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From a Lucky Few to the Reluctant Many: Interrogating the Politics of Sport for All

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Introduction

There is something slightly ironic about Sport for All as an aspiration or policy setting. Stripped of this irony it implies that everyone can or perhaps should benefit from participating in sport. This is sport as "motherhood", an idea about which no objection could be raised and which has been elevated to something approaching a human right. As a result, during the twentieth century the idea of women or cultural and sexual minorities, older or disabled people having limited access to sporting

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experiences came to be seen as pressing social problems in many parts of the world. In contrast, it is difficult to imagine a similar level of agitation about people's freedom to enjoy French cooking, daytime television, chamber music or crossword puzzles, as worthy as these activities might seem. Sport, it seems, exists in a recreational category all of its own.

On the other hand, Sport for All reminds us, albeit inadvertently, how discursively flexible sport is. For many of its advocates, sport is a kind of "universal acid" (Dennett 1995) with a wide range of social, cultural, economic, medical and political applications; a solution, as it were, for all problems. Of course, we acknowledge that this discursive flexibility—perhaps "promiscuity" captures it more accurately—has been observed by many scholars and commentators before us (e.g., Coakley 2015; Green 2006, 2007, 2012; Nicholson et al. 2011). The tendency of advocates to overstate the benefits of sport and physical activity more generally is well known and needs to be factored into any analysis of sport as an instrument of public policy. If anything, the social policy utility of sport deserves particularly close scrutiny precisely because of its enduring discursive resonance, a fact which finds expression in the way sport and sporting people continue to be used by advertisers and policy makers alike as symbols of health, success, desirability and moral worth. The irony of Sport for All, in other words, is that it helps us to see that no pastime—neither sport nor anything else—could ever truly be "for all".

The element that we propose to add to the existing critiques of sports' social policy utility is to consider it within a wider socio-cultural and historical context. Our argument in this chapter will be that this context is evolving and political in both familiar and novel ways and that one of the roles that academics can and should play is to make connections between policy agendas that might seem unrelated. By highlighting the contradictions and perversities that policy making sometimes generates, we also hope to offer readers food for thought. In particular, while most of the contributions in this book are necessarily concerned with specific research and policy-related problems and agendas, our goal in this chapter is to explore some of the ways these different agendas resonate or contradict each other. That sport and physical activity policy should provide rich material for commentary and critique is unsurprising, at least to us, precisely because of the discursive promiscuity we have just described. In a context where sport can mean almost anything to anybody, the potential for instructive juxtapositions and critical comparisons is considerable.

Before moving on, a brief clarification about the word "policy" is probably necessary here. We use "policy" in this chapter as a catch-all to talk about a range of phenomena such as official government programmes and statements, educational curricula, existing and proposed public health interventions, the pronouncements of experts and even media commentary. In other words, our treatment of "policy" is concerned with the wide variety of collective and premeditated actions that different stakeholders advocate for, whether or not they are currently being enacted. More broadly, our intention here is not to analyse or argue for or against any particular policy, but to consider aspects of the broader policy landscape and how it has changed over time. Our interest is in making connections between the ways various stakeholders talk about the utility of sport and the kinds of actions that are thereby implied or realised.

Sport Policy Through History

Since its nineteenth- and early twentieth-century codification, modern sport has consistently been framed within a narrative of social utility. A large historical literature demonstrates how the Victorian period in a number of Western countries was marked by debates about the risks and rewards of encouraging people, but particularly young people, to play sport (Bachin 2001; Holt 1990; Roessner 2009). The intensity and significance of these debates is perhaps best exemplified by the shifts in thinking about the effect of sport on ruling class young men's academic performance, personal conduct and moral rectitude. In the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, educational, political and religious leaders found it relatively easy to see vigorous sport as inculcating physical aggression, undermining the importance of the intellect and encouraging deceitful and over-competitive behaviour. Of course, sport's folk origins, especially in the form of team games, also gave it a vulgar and brutish reputation amongst those whose voices were most likely to be heard (Collins 2009). It was a short step from here to claiming that certain forms of sport were nothing less than a threat to society.

But as the Industrial Revolution continued to reconfigure work, living conditions and social relations, and produce new kinds of social problems, sport could be seen in a new light. The domestication and gentrifi-

cation of organised sport, crossed with new worries about the effect of city life and office work on the virility of ruling class men, produced the idea of sport as the antidote to, rather than the cause of, social breakdown (Crotty 1998; Kimmel 1990). As the nineteenth century progressed, ambivalence lost ground to the "cult of athleticism" and sport gradually cemented its place within dominant ideas about how to organise, educate and govern society.

Moving into the twentieth century, the rise of muscular Christianity, eugenics and fascism are all in their own way further examples of social movements that invested enormous symbolic value in the athletic male body (Cashman 2002; Gagen 2004). This is not to suggest that sport was the only or even the primary vehicle through which these movements imagined social order being shaped or maintained. At the same time, it is undeniably true that in each of these cases sports training and participation acquired a symbolic potency that translated into actual social policies, such as the creation of the various Fascist "youth movements" across the world (Mangan 2000).

