COMMUNICATION
AND SPORT
THIRD EDITION

Communication and Sport: Surveying the Field, Third Edition examines a wide array of topics necessary to understand sports media, rhetoric, culture, and organizations from micro- to macro-level issues. All levels of sports are addressed through varied lenses such as mythology, community, and identity. The **Third Edition** is newly expanded to incorporate the latest topics and perspectives in the field, including fan cultures, racial identity and gender in sports media, politics and nationality in sports, crisis communication in sports organizations, and more.

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION

- **Contemporary sports topics** include discussions of issues like modern athlete protest movements (such as the one that happened within the University of Missouri football program) and the continued rise of sports media entities ranging from Bleacher Report to *The Players' Tribune*.

- New case studies are drawn from **recent sports-related incidents like the regulation of fantasy sports** and **new interviews that include Mark Cuban**, owner of the Dallas Mavericks, and **Cyd Zeigler**, the co-founder of the increasingly influential website Outsports.

- **Up-to-date citations from the most recent research in the field** make this textbook the most comprehensive and current option available in the communication and sport marketplace.
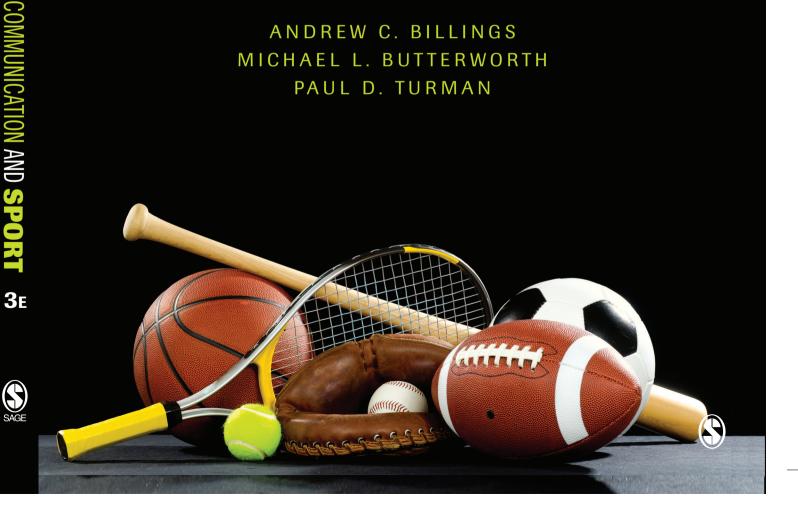
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COMMUNICATION AND **SPORT**

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SURVEYING THE FIELD

ANDREW C. BILLINGS

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PREFACE

Lao Tzu once claimed, "Those who have knowledge don't predict. Those who predict don't have knowledge." We generally agree with this sentiment, yet found ourselves attempting to do both in this third edition of *Communication and Sport: Surveying the Field*. We obviously wish to have knowledge conveyed in the most accessible and accurate degree possible, yet decisions on *which* pieces of knowledge to disseminate involve a series of educated guesses. Particularly with some of our new media information that is enhanced in this book, we attempted to paint a picture that would be useful for several years while acknowledging that communication and sport will have inevitably shifted in noteworthy ways even before the book goes to press. Our interviewee for Chapter 16, Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban, is known for being able to make prognostications about the future—and even he can only write the future story of communication and sport in pencil, not pen. Thus, with the most accurate eye toward the future that we can hope to possess, we are offering this third edition as the closest representation of the issues pertinent to communication and sport, circa 2017.

THE BOOK

Communication and Sport: Surveying the Field is designed to bridge traditional divides between notions of speech communication (a tradition that includes interpersonal, organizational, and rhetorical approaches) and mass communication (a tradition that includes media studies, journalism, and cultural studies) and all of the potential divides and schisms inherently within. The aim was the creation of a book with enough breadth that it would be difficult to have one scholar who could truly claim expertise in all of the terrain. Thus, the combination of the three of us results in a media scholar, a rhetorician, and an applied interpersonal/organizational expert who jointly canvassed what amounts to an amazing scope of work in the field that is now outlined, structured, and synthesized for an undergraduate to grasp the scope and importance of studying communication and sport.

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

The comprehensive focus on communication scholarship is one of the major features of this textbook. In particular, we orient readers to the enactment, production,

consumption, and organization of sport. This entails a wide range of communicative processes, including mass communication productions, interpersonal interactions, family and relational development, public speeches, individual expressions of identity through sport performances, collective expressions of community through sport rituals, and much, much more. The chapters within this textbook also feature communication scholarship that directs our attention to the ways that sport produces, maintains, or resists cultural attitudes about race, gender, sexuality, class, and politics.

The broad range of topical material is complemented by a pluralistic approach to communication and sport research. We survey scholarship that can be found in each of the major academic research paradigms: social scientific, humanistic, and critical/cultural. Each of these paradigms values different dimensions of intellectual inquiry. Social scientists, for example, are commonly interested in conducting research that allows scholars to explain how communication has worked in the past in order to offer some prediction of how it may happen in the future. Humanists, by contrast, tend to spotlight more particular instances of communication (rather than universal patterns) so that they may reveal deeper levels of understanding of human experiences. Meanwhile, critical/cultural scholars are committed to identifying relationships of power with the goal of sparking productive social change through academic inquiry. Although most researchers tend to identify with one of these paradigms over the others, they are not mutually exclusive, and, in the best cases, the insights from one approach may complement or supplement another. Communication and sport scholars also approach their research using different methodological tools, including content analysis, statistical modeling, ethnography, interviewing, experiments, survey collection, and textual criticism. Throughout this textbook, we have included examples of each research paradigm and various methods of study. It is our hope, then, that we have truly represented the diversity of scholarship conducted in communication and sport.

Another feature of this textbook is the inclusion in each chapter of a series of inserts, which include interviews, case studies, ethical debates, theoretical connections, and examinations of American niche sports. The interviews feature a range of experts in communication and sport, including renowned television figures such as Bob Costas, leading journalists such as Outsports cofounder Cyd Zeigler, prominent people within the sports industry such as Dale Earnhardt, Jr., and established sports scholars such as Lawrence Wenner. These interviews help to contextualize and extend the ideas that are developed in each chapter. The case studies pick up on a specific dimension from each chapter in order to facilitate discussion about the communicative nature of sport. Ethical debates invite a consideration of various cultural, political, and social consequences of sport, while understanding niche sports hopefully broadens readers' conceptions of the breadth and depth of sport in society. Many of these issues are tied together in our "Theoretically Speaking" sections, and readers can expect all of these inserted features to clarify, extend, and challenge their understanding of communication and sport.

Finally, as those already familiar with sport are well aware, the relationship between communication and sport is one that is rapidly changing. New technologies, changing organizational structures, a pervasive sports media that now includes a multitude of social media formats, and the explosion of fantasy sports are just some of the ways that

sport has been dramatically altered in recent years. The final chapters of this textbook, then, offer some insights into these developments and provide some cautious glimpses into the future. Although we cannot peer into that elusive crystal ball, we are certain that communication scholarship will remain an essential lens through which we can view, understand, and modify the universe of sport.

NEW FOR THE THIRD EDITION

The general structure that we moved to for the second edition still holds—16 chapters that run the gamut of communication and sport in a variety of forms from humanistic to interpersonal to mediated. What changes for the third edition is an increasingly contemporary feel, including cutting-edge case studies on issues such as the regulation of fantasy sport and new interviews with people such as Mark Cuban, owner of the Dallas Mavericks, and Cyd Zeigler, the cofounder of the increasingly influential website Outsports. Even more prominently, the entire book is infused with a distinct sense of modern day, including issues such as modern athlete protest movements (such as the one that happened within the University of Missouri football program) and the continued rise of sports media entities ranging from *Bleacher Report* to *The Players' Tribune*. Finally, we must note that relevant citations from recent years are part and parcel of the update, as we strive to make this textbook the most comprehensive and complete option available in the communication and sport marketplace.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With each edition of this textbook, we approach a revision with a combined sense of apprehension (because of the time involved in completing it) and excitement (because so many new works have been published and examples have unfurled within the sports landscape since the previous edition). The goal is to keep the textbook fresh, up-to-date, and at its highest level of utility. This evolution of a project that, at times, could seem unwieldy could not have happened without a great deal of synergy among the three of us, but we also recognize how fortunate we have been throughout this process.

First, we must thank SAGE Publications, particularly Matthew Byrnie, for believing in the first edition of the project and continuing to support our book over the years. It is nice to have a publisher that is willing to be an advocate for the burgeoning field that is the combination of communication and sport.

Second, we wish to thank the following people for their help with developing the textbook with their useful and supportive insights: Marie Hardin (Penn State University), Jacqueline A. Irwin (California State University, Sacramento), Nick Linardopoulos (Rutgers University), Mike Milford (Auburn University), David Sabaini (Indiana State University), Rebecca Robideaux Tiedge (Boise State University), and Joseph G. Velasco (Sul Ross State University).

Third, our institutions/organizations (University of Alabama, Ohio University, and the South Dakota Board of Regents) have allowed us the leeway to pursue this project in the time frame we wished, and for that we are thankful.

Third, we wish to thank all of the faculty and students who embraced the first and second edition of our work, bringing it into classrooms across the country and, indeed, to other nations in an attempt to educate about the role of communication and sport in society. Without your endorsement of the first and second edition of this book, a third edition would not have been conceivable.

Fourth, we thank our graduate students who have assisted us over the course of all three editions with the review of scholarship and other materials for this book. These students include Cory Hillman and Erin Paun from Bowling Green State University and Aisha Avery from the University of Alabama.

Finally, we must also note that we all are approximately in the same life stage, meaning that we have children and understanding wives that accommodate our schedules, which

often became demanding near various deadlines. The confluence of events and supporters has resulted in a revised and updated text of which we are proud, and we thank all of the people in our lives who allowed for it to happen.

Andrew C. Billings
Michael L. Butterworth
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INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION AND SPORT

On July 5, 2015, the United States Women's National Team (USWNT) defeated Japan, 5 to 2, to win the Women's World Cup. The victory marked the third time the United States had won the title, having previously captured the inaugural tournament in 1991 and again in 1999. The game was a fitting send-off for Abby Wambach, perhaps the most accomplished soccer player in U.S. history, and a coming out party for Carli Lloyd, who scored three goals in the championship game. The success of the 2015 team cemented the United States' status as the best women's soccer team in the world and further boosted interest in women's soccer at home.

