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Introduction

Sport and contested identities

Ciaran Acton and David Hassan

The study of sport and politics as a discipline in academic circles has had a prolonged evolution. Perhaps this was inevitable, considering that a substantial move away from the study of traditional political history and science towards social history, in particular, only really began, certainly in a European context, in the early 1980s. For much of the 20th century, the historiography and broader study of sport and politics were dominated by studies of the Olympic Games: the largest sports event in the world and one, during the mid-part of the last century, that was continually beset by some form of political underwriting and controversy. The importance of the Olympic Games as a pillar of progressive European societies – for the Summer and Winter Olympics were, almost exclusively, European affairs for the best part of the twentieth century – and their connection with evolving nation-states meant that histories of the Olympics were invariably dominated by the perceived role of the movement as a totem of confident, increasingly expressive and assertive nations, especially in the aftermath of the two World Wars during the early part of the century.

While there was no denying the political import and credentials of the Olympics, and therefore no obstacle to recording their significance as a critical site for the contestation of political ideologies and regional, often ethnic, disputes, the situation was far more complicated for proponents of other sports and global events because they were, comparatively speaking, less popular in terms of participating nation-states, while in all cases a desire to see politics successfully extricated from the sporting domain gathered momentum during the second half of the twentieth century. As such, the perceived link between sport and identity came to the fore on a global scale in the 1970s as a range of seminal events confirmed sport as one of the most readily accessible and meaningful sites for the expression of resistance against 'the other' be that in the context of expressions of gender, ethnicity and/or national identities.

Indeed, the success of female athletes in sport, especially over the last three decades, is beginning to make some commentators reconsider longstanding

within the sporting domain only serves to reinforce existing power structures and shore up hegemonic discourses has important parallels with the observations on unconscious racial/ethnic stereotyping and the 'invisibility of whiteness' discussed in Chapter 5. However, as van Sterkenberg and Blokzeikl recommend, in order to challenge and destabilise these taken-for-granted assumptions and stereotypical thinking it is necessary to publicise, disseminate and debate the findings of this type of research.

In the final case study in Part 3, Souvik Naha examines the relationships between cricket, the media and identity in the state of West Bengal. Tracing the trajectory of these relationships alongside the state's political fortunes, Naha shows how cricketers were presented as embodiments of West Bengal's contentious identity and became a critical part of the media's protest against the discrimination of Bengalis in society more broadly. While many of the chapters in this collection, suggest an inextricable link between sport and identity politics, Naha brings the role of the media in this process to the fore.

While the process of globalisation is an underlying theme in many of the previous chapters, this is brought to centre stage in the penultimate section of the book. Addressing the theme of sporting mobilities, the chapters in Part 4 extend our analysis of the complex relationships between sport, ethnicity, and identity by focusing on the movement of sport-related ideas, cultures, goods and people, both within and between nations and continents. In Chapter 8, David Rowe focuses on the relationship between sport and national identity and interrogates the ways in which diverse, mobile human subjects are exposed to and construct narratives of the social self and others by means of mediated sports culture. Rowe's analysis draws on a combination of quantitative data from a national survey addressing participation, taste and knowledge of sport in Australia and qualitative data from interviews with players, volunteers and spectators on the role of sport in their lives and in wider Australian culture. This data helps to shed light on the complexity of the sport and national identity nexus and the interviews reveal a strong resistance to the idea that sporting affinity should define Australian identity. Although the research evidence is drawn from an Australian context, the processes at work here have much broader application. What this chapter suggests is that the essentialist conceptions of identity in which sport is implicated are increasingly at odds with the more fluid and multifaceted identities that are characteristic of contemporary, diverse and mobile societies.

The relationship between sport and identity among diasporic communities is also the focus of Thomas Michael Walle's contribution in Chapter 9, although in the rather different geographical and sporting context of cricket in Norway. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork among Pakistani migrants, Walle explores the ways in which cricket can be seen to constitute social resources that may facilitate the social inclusion of members of minority

ethnic communities and alleviate the hardships they encounter. This chapter furthers our understanding of the relationships among sport, identity and transnational change by unpacking some of the factors that shape sport's contribution to the development of cohesive or fragmented diasporic identities. The richness of the data employed by Walle allows him to examine the complex intersection of social divisions in diasporic communities and a range of factors including gender, age, class and ethnicity are shown to have an influence on one's status within the cricket circle.

