Mintel (2003) survey, the number of health clubs in the UK and the rate of subscription to such clubs have risen steadily and consistently over the last 10 years. There was an 18 percent increase in the number of private health clubs in the UK between 1998 and 2002 alone, with national club membership rising from 2.16 to 3.78 million; that is, from 4.6 percent of the adult population to 7.8 percent – a 70 percent increase (Mintel, 2003). Given that private health clubs are believed to have only half of the market share in health clubs as a whole, with schemes in public facilities holding the other half, this suggests that health clubs or gyms now constitute a significant form of association and social membership in the UK. In fact a recent 'Citizens Audit', which involved a representative sample of the British electorate, found that 14 percent of the population belong to a gym, a figure just two percentage points lower than trade union membership (16%), double that of church/religious membership (7%) and over four times greater than membership of environmental, animal rights or women's groups (3% each [Citizen Audit, 2002]).

There are a number of competing perspectives within sociology that purport to explain, or at least shed light upon this trend of gym-going and the practices it involves; from Giddens' (1991) account of body projects and the narrative construction of self-identity, through Foucault's (1980a: 56) account of 'body-power', which defines 'gymnastics, exercises [and] muscle building' as forms of power which invest the body and induce mastery and awareness

of it, or at least recent reinterpretations and uses of Foucault which centre upon such claims[1] (e.g. Bartky, 1993; Bordo, 1993; Lloyd, 1996; Mansfield and McGinn, 1993), to Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) contention that agents, particularly middle-class females, 'invest' in the body in expectation of profits in both employment and relationship markets. These grand theoretical accounts are each problematic in a number of common respects, however, at least as accounts of gym-going.

First, they are overgeneralized. Working out is just one of a range of diverse practices they seek to elucidate within a common framework. Consequently they lack specificity, gloss over detail and ignore potentially significant differences between different types of 'body work' (see also Crossley, 2005). I do not mean to suggest that the work of these theorists lacks specificity *in toto*. Foucault (1973, 1979, 1987), for example, gives a very detailed account of disciplinary practices in 18th-century France, a very detailed account of the emergence of modern medical discourses and an equally rich account of 'technologies of the self' in Ancient Greece, to name only the most obvious and relevant studies. Likewise, Bourdieu's key works of the late 1970s and early 1980s are rooted in extensive survey and ethnographic data. However, both writers comment on contemporary physical culture, as it was taking shape in the late 1970s, both depart from their details and data in doing so, moving away from analysis towards speculative commentary, and both have been very influential in doing so, such that their speculations tend to be frequently recycled and reiterated as established facts without ever being subject to detailed dissection or empirical questioning.

Second, where these perspectives deal with empirical material it is seldom material bearing directly upon gyms. And where it is it tends to be focused upon official documents and texts, such as work-out manuals, neglecting gym-goers' actual activities and the (unofficial) meanings they attach to them (e.g. Giddens, 1991; Lloyd, 1996; Mansfield and McGinn, 1993). Worse still, in some cases manuals are taken as reliable indicators of gym-goers' activities and meanings such that the gym-goer is treated as a 'cultural dope' in the thrall of official and expert discourses (for other critiques of 'cultural dope' models in the body literature see Davis, 1995 and Gimlin, 2002). Official discourses about a particular practice are conflated with the practice itself and analysed as if they *were* the practice. Relatively little empirical work has been done on and in gyms, especially if we bracket out studies of bodybuilding (e.g. Monaghan, 1999, 2001; Klein, 1993) and focus upon more mundane, everyday forms of working out (exceptions are Crossley, 2004a; Gimlin, 2002; Sassatelli, 1999a, b; and on 'working out' more widely conceived, Hockey, 2004; Smith, 2001). I do not mean to deny that official discourses about practice are important and shape practice, nor that discourse is itself a practice, but there is a difference between the reality of the plan or discourse and that which it plans or discourses about, as Foucault (1981) himself conceded in relation to prisons; life in real prisons, he notes, is a 'witches' brew', quite different to the idealization, the