Players from the United States and Japan line up before the 2015 Women's World Cup final

This brief description is framed primarily in sporting terms: a historically successful team enhanced its international reputation in a dominant performance in the sport's premier event. This is a book about *communication* and sport, though, and we begin with this brief narrative because we believe it introduces a range of topics and questions that we explore at length in the following chapters. Consider the following:

- The FOX **broadcast of the game** (see **Chapter 3**) averaged more than 25 million viewers, the most ever for any soccer game in the United States and an obvious demonstration of the synergy between sport and media (Deitsch, 2015).
- **Social media** (see **Chapter 3**) captured the moment of victory, with prominent celebrities, politicians, and other athletes among the millions who followed the game on Twitter (Mandell, 2015).
- The team's ultimate success came after early criticisms directed at coach Jill Ellis. Among team members, it appeared that Carli Lloyd was especially frustrated (Baxter, 2015). After Lloyd's spectacular performance in the final, it became easier to focus on the team's ability to overcome adversity and develop positive **player-coach relationships** (see **Chapter 11**) and **team cohesion** (see **Chapter 12**).
- Because the game featured the U.S. Women's *National* Team, it inherently captured public interest and reflected sport's capacity to cultivate **community** (see **Chapter 2**) and promote **nationalism** (see **Chapter 8**).
- International sporting events feature prominent **political symbolism** (see **Chapter 8**), with teams often serving as metaphors for nations and fandom as a metaphor for citizenship. This was evident in one minor controversy, when some Twitter users celebrated the U.S. victory by tweeting references to the Pearl Harbor attack of 1941 (Smith, 2015).
- A more substantial controversy, involving questions of **gender and politics** (see **Chapter 6**), occurred leading up to the tournament, based on the Fédération de Internationale de Football Association's (FIFA) plan to play all the games on artificial turf instead of grass (as the men do). As one sportswriter noted, the controversy symbolized "the ongoing inequalities in support for women's and men's soccer programs globally" (Dubois, 2015, para. 3). Because many of the players felt artificial turf increased their risk of injury, the controversy also spotlighted discussions about the health needs of athletes and caused something of a public relations crisis (see **Chapter 13**) for FIFA.
- Other matters of **gender representation** (see **Chapter 6**) were on display. For example, critics lamented that FIFA paid the champions $2 million, a far cry from the $35 million awarded to the 2014 men's champion from Germany (Isidore, 2015). Meanwhile, other critics pointed to continued biases in representations of female athletes, such as Alex Morgan, as objects of sexual desire more than as athletes (Moss, 2015).
- In a break from conventional representations, media also made much of superstar Abby Wambach's postgame celebration, which included a kiss with her wife (Chan, 2015). The moment reflected the rapid changes in American society with respect to same-sex couples and the **performance of identity** (see **Chapter 9**).

- Shortly after the World Cup concluded, EA Sports revealed the cover for its soon-to-be-released *FIFA 16* video game. Having already announced that women's teams would be included in the game for the first time, it revealed that Alex Morgan would share the cover with Lionel Messi (Grez, 2015), another important reference to gender and a reminder of the influence of **sports video games** (see **Chapter 15**).

We could likely add several other items to our list, but we don't wish to belabor the point. As should be clear, a single event such as the USWNT's 2015 victory speaks to a wide range of *communicative* phenomena that reflect the themes that are found throughout this book. Moreover, despite its uniqueness as a spectacular event, the World Cup highlights the degree to which sport plays a prominent role in the daily lives of an overwhelming majority of Americans.

To understand the impact sport has in American life, let us be more specific. Youth sports, for example, are among the most common activities for boys and girls throughout their childhoods. The Women's Sports Foundation reports that 75% of boys and 69% of girls participate in organized team sports (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). While these numbers provide us with some appreciation for the extent to which sports are important, they cannot fully describe the range of sports in which young people participate or the ways children play sports informally. Sports are also significant because they provide models of leadership for young people, environments to develop interpersonal and conflict resolution skills, and stories of inspiration when children use sports to develop their individual skills and character. All of which is to say that *communication* is central to how we play, watch, interpret, and evaluate sports.

Of course, youth sports beget other forms of sport. A quick glance at your college classmates offers an appropriate example. How many of them wear a sweatshirt or hat that features their favorite team? Perhaps your own wardrobe has these articles of clothing? When you wear a collegiate sweatshirt, are you affiliating with an academic or athletic program? Both? Indeed, a positive affiliation with sports is one way that college students construct and communicate identity. Many students even choose where to attend college based on a campus culture organized around sports (Sperber, 2000). And, as the ESPN advertising campaign called "Never Graduate" illustrates, many of us maintain our allegiances to the colleges we attended. Using familiar rivalries such as Michigan-Ohio State or North Carolina-Duke, the ESPN commercials depicted adults who continue to be loyal to their undergraduate institutions. At the heart of the campaign was the idea that our college affiliation—*understood primarily as a sports affiliation*—communicates something essential about our identity. As much as it may be warranted, no university is likely to receive a parade when its business school moves into the top 10 of the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings.

The stakes for understanding communicative practices may be even greater at the professional level. Especially because professional sports are inextricably linked to the media that broadcast, report, and opine about the games, it is next to impossible to escape the influence of professional sports. Consider that leagues such as Major League Baseball and the National Football League routinely set attendance records during the 2000s,

CASE STUDY

SUPER BOWL SYMBOLISM

In order to fully comprehend the extent to which sport intersects with a multitude of participants, media sources, and society, one only needs to look at the activities that surround the Super Bowl each year in the United States. At the conclusion of the 2015 National Football League (NFL) season, a number of relevant story lines emerged from a surprise win by the Denver Broncos over the heavily favored Carolina Panthers. Media attention focused considerable attention on quarterback Peyton Manning who, despite injuries earlier in the season, re-emerged as a starter for the Broncos during the playoffs. At the twilight of his career, Manning faced questions about his eventual retirement if the Broncos were to emerge victorious and erase the memory of an unexpected loss 2 years earlier to the Seattle Seahawks.

After each Super Bowl, sportscasters engage in significant analysis of the final outcome. Key turning points are assessed, coaching decisions are questioned, and a look toward the future begins as commentators begins to speculate about the upcoming NFL draft. Speculation about Manning's retirement fueled sports broadcasts when he declined to comment about his decision during the awards ceremony that evening. Meanwhile, following the game, Panthers quarterback Cam Newton was criticized for his unwillingness to engage the media and discuss the team's defeat. To many, he violated the basic tenants of losing gracefully, as he failed to recognize the performance of the Broncos in defeat.

Not only does the outcome of the event have meaningful implications for the fans of the teams involved, but the local communities are heavily invested in their teams' performances. Whether fortunate enough to attend the Super Bowl in person or to watch remotely, sport fans are afforded an opportunity for a culminating event that is celebrated throughout the country with activities consistent with many national holidays. The day of the event provides activities leading up to the kickoff, opportunities for socialization and engagement during the game, and reflection afterward. When considering implications for consumers and the media outlets that cover the event, the television commercials produced for the game have produced considerable reactions among even nonsport fans tuning into the game who rate the uniqueness and creativity on display by advertising firms from around the country.

In summary, few events can better illustrate how and why sport is able to connect so many interests, ranging from the broadcast itself, to the media coverage that precedes and follows the game, to the advertising industry's investment in the spectacle, to the scores of interactions fans and nonfans experience that make the Super Bowl a cultural touchstone.

1. What are the various factors that bring about the connection sport fans have with the events surrounding the Super Bowl?

2. How has this particular event been able to engage such a large following for fans and nonsport fans alike in the United States?

3. What are the communicative elements that are an integral part of the success of this event?

Members of the Army National Guard show their loyalties to Michigan and Ohio State

the expansion of digital services makes consuming live sporting events more available through satellite providers and Internet feeds, and television networks continue to invest billions of dollars in sports broadcasting contracts. Or, think about the fact that newer "lifestyle" sports such as mixed martial arts have exploded in popularity, fantasy sports have produced an entire industry that is dependent on, but also separate from, sports themselves, community officials often insist that the key to urban development or city pride is to invest in a professional sports franchise and/or arena, and player salaries continue to rise, often driving up the cost of attendance in the process. There are many other ways our lives are affected by professional sports' popularity. What is critical, once again, is that communication practices are essential to the success of sports—from expressions of collective identity found at live events, to the images produced by sports media, to the importance granted to sports in the vitality of a community.

Across all levels of competition, and through the media that cover these events, the very language of sports has become commonplace in American culture. As early as 1959, when Tannenbaum and Noah coined the phrase "sportsugese," there has been an acknowledgement that sports influence how we think and talk. Inspired both by his experience as a sportswriter and the prevalence of sports language in the speeches of President Richard Nixon, Robert Lipsyte (1975) termed this phenomenon "sportspeak." Indeed, as Segrave (2000) has pointed out, sports metaphors are commonly used to communicate ideas and feelings about politics, war, business, and sex. For instance, during the 2008 presidential campaign, both Democrat John Edwards and Republican Mike Huckabee compared themselves to the race horse, Seabiscuit, as both wished to embody similar qualities of determination characterizing the 1930s thoroughbred. During the 1991 Persian Gulf War, General Norman Schwarzkopf famously referred to a military strategy as a "Hail Mary pass," a familiar football reference. Meanwhile, business meetings are routinely punctuated with platitudes such as "this ad campaign is a slam dunk." As for sex, American adolescence is commonly described through the

Q: What is the greatest contribution sport provides to modern society?

A: Sports are still the ultimate shared experience. Sport draws the attention of people from all walks of life in ways that few other things can. People now receive information and entertainment from niche outlets on television, radio, the Internet, and more, but big sports events are still much broader based. For all its flaws and issues, sports at its best can still be a shared experience that bonds individuals, groups, and even nations.

Q: How has the consumption of sport changed since you entered the business?

A: There is just so much more of it, even from the traditional formats. Add all of the ESPN networks, all of the regional Fox Sports networks, and the Internet and the mass of it has grown exponentially. Even if the coverage hadn't changed, the sheer amount available would change sports tremendously. Of course, the coverage has changed—it is more highlight driven because of the presumed shorter attention spans of today's fans. We are barraged with information—which is sometimes good and sometimes overdone. In fairness, much of the event coverage is technically superb and very well crafted, and truly journalistic efforts like HBO's *Real Sports* and ESPN's *Outside the Lines* stand out. On the other hand, in many areas the tone is mindlessly negative—even abusive. The worst of sports talk radio and the sports blogosphere do not just appeal to the least common denominator, they redefine it.

Q: What is the impact of the evolving relationship between athlete, organization, and fan?

A: Athletes are more protected now by layers of agents and advisors. Some may think, "Well, the money is so great, what good does it do me to be all that accommodating to the media? Is it necessary to let the media present my image, or can I control it myself?" Add to that a press corps that is generally more critical and snide, and you can understand why many athletes are more guarded.

Q: How do you see the participation in and consumption of sports changing in the next several decades?

