

Introduction

At the Confluence of Sport and Identity

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Writing a book about the influence of sport on culture during the ongoing, seismic global shift in the recognition of marginalized identities has not been an easy endeavor. Just this week, as we worked to finalize this book, the Texas Legislature passed yet another bill (H.R. 25, 2021) effectively banning trans athletes from participating on sports teams that do not match their assigned sex at birth, going so far as not accepting birth certificates that have been legally amended. As a response to H.R. 25 and other recent discriminatory legislation, in an open letter to the players associations of all the major professional sports leagues, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) called on athletes to refuse to sign with Texas sports teams unless these laws are overturned (Franklin, 2021). Though Texas is seemingly an epicenter of discriminatory legislation in recent months, this oppressive response to the ever-increasing social acceptance of diversity is not an issue solely relegated to this state alone, as 33 states have introduced bills banning transgender athletes (Krishnakumar, 2021). Moreover, the injustices that we are presented with today are not novel but a product of the capitalist system that has been developed by those who have versus those who don't have. This capitalist system, though allowing for opportunity, often affords that opportunity for only for a small few while restricting many opportunities for a minoritized many.

Though markedly improved from racially segregated sports leagues or the lack of opportunities for women prior to Title IX, inequality still reigns supreme among the sporting world and broader culture: immense gender pay gaps continue to exist among professional-level athletes (Murray, 2021); Paralympians are perceived and presented as unable to match their Olympic peers (Weiller et al., 2021); and trans athletes are often unable to participate at the outset (Krishnaumar, 2021). Yet, no matter where injustice is being

confronted, sports—more specifically, athletes—often play a central role in either starting such civil rights movements or amplifying their cause: players in the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) don Black Lives Matter (BLM) jerseys and warm-up in shirts with bullet holes (Blackwelder, 2020); former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick kneels in solidarity with BLM to protest police brutality, and remains a free agent (White, 2020); disabled athletes compete on a global stage but are treated like second-class citizens at home (Johnston et al., 2015); openly gay athletes get engaged while audiences support and applaud them, yet, though legal, still often have to justify their ability to marry to those around them (Graham, 2021); and trans athletes continue to fight ardently for the right to compete at all levels of sport with respect to their gender identities (Buzuvis, 2016). All the while, athletes—particularly those from marginalized communities—are told to keep their personal politics out of sport competition, play the sport and keep quiet. Yet, as Dr. Muqtedar Khan, Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Delaware, stated, in a webinar held by the United States (US) Department of State’s Sports Diplomacy Division, “Politics is as much a part of sports as it is a part of life” (Tandon, 2021, para. 16).

POLITICS AND SPORT: THE VENN DIAGRAM IS A CIRCLE

Some believe sports, and more broadly sports competitions, should not include the personal views or political rhetoric of athletes, particularly if that view differs from their own. In other words, many wish that athletes should just “shut up and dribble” (Sullivan, 2018). To do so, however, would ignore the myriad examples of the intertwined nature of politics and sport. Sport, through the media’s lens, has often offered a platform to (re)examine these identities and their acceptance within society (Collins, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2020; bell hooks, 1981; DePauw, 1997). More specifically, sport athletes have leveraged their platform to express views on social justice and social movements to force society to examine the preconceived notions of ability, worth, and identity (Steidinger, 2020; Zirin, 2008). Though imperfect messengers on their own, athletes such as Jackie Robinson and Billie Jean King served as examples of the power of sport to create a larger wave of societal change. Yet, as Kane and Barber (2019) have suggested, our examples of the disruption of past hegemonic practices in sport have privileged a few rather than many. Thus, larger social change would only be effective with “strategic initiatives” (Kane & Barber, 2019, p. 223) to address the changes that are needed and lead to an emancipatory movement.

The “Battle of the Sexes” match between King and Bobby Riggs—a match that King won—addressed a needed shift in societal and cultural beliefs about women’s place in sport; playing a major role in increasing public support for Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 (2018). As a *New York Times* editorial phrased it, “In a single tennis match, Billie Jean King was able to do more for the cause of women than most feminists can achieve in a lifetime” (as cited in Ware, 2011, p. 2). A through line can be traced from King’s victory to the 1999 US women’s soccer win and their present legal battle for equal pay (Murray, 2021).

