Introduction

This collection, titled *The Business and Culture of Sports*, highlights how sports is a collective activity. That is to say, sports is located within a network of suppliers, performers, dealers, agents, managers, politicians, critics, and consumers. This is why we, as editors, and also our contributors, focus on both the business side (with its economic and political components) and the culture side (with its complex and competing sets of meanings and identities) of sports. These networks are marked by a series of conventions, taboos, power struggles, and commodity chains. Each is essential to the operation of the network and the production of global/local sports. Sports economies and cultures consist not only of people who play, watch, listen to, or read about sports but also those people whose activities are necessary to the production and consumption of sports—owners, workers, and politicians, within the world of sports and beyond. In considering how these people interact, this collection examines the coordination of activities and the established network of links among its participants.

For us, several key characteristics stand out. First, as noted, is the role of networks in the production and consumption of sports. Sports, however, should not be seen in some way separate from or independent of society. Far from it. Second, we see the boundaries that surround sports as permeable—it is difficult to discern what are sports and what are not without reference to other networks and aspects of societal relations. In fact, the production and consumption of what is defined as sports is dependent on these other social worlds. Third, while sports people try to distinguish their world from others, they too have close and extensive relationships with people from those other worlds. Fourth, sports is sustained by conventions, but innovations and challenges also occur. Finally, while sports may have varying degrees of relative autonomy from interference by other groups and social worlds, it is not immune. Sports, then, is a form of collective action, involving a host of different people, connected in particular networks, who create specific forms of sports products, performances, and patterns of consumption. This collection of chapters, by experts in their respective fields, highlights these interdependencies that are involved in the business and culture of sports. Let us examine the structure and organization of this collection in more detail.

THE STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE BUSINESS AND CULTURE OF SPORTS

This collection, involving over 100 experts from across the globe, contains four volumes: *Foundations*, *Sociocultural Perspectives*, *Community*, and *Governance*. Within each, there are sections that deal with and focus on sports in social
contexts—elite or leisure; political or economic; within communities, regions, and countries or cross-culturally and on a global scale. Core questions about the role, function, and meaning of sports are raised. To what extent does sports contribute to the health and well-being of individuals, communities, and the societies they form? Or, conversely, does sports reflect or indeed exacerbate the social ills and fault lines of societies? How and in what ways did modern sports emerge, develop, and diffuse, and what is the global state of play today in terms of its equitable production and consumption? And, indeed, this very production and consumption raise profound questions about the role that sports plays in climate change, environmental degradation, and sustainable lifestyles and communities. Questions of this nature highlight issues of governance, accountability, transparency, and democracy—within organizations such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), as well as national federations and local sports clubs. If today’s business and culture of sports were constructed in the past, then what future is currently being made by participants in the networks that this collection seeks to describe, explain, and analyze?

Volume 1, titled Foundations, not only covers the ways in which the social sciences and humanities have sought to explain sports but also highlights some of the basic divisions, inequalities, and forms of discrimination that exist within societies. Containing fourteen chapters, this volume provides both a state-of-the-art account of disciplinary knowledge and specific chapters on selected aspects of the fault lines of society and how these find expression within sports. In section I, disciplinary perspectives from history, social psychology, and philosophy raise questions about the origins, cross-cultural significance, and meaning of sports for both the individual and society. The contemporary place, spatial form, social function, and mediated experiences of sports are explored in chapters drawing on knowledge produced in the disciplines of geography, media studies, and sociology. Broader network questions that relate to jurisdiction, production, consumption, and representation are addressed in chapters provided by experts in law, economics, and politics.

Section II focuses on some, but not all, of the fault lines of society and the role that sports plays in challenging, reflecting, reinforcing, or exacerbating them in different cultures. Here, scholars from a range of societies and standpoints consider questions of age, class, “race” and ethnicity, disability, and gender and sexuality. The common message from these chapters is twofold: studies of sports that are not also studies of the societies in which such sports are located are studies out of focus; and it is not possible to have normal sports in an abnormal society.

Volume 2, titled Sociocultural Perspectives, includes twenty-seven chapters within five sections. Each section probes key questions and debates that circulate in the networks of the sports world today. Section I addresses questions of class, inequality, and social mobility. In doing so, the various authors distinguish between multiple myths and facts about the role that sports plays in these processes. That is, chapters on class, gender, ethnicity, and sports policy provide a more realistic, social science–based account of the actual effects and possible potential of sports to address social ills and divisions.

Section II examines questions of socialization and identity. Here, chapters examine the process of socialization into, through, and out of sports. Broader questions of culture are combined with an examination of different subcultures.
Attention is also given to issues of coaching, lifestyle, gender, identity, pain, injury, and violence.

Section III looks at different cross-cultural perspectives. Here, the making of modern sports and their diffusion into and reception by different cultures is excavated. Questions of adaptation, indigenization, and resistance are explored in case studies covering countries across the globe.

Section IV focuses on another key element in the production and consumption of sports: the media. Key issues and concerns are identified, and attention is given to broader questions of local and national identity, gender relations, and globalization. Case studies examining the role of the media in “traditional” media markets, such as the United States, are combined with similar looks at the media in “emerging” markets, such as the Arab world.