A: In ways we can't fully predict! Over the next decade I'm sure new technologies will leave our present high-definition televisions, mobile phone videos, and Internet links outdated. If you want it and are willing to pay for it, you will have access to just about anything at just about any time. I would also expect at least some American sports to become more global, particularly baseball and basketball. We can't know all the specifics, but it is fair to speculate that the future of sports will be bigger and more elaborate in virtually every way.

quest to "get to first base" or "hit a home run." Sports media professionals, especially announcers, also regularly feature these metaphors and clichés. This is especially the case when announcers are under a great deal of pressure or when the action on the field or court is not following expected patterns (Wanta & Leggert, 1988).

While language use is one indicator of sport's prominent role in American culture, another is the fact that it is among the largest industries in the United States. Financial consultants Price Waterhouse Coopers report that the North American sports market generated $60.5 billion in 2014, up from approximately $50 billion in 2010 ("At the Gate," p. 1). These revenues, coming from ticket sales, media rights, sponsorships, and merchandising, have remained steady or grown even as the worldwide economy has struggled. And, according to the Price Waterhouse Coopers Report, revenues from media rights are expected to surpass gate receipts to become the industry's largest revenue segment by 2019 ("At the Gate," p. 1). Meanwhile, we should point out that sports' ability to generate media interest is almost unparalleled. The two most watched television events in the world are routinely international sporting events—the Olympics and the men's World Cup in soccer (Tomlinson, 2005). With that popularity, television networks eagerly pay astronomical sums for the rights to broadcast sports. In 2010, for example, CBS and Turner Sports paid the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) $10.8 billion for a 14-year contract to broadcast the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament (O'Toole, 2010). In 2016, the contract was extended to 2032 for an additional $8.8 billion (Norlander, 2016). For the right to broadcast the Olympic Games from 2014 to 2020, NBC paid the International Olympic Committee nearly $4.4 billion (McCarthy, 2011). All of this demonstrates that the immense popularity generated by sports make them among the most desirable commodities in the media industry.

COMMUNICATION AND SPORT

What should be clear by now is that we are interested in sports primarily as phenomena of *communication*. The academic field of "communication" traditionally covers a range of interests including, but not limited to, intercultural, interpersonal, mediated, organizational, and rhetorical. Other academic publications and textbooks have studied sports through other perspectives. Indeed, the disciplines of anthropology, history, kinesiology, psychology, and sociology have contributed greatly to our understanding of how and why people participate in sports. However, they tend to do so without emphasizing the communicative practices that precede and frame the ways people participate in sport. Kassing et al. (2004) suggest that people enact, produce, consume, and organize sport primarily as a communicative activity. Thus, our focus in this text is to explore how and why sport can be understood and studied specifically from the perspective of communication, a field with a far-ranging set of interests and applications.

This is not to suggest that the field of communication hasn't benefited from other academic disciplines. Sociology, in fact, is likely the academic field that has done the most to promote the serious study of sports. In 1978, the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport was founded, leading to the publication of the *Sociology of Sport Journal* (*SSJ*). Just a few years later, scholar Richard Lapchick founded the Center for the Study of Sport in Society, then housed at Boston's Northeastern University. This

led to the publication of the *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, which alongside *SSJ* publishes the leading scholarship on the sociology of sport. Meanwhile, other academic fields cultivated the study of sport through publications such as the *Journal of Sport Behavior*, the *Journal of Sport Management*, and *Sport in History*.

The field of communication developed its interest in sport around the same time period. In 1975, Michael Real published a study of the Super Bowl, called "Super Bowl: Mythic Spectacle." In that article, Real explained that the televised broadcast of the Super Bowl was arranged to emphasize the mythology of football as a ritualized expression of American identity. That sport could be used to communicate—and thus, affirm and extend—American values became one of the early themes of communication and sport scholarship. Other early studies in mass communication confirmed the importance of sports. Trujillo and Ekdom (1985), for example, analyzed sportswriters' accounts of the 1984 Chicago Cubs to reveal how journalism is a means by which "American cultural values are displayed, affirmed and integrated" (p. 264). Meanwhile, Farrell (1989) recognized that the mediated production of the Olympic Games used international politics to create dramatic narratives that fostered national identity. By the time that Wenner's *Media, Sport, & Society* was published in 1989, it was clear that there was much to be gained through the communicative study of sport. These early studies were significant not only because they demonstrated the significance of sport but also because they blurred the traditional divisions of communication scholarship, therefore making the study of communication and sport a truly interdisciplinary endeavor.

The relationship between communication and sport further developed in the 1990s with studies featuring an increasingly diverse set of topics and scholarly methods. As Trujillo (2003) notes, "[D]uring the 1990s, communication students and scholars became very serious about studying sport" (p. xiii). This attitude stood in contrast to previous decades, during which many academics dismissed the study of sport as being trivial, much like the traditional view in news media that ridiculed the sports page as a "toy department" (Rowe, 2007). By the turn of the century, this seriousness prompted a robust interest in communication and sport that now cuts across virtually every area of inquiry in the discipline. Throughout the 2000s, communication scholars found new avenues for engaging in sport-based research, resulting in numerous conferences and publications, including several special issues of communication journals dedicated exclusively to sport. Such growth leads us to the contemporary moment in which the "field of sport communication now has its own coherent body of knowledge and a community of scholars who are advancing the field" (Abeza, O'Reilly, & Nadeau, 2014, p. 308). This book, therefore, is an effort to synthesize that knowledge and offer a comprehensive survey of the field.

Before we proceed, we should note that this text is not a handbook for practitioners. We know that many of you are interested in careers in "sports communication," perhaps working for the marketing department for a sports franchise or in communications at a university athletic department. We make relevant connections to these professional interests throughout this text. However, primarily we take up how communication and sport can be studied and what they can tell us about one another. The emphasis on

study over *practice*, therefore, is the logic by which we have chosen to feature the phrase "communication and sport" over "sports communication." With this distinction in mind, but before we offer an overview of the material covered in this book, let us turn our attention to some matters of definition.

Communication

It is virtually impossible to find a definition of *communication* that everyone can agree upon. If you have taken a public speaking course or an introduction to communication theory, you've likely encountered some of the more common definitions of the term. These definitions involve key concepts such as "sender," "message," and "receiver," all of which emerged from telecommunications research in the 1940s (Shannon & Weaver, 1948). Communication scholars have used these simple concepts to develop increasingly sophisticated models of communicative practices. Today, communication is largely understood as a process, wherein meaning is constructed and exchanged through a variety of symbols and media. Thinking of communication as a *process* instead of a *product* allows researchers to examine more than the content of the "message" or the intention of the "sender." Instead, scholarship may examine message construction, interpersonal influence, small-group dynamics, mass media, rhetoric and persuasion, and the performance of identity. Accordingly, in this book we adopt a broad and inclusive approach to communication, recognizing that different definitions and methods allow for greater understanding. Thus, if there is any single definition we would endorse, it is one in the spirit of Alberts, Nakayama, and Martin (2012), who define communication as "a transactional process in which people generate meaning through the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages in specific contexts, influenced by individual and societal forces and embedded in culture" (p. 20).

Communication is a broad discipline. As we noted earlier, communication scholars study areas such as intercultural, interpersonal, mediated, organizational, and rhetorical phenomena. Each of these labels are insufficient on their own, however, as there are various subfields of interest. An interest in interpersonal communication, for example, might include studies of family relationships, friendships, romantic relationships, or workplace interactions. Mediated communication, meanwhile, encompasses studies of audiences, industries, and productions across an array of forms, including print media, television, and "new media" (which often refers to the Internet, social media, user-generated media, or some combination). Another way to think about communication research is to focus less on the means of communication and more on the contexts. From this view, we might think about topical interests in areas such as environmental communication, health communication, or, yes, communication and sport. It is also important to note that often times these areas and topics of interest interact and overlap, truly reminding us that "communication" is a fluid term.

In addition to the range of topics, communication scholars conduct research from different intellectual traditions, namely social scientific, interpretivist, and critical. *Social scientific* scholars are those who value objective studies of observable communication behaviors. Their research seeks to test, predict, and generalize communication phenomena, typically through quantitative forms of analysis. *Interpretivist* scholars take

a more subjective view of communication, using qualitative forms of analysis to explain particular (as opposed to general) examples as a means of gaining a deeper understanding of how and why people communicate as they do. *Critical* (or critical/cultural) scholars prioritize ideologies and power as influences on communication practices. They view both human behavior and scholarship as unavoidably political, using scholarship as a means to facilitate positive social change. Between the three of us as authors, we have expertise across these orientations to communication research. Our approach in this book is therefore inclusive, as we survey broadly the topical and methodological issues addressed by communication scholars of sport.

Sport

If it is important that we have a shared basis for understanding of the term *communication*, then it is equally important to define *sport*. You may have noticed by now that although the word *sports* is used in the opening pages of this book, we have chosen *sport* for the title. Before we explain this distinction, let us first settle on what makes something a sport in the first place. Guttmann's *From Ritual to Record* (1978) is written in the sociological tradition of sport scholarship. Nevertheless, it provides a typology that helps define and delimit the scope of sport. Guttmann wants to distinguish between four levels of activity: play, games, contests, and sports. Play, he suggests, is "nonutilitarian physical or intellectual activity pursued for its own sake" (p. 3). When that play becomes organized, we have "games," and when games have winners and losers, we have "contests." Not all contests are games, however. As Guttmann notes, a war is a contest with winners and losers, but it is most certainly not a game.

Are all contests sports, then? Guttmann doesn't think so. For example, he notes that just because *Sports Illustrated* writes about it, it doesn't mean chess is a sport. Thirty years later, we could amend this to say that just because ESPN televises it, it doesn't mean poker is a sport. What is required, Guttmann (1978) claims, is that sports involve a *physical* component. Therefore, sports are defined as "'playful' physical contests, that is, as nonutilitarian contests which include an important measure of physical as well as intellectual skill" (p. 7). Following this definition, when we talk of specific contests such as basketball or golf, we will likely use the term *sports*. However, and much more frequently, when we refer to the institutional arrangement of leagues, teams, officials, players, fans, and media we will use the term *sport*. In similar terms, we might also think of Bell's (1987) definition, which states, "Sport is a repeatable, regulated, physical contest producing a clear winner" (p. 2).

PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES

This book builds on the foundation we have detailed above. We cast a broad net in the effort to survey the field of communication and sport across its methodological, theoretical, and topical diversity. Let us now provide an overview of the chapters to follow.