Preceding Billie Jean King and other activists’ pursuit of gender equality, the story of Jackie Robinson and his integration into Major League Baseball served as one of the most visible, and potentially most important, moments in American civil rights history (Shropshire, 1997). Though certainly not the first Black athlete to confront racial injustice, Jackie Robinson’s presence in a professional sport competition, during a period before any major civil rights legislation, serves as an example for small changes reverberating through time and how broader media coverage can encourage societal shifts toward justice. Without the success of Jackie Robinson, the civil rights movement may have been set back decades (Lester, 2002). Robinson’s experience, however, continues to be reflected in the present struggles facing today’s athletes and their pursuit of equality more than the predominately white spectators would like to admit. Robinson, as a condition of his contract, pledged to “turn the other cheek in the face of white physical and verbal abuse” (p. 11) facing racial taunts, rough treatment during game play, and death threats (Lester, 2002). In his autobiography, Robinson explained,

I learned that as long as I appeared to ignore insult and injury, I was a martyred hero to a lot of people who seemed to have sympathy for the underdog. But the minute I began to answer, to argue, to protest—the minute I began to sound off—I became a swell-head, a wise guy, and “uppity” [n-word]. (Robinson & Duckett, 1972, p. 80)

It does not take much imagination or creative thought to see the parallels of Jackie Robinson’s experience—or those of Muhammad Ali, Jessie Owens, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, Althea Gibson, or Wilma Rudolph—with today’s athletes. Colin Kaepernick, former quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers, perhaps most clearly reflects Robinson’s experience in the wake of his eventual protest of his poor treatment. Prior to the national and international attention on the BLM movement following the death of George Floyd at the hands of the police in March 2020, Kaepernick began his protest of police brutality by sitting, later kneeling, during the US national anthem nearly four years prior, stating:

I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. . . . To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder. (Wyche, 2016, para. 3)

Though not the first athlete to address the issue of racial injustice in the modern era—several high-profile professional men’s and women’s basketball players were already drawing attention to the issue of police brutality at the time—like Robinson, Kaepernick represents the most prominent representation of the continued injustices of sport and hypocrisy of society. No team would—as of publishing this collection—sign Kaepernick after his protests, despite the evidence that he still retains the skill and talent to play.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: MEDIA AS A MIRROR OF SOCIETY

Whether it be print, television, or social media, media have served for many years as a conduit, for better or worse, in shaping the views of society. Outside of sport arenas, media coverage of global events has long been used to mold the cultural views of events, past and present. For instance, upward of four-fifths of news coverage between 1942 and 1946 in the United States was devoted to war themes such as supporting family members in combat, importance of being a “good citizen,” and encouraging women to work as laborers (Maynard, 1997). Ebbing with the views of society, media have adapted and changed to model that of the broader culture, encouraging growth or acceptance as well as reinforcing stereotypes and stigma.

Media’s amplification of those movements have helped bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice, slightly. Ultimately, media gatekeepers’ decisions on what is stressed in coverage and how it is presented affect public perception (Weiller-Abels et al., 2021). Indeed, prior examinations have found that coverage of women athletes is likely to be represented in passive and sexual poses intended for the male gaze (Bishop, 2003; Daniels, 2009; Davis, 1997; Hardin et al., 2005; Salwen & Wood, 1994), and the framing within media coverage emphasizes their femininity and conformity to traditional gender roles (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). Among disabled athletes, media coverage focuses on medicalized descriptions focused on impairments and “overcoming” their disability (Ellis, 2009) in pursuit of an “able-bodied ideal” (Berger, 2008), indeed, serving to further otherize disabled individuals and perpetuate stigma of disability (Pullen et al., 2019). This stigmatization not only roots stigma in those without disabilities but has been shown to be internalized by those with disabilities as well (Hardin, 2003), thus, continuing

a hierarchy among athletes with disabilities (Howe, 2011). Howe described this phenomenon as media focusing on the stereotype of the “supercrip”—that is, inspirational stories that depict athletes with disabilities as having special powers to “overcome” adversity and perform athletically. By defining athletic accomplishment in such a way, media continue to give permission to those who cheer for marginalized athletes in competition to excuse their own discriminatory actions in other aspects of society.

Sport can “mobilize the sentiments of people in all countries in an unrivalled manner” (Carlin, 2003; as cited in Smart, 2007, p. 114). Yet, ongoing media coverage and the existing infrastructure of sport continue to support the oppressive systems that marginalize a great number of communities to satisfy a broader, whiter audience. Indeed, opportunities for ethnic and racial minorities, women, and those with disabilities have improved in the 80 years since Jackie Robinson first stepped onto the field as a Brooklyn Dodger; however, as the civil protests of 2020 have shown, society still has a tremendously long way to go before we can claim equality.

