
BOOK AND RESOURCE REVIEWS

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Sports Mania: Essays on Fandom and the Media in the 21st Century.

By Lawrence W. Hugenberg, Paul M. Haridakis, and Adam C. Earnheardt. Copyright 2008 by McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers. P.O. Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640 (\$35.00, 293 pp.)

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Studies examining sport spectator and fan psychology have increased dramatically in the last two decades. Researchers have attempted to take a more scientific approach to explain underlying psychological reasons behind spectator and fan behaviors. Concepts that have been examined in these many studies include motivation, identification, marketing to sport consumers, and theories of consumption. In *Sports Mania: Essays on Fandom and the Media in the 21st Century*, the authors do an outstanding job of assembling a wide range of original and retrospective contributions from authors primarily in the psychological and communications disciplines. The end result is a text that should join other seminal works in the field of sport spectator and fan psychology (i.e., Goldstein, 1989; Guttman, 1986; Kahle & Riley, 2004; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001) as important resources to those interested in gaining a better understanding of the science behind sport fandom.

Upon first examination of the book, one is struck with how well the mix of authors provides widespread coverage of many of the current issues key to the discipline. I can't recall reading a better review of studies examining the different ways fans utilize electronic resources and outlets to maintain or promote the attachment they have with their teams. The importance of fantasy sports and video games to the sport fan are new research directions that are beginning to garner more attention. For example, many sport marketers have focused on the video game industry and fantasy sports and how product placements may impact spectators through these new mediums (e.g., Clavio, Kraft, & Pedersen, 2009). The editors have incorporated analyses on video games and fantasy sports and have also focused on the use of message boards to help demonstrate allegiance. I found these studies to be particularly fascinating due to the fact that much of the existing literature has been focused on more traditional settings. The importance of electronic media that requires direct participation on the part of the fan is a new research direction that the editors have done an excellent job of addressing in this compendium, and it adds much to the knowledge base. It is definitely one of the strengths of this particular book.

Readers are also treated to an excellent review of the main theoretical areas pertinent to a better understanding of spectators' and fans' willingness to follow sport teams. More specifically, sport spectator and fan identification, motivation, and general fandom are reviewed quite well. They provide a necessary update to

much of the literature that was reviewed extensively by Wann, Melnick, Russell, and Pease in 2001. Thus, the reader that is attempting to learn more about these areas would be well served in using this as an ancillary resource. I still consider Wann and colleagues' (2001) text to be better suited to introducing the concepts to the lay or novice reader while this text further reviews and expounds on those concepts. Thus, one interested in sport spectator and fan psychology would do well to begin their study of the field with these two texts.

An added bonus for the reader includes a chapter by Sloan and Van Camp that reviews the research dealing with fan motivation in great detail. Sloan (1989) authored two of the seminal works in sport spectator and psychology research when he contributed to Goldstein's (1989) edited books examining many sociological and psychological issues attached to sports. These works helped guide the wide variety of theoretical frameworks present throughout much of the spectator and fan research in past decades and this updated review from Sloan and Van Camp is a welcome addition to this text. In addition, they further elaborate on the relationship that exists between fan motives and the resultant emotional responses that a fan experiences, suggesting that there are other concomitant factors that should be examined. These findings help propose new directions in sport spectator and fan research and give the reader much to think about regarding the complex nature of fan behavior. Combine these findings with additional research from other primary contributors to this book from the psychology disciplines (i.e., Wann & Grieve and Dietz-Uhler & Lanter) and the reader is provided with a thorough background of relevant research issues.

Another strength of the book lies in the fact that researchers from the media relations and communications disciplines have contributed their own perspectives. Given that the editors' backgrounds are from these areas, this should not come as a shock. These additional perspectives help strengthen the text as it tends to branch out more into other disciplines that ultimately influence the fan and their tendencies to follow sports teams and/or athletes. Wenner's perspectives on "sports dirt" and its impact upon many of the other key areas that touch fans and their identification with sports was particularly intriguing and a concept that I was not very familiar with prior to reading this text. This and other communications perspectives provide some interesting ideas to incorporate into future studies examining sport spectator and fan behaviors from the psychological perspective.

The editors do a very good job of merging research from the two fields into a review that never seems forced or disjointed. In fact, the areas covered in the communications topics are quite useful in lending further extrapolation of the psychological concepts that are discussed throughout the text. For example, Martin and Breidenfelt's analysis of the role the National Football League (NFL) played in helping people recover from disastrous events relies significantly on the concept of identification. The topics in the text that incorporate communications analysis ultimately help provide an enhanced understanding of psychological concepts in an applied setting. This strength, combined with the inclusion of multiple settings and research targets from the many studies included in the text, provides the reader with a comprehensive view of timely issues that currently impact spectator and fan research.

In summary, Hugenberg and colleagues' text is one that should be on the shelf of anyone that is interested in understanding what makes sports fans "tick."