Chapter 10 extends the theme of mobility and addresses one of its most interesting and dynamic manifestations: sports tourism. The relationships between sport, tourism and identity are complex and Hinch, Higham and Doering provide analytic purchase on this in the specific context of Japan's hosting of the 2019 Rugby World Cup. While sports-related mobility takes many forms, the authors focus on two that have a particular bearing on the Rugby World Cup in Japan – labour migration and sports tourists. Focusing on the contested identities of Japan's national rugby team, the authors explore the concept of the 'transcultural maui', drawing upon Morgan's (2007) theoretical analysis of event delivery and host-guest experiences. Mirroring some of Rowe's observations on the relationship between sporting mobility and identity in Chapter 8, Hinch and his colleagues demonstrate how one specific manifestation of sporting mobility, Japan's ethnically diverse national rugby team, serves to challenge traditional understandings of identity. It appears that there is inevitable tension between the conservative and mono-cultural instincts of the organisers of sporting mega-events and the diversity and heterogeneity generated by sporting mobilities, and it is this that makes the prospect of the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan so intriguing.

As sport is embedded within broader structures of power and inequality, it is important to consider the ways in which these relationships are played out in terms of the amelioration of social conflict and disadvantage. With this in mind, the final section of the collection focuses on some key sports-related interventions, including top-down initiatives implemented by national governments and national governing bodies (NGB)-sponsored anti-racist campaigns. The impact of these initiatives is also considered and the reasons for their success (or lack of it) are explored. The first case study in this section provides an illustration of the role of national governments in the development of policies to tackle ethnic discrimination and inequality in the sporting domain. In assessing the impact of such interventions, Gorman and Oliver focus on the experiences of Indigenous Australians in the Australian Football League (AFL) and the complex relationship between agency, motivation and identity. The potential of sport to facilitate social mobility for marginalised groups was demonstrated in the context of Pakistani migrants in Chapter 9, and it is clear that this is also a motivating factor for Aboriginal Australians aspiring to the AFL. However, as Gorman and Oliver illustrate, this enhanced status does not inoculate indigenous

beliefs around the appropriateness or otherwise of women's relationship with competitive sport. In this regard, sport now offers a suitable platform for women to successfully challenge their historical subjugation in this sphere and, by extension, amid a range of other settings as well. Similarly, after more than a century of struggle the plight of ethnic minorities in sport, including African Americans and British Asians, arguably hasn't developed in any meaningful way and members of such groups are still subject to significant forms of discrimination. That being said, in a range of other cases sports remain a ready medium for members of ethnic/national minorities throughout the world to add to their armoury of resistance against dominant groupings, their ideologies and way of life. Their counter-hegemonic activities, which range from the explicit to the nuanced, has allowed minority groupings to achieve these aims, often in a pronounced and effective manner. In a similar way, the relationship between sport and nationalism across the globe displays both commonality and diversity. For some 'new' nations, sport serves a dual purpose of, at once, asserting their very existence and repealing previous links with other nations, which may have come about a consequence of colonialism, occupation or, in a historical sense, as one part of a broader amalgam of nations – e.g., the former Soviet Union.

Particularly in Europe since the dawn of the new millennium, the emergence of neo-Fascism and related extreme right wing politics within sport, in particular, has been one of its defining features. Likewise, the not unrelated rise in reported homophobic incidents surrounding sport is, by now, widely accepted. In these and all such cases, sport does not merely reveal existent identities but offers a site whereupon they are increasingly contested – the meaning of victory in such circumstances extends well beyond the confines of sport. Precisely why we have witnessed a rise in the significance of these contests and the outcomes associated with them existed as the motivation for this collection in the first instance and by now, it is hoped, defines its timely contribution to research in the allied fields of sport, political history and science, and human geography, amongst others.

The 1990s finally witnessed the emergence of a generation of cultural and sports scholars and political scientists dotted around the world who, influenced by what had been developing in British and American academia, sought to place the importance of sport as a site of significant political contest in the wider international context of the late twentieth century. Works by Alan Bairner, Alan Tomlinson and others further sought to move the historiography of sport away from a somewhat benign setting 'on the sidelines' of serious academic scholarship, to deploy a suitable metaphor, and locate it within the broader context of the social, economic and political histories of the time. Their pioneering research laid the groundwork for an exponential growth in interest of the study of sports for broader political and cultural outcomes since the turn of the current century and, by extension, to the contribution of this collection to this body of work.