Sport is a central feature of life in countries around the world. Our focus in this textbook, however, is primarily on the United States and the study of how Americans participate in the community of sport. With that in mind, what does it mean to study the "community of sport?" Bob Krizek (2008), who is interviewed in **Chapter 2**, states that it "is a diverse community with often disparate interests that compel us to employ a wide variety of research practices and theoretical frameworks" (p. 105). Thus, on the one hand, the "community of sport" is about those who study it from perspectives we have described above. However, this community is less about communication scholars and more about those who are invested more directly in the community of sport. Accordingly, in **Chapter 2** we examine how this community is constituted by participants, organizations, media, and fans. For example, think about the discussion that emerged when Major League Baseball (MLB) introduced a rule change in 2014 that sought to minimize the risk of collisions between baserunners and catchers at home plate. The new rule came in response to injuries that occurred from collisions some saw as unnecessary, but the change raised questions about the game's traditions and the toughness of its players. First and foremost, the rule was designed to protect the players (participants), which in turn protected the teams (organizations) from losing a player to the disabled list. Meanwhile, MLB (another organization) promoted the decision as being in the best interest of the game. Broadcasters and sportswriters (media) then debated the virtues of the rule, while observers (fans) watched to see how players would adapt to the change. Collectively, these four constituencies adapted to the new rule and deliberated over whether or not it was good for baseball. Although all four groups represent different interests in the community of sport, those interests overlap, revealing the interdependence of participants, organizations, media, and fans.

Much of the community of sport is influenced by media. Especially when talking about sport at the collegiate and professional levels, it is all but impossible not to think about how the media constructs, delivers, and digests sporting events. Therefore, we provide an overview in **Chapter 3** of the role of media in sport, including traditional forms such as newspapers to "new" media such as Twitter. Twitter, along with other social media sites such as Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram, are still relatively new platforms. The rapid emergence of these sites has changed communication practices in a variety of contexts, including sports. Sanderson (2011) contends that social media is especially relevant to sport because it breaks down some of the barriers that previously prevented fans from interacting with the sports they follow. As he notes, "Fans are capitalizing on the interactivity offered by social media channels to directly engage athletes and sports organization personnel" (p. xiii). Many of these changes are exciting; others raise concerns. All of them, however, merit our attention if we are to understand how sport affects our lives.

Communication and sport scholarship is also interested in understanding how sport constructs, maintains, or even threatens the communities in which we live. Fans often tell us a great deal about sport's impact on community. Thus, we turn our attention more specifically to Sports Fan Cultures in **Chapter 4**. As an example, consider the

fan culture of Major League Soccer's (MLS) Portland Timbers. The team began play in 2011 and has sold out every regular season and playoff game since, with more than 12,000 people on the waitlist for season tickets (Goldberg, 2016). The dedication to the franchise can be explained in part by the fact that Portland is a large metropolitan area with only one other major league franchise (the National Basketball Association's [NBA's] Trail Blazers). But there is also a specific passion for soccer, best symbolized by the popular "Timbers Army" fan club. This group dates back to a previous professional soccer franchise in the city, and this history is rooted in Portland's identity as a progressive, creative city. As the team prepared to join the MLS, the organization launched a "Timbers Army" promotional campaign featuring a diverse array of local fans on billboards throughout the region. The only other content on the billboards was a small Timbers logo. By spotlighting the fans, the campaign channeled local passions and helped establish an immediate connection to the franchise (Dean, 2014). This is only one view of fanship, of course. In **Chapter 4** we examine various forms of fan behavior, including other motivations guiding fans to identify with certain sports or teams as well as the technological changes that have altered the terrain of sport spectatorship and consumption.

Connections to the community of sport are commonly cultivated through mythologies linking fans with their communities or sports in particular ways. As we discuss in **Chapter 5**, myths are stories that are not necessarily true, but their communicative effect is that they feel true. Thus, they provide order and guidance for how people should navigate their worlds. Some myths are local. Grano and Zagacki (2011), for example, demonstrate how civic leaders in New Orleans used the Louisiana Superdome as a site for rehabilitating the city's image after devastation suffered in 2005 because of Hurricane Katrina. The rituals enacted during the ESPN *Monday Night Football* game that reopened the stadium spoke to sport's ability to create a mythic unity, in this case enacting a "spiritual obligation for the community as a whole" (p. 214). Other myths are national. Consider, for instance, the deeply ingrained belief that baseball, as the "national pastime," is somehow representative of America itself. Or, myths may transcend such communities by taking on more cosmological, or religious, significance. Hence, some of the more pervasive sport myths are those equating sports with religion: the "church of baseball" or the idea that the Super Bowl is a "religious festival" (Price, 1992). In each case, myths depend on heroic figures and universal values to impart their lessons. As a result, when we subscribe to a myth's lessons there are substantial consequences to our attitudes, beliefs, and actions.

Communication scholars have revealed that sport is one of the primary sites for the construction, maintenance, and contestation of identity. In a series of chapters, therefore, we turn our attention to the relationships between sport and both individual and collective identities. We begin in **Chapter 6** with a discussion of gender and sport, focusing both on the substantial increase in participation of women in sport since the landmark adoption of Title IX and the problematic representations of female athletes, especially through the media. Overt expressions of sexism are increasingly rare; however, many more subtle iterations of sexism remain. This includes the tendency to provide

Inside the Louisiana
Superdome

different coverage to men's sports over women's sports (Billings, 2007), the need to define women first as "feminine" and second as "athletic" (Shugart, 2003), and the all too common emphasis on female appearance over other characteristics.

We clarify as well that "gender" is not a synonym for "women." Although the role of women in sport is a central focus of communication and sport scholarship, we must also attend to sport's role in the construction of masculinity and sexuality. The concept of "hegemonic masculinity," for example, helps explain the dominant features of masculinity for a given culture. These features are often based on power, strength, and control and frequently come at the expense of women or gay men (Trujillo, 1991). Thus, in **Chapter 6** we are careful to acknowledge the multiple identity positions that are implicated by the concept of gender.

If the media have been guilty of sexism with respect to representations of women, then a similar problem arises with respect to race and ethnicity. On the one hand, sport has been the rare institution in American history where racial minorities or non-U.S. natives have been visible, successful, and celebrated. A century ago, when African American Jack Johnson claimed the heavyweight boxing championship, the victory touched off nationwide riots and precipitated cultural anxieties about the diminishment of White cultural authority. Today, American sport is an arena of diverse races, ethnicities, and nationalities. Indeed, often the most beloved stars—Gabby Douglas, LeBron James, Derek Jeter—are racial minorities.

The presence of these athletes, however, does not mean that Americans have transcended racial biases or even reached an understanding of what "race" means. Is

Derek Jeter

race equitable with skin color? Ethnicity? Blood? Questions such as these can threaten the harmony that sport has the potential to cultivate. Meanwhile, despite the apparent level playing field offered by sport, racial minorities are often subjected to questionable portrayals and remain marginal participants in managerial and ownership ranks. Meanwhile, what is communicated by a sport like college football, which consistently fields teams comprised largely of African Americans yet rarely coached by them? Or that in Major League Baseball, where players of Latin American and Asian descent are now commonplace, but the overwhelming majority of owners remain White? These kinds of questions, and many others, characterize our approach to **Chapter 7**.

Moving from the individual identity positions of the previous two chapters, **Chapter 8** evaluates the mutual influence between sport, politics, and nationalism. One of the most deeply held misconceptions about sport is that it is "apolitical," or that it offers *only* an escape from the "real world" concerns of politics. However, if you have ever attended a live sporting event in the United States, you have likely participated in a political ritual that few of us would question. Specifically, most of us take for granted that the performance of the national anthem before a game is simply standard procedure, and few of us would think of it as "political." Yet, consider the uproar that has been caused over the years when someone dares to threaten the sanctity of the ritual. Jose Feliciano, for example, was widely reviled after he delivered what is believed to be the first nontraditional rendering of the anthem at Game 1 of the 1968 World Series. Much more recently, San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick attracted both praise and criticism for refusing to stand during the national anthem ceremony before the start of games. Kaepernick was motivated by incidents of racial violence that had occurred throughout the country in recent years leading up to the 2016 NFL season. Many others followed his lead (Walker, 2016), sparking substantial discussions about the role of sport in addressing matters of racial justice and the extent to which sport and politics intersect.

Both Feliciano and Kaepernick earned scorn for "politicizing" sport. This charge does not stop elected officials from hoping to exploit sport for their own purposes, however. Presidents routinely throw out pitches at baseball games, invite championship teams to the White House, and appear for interviews during broadcasts in order to foster identification with American citizens. This can generate great favor (President George W. Bush was widely praised when he threw out the first pitch at Game 3 of the 2001 World Series, just weeks after 9/11) or result in embarrassment (such as presidential candidate Mitt Romney's ill-fated attempt to connect with NASCAR fans by talking about his friendships with NASCAR team owners). Less formal uses

Barack Obama at the Major League Baseball All-Star Game

of sport also have political implications, such as the "rare bipartisan partnership" shared between President Barack Obama and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie in 2013 after they played a game of "Touchdown Fever" during a tour of a New Jersey boardwalk that had been damaged by Hurricane Sandy in 2012 (Shear & Leibovich, 2013). International sport also raises various political issues, from the metaphorical contests of events such as the Olympic Games to heated disagreements about human rights and national ideologies. Recent Olympiads, for example, have spotlighted these concerns, such as the backlash against anti-LGBT laws in Russia that emerged during the Sochi Winter Games in 2014 and the public protests against the Brazilian government's investment in the Rio Summer Games in 2016. In many cases, the mixing of sport and politics sparks controversy about the degree to which they should remain apart from one another.

In the cases of gender, race, and nationality, the construction of identity is often produced, or at least guided, by the media, sports organizations, or politicians. Because *athletes* are also part of this process, we turn our attention in **Chapter 9** to the *performance* of identity in sport. What this means is that participation in sports is often a means for individuals to express who they believe themselves to be or to challenge conventional expectations about identity that they wish to change. The average sports fan, for example, assumes (probably unconsciously) that athletes are *exceptional* physical specimens, and that athletic performance requires a fully able body. Disabled athletes challenge this assumption through their participation in sport. Golfer Casey Martin, for instance, garnered significant attention in 1997 because he had a degenerative leg condition that limited his mobility, and he sued the Professional Golfers Association (PGA)

for the right to use a cart on the tour. The PGA insisted that his request undermined the integrity of its rules, but the Supreme Court ruled in Martin's favor. Although his leg condition ultimately prevented him from pursuing a long-term career in professional golf—he is now the head coach of golf at the University of Oregon—the case helped redefine what it means to be an "athlete."

Sexuality can also be understood as a matter of performance. Scholars influenced by the academic field of cultural studies view terms such as *gender* or *sexuality* on a continuum, meaning that there is no such thing as pure masculinity or femininity but rather people *perform* their identities in more or less masculine or feminine ways. Performances can take many forms, from choosing types of clothing, to using specific words, to participating in one sport over another. What is communicated, for example, when a teenage boy opts for figure skating over hockey? As we noted above, one of the common expectations about sport is that it privileges hegemonic masculinity, through which men are expected to be strong, tough, and heterosexual. Thus, the presence of a gay male in sport represents a challenge to the conventions of gender and sexuality. In part, this is why the coming out narratives of Robbie Rogers (MLS), Jason Collins (NBA), and Michael Sam (NFL) were such big news stories in 2013 and 2014. A discussion of the extent to which our performances reinforce or redefine identities, therefore, concludes our focus on negotiating identity in sport.