The post WWII period continued to produce an array of new aspirations and, therefore, policy agendas for sport in different parts of the world. In parts of Eastern-Bloc Europe sport became an important tool of cold-war diplomacy and ideological warfare (Green and Oakley 2001). Likewise in the United States, for example, anxieties about the physical decline of American youth in comparison to Europe was the catalyst for the creation of the President's Council on Youth Fitness in 1956, an initiative which, at least rhetorically, linked sports participation with the defence of the nation (McElroy 2008; Wrynn 2011). More recently, the pursuit of success in international sporting competitions, such as the Olympics and football World Cup, appears increasingly to be seen as an important policy objective for "developing countries" anxious to be seen as mature members of the international community of nations. That is, sport continues to be a popular policy instrument in the prosecution of economic, political and cultural nationalisms.

There is no space here to discuss the efficacy, effectiveness or the merits of these evolving policy agendas or the way they are themselves reflections of existing socio-political conditions. What matters for now is to register the point that sports policies are always operating on multiple levels;

explicit and implicit, intentional and unintentional, benign and malign. As many scholars of policy in a range of fields argue, a policy is never just one thing (Green 2006, 2007, 2012; Stein 2004).

From the Few to the Many

One—albeit problematic—way of glossing the history of sports participation in the industrialised West since the nineteenth century is via a narrative of gradual democratisation. By and large, codified competitive sports were created *for* rich white males and constructed as either inappropriate or dangerous for everyone else. Over time, other groups have claimed sport as a legitimate site for recreation, personal development and social advancement. To provide just one example, Kirk (1998, 2001) has documented the importation of competitive sports from elite private schools to the curriculum of government schools in England and Australia during the first half of the twentieth century. In essence, educational progressives of this period argued that it was unfair that only the children of the rich were able to benefit from the edifying effect of running, hitting, kicking, catching and throwing.

The material and rhetorical democratisation of sport has taken many forms, a striking example of which is the emergence of Sport for All, an idea born in Europe in the late 1960s (Van Tuyckom and Scheerder 2008). Since then, Sport for All has become both a slogan used by those in favour of spreading sports participation as widely as possible and an official policy setting that elevates sport to the level of a human right (e.g., the International Olympic Committee 2013). It is worth dwelling for a moment on this historical transformation. While it appears that all human societies have engaged in physical play, this seems a very long way from the codified, rule-bound and generally competitive thing that sport became in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and which was exported to the world via events such as the Olympic Games and the football World Cup. In short, the modern idea that sports participation is something that no human should be denied would, until a few decades ago, have seemed radical and probably wrong-headed to many people.

We live now at an intriguing point in this historical trajectory. On the one hand, sport has reached an unprecedented position of pre-eminence across the world as a form of social policy. A range of scholars have described the sheer breadth of social problems that sport has or is currently being used to solve, from juvenile delinquency and ethnic disharmony to obesity-, lifestyle- and age-related diseases and the social integration of people with disabilities (Bailey et al. 2009; Fusco 2012; Gard and Dionigi 2016; Nicholson et al. 2011). At the same time, such policies and the agendas underlying them are conflicting, paradoxical and perverse. To demonstrate these contradictions we use trends in contemporary sport policy in Australia as a framework for discussion. In particular, we draw on a report produced for the Australian Government's Australian Sports Commission (ASC) that 'identifies six megatrends likely to shape the Australian sports sector over the next 30 years' (Hajkowicz et al. 2013: 1). Below we focus on the trends related to: 'A perfect fit' and 'From extreme to mainstream' (Hajkowicz et al. 2013: 1), by discussing the decrease in popularity of traditional club sport amongst some youth and the rise in lifestyle and/or fitness sport participation; 'Everybody's game' and 'More than sport' (Hajkowicz et al. 2013: 2), through highlighting the radical medicalisation of sport, the increase in sport promotion to toddlers, older people and gay and lesbian communities, the increase in school sport funding and physical literacy education to fight obesity, and a case for increased sport funding to reduce health-care costs, and; 'New wealth, new talent' and 'Tracksuits to business suits' (Hajkowicz et al. 2013: 2), with examples of the prospect of selling our sport expertise in Asia, the commercialisation of community sport and the rising cost of sports participation and spectatorship. We also use the concept of neoliberalism as one way of understanding the complex nature of sport policy in our culture.