A NEED TO EXPLORE OUR INTERCONNECTEDNESS

In the opening of her poem, “All Oppression Is Connected,” poet and activist Stacyann Chin states:

Being queer has no bearing on race
 my white publicist said . . .
 true love is never affected by color
 I curb the flashes of me crashing across the table
 to knock his blond skin from Manhattan to Montego Bay
 to bear witness to the bloody beatings of brown boys
 accused of the homosexual crime of buggery
 amidst the new fangled fads and fallacies

In this poem, Chin emphasizes how the individual oppressions that each marginalized group suffers are rooted in the same hatred, the same bigotry. She calls us—white “progressives”—out for celebrating the victories of some oppressed groups that often come at the expense of other, even more vulnerable people. As we examine the oppressions that have and continue to be addressed by society, we—all participants, stakeholders, and powerholders—must examine our interconnectedness within sports and how sports may continue to whitewash ongoing oppressions by celebrating the small improvements made for “accepted” groups of minoritized persons. The hypocrisy of progressive ideals in addressing prejudice is most apparent in

the United States, though it is present across the globe. The United States, a self-proclaimed beacon of individual freedoms and “champion” of human rights, has long touted love of multiculturalism abroad, yet has continually failed to address these concerns at home. Sport offers an avenue to examine this duality. In the years since the integration of Black athletes into the Major League Baseball association in the 1950s, inarguable progress has been made for racial and ethnic minorities, women, and disabled persons. Yet, within each of those gains, multiple marginalization and oppression remains.

Using an intersectional framework (Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 1989), we—the editors—and each of the chapters’ authors will examine how sport offers a platform for the development of individual identity and provides a mechanism for influencing societal perceptions. We will present aspects of how individual identities and individual acts of activism can create opportunity to build a more inclusive society, as well as examine media’s role in such depiction. Each included chapter presents an aspect of the confluence of identity, sport, and the media that represents it, through both academic and community scholarship; thus, rooting the focus of the book in both theoretical understanding of identity, sport, and representation as well as its lived experience. In examining this product in its entirety, we present an intersectional argument for the use of sport to encourage collective identity while respecting and supporting our individual affinities.

Within this collection, we have aimed to provide an accessible space for interdisciplinary scholarship and narrative surrounding the intersectionality of sports, media, politics, social justice, and social movements. Rooted in the theoretical framework of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2019), this collection examines how identities coalesce in sports and how sport itself can offer a mechanism for driving social change. We argue that sports are political and that they provide spaces for marginalized communities to participate. The forum of sport offers a unique platform for shifting how society sees identity and, in turn, how society views the identities of those outside of sport. Athletes’ identities and actions, and the mass media’s representation thereof, can influence the perceptions of society as a whole and, also, how an individual views themselves. Each included chapter intends to examine how those identities—such as race, gender, disability, and sexuality—have developed and influenced social change. Indeed, we have come a long way; yet we have so far left to go.

A strong focus in this book is the representation of lived experiences from both a scholarly perspective and a lived perspective. Included are athletes from marginalized groups as they form their experiences concerning each chapter’s foci. The discourse consists of how these lived experiences are a collection of multiple marginalization and how they align with the theory presented. Sports can highlight societal injustice; yet, it can also offer

opportunities for unity in pursuit of a fair, equitable, and just society. Within this interdisciplinary collection, we have sought to emphasize scholars and writers who examine sport, media, and society and how they shape popular thought on political and social issues. We have also included a stakeholder narrative as a part of each chapter to provide firsthand accounts of athletes or other sports stakeholders' lived experiences.

Through the investigation of identity and sport, this collection is intentional in probing the intersectionality of these identities and sport as a transformational force within broader society. Furthermore, the presented collection includes a diverse group of academic scholars from the United States as well as from South America and Europe. Each chapter includes a contribution from a community member that relates the chapter's topic to their own lived experience through short narratives or personal reflection. We intentionally wanted to represent community voices to add depth and personal meaning to the chapters. This collection is meant for the academic community but also, we hope, applies to a broader audience. We believe athletes, journalists, educators at several levels, and sports fans in general will not only gain knowledge from it but also consider the perspectives of those marginalized groups described in these chapters.