Sport is often celebrated for its ability to foster relationships, develop teamwork skills, and find creative outlets for resolving conflict. Our attention to these issues begins in **Chapter 10** with a discussion of parent–child relationships in sports. As participation in youth sports continues to climb, its impact on the family takes on growing importance. For many, sports are seen as means to socialize children. Kremer-Sadlik and Kim (2007), for example, revealed that family interactions during sports activities promote the idea that sport communicates and develops important cultural values. Meanwhile, sport also leads to more troubling phenomena, such as parents who identify too strongly with their children's athletic achievements. The emergence of the so-called "helicopter parent" can arguably be traced to parental involvement in sports, as parents have long obsessed over issues such as playing time or the treatment their children receive from their coaches. For some, the stereotypical figure of the overly demanding father as depicted in the film, *The Bad News Bears*, remains a cautionary tale about the line between support and pressure.

If parental pressure is a significant issue, so too is the problem of the few, but high-profile, instances of violence committed by parents. Perhaps the most infamous incident came in 2000, when 44-year-old Thomas Junta beat and killed 40-year-old Michael Costin in a fight prompted by an incident between their sons in a youth hockey game. Sadly, other more recent cases remind us that violence happens in youth sports more than it should. Another hockey father, Thomas Tonda of St. Paul, Minnesota, received a 6-month prison sentence in 2012 for assaulting his son's coach and allegedly threatening to kill him (Pheifer, 2012). In 2010, a Pennsylvania man was charged with assault for punching his own son after the 9-year-old was ejected from a baseball game (Leibowitz, 2010). Such outbursts have led many communities to adopt codes of conduct that require parents to pledge they would maintain good behavior. That parents sometimes become

the focus of youth sports invites communication scholars to consider how and why we invest as much in sport as we do.

In some ways, the relationship between players and coaches mirrors the relationship between children and parents. Coaches are often surrogate parental figures, and they are charged with communicating lessons about discipline and hard work, even as they are expected to lead their team to victory. Accordingly, communication scholarship has attended to the ability of coaches to motivate players, including as assessment of different motivation strategies. Although stereotypical portrayals of coaches in television shows and movies—such as the *Bad News Bears* portrayal we referenced earlier—tend to emphasize the role of anger and punishment, Kassing and Infante (1999) discovered that aggressive behaviors commonly lead to unfavorable perceptions of coaches, which leads to weaker performances. In **Chapter 11**, we explore coaching communication strategies, as well as the significance of the coach as a model for organizational leadership.

Coaches can affect the team environment, as well. Communication scholars emphasize the term *small groups* over *teams*, but the terms share many traits. Teams are relatively small units that depend on organization and the distribution of tasks across the group's membership. In this way, team sports are appropriate metaphors for understanding small-group communication processes that are found in organizations of every kind. **Chapter 12** evaluates various issues related to teams, including cohesion, leadership, and organization. Turman (2003), for example, showed that coaches were instrumental in fostering team cohesion. Meanwhile, Hawkins and Tolzin (2002) concluded that baseball teams provide exemplary models of leadership for postmodern organizations.

Small-group communication is typically considered a part of organizational communication studies. In **Chapter 13**, we shift our attention to organizations and the specific set of issues prompted by crises. A crisis can occur at multiple levels—it can be macrolevel, such as the national crisis in the United States precipitated by 9/11, or it can be microlevel, such as the Formula One racing industry's response to a tire controversy. Brown (2004) addressed the first kind of crisis in his study of the role played by sports leagues in the healing process after terrorists attacked the United States. Organizations such as Major League Baseball or the National Football League, Brown suggests, served as positive and unifying forces for Americans shocked by the tragedy. Pfahl and Bates (2008), by contrast, analyzed the various responses from Formula One teams, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Michelin, and others, when a dispute over tires threatened to discredit the sport. Their study offers models for communication students and scholars to see how sport provides both positive and negative examples of image repair strategies. One recent volume (Blaney, Lippert, & Smith, 2013) is entirely dedicated to studies of image repair in sport. Similarly, in our chapter we seek to understand crisis communication both for what it does well and for the lessons it invites us to consider.

One challenge in writing a textbook about communication and sport is trying to keep up with changes and new developments. In the final chapters of the book, we address two particular issues that continue to change the landscape of sport: commodification and fantasy sports. We do not suggest that commodification is entirely new to sport. Despite

the contrary claims made by nostalgia buffs, sport has been a commercial enterprise just about from the beginning. Nevertheless, changes to the economy in the late 20th and early 21st centuries have produced new relationships between sport and commerce, which have subsequently altered player contracts, how sports are broadcast, who can afford to attend games in person, and what kind of facilities are built to host sporting events. Even as many are comfortable with these developments in professional sports, there growing concerns about the increasingly blurred lines between commercialism and amateur sports. Thus, in **Chapter 14**, we hope to identify the key communication issues that have emerged out of the growing economic reach of sport.

One example of the commercial possibilities of sport can be found in the explosion of fantasy sports. Although many fantasy sports developed in the 1980s, the emergence of the World Wide Web in the 1990s made fantasy sports a widespread phenomenon. With fantasy sports now a multibillion dollar industry, there is little question that it is as much a part of the contemporary landscape as sports themselves. Fantasy sports allow for a new form of fandom and provide an outlet for friends, family, and sometimes complete strangers to communicate and connect with one another. Meanwhile, they also raise questions about addiction or threaten to distract employees who should be working instead of checking their fantasy statistics online. Similar temptations are found with sports video games and gambling. Sports video games are played by millions, some of whom are not even sports fans, and gambling is a multibillion dollar industry. These various forms of games are industries unto themselves, and they have helped to change the way fans consume and interact with sports. For example, not only can fans gamble on a full range of sports thanks to Internet access, they can also make (presumably) informed decisions about their bets thanks to an associated electronic gaming (eGaming) industry, symbolized by publications such as *EGR* (EGaming Review). With these issues in mind, we approach **Chapter 15** with the intention of viewing sports gaming as an integral part of the communication and sport relationship.

Finally, in **Chapter 16** we look to the future of communication and sport scholarship. Especially in light of technological developments that have dramatically changed the way people experience sports, such speculation is no easy task. Speculate we shall, however, with specific attention on sports participants, organizations, media, and fans.

It should be evident that the relationship between communication and sport is one that requires multiple approaches. The chapters in this book are as comprehensive an overview as is available. Yet, we understand that additional topics and questions could be raised. It is our hope that the following chapters provoke you to consider how we might best understand communication and sport. Each chapter incorporates numerous examples and definitions of key terms. We also include five features found throughout the book: an interview with either a communication and sport scholar or a practitioner with experience in sports media; an example that provokes discussion about the role of ethics in communication and sport; a representative case study that demonstrates the central concepts introduced in the chapter; a "theoretically speaking" box that expands on a given academic concept; and an "off the beaten path" insert that spotlights nontraditional sports.

We close this introduction with one final observation about our approach in this book. We are scholars and critics of sport, yes, but we also are fans. We have strong allegiances to our teams, from the Green Bay Packers to the Chicago Cubs to the University of Nebraska Cornhuskers. We played sports as kids, continue to play as adults, and are committed to supporting the athletic activities of our children. And, yes, we even participate in fantasy sports. In short, we are invested in the community of communication and sport in multiple ways. Throughout this book, we hope you will join us.

2

COMMUNITY IN SPORT

No major part of everyday life is left untouched by sport. We join bowling leagues with our coworkers. We play softball with church members against teams representing other denominations. Our schools hold pep sessions to support teams that bear the same school logo and nickname. We attend horseraces by the thousands. In many ways, the topic of this chapter—the community of sport—would be easier to canvass if one were to discuss what does *not* constitute the community of sport. Within American society (and most of the modern world), sport impacts the very manner in which our typical day unfolds. Moreover, it always unfolds within a communicative context. It could involve the interpersonal communication between coach and player, parent and child, or producer and director. It could incorporate the rhetoric of a radio announcer or the bombastic nature of a coach's halftime speech. It could involve intercultural communicative notions of in-groups and out-groups and certainly can be embedded in notions of communication theories that deal with silenced or muted groups or with violations of social expectancies.

Communication informs, persuades, and permeates how we play, how we consume, and how we incorporate notions of sport into our daily lives. The myriad ways in which sport permeates virtually all forms of society make it important to recognize who the various "players" within the mingled communication and sport process are. This chapter outlines the major entities that jointly influence the manner in which sport is communicated in the United States and globally. Trujillo (2003) notes that sport is a "billion-dollar industry and an important purveyor of cultural values" (p. xii). Decades ago, a prevailing attitude rendered was that sport was a microcosm of society; in the modern day, there are many instances in which the inverse also holds true as society is often a microcosm of sport. This chapter is about how these attitudes, ideas, and behaviors are simultaneously influenced by many crucial "players" who collectively

constitute the community of sport. More specifically, we explore the (a) **participants;** (b) **organizations;** (c) **media entities;** and (d) **fans** that jointly influence sport and society in increasingly conjoined manners.

PLAYER #1: THE PARTICIPANT

Nearly all of us have played sports—mandatory physical education classes ensure that if nothing else. Games we play range from organized (AAU basketball leagues, school teams, and YMCA clubs) to spontaneous (pick-up basketball games at local parks, throwing a Frisbee with family members in the backyard) games (see Guttmann, 1978). As we grow older, the games become more sophisticated, and the perceived stakes of participation become higher, allowing for a differentiation between play, games, and sports as articulated in Chapter 1 (which is why responses to athletics becoming too intensely serious often involve the rhetoric that "it's just a game"). Relatedly, the decision to continue participation in a given sport is often determined by whether a person is willing to pledge an increased level of commitment. We often hear of the professional player who has forgotten the sheer youthful joy of playing a sport. Thus, to understand our first player, *the participant,* we must begin with childhood play.

Q: What do you feel encompasses the community of sport?

A: The community of sport is a symbolic collective that includes all the people who work in, participate in, are fans of, and /or reporters of sport and sporting events, spanning countries, regions, cities, and schools. It includes everyone who "touches" any aspect of sport, and it is larger than any country or single religion. It connects us to the past and helps us anticipate the future. Nonetheless, it is a symbolic community; it exists because we can imagine and talk about it. The community of sport encompasses all that we as humans find meaningful about our forays into the games we play individually and against one another.

Q: How has this community evolved in recent years?