The collection

In order to provide a comprehensive examination of the relationship between sport and identity, this collection adopts a case study approach, drawing examples from a variety of sporting contexts and geographical locations, and encompassing a diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches. The case studies are organised within a clear thematic framework, with each section making its own unique contribution to our understanding of the sport-identity nexus. However, many of the themes of the book are cross-cutting and one of the strengths of this collection is the extent to which the conceptual and theoretical concerns of the different chapters overlap.

The first two contributions explore the theme of contested identity in relation to participation, albeit in two different sporting contexts. In Chapter 1, Steven Bradbury examines the experiences of ethnic minorities involved in High Level Coach Education (HLCE) in English professional football and draws upon his own previous research in this area, as well as semi-structured interview data with elite level minority coaches from a range of demographic, playing and coaching backgrounds. The respondents in this study, all of whom have played football in a professional or semi-professional capacity in England, not only provided rich and detailed accounts of their own experiences of accessing and undertaking various HLCE awards, but were also able to draw upon their significant insider knowledge of other minority coaches who had been through a similar process. The conclusions of Chapter 1 chime with some of the other case studies in this collection, particularly van Sterkenberg's and Blokzeijl's contribution, and Bradbury demonstrates how the taken-for-granted and largely unremarked definitional power of whiteness has led to a particular conceptualization of minorities that contributes to their exclusion from many professional football coaching opportunities. This chapter not only identifies the various structural and cultural constraints that have negatively impacted minority coaches' ability to progress in the HLCE environment but also offers concrete proposals for how these processes and practices of institutional racism should be addressed.

The tendency of sport to reflect and even magnify the broader societal structures of power and inequality that are highlighted in Bradbury's research is even more apparent in Murray and Hassan's chapter on the relationship between sport and national identity in Northern Ireland. While this represents a shift of focus from race and ethnicity in elite coaching in English football to national identity in various amateur and semi-professional sporting contexts in Northern Ireland, many of the overarching themes remain the same. Building upon the existing research on international soccer and player eligibility that has been published since the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), this case study examines a number of other "sites"

of contested sporting identities that have emerged since 1998. Although the evidence is drawn from a number of ostensibly disparate sporting contexts including club level soccer, Commonwealth and Olympic sports and the indigenous Gaelic Athletic Association, the common thread running through them relates to the ways in which broader societal divisions infiltrate the world of sport. Murray and Hassan raise doubts about the potential of the current political arrangements in Northern Ireland to bring about a significant transformation in the contested nature of sporting identities in Northern Ireland and this case study, like many of the others in this collection, only serves to demonstrate the potency and complexity of the relationship between sport and identity.

Part 2 of the collection represents a shift of emphasis from coaches, players and administrators to the related, but analytically distinct, sphere of sports spectating and fandom. Focusing specifically on cricket and football, the case studies in this section examine the relationship between sport and ethnicity in the context of supporters, not only on the terraces but in a number of online and media contexts. In Chapter 3, Kausik Bandyopadhyay provides a fascinating analysis of the complex contested identities at play in the international context of India-Pakistan cricket. While this is widely recognised as one of the most intense of all sporting rivalries, the dynamic and multidimensional nature of the enmity has hitherto not been fully explored. Bandyopadhyay traces the contours of Indo-Pakistan rivalry from the partition of 1947 to the present day, drawing attention to the role of supporters and the media, as well as the influence of cricket in the political and diplomatic spheres. However, it was the increasing vulnerability to terrorist attack that finally threatened the future of India-Pakistan cricket. Thus, for Bandyopadhyay, the identities that shaped India-Pakistan cricket have been superseded by Pakistan's alleged terrorist identity and 'the cricket rivalry is now being played out more in the virtual world of debates and discourses than on the cricket field'. What this chapter demonstrates is that not only are contested identities inherent in competitive sport but that these identities are often multifaceted and subject to constant change and flux.