OUR PRAXIS

As the editors of this collection, we recognize the influence of our own identities, views, and biases in the gathering and editing of the narratives held within. We have been conscious of our limitations in examining identity and have intentionally sought to include diverse discussions of identity and sport, particularly from those outside traditional academic discourse. To root the positionality of this book and the conversations more transparently within, we have each detailed our own beliefs and identities.

I, Dr. Andrew M. Colombo-Dougovito, am a 35-year-old white, cisgender, hetero male raised in the Midwest. I identify as disabled and athletic. My scholarship is rooted in my experience as a public educator and seeks to improve the physical activity access of disabled people across their lifespan. My scholarship is guided by my own paradigm as a radical pragmatic researcher. Informing my decisions to guide my research toward practical solutions, I root my scholarship heavily within participatory and emancipatory frameworks of research so that solutions are closely aligned with community need. With my pragmatism, however, I draw from critical examinations of injustice within our existent systems, thus borrowing from radical ideology that the most practical solution is the most radical of changes.

I, Dr. Tracy Everbach, identify as white, female, and cisgender. My research focuses on the ways media represent race, gender, sexuality, disability, and other marginalized groups. As a former journalist, I can look back on my work at a newspaper and see that I wrote through the lens of my own experiences and only sometimes was able to present the views of those who often are voiceless in media. Joining the academic world and reading scholarship on media effects and media framing, I have learned a great deal, including being able to acknowledge my own white privilege. I hope that my research and teaching help students, other academics, journalists, and others in the larger community to understand how the hierarchy of our society works and how it affects the way media content is presented to audiences, whether it is news, entertainment, or social media. Stereotypes persist, although society has changed little by little. The work never ends.

I, Karen Weiller Abels, identify as a white female, lesbian, and cisgender. I have been in a relationship with my spouse for over 40 years and married for 11 years. We have two children, 28 and 22. Many years ago when our son was young, we wondered how he and we would be accepted in preschool and in society in general. It has been a journey of learning for all, though through proactive measures, we have been always well received with both of our children. My work has centered on gender issues in the media, with recent work in disability. Examining and presenting the lived experiences of those who played in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League afforded me a glimpse into the gendered world of sport in the 1940s and 1950s. I have seen improvement in how media presents women in sporting roles, though the hegemonic perspective appears to be ever present. It's this work and the hope that we can continue to envision a more open world that fosters my continued interest in this work.

WHAT THIS COLLECTION IS (AND ISN'T)

As described above, this collection of academic and community-based writing aims at identifying the ways that identity and sport are infused in every aspect of our global culture and how media mediation of those elements of socialization can shift cultural acceptance of historically marginalized identities. This collection is not meant to be an exhaustive history of each identity or sport but a snapshot of the ways in which these elements are intertwined. Each element of this book highlights aspects of this phenomenon but is not all-inclusive. As the editors, we recognize that there are elements of identities that are not well represented nor well considered. We still believe that this collection could be of great benefit to novices and experts alike, as it is rooted in . . . historical and contemporary examples of

the ever-evolving exploration of one's identity and the influence of sport and media. We also hope that this collection can serve as an example to academics seeking to make greater connection to the communities in which they work, as well as spark a conversation among those with power and privilege to recognize the vast amount of work that is needed in pursuit of a just and equitable society.

Beginning with Our Cover

As the first and most visual element of this collection, the cover features a soccer ball and a baseball that have been thrown at and shattered a television (TV) screen. We have intended through this depiction to show the dynamic relationship between media and sports, as well as how athletes must at times work in confrontational ways to push media toward equity.

The choice to use a TV screen was intentional; though media have shifted toward a more digital, mobile Internet base that will likely be the sole means of consumption in the decades to come, the TV still plays a central role in many households, particularly those in Western, Euro-centric cultures. Its destruction lays bare the imperfections among media coverage and underscores the need to repair, or build a new, the foundations of a just and equitable media environment.

Lastly, the choice of a baseball and soccer ball was also intentional. The baseball harkens back to the most visible representation of sport's influence on society and the beginning of our long-running civil rights movement: that of Jackie Robinson, who represents one of our most visible examples. The soccer ball represents the ongoing fight for gender equality headed by the US Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT). This highlights the growth and positive change that has emerged in the last half century, yet also represents the continued inequality. Both the soccer ball and baseball are torn and tattered to show how although sports are used for change, they continue to be points of contention by such advocacy and, like the media that covers it, are not perfect in the pursuit of justice.