Section V examines global developments and approaches. Since around the mid-1990s, greater attention has been paid to the role that sports can play in assisting social change within not only “developed” societies but also “developing” societies. While the United Nations, the IOC, and numerous sporting federations and national governments claim that sports can have a significant, if not profound, effect on various social issues in the “developing world,” social scientists argue that a more careful, empirically based, and theoretically informed analysis of the actual impact of sports and development programs is needed. Whether it is with regard to health, gender relations, peace building, or conflict resolution, the scholars investigating this question address these important issues in a more nuanced and balanced way—examining the myths and realities of development of and through sports.

Volume 3, titled Community, addresses a key societal concern. Organized along five areas of interest and twenty-eight chapters, this volume examines the broader network of suppliers, performers, dealers, agents, managers, politicians, critics, and consumers to which attention has already been drawn. Section I, titled “Politics and Policy,” examines a diverse range of concerns, including drugs, Title IX legislation, elite sports systems, consumption, national identity, and ethics and integrity. Each chapter examines how sports are put to use in the service of politicians and/or political causes.

Section II, titled “Community and Connection,” traces not only how sports can contribute to the social health and well-being of communities but also how sports systems and cultures have isolated or marginalized different social groups. The chapters in this section examine the connection of religion through and in sports, sports in the lives and cultures of indigenous peoples, and specific questions of the role of sports in matters of disability and mental health. The chapters take a unified approach of attempting to capture “how things really are” rather than how politicians or stakeholders claim things to be.

Within section III, titled “State and Nonstate Actors,” questions of the role sports plays in the development of youth, of gender and sexual politics at the Olympics, and of the migration of athletes in elite sports are examined. In addition, this section deals with the role of the state in contrasting countries such as the People’s Republic of China and the United States. Finally, attention is given to the role of the state in divided societies—in this case, Northern Ireland.
In section IV, titled “Diplomacy,” debates about the role of diplomacy, sports, and soft power are addressed, including specific issues such as diplomacy and mega events, the international Paralympic movement, and the diplomatic role of sporting cities. In addition, the role of sports in transnational relations is examined with reference to sports, the British Empire, and Ireland. Questions of politics, community, the role of the state, and diplomacy also prompt discussion of in what ways and in whose interests the sports network is regulated.

Finally, in section V, titled “Organization and Representation,” chapters focus on questions of governance models, gender representation, differential sports participation, match fixing, and the role of the Court of Arbitration for Sport—in matters such as drugs, jurisdiction, and player transfers.

Volume 4, titled Governance, covers a range of critical themes across twenty-seven chapters arranged into five sections. The chapters address issues in relation to the organization of sports concerning control, marketing, shifting economies, questions of sustainability (economic and environmental), and resistance as key features in understanding sports worlds. “Business, Economics, and Governance,” the first section, addresses key topics including the influential and often-controversial role of global governing bodies; the economics of sports facilities and mega events such as the Olympic Games or FIFA World Cup; the economic impacts of neoliberal logics; labor relations; and the rise of sports analytics.

The contested features of the social presence of sports within communities are addressed in the second section, “Democracy and Protest.” Featuring four chapters, it addresses those elements of “sports for development” initiatives, sporting protest, sports organizations and equity, and the effects of sporting mega events on communities.

The third section, “Ownership,” addresses issues of power and control. Contributions here address the issues that arise relative to shifting global media economics and technology, critical assessments of sports franchise relocations and the claims often made regarding economic impacts, the entanglement of global elites with sports ownership, and issues of fan resistance.

“Advertising and Marketing,” the fourth section, covers issues increasingly influential in the cultural presence of sports in recent decades. It addresses the interconnection between sports contexts and the advertising industry, the celebrityization of sports stars, sports marketing, and sports as a site of increasing tourism development. Finally, as noted in other volumes, sports have often been associated with wellness and healthy environments.

The fifth section, “Environmental Impact, Responsibility, and Sustainability,” addresses key debates regarding the sustainability of sports events and facilities, and in so doing highlights issues often overlooked in the “clean and green” image of sports within the popular imagination regarding environmental policy and initiatives, water use, sustainable design of facilities, and “greenwashing.”

**FINAL THOUGHTS**
The struggle to change what counts, who counts, and in what ways such counting is done begins with consciousness-raising and knowledge accumulation.
This edited collection, containing contributions from experts from different parts of the globe, is intended to provide the reader with insights into the challenges and the opportunities that face us as citizens in our everyday experience of sports. If, having read the chapters contained in *The Business and Culture of Sports*, students, and others, take up the challenge to “make a difference,” we, as editors, would be delighted. That “making a difference” can occur through one’s own participation, as players, coaches, officials, consumers, teachers, and/or parents. Through education, more athletes, workers, or consumers can campaign for the global sports power elite to be held accountable—their decisions made transparent and their positions more democratically based. Then, perhaps, the social problems that beset sports can be tackled. The choice is ours. In making this case, we are aware that power resources are unevenly distributed within and between societies. Yet, it is important to hold out hope that we can change things—our intent is that *The Business and Culture of Sports* provides some of the key conceptual tools and empirical insights for doing just that.

In a project of this nature and magnitude, special thanks must be recorded. In particular, we would like to thank Elizabeth Ferguson, Alan Hedblad, and Laurie Malashanko from Gale/Cengage. From our initial contact and first meeting, Alan and Laurie were enthusiastic and convinced us that a project of this scale could succeed. Joined by Elizabeth, the Gale team has been a continuing source of advice and support. We cannot thank them enough. In addition, the copyeditors have been expert and provided wise feedback to authors. Finally, we, as editors, must also thank our authors. Without their collective efforts this project would not have been possible.

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