The dynamic nature of contested identities is also highlighted in Kilvington's exploration of the experiences British Asian fan groups in the English Football League. In drawing attention to the changing nature of fandom and exploring the concept of 'post fandom', Chapter 4 reveals a further layer of complexity to the sport-identity nexus. However, the focus of this chapter is on the more traditional location of football stadia, an environment in which British Asians have been significantly under-represented. Drawing upon a rich seam of qualitative research, Kilvington considers the nature of British Asian football fan groups and critically explores their success and popularity. Although British Asian fan organisations have been criticised for being separatist and exclusionary, the empirical evidence discussed in Chapter 4 paints a different picture. Not only do these

organisations provide a sense of security for British Asians entering the potentially hostile and intimidating football stadium environment, but they also engage in a range of activities that actually serve to strengthen cross-community relations and foster social cohesion. As Punjabi and Bangla fan groups have demonstrated their ability to foster positive relationships between home and away fans, promote a greater understanding of British-Asian culture in the general population, and generate a stronger sense of belonging to the local community, Kilvington suggests that the mutually beneficial relationships between football clubs and Punjabi and Bengali fan groups should be nurtured and extended.

The role of the media in reproducing structures of power and inequality is well documented and the sociology of sport has made a particularly important contribution to our understanding of this process, not only in terms of the richness of the empirical data but also in relation to the innovative application of theoretical and conceptual ideas. The chapters in Part 3 continue this tradition and although they explore the relationship between media, sport and identity in very different ways, a number of common themes emerge in their conclusions. In Chapter 5, van Sterkenberg and Blokzeikl explore the construction of race and ethnicity in sports media, but unlike most previous studies, they focus specifically on the audience perspective. Drawing upon focus group interviews with young respondents from a diversity of racial and ethnic backgrounds, the authors explore the ways in which the audience of Dutch televised football negotiate dominant discourses about race and ethnicity. The meanings and stereotypes reproduced by football media are taken up or resisted by these audiences in a variety of different ways and the empirical data provides a range of vivid illustrations of these processes. Because football talk reflects the ideas prevalent in society more broadly, the findings of this research in terms of attitudes to race and ethnicity within Dutch society are particularly significant. Not only did the focus group interviews reveal patterns of routine and unconscious racial/ethnic stereotyping, but they also provided further evidence of the ways in which the invisibility of whiteness and white privilege in dominant discourse serve to reproduce racial and ethnic inequalities.

Chapter 6 also highlights the role of the media in reproducing inequality and social exclusion, but the emphasis here is on gender and sexuality. Teresa Willis examines the way in which masculinities and femininities, and their associated sexualities, are either reinforced or challenged by sporting discourses both in the media and on the playing field. Drawing upon her own empirical research on openly gay men in recreational football leagues in Scotland and Ireland, Willis suggests that ideas about gender and sexuality intersect to the extent that gay men are perceived as being less suited to sports than their straight counterparts, and rendering parts of their identity, and experiences, invisible in the overall sporting narrative. Willis's conclusion that the 'silence' that often permeates issues of sexuality

players from discrimination, whether this be from individual opponents or sporting institutions more broadly. Drawing upon oral testimonies of aspiring, current and retired Aboriginal players from several AFL clubs, this chapter provides a vivid picture of how Aboriginal Australians engage with the AFL, how they perceive it and what they hope to achieve from it. By focusing on three distinct tiers of indigenous footballers, the authors provide a comprehensive and contemporary insight into their experiences and in the process shed light on the complex interplay among the personal, social, historical, cultural, economic and professional issues that impact on their lives.

The second case study in this section, and the final chapter of the collection, provides a comparative analysis of antidiscrimination interventions in football by different actors in three specific national contexts. Focusing on the grassroots game, Mauro explores the implications and consequences of antidiscrimination actions taken outside of comprehensive anti-racist strategies and identifies emerging patterns across different European countries. The chapter highlights a number of important distinctions between the responses to racism and discrimination in grassroots and elite football, and Mauro observes that while racist incidents have not been completely eradicated from the professional game, they are much more likely to be detected when they do occur, than in grassroots football. The three national case studies selected by Mauro provide a powerful illustration of the extent of the problem, as well as the relative effectiveness of the different strategies employed in England, Germany and Italy. For Mauro, the evidence from this comparative study highlights the necessity of adopting a more comprehensive approach to racism, one that incorporates monitoring and disciplinary sanctions, but places anti-racism education at its core.

Participation