The Construction of This Collection

In recruiting authors to share in this collection, we intentionally sought narratives that explored the breadth of intersecting identities, media representation, and the influence of sport. Ultimately, the chapters were organized so similar ideas and constructs shared equal space. We begin the book with discussions of how space can define our identities and how our identities can define that space. Next, we acknowledge the power of Black activism and dedication to ensuring that not only are people afforded their equal rights but also share that

freedom with other oppressed peoples. Lastly, we finish with the influence of media and its inherent power to shift societal consciousness.

Section I: *Spaces that Define*

The first section of the book, *Spaces that Define*, explores the interconnected nature of the policies and organization of sport with identity. In other words, the section details the many ways in which our construction of sport has influenced our cultural construction of identity, for good and bad. Across this section, how sport and recreation spaces govern themselves, as well as their impact on our cultural beliefs, begin our journey.

In the first chapter, “‘Keep It in the Locker Room’: How College Athletic Departments Stifle Controversy and Dissent,” Frank LoMonte and Dionne Koller argue that we have entered a transformative period regarding college athlete free speech. They review legal actions that have defied the suppression of college athletes’ speech and contend that these athletes have the constitutional right to speak out. Using First Amendment law as a basis, LoMonte and Koller maintain that athletes are legally, albeit slowly, gaining the right to speak to the media and participate in democracy without being muzzled by their universities.

Joshua Rubin’s chapter, “On Balls, Players, Tackle Boxes, and Other Footballing Objects: The Politics of Being in the NFL Rulebook,” examines the 2018 edition of the NFL official playing rules. The analysis is applied as a document of social and political history, examining the changes in the NFL rulebook over time. This investigation includes a discussion of how the social and political aspects intersect into the conditions in which the game has and is being played. The rulebook takes on an identity of its own as Rubin presents both the meanings of football on society and on the bodies of the athletes who play the game.

William P. Cassidy in “Shattering the Glass Ceiling Twice: Sports Journalism Framing of Katie Sowers” has provided us with an analysis of Katie Sowers, who made sports history by coaching in a male-dominated sport, professional football, the NFL. This chapter presents readers with a discussion of sport journalism’s approach to Sowers’s history-making accomplishments. With a focus on both the gender and sexual orientation component, Cassidy contends journalists in the process of doing their job can and should take a stand in addressing social and cultural issues. Using a framing lens, Cassidy examines the space, time, and prominence of the media presentation of Sowers’s entrance onto the major sport NFL stage.

In our fourth chapter, “Queer Recreation: LGBTQ Sporting Spaces, Community, and Impact,” Austin R. Anderson and Eric Knee focus on how recreation and leisure spaces outside of the mainstream have provided opportunities for

the LGBTQ+ community to find belonging. They offer insight into how traditional sporting spaces can reinforce heteronormativity despite lipstick marketing such as Pride events or use of the rainbow flag. In analyzing the intersection of queer identity with other forms of identity, Anderson and Knee highlight the difficulties that many from the LGBTQ+ community can face and why queer spaces are vital.

In “A ‘Permissible Prejudice’: An Exploration of the Systemic Ableist Barriers to Sport and Leisure Activities for Disabled People,” Andrew M. Colombo-Dougovito and Suzanna Rocco Dillon examine the ingrained cultural beliefs that limit, even prevent, many disabled individuals from engaging in physical activity or sport, as well as how these beliefs can be transferred and exacerbated by the disabled people. Using a thematic meta-synthesis, Colombo-Dougovito and Dillon have aggregated first-person narratives and experiences to explore the ways in which society has defined ability. Stemming from critical disability discourse, they assess societal barriers through the lens of ableism and scrutinize the duplicity of media in pursuit of inclusion.

Section II: *Black Athletes as Activists*

The second section, *Black Athletes as Activists*, looks at the many ways Black athletes have and continue to serve as advocates for justice within sports. The chapters emphasize how, using their platform, Black athletes push for equity not only for themselves but for all. Rooted in relevant, ongoing conversations, this section gives light to that which is obscured by bad actors in the fight for racial justice.

Tracy Everbach, Gwendelyn S. Nisbett, and Karen Weiller-Abels examine the activism of WNBA players in “#SayHerName: The WNBA and Black Women’s Athletes’ Social Activism.” This chapter ties the WNBA’s social justice campaigns and actions to a long history of Black feminist activism and an intersectional approach to fighting racism and sexism. The authors demonstrate how WNBA players and coaches organized a collective to speak out about social justice, which their male counterparts followed and emulated. In this way, they embraced a long history of Black American women, including athletes, who have fought for human rights, social justice, and equality.