A: Our awareness of it has become much greater. Economic expansion over the last 4 centuries has provided us with more leisure time, which in turn has allowed the community of sport to develop new ways to experience and define sport. We have introduced "old" sports to new constituencies, as seen in the World Baseball Classic,

(Continued)

and legitimized "new" sports such as the X-Games and Ultimate Fighting Championship for all constituencies. The evolution of the community of sport blurs traditional city/state sport boundaries as well as challenges traditional meanings of sport.

Q: In what way do media entities influence this community?

A: The media allows us to be socially present in many places in multiple ways. We can watch the Olympic Games in China while listening to our favorite baseball team play a game in the park of a divisional rival. With exposure comes a tremendous amount of power, including notions about what it takes to succeed and what we should value.

Q: Do you see any dangers in the ways in which people interact within this sporting community?

A: The community of sport and all of its mediated representations is pervasive; therefore, this community may be shaping us in ways we do not truly understand. Because the vast majority of people view the activities that the community of sport comprises as ideologically neutral, we rarely consciously reflect upon what occurs in that community. We concern ourselves with wins and losses and not how the community of sport reproduces dominant ideologies that benefit some and disadvantage others.

Q: What is the biggest misconception about sporting communities?

A: It varies based on the lens through which the person answers. Sport communities are not ideologically free zones. Most people perceive sport as being neutral in regard to politics, gender, culture, and sexual orientation.

It is not. The best man not only doesn't always win, but sometimes he doesn't even get to play. More often than not, the most talented woman doesn't get recognized for her skills in the same way that her male counterpart does. The community of sport is a privileged place that does not act as a social or political leveller.

Q: To what extent is there a link between community and consumption in sport?

A: In this country, the link is constant and strong. From the sponsors' names on the back of our children's Little League uniforms to the names on our professional sport stadiums, the community of sport encourages us to consume. Even in nonorganized neighborhoods in the community of sport, participants in pick-up ballgames don jerseys, headbands, and protective wear that model exactly how the professional and amateur organizations decorate their athletes. The community of sport has a voracious appetite for consuming fed by a constant flow of marketing campaigns and new products.

Q: How do you see the various "players" within the community of sport changing in the years to come?

A: I would hope that as our critical examination of the community of sport gains momentum, a growing body of knowledge gains traction. More realistically, perhaps, I can see the community of sport becoming even more consumer oriented, maybe not to the extent prophesized in the movie *Rollerball* but certainly more than we currently experience. More positively, more people will actively participate in sport as our life spans increase and as we choose to realign life–work balances.

Source: ©iStockphoto.com/Jacob Ammentorp Lund

Enjoyment and fellowship in the community of sport

Casual Play: Sport as Leisure

By no means is casual play limited to children, but it does represent the formative steps in most people's initiation into the sporting world. Even if children are not indoctrinated into formal types of sports, they naturally create them within the realm of play (such as playing catch with a ball). Four factors influence the degree to which we choose to begin or continue playing sports: personality characteristics (rudimentarily on the continuum of active vs. passive), resources (chances to play and improve via coaching and varied environments), interactions with close contacts (sport-loving parents are more likely to yield sport-loving children), and athletic ability (both inherent and developed in initial experiences). However, variations of these primary four factors occur; for instance, parents who may not overly enjoy sports may nonetheless believe that sport can aid in socializing a child, making the child less likely to participate in delinquent behavior (see Trulson, 1986, for evidence this is true in certain situations). In addition, Chapter 12 focuses on the intergroup dynamics involved in sport that tend to masculinize or feminize the social roles of those who play.

The desire for casual sports play remains for adults, yet the opportunity to participate wanes as life progresses. Whereas children have recess and both informal and structured playdates and parties, these types of occasions rarely naturally occur for the hyperkinetic 21st-century adult. When adults do find occasion for casual play, it is most frequently with their children. Regardless of age, casual sports represent a substantial portion of all athletics and communicate many foundational messages: (a) Sport should be a vital and healthy part of anyone's life, (b) sport is a primary means for functioning socially, and (c) participation in sport is more likely to yield high character and enhanced opportunity for those involved.

Intramurals: Introductions to Organized Sport

The transition from spontaneously played sport to organized activities comes earlier in a person's life now than ever before. Children begin "smart start" programs as young as age 3, and recreation leagues often feature leagues for preschool children. At this stage, the focus of the sporting activities is on understanding rules and basic levels of sportsmanship. Children are often funnelled into these types of structured sporting activities because of the proven correlating benefits between participation in intramural sports and higher grades, lower dropout rates, and greater success in attending and completing college (Lipscomb, 2006). While some experts have been skeptical of these benefits, scholars such as Hartmann and Depro (2006) find positive relationships between activities such as midnight basketball and property crime rates and other forms of deviant behavior. However, research currently has been relegated to finding correlations between intramural activities and positive social benefits; little scholarly attention has been devoted to the communication processes enacted to create this perceived cause-and-effect relationship, making this a ripe area for sport analyses in the future.

Amateur Athletics: Altruism and Idealism

For much of organized sports' history in the United States, being a professional athlete was often equated to being second rate, as the true athletes were the amateurs. They were held in the highest regard largely because they were playing the game because they loved it, not because they needed to in order to make a living. Obviously, the working classes

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

IRONMAN

The event that was imagined in 1977 as a 140.6 mile journey, combining Hawaii's toughest endurance races in swimming, running, and cycling, attracted 15 participants to Waikiki in 1978 for the first-ever Ironman challenge. Ironman's mantra is "Anything is Possible," and its triathletes embrace the essence of the human spirit. The World Championship's home has remained in Hawaii and is now hosted on in the Big Island in Kona and attracts nearly 1,800 athletes from around the world. As a way of showing its appreciation to Hawaii for continuing to host the Ironman World Championship annually, the Ironman Foundation has shown its commitment to the community of Kona through charitable giving. Local non-profit foundations serving members of the community have worked closely with the Foundation to identify the best grant opportunities. The Foundation also recognizes that its triathletes are drawn to the event for various reasons and provides them with the opportunity to race for charities of their choice. This partnership between its foundation, athletes, and the community helps Ironman spread the spirit of *kokua*, Hawaiian for "helping others."

—Aisha Avery

CASE STUDY

BLOOM'S BATTLE

It isn't unusual for sports to blur the lines between professional and amateur athletics. Traditionally the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has established rigid policies that attempt to protect student athletes from the high-stakes game of professional sports, yet with each passing year, major athletic conferences push the NCAA to allow a greater portion of college sport revenue to be provided to amateur athletes. In early 2015, members of the AAC, Big 12, Big Ten, SEC, and Pac-12 moved forward with providing the full cost of attendance to athletes involved in the 65 schools affiliated with the five conferences. Traditionally, athletic scholarships at these institutions reflected the cost of room, board, tuition, and textbook costs for student athletes. Scholarships supporting collegiate athletes could not exceed these calculations determined for each institution despite the long held belief that it did not cover the full obligation that students incurred while enrolled. Each sport can require athletes to practice/compete up to 20 hours each week, and when weighed against the demands of school, work makes it difficult to earn additional income that may be necessary for them to cover other expenses associated with college attendance.

Initially approved by the NCAA in August 2014, the vote by the five major conference leaders now allows for institutions to provide stipends (amounts determined by federally established guidelines) of up to $2,000 and $4,000 annually. Shortly afterward, a number of other smaller conferences also followed suit noting that to maintain a competitive advantage in Division I athletes, the need to offer equivalent stipends to at least football and men's basketball players was crucial in the current recruiting environment.

Many believe that successful college athletic programs should allow student athletes to earn a larger portion of the revenue generated from their competitive efforts. For instance, the NCAA currently sells the television rights to its national tournament each year, for which CBS pays more than $6 billion to retain the rights. More than 94% of the money is distributed back to colleges and universities to support all athletic programs. Yet, the athletes responsible for helping to generate this revenue see little of that money beyond the scholarships they receive to attend their institutions.

Should collegiate athletes be eligible for additional stipends from their institution to cover the expenses beyond actual attendance costs?

1. Does it seem appropriate that only athletes from a limited number of sports are eligible for the additional stipends based on their capacity as a revenue generating sport?

2. What potential problems might the shift by the NCAA cause in the future as revenue from collegiate sports continues to increase?

had a much more difficult time staying at the amateur level because of economic realities, so upper classes held to the notions of amateur athletic superiority at least partially because it shut out other classes of people who would be relegated to the professional ranks. For instance, even in the early 1930s, golf's Grand Slam events consisted of the U.S. Open, British Open, U.S. Amateur, and British Amateur Championships, showing just how elevated amateur competition was in comparison to other professional events. Similarly, tennis's "Open Era" did not start until 1968, when professional players were allowed to compete against amateurs.

Things have obviously changed since then, as now even the Olympics allows professionals to compete while other sports, such as tennis, allow players to earn money but place a monetary cap on the amount of prize allotments players can receive while still retaining their amateur status. College athletes do not receive paychecks, yet they receive everything from room and board to tuition waivers to clothing to spending money at college football bowl games in exchange for their participation. Debates remain as to whether such resources constitute adequate compensation for athletes, particularly for prominent athletes in revenue-producing sports. Attempts for larger universities to provide stipends have been rejected in courts (see Solomon, 2015), with antitrust exemptions questioned in the process. Nonetheless, amateurism still is upheld for idealistic and practical reasons, particularly noted within secondary education and university settings. Most athletes participate because they enjoy the competition, yet others do so with their eyes on the ultimate goal of turning professional, with all of the perks that accompany that level of achievement.

Professional Athleticism: Style and Substance

Finally, there are those who participate at the perceived highest level of athletics: the professional athletes. Given how jaded some views have become regarding the notion of pure amateurism in the 21st century, it is no surprise that some have similarly skeptical views about professionalism. Some athletes in high-profile sports can command eight-figure annual salaries, leading fans to feel they cannot relate to the players or that the athletes play not for the love of the game but for a paycheck and the lifestyle that accompanies it.

TABLE 2.1 ■ Top Athlete Salaries (2016)			
Sport	**Player**	**Duration**	**Amount**
MLB	Giancarlo Stanton	13 years	$325,000,000
NFL	Andrew Luck	6 years	$139,125,000
NBA	Mike Conley, Jr.	5 years	$153,000,000
NHL	Alexander Ovechkin	13 years	$124,000,000
Auto Racing	Sebastian Vettel	3 years	$240,000,000

Nevertheless, many professional athletes make much smaller amounts of money, often to the point that they need ancillary jobs to support themselves. For example, until 2009, Home Depot provided part-time, flexible-hour jobs to more than 600 future Olympians because, even though the Olympics now involves professional athletes, most could not fulfill their athletic dreams without outside employment. USA Wrestling has implemented their "Achieve the Dream" campaign that awards $1 million to any USA wrestler that earns an Olympic gold medal, encouraging more seasoned athletes to continue in the sport while they are still in their prime.

Despite economic and celebrity-oriented disparities, one commonality that occurs in professional sports is that athletes are playing the game at the highest level. Perhaps this involves someone making thousands of dollars for each pitch he or she throws, but it also involves professional bowlers; the nation's top bowler may make $200,000 a year while most others make far less. Professional seasons are typically longer than amateur seasons, and some notions of athlete welfare are lessened because of the notion that people who earn a living playing a game could (or perhaps even should) endure some hardships in the process. Sports with strong unions are able to ensure some form of equity, but others do not have these bolstered structures in place.

Professionalism involves a ton of talent yet also is about marketability. When a player or sport is marketable, salaries increase along with other sponsorship opportunities. The late BMX biker Dave Mirra made 10 times as much money in outside endorsements and other opportunities as he did from biking competitions. Careers of professional athletes tend to be short, and no two ever appear to be alike because of the deviations in talent, health, marketability, and other outside influences.

PLAYER #2: SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

Of course, these athletes could not begin to participate at these various levels without governing and organizing bodies to oversee these events. *Sports organizations* serve this vital role by coordinating efforts and providing spaces and events that advance opportunities for sport participation. These groups come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from large conglomerates to events coordinated out of a home of a single person. Some types include *recreation clubs* that often serve as a lifeblood of a local community. Some may have ties to formal, structured sports (think YMCA), yet others regard themselves much more as fitness centers where sports are played in the form of pick-up basketball games and other casual events. These games are then supplemented with a heavy dose of activities that represent physical education in a noncompetitive format, such as aerobics classes and public swimming.

Related and yet quite different are *athletic clubs.* Sometimes, these organizations function in the same "go to the gym and exercise" manner, yet these also may not involve providing a specific, formal physical space in which sports are played. Instead, the focus is on local (and sometimes state and national) organizing as these groups work with city parks and recreation departments and other entities to use spaces for competitive games. A good example of an athletic club is the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), as the

organization is now so well networked in the United States that AAU coaches can wield more influence on athletes than even their high school coaches. Groups such as these provide opportunities for organized play and regional tournaments.

Another type of sports organization involves *state and national federations.* For instance, each state has an organizing federation to handle high school athletics rules and competitions. These groups facilitate play but also aim to fulfill advocacy roles to ensure athlete equity and welfare. For instance, in 2016, the U.S. Women's National Team accused U.S. soccer of wage discrimination because the women's team—the #1 team in the world and reigning World Cup champion—often made less for winning a game than the men's team—ranked #31 in the world—did for losing one. Centralizing national agencies (such as the NCAA) serve similar advocacy functions, intending to offer highly competitive sporting events within the realm of maintaining true amateurism. National groups such as the United States Tennis Association function as federations to promote a certain sport, often by providing youth programs and structures that can aid and help promote sports to those with less access because of their economic or geographic circumstances.

Organizing committees also are integral to the grander sporting events. The biggest sports event of all, the Olympics, has an International Olympic Committee specifically designed to coordinate the Games with a host city. Such a process is so involved for

THEORETICALLY SPEAKING
IDENTIFICATION

Although you might first think of identification in terms of verifying an identity—an ID card, for example—communication scholars who use the term are more likely to think of it as a *process.* In other words, identification refers to the process by which individuals come to see themselves as having things in common. This theoretical approach to identification originates with Kenneth Burke, author of numerous books on literature and rhetoric, including *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950/1969). In that book, Burke famously declares, "Identification is compensatory to division" (p. 22), meaning that it allows distinct individuals to communicate across their differences to achieve symbolic cooperation. This may happen in one-to-one interactions, but large groups also may form communities through the process of identification. For example, Gill (2012) examines *Gold & Black Illustrated* (*GBI*), a publication that covers sports at Purdue University. Through consistent references to the organizational history, *GBI* cultivates identifications that socialize fans into the Purdue community. As he concludes, "Historical messages reinforce socialization by providing knowledge and recounting experiences that indoctrinate fans into a particular organizational fanhood" (p. 153). Thus, through identification, fans learn how to participate in a given sports community.

the Olympics that host cities are selected 7 years in advance of the competition after several preceding years of a location vetting process by national Olympic Committees. Yes, these organizing committees sometimes are designed to fulfill advocacy roles in a similar manner to federations, yet this is not always the case. College football bowl games have organizing committees that are centralized around a specific event for a specific sport, yet they do not determine rules or sport governance in any way. Instead, these groups work year round to promote a game in which the two competing institutions won't even be known until a month before the game is played. Moreover, NCAA Final Four basketball host cities do not know which schools will be participating until 1 week before the tournament begins.

Finally, there are *team networks.* These types of organizations are not just focused on a specific sport; they are often elaborately designed groups with the intention of promoting a team that plays the sport. All college and professional teams have these types of organizations designed to market and promote a certain team (such as the Cincinnati Reds) or institution with multiple teams playing with the same moniker (such as the Indiana Hoosiers). Branding, media exposure, and the potential for future athletic success are all part and parcel of what these team networks are charged with accomplishing.

PLAYER #3: SPORTS MEDIA ENTITIES

As sports have grown at all levels of society, so too has the plethora of media outlets that now devote substantial time to sport. We will discuss more of the minutiae of traditional, new, social, and user-generated media in Chapter 3. However, it is also important to discuss how media entities impact the community of sport. Aspects of sports media have changed substantially, such as the diminishing opportunities at local sports television networks as a result of increasingly regionalized coverage of sport via regional outlets (Fox Sports Net, New York's YES network, Sports Net L.A.). Even with these changes, parts of *sports media entities* can still be subdivided into visibility jobs and production jobs.

Visibility Jobs

First, *visibility jobs* feature media players with which most people are most familiar: Joe Buck commenting on a football game or Jessica Mendoza opining on the Celtics' off-season moves. These players in the sports media empire are well known and often beloved because fans welcome them into their homes on a regular basis. When Vin Scully was retiring as the voice of the Los Angeles Dodgers in 2016, his 67 years as the voice of the team made millions of fans nostalgic, including one who wrote to *Sports Illustrated* to indicate that he was in diapers when Scully began announcing and that he may be in diapers again when Scully finished his career.

In television, multiple visibility roles exist that are now integral to what is consumed at home. The *anchor* often functions as a host. Anchors are typically highly scripted (via teleprompter) even if the words are primarily written themselves (with the help of editors). An anchor's job is often to focus on the significance and scope of sports games and issues;

Sportscaster Erin Andrews

in other words, anchors relay the "big picture." Yes, they may play a role Bob Costas labels as a "traffic cop" where the goal is to get people from Point A to Point B (say, from pregame announcers to an injury reporter), yet their primary function is to relay a sense of meaning to their audience (see Billings, 2008). What would a win or loss mean within the overall scheme of things? Why should we be interested in today's starting pitching matchup? Anchors frame all of the discussion that will ensue.

At live televised events, commentary still tends to occur within paired broadcasting combinations of a *play-by-play announcer* and a *color analyst.* The play-by-play announcer describes the athletic contest largely in terms of observable facts ("Patrick Kane with a Game 5 hat trick"), while the color analyst interprets the game within a larger context ("LeBron James doing something Michael Jordan never did in the NBA Finals, leading his team in nine statistical categories"). Several decades ago, a study found that 73% of all television commentary was play-by-play (Bryant, Comiskey, & Zillmann, 1977), and this percentage still holds true today, although the strict divisions of who provides which form of commentary are beginning to blur. Even though color commentary represents less than a quarter of all spoken words, color commentators continue to be of extremely high visibility because their dialogue can often be more interesting, memorable, and outside of the box of traditional thinking (consider Dick Vitale's college basketball coverage and his terminology such as a "dipsy-doo dunakaroo" and "diaper dandies").

Television also features another visibility player: the *sideline reporter.* These reporters have been found to be increasingly useful as audience appetite for more "inside" information escalates. More often than not, this role is filled by an attractive female—a topic that will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 6. Whether it is an interview with the parents of a player, an injury update, or a report on a coach's halftime rant, the sideline reporter offers a form of sports media with an even greater sense of liveness and immediacy.

Beyond television, several of these visibility jobs overlap, while others are functionally quite different. For instance, radio sportscasts usually still have play-by-play and color components, yet they are obviously done without video, resulting in even more play-by-play coverage. However, one visibility job that is starkly different from television is the *radio host.* The formats of shows differ, yet the host is rarely considered to be an anchor as much as a facilitator and/or resident expert. Many local shows are defined by a host taking a series of phone calls from fans and then having discussions and assessments of sports happenings. Others feature a group of people who are usually diverse in roles

and backgrounds (studied sports enthusiast, former professional athlete, etc.) who jointly engage in sports talk. A few others, such as FOX Sports 1's Colin Cowherd, perform more of an anchoring function by taking very few calls and instead providing analysis of "big picture" issues. Still, the large majority of radio shows (local and national) are defined by a host who can create a sense of community (such as Jim Rome and his listeners "the clones," who participate in this radio "jungle;" see Nylund, 2007).

Newspapers and magazines also feature two other forms of visibility players: *print reporters* and *feature columnists*. Comparisons can be drawn as reporters often fulfill play-by-play functions and columnists provide the "color" commentary. Still, the benefit of time and hindsight makes these roles quite different. Print reporters often provide event recaps focusing on the chronology of events ("Leading 10–7, the Broncos effectively ended the game with a late touchdown pass"). These reporters also can provide "beat" stories, which involve ongoing commentary on full seasons and events (as these reporters often travel with a team or set of athletes continually). Feature columnists, on the other hand, function as color commentators, yet they often have even more freedom as they can seek out a story that perhaps no one has even thought about.

Production Jobs

Because there is less "glamour" in *production jobs* than in visibility jobs, substantially fewer people (often 10 times fewer) seek out these positions in sports media. Nonetheless, these jobs are critical to any sports media entity. Consider the *photographer* who must capture a single shot worthy of encapsulating a 3-hour game or the *producer* who must determine how the storytelling will unfold between the visual, audio, and graphics components. These jobs are no less important but are instead so plentiful that describing each one takes a substantial amount of time. A typical football game requires a television crew of more than 50 people; only a handful of those are visibility players while the rest are directors, camerapersons, technical directors, and so forth that are jointly responsible for airing the contest. Radio certainly operates with fewer people, yet the ratio of visibility to production people still favors production.

One behind-the-scenes area that is critical in all forms of media is the *editorial department.* Many times people consider these people to be strictly focused on streamlining content, such as a newspaper editor who checks a story for accuracy, length, and appropriate emphases. Yet editorial departments also include writers, researchers, and other information gatherers who can make a visibility player's job much easier. For instance, when watching a profile of an Olympic athlete, an anchor or reporter may provide the voice-over, but often the actual writing and certainly production aspects are choices made by a person (or group of persons) in the editorial department.