Teveraishe Mushayamunda and Mildred F. Perreault, in “How Social Media Gives Black NBA Athletes a Platform to Rally Around Racial Injustice During the #BlackLivesMatter Movement,” explore the strategies Black male athletes have employed to demonstrate their endorsements and support of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. The authors investigate Black male NBA athletes’ social media engagement through political advocacy statements on YouTube and Twitter using the lens of critical race theory and the

theory of social media engagement. They find that the athletes also seek to engage their fan communities around their concerns for racial injustice using both traditional media and personal social media engagement.

In “Athletes as Activists: Exploring Audience Evaluations of Black Celebrity Athlete Activism,” Gwendelyn S. Nisbett, Newly Paul, and Stephanie Schartel Dunn also examine Black athlete activism through the lens of celebrity endorsements. Using social identity theory and white racial frames, they explore audience responses to athletes’ support of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, finding three themes: identification with the athletes, different responses depending on the tone of the athlete’s message, and ambivalent responses to the use of their platform for activism.

Section III: *After the Lights Go Out*

In the final section, *After the Lights Go Out*, the authors investigate the role of media narrative in the acceptance of marginalized identities. Via a running theme through the preceding chapters, this section explores how storylines can linger beyond what occurs on the playing field. In this section, you will be confronted with how media can exacerbate stigma or be the agent of its change.

In “Fairness, Without the Inclusion: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Trans-Exclusionary Sports Bans,” Vincent Peña presents a study of sports from a view that focuses on the construction and portrayal of transgender athletes. How are they portrayed by the media? What is the discourse presented by journalists? Peña also provides a critical discourse analysis through feminist theory in his presentation and discussion of two recent cases (from Connecticut and Idaho) surrounding the question: Why do media often disregard and exclude trans athletes from their presentation? His discussion includes commentary not only on this lack of inclusiveness by journalists but also on how sports journalists might more effectively portray trans athletes.

Allison R. Tsuchida and Nathan M. Murata provide a chapter focused on the creation of a program that prepared students with disabilities and their peers to participate together in interscholastic competition, “In High Demand: Friday Night Prime Time and High-School Athletes with Disabilities.” The intent of the program called *Friday Night Prime* was to utilize sport as the focal point in developing well-being for students with and without disabilities. This program focused on physical, emotional, and psychological well-being, helping students to develop a sense of purpose. Three constructs formed the basis for this project: sense of belonging, self-esteem and self-efficacy, and social justice. The *Friday Night Prime Program* was rooted in equity, motivation, a sense of purpose and relationship building for all students. Students who participated in this program, based in Hawaii, were truly part of an authentic

experience that allowed students with and without disabilities to participate in sport together, build bonds, and form lasting friendships.

Paolo Lucattini, in “Migrant Children with Disabilities in Italian Schools: Educational and Sport-Related Experiences,” explores the experiences of those that face “double belonging” because of their disability and migratory status. In this chapter, Italy serves as a case study for discussion regarding how existing policies can benefit and hinder individuals’ ability to find connection with their new community. As global migration has increased due to civil unrest, famine, and climate-related disasters, Lucattini provides an overview of how cultures can better prepare themselves through sport.

In our final chapter, “Criticism of Stereotypes in Paralympism and Expectations of Media Portrayals of Latin American Athletes” Sandra Meléndez-Labrador probes the influence of media coverage on the broader culture of Latin American athletes and provides guidance on how journalists can better cover disability without further stigmatization. This chapter gives insight into how athletes in the global south are confronted with stigma regarding their disability and how they are using their new platform to push for equitable coverage. Examining the interviews of athletes from South American countries, she presents firsthand accounts of how media can more appropriately cover disability, particularly among ideologies that are so rooted in the overarching culture.

LET US BEGIN

As we start this exploration, we hope this book will ignite a conversation among all those who would consider themselves stakeholders or stewards of sports. It has become evident that the status quo no longer works—if it ever did—and there is a desperate need for critical reflection on the historically oppressive practices that have and continue to exist. We hope you enter this book with an open mind to exploring the experiences of those whose are, potentially, vastly different from your own. We also expect that many will find similarity and camaraderie in the narratives within.

Enjoy.

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