There are also public relations departments that contribute to behind-the-scenes matters. Years ago, the *sports information director* was charged with almost all of these aspects; now, there tend to be separate *marketing, promotion,* and *information* departments. Many sports teams have *media relations specialists* who work to merge promotions (such as public appearances) with relevant information (such as media guides prepared by the sports information department) and marketing to yield a product that the media easily understands and can relay to the masses.

Cameraman at
football game

Hybrid Jobs

At this point, one may wonder why the Internet has been omitted from a section on sports media; this is because new media now often feature new roles and media outlets that are not nearly as established or defined. These are best termed *hybrid jobs* because a single person may contribute to the entire process in a singular fashion. For instance, it is now expected that a print journalist will also work in television and on the Internet. Even prominent sports bloggers often write, present, and produce their own content from their homes; these people are not media entities in any formal sense, yet they contribute to the overall sporting landscape. Other more mainstream forms of the Internet overlap with the roles discussed earlier as a feature columnist often has his or her story on the Internet as well, and sports television finds ways to stream a sportscast to essentially make a person's computer into a television. Thus, the principles of sport media hold true, yet the medium changes the way people consume the product in considerably different ways.

PLAYER #4: THE FAN

Motivations for Fandom

Of course, the final "player" of note within the community of sport arguably influences all of the others, as an avid *fan* often is motivated to play more sports as well as consume them, allowing sports organizations and media entities to exist and thrive. Raney (2006)

probes the psyche of the typical sports fan, noting motivations in the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral domains. These domains, along with much more detail surrounding the communicative nature of fandom, are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. However, an overview of the community of sport is not complete without at least a rudimentary articulation of the role millions of fans play.

First, Raney argues that fans are interested in following sports at all levels because of their inherent emotional appeals. These include the (a) desire to be entertained (often watching athletes playing at the highest level and performing physical feats that they cannot begin to do themselves); (b) "eustress" desires (a form of stress that is actually good for you by providing a sense of fulfilment and achievement); (c) bolstering of self-esteem (for instance, when a person's alma mater wins a national title, he or she may feel pride in selecting and attending that school); and (d) the need to escape from the daily grind of life (one can unwind at the end of a tiring day while consuming a contest that is not a matter of life and death). Collectively, these appeals are very powerful, as sport is used to manage moods (see Zillmann, 1988) in ways that alter the daily existence of millions of people.

Then, there are cognitive motivations for fandom, which Raney divides into the learning and the aesthetic. First, in terms of learning, people glean a great deal of information from following sports at all levels, whether it is about the families involved in a local softball game or the career earned run average of their team's star pitcher. Still, beyond this largely factual level of learning is a higher form of learning, a navigation of a social world. When one watches the Olympics, for instance, a viewer learns about geography (where is Slovenia located?), politics (will political unrest mar the Rio Summer

Fandom even in the rain

Games?), and cultural tastes (is table tennis a major sport in China?). Even beyond that, issues of identity discussed later in Chapters 6 through 9 are negotiated through fan consumption. Second, aesthetic needs are also fulfilled at a cognitive level. Being a fan often involves being transported to a different place and time. These places tend to be majestic (picture a skiing event in the Alps shown in high definition) and epic (consider more than 100,000 people watching a football game in the Rose Bowl). In sum, the fulfilment of cognitive stimulation facilitates many forms of fandom, from the avid to the sporadic fan.

A MATTER OF ETHICS
WE ARE PENN STATE?

In November of 2011, long time Penn State defensive coach Jerry Sandusky was accused of sexually abusing several young boys over the course of many years. The ensuing scandal led to the ouster of Penn State's president (among others), the near erasure of legendary head coach Joe Paterno's image on campus, and, eventually, the conviction of Sandusky on 45 counts of sexual abuse. The revelations that so many children could have been victimized raised numerous questions about the culture of the university's football program and, by extension, the values held by the State College community. For many, both at Penn State and around the country, the university is synonymous with its football program. And it is fair to say that success on the field has yielded positive benefits from the attention, esteem, and money directed toward Penn State. At what point, however, does a community become complicit in creating an illusion that enables the kind of abuse committed by Jerry Sandusky?

This question was addressed by journalist Michael Weinreb. Writing for Grantland.com, Weinreb recalls what it was like in "Growing Up Penn State." His childhood in State College was characterized by safe neighborhoods, good schools, and the common bond forged by the Nittany Lions football team. This bond was most represented by Paterno, of whom Weinreb writes, "He was as much our own conscience as he was a football coach, and we made that pact and imbued him with that sort of power because we believed he would wield it more responsibly than any of us ever could. Maybe that was naïve, but we came of age in a place known as Happy Valley and naïveté was part of the package, and now that word isn't in our dictionaries anymore" (2011, para. 11) Weinreb's lament certainly calls into question the amount of energy, passion, and faith that we invest in sport as a symbol of our communities. Although the specific nature of Sandusky's crimes are unique to Penn State, it is not difficult to imagine other communities across the United States that are similarly dependent on athletics. As you consider this case, do you think Penn State is unique? Why, or why not? How much community investment in a sports team or identity is too much?

Finally, there are behavioral motivations, of which Raney lists five: release, companionship, group affiliation, family, and economics. Many of these five action-oriented reasons are interrelated; for instance, people often find companionship with other like-minded souls when attending a game, but they also do this in family formats, witnessed by countless cases of full families tailgating and sharing tickets together for years on end. Similarly, there is an emotional release that arises from being a fan, and sometimes this is manifest economically in the form of sports bets and other ancillary meanings attached to the outcome of the athletic performance(s).

All in all, there are many reasons for fandom and, relatedly, the overemphasis of some of these same motivations provides proof of unhealthy fandom, another topic that will be explored more fully in Chapter 4.

Modes of Fan Consumption

Hugenberg, Haridakis, and Earnheardt (2008) claim that there are macro levels of sports fandom that include the enactments of identification, motivation, and fan-produced content. Billings (2010) expanded these notions to include four modes of fan consumption (which, admittedly, blend with each other and are not a fully exhaustive list).

The first mode is the *first-person supporter,* who is largely defined not by media consumption but the desire to witness an event firsthand. Season ticket holders for professional and college sporting events certainly fit this criterion but so do those who stop by a youth sporting event to watch a friend's son or daughter play. First-person supporters often consider themselves to be the "true fans" because they are there in the down times as well as the good. Moreover, they often invest significant funds in booster groups and other agencies in exchange for tickets and VIP treatment.

Source: © iStockphoto.com/FranckReporter

An enthusiastic soccer crowd

A direct contrast is found in the second way fans consume sport, the *home-dwelling devotee.* These people also may consume sports in heavy doses but tend to do so using various forms of media (television, radio, etc.) rather than actually attending the game. The motivations for not being a first-person supporter differ, ranging from the economic (lacking the funds to be a season-ticket holder) to the geographic (a Green Bay Packer fan living in the south may find traveling to the game to be quite difficult) to the health oriented (some older fans find the bustle involved in attending games to be overwhelming). Regardless, these people are frequently avid followers, often purchasing television sports packages and better technology to enhance the at-home experience.

Third, there are the *social sports addicts.* These people love sports but only so far as others help them love the games. The rapid rise in sports bars over the past two decades underscores the need for a place where social sports fans can congregate. For most of these people, watching their team win at home is a hollow experience, but watching the same game with friends (even friends they just met that day) in a social place is highly rewarding. Economics become a crucial factor for these people as well, as people often fit into this category when they have surrendered any notion that they could enjoy some of these sporting events live and in person. Often, they congregate where the resources offer them a relative deal financially, ranging from the sports bar offering games that cost hundreds of dollars in satellite packages to visiting a neighbor who happens to get the channel on which the game is being offered. Some people are social sports addicts because they enjoy it; others are because it is the most practical mode of being a modern sports fan.

Finally, Billings outlines a fourth consumption mode: *virtual world aficionados.* We now have fans without televisions, radios, or season tickets who nonetheless are highly involved not only in watching sporting events online but also in actively creating media themselves, whether this means the creation of one's own blog or commenting on various message boards. Some virtual-world aficionados are "lurkers" who prefer to consume and not actively participate, but many others seek to become part of the media themselves, and cyberspace provides considerable opportunity for that.

COMMUNITY OF SPORT IN THE 21ST CENTURY: CHANGING "PLAYER" ROLES

The majority of this chapter has segmented out the four major entities of the modern sporting community, yet one must also recognize that these roles are not completely distinct and are constantly changing. The different players are now intermingled more than ever. Most specifically, the role of the fan in the overarching process now alters the other three players through user-generated and 24-hour sports media. Consider the ownership of the Seattle professional soccer team, the Sounders. All season ticket holders (plus anyone who pays $125 annually) become members of the Alliance. This group makes ownership decisions collectively, including a vote every 4 years on whether to replace the team's general manager. Such decisions are normally left to ownership—the players within the sports organizations discussed previously.

Along with these blurred lines between fans and other aspects of sport comes the enhanced bonding that arises in the process. The concept of BIRGing refers to people who "bask in reflected glory" in team triumphs and good times. Fans in New England may have jointly experienced these feelings when major sports teams (Red Sox, Celtics, and Patriots) all won championships within a few years of each other in the 2000s. There is also the concept of CORFing (cutting off reflected failure), which pertains to the inverse feelings fans feel when their teams lose or underperform. The common refrain that "we" won or "they" lost is underscored by these two concepts. New England baseball fans likely felt this until 2004, when the Red Sox finally ended an 86-year drought in winning the World Series, as did Cleveland until the Cavaliers ended the city's 6-decade-long title drought during the 2016 NBA playoffs. While BIRGing and CORFing have been examined in sport for decades (see Wann & Branscombe, 1990), these fan feelings are exaggerated in recent years, largely because of greater fan investment. It is difficult for fans to put sports in proper perspective when they are increasingly spending thousands of dollars on watching their favorite teams and are constantly consuming messages about sports via sports radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet. Thus, fans become a part of media and organizations by impacting fan message boards and injecting opinions on radio call-in shows.

The result of all of this interaction between the various players in the community of sport is an enhanced form of identification. There is a feeling of kinship when one spots a person wearing his or her team's logo at the airport or when a community jointly celebrates "its" first championship in decades. Wann (2006) offers three antecedents for sports team identification—psychological, environmental, and team-related—but then notes that there are myriad forms of antecedents to the point that each person's experience of identification is different. Given the increasingly diverse community of sport, this is not at all surprising. Understanding the players within the community is important; yet equally important is the embrace of change and overlap. Members of sports media are undoubtedly still fans; people within sports organizations are more likely to be players of sport as they have dedicated their careers to advancing the importance of participation in athletics. Society is, indeed, a microcosm of sport and, increasingly, that culture is facilitated through media—including a new complex of sports media that eliminate many of the barriers that used to exist between the "players" outlined in this chapter.

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