Neoliberalism is a nebulous, multi-faceted and contested term, but for the purposes of this chapter we draw on key theorists and philosophers such as David Harvey, Jamie Peck and Michael Sandel to connect neoliberalism (as a cultural and economic concept) with contemporary sport and physical activity participation and promotion across the lifespan. Harvey claimed:

> Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (2005: 2)

Therefore, in terms of Sport for All, the role of policy becomes one of creating the market conditions for private interests to provide for the health and lifestyle needs of people across the lifespan. In an edited text on sport and neoliberalism, Green (2012: 48) explained that '… the embrace of policies for sport and physical activity by government to the degree evident over the past decade or so is unprecedented', while Fusco (2012: 145) claimed:

> Sport and physical activity have always been depicted as solutions to the "problem" of youth and urban spaces (Fusco 2007; Gagen 2000). So it is not surprising that in North America and many other industrialized countries, health discourses of childhood inactivity and obesity, which have woven their way into peoples' consciousnesses (McDermott 2007), point to the production of sports and physical activity spaces for youth as the antidote (Active Healthy Kids Canada 2011; Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute 2011).

While sport continues to be seen as "the medicine for everyone", concerns have been raised in policy and research about children's increased use of "screens" and whether or not sports participation alone is "enough" to positively affect one's overall health or "tackle childhood obesity" (see Active Healthy Kids Australia 2014; Australian Sports Commission 2015; Hastie and Trost 2002; Trost 2006). As a consequence, the promotion of lifetime physical activities to children such as running or walking with headphones and kids' cross-fit classes at the local gym, has emerged alongside the promotion of sport (Hajkowicz et al. 2013). Part of this rhetoric includes sedentary behaviour and screen time recommendations for infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers, primary/elementary school children and teenagers (e.g., in Australia it is recommended that children aged 0–5 years should not be inactive for more than 1 hour at a time, except when sleeping, and children aged 0–2 years should not undertake any screen time activities; Department of Health 2014).

Evidently, a key part of this neoliberal shift in policy across Western countries is the notion of self-responsibility for health, or the economisation and moralisation of health, from childhood to old age to reduce the cost burden of health care on the state (Aberdeen and Bye 2013; Asquith 2009; Gard et al. 2017; Harrington and Fullagar 2013; Mendes 2013; Steinbrook 2006). In addition, in his critique of neoliberalism, Peck explained that:

> … in effect, neoliberalism seems often to be used as a sort of stand-in term for the political economic zeitgeist, as a no-more-than approximate proxy for a specific analysis of mechanisms or relations of social power, domination, exploitation, or alienation. The forms and registers of the phenomenon can seem almost without limit. (2010: 14)

In other words, neoliberalism is simultaneously a concept, discourse and mode of practice that pervades all aspects of society, and in what follows we provide a greater understanding of the synergy between the sport and physical activity policy discourse, sports participation among various groups of people at different life stages and the related practices of various stakeholders of sport and physical activity.

An Endlessly Flexible Discursive Resource: Sport in Australian Policy

New sport-related policies and policy directions, such as the six megatrends outlined earlier (Hajkowicz et al. 2013), are being developed because governments and other stakeholders increasingly see the sports industry as a driver of economic growth, as well as a source of foreign investment and export income. For example, economic dimensions of government sport policy directions in Australia include the potential to capitalise on the increasing population and economic growth in Asia by offering onshore and off-shore sport-related services, training, coaches, sports equipment manufacturing and sports technology (see Hajkowicz et al. 2013). Also in 2013, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) conducted the *Market segmentation for sport participation—adults* (aged 14–65 years) with market analysts, GfK Blue Moon (see www.gfk.com/

au/Solutions/) to identify ten contemporary sport consumer segments to increase sporting club membership in Australia. It recommends different types of products, messages and tones to appeal to each segment of the identified market. This report points to the decline in club sport participation in Australia, which has led some to argue that we should put more policy emphasis on the growing interest among youth in less-structured, non-mainstream lifestyle leisure pursuits (e.g., Hajkowicz et al. 2013). Some of these alternative, lifestyle and extreme sports include downhill longboard skateboarding, volcano surfing, train surfing and cliff jumping (Enright and Gard 2016; Gilchrist and Wheaton 2013; Hesselink 2008), which have attracted media attention in relation to risky or criminal youth behaviour (e.g., a group of train surfing youths made the news in Melbourne in 2016). Also, sports that many of us may be unaware of have emerged in recent years, such as the hide and seek world championships in Italy. At the time of writing this chapter, Australian athletes are being sought to form our inaugural representative team at this international sporting event which boasts an eight-year history (Reid 2017). What we are witnessing under neoliberalism is a simultaneous celebration and fear of the increasing diversity in the meaning and types of sports available to people across the lifespan.

Another document that reflects cultural anxiety surrounding the erosion of traditional sport, a belief in the inherent goodness of sport and the use of increased sports participation to "save on health care costs" is the Confederation of Australian Sport's (CAS 2014) submission to Government on *Maximising the potential of Australian Sport*. CAS calculates the yearly economic contribution of Australian sport to be over $22 billion. This report claimed that:

> At $22 billion per year Sport's economic contribution is 17 times greater than the combined total of national and state government funding of $1.3 billion. CAS calculates that every Australian sport participant contributes almost $1,600 to the economy each year at $8 per sporting hour.
>
> Australia's sport participation contributes to the nation through: reduction in health costs; increases in workplace productivity; the building of social capital through volunteering; the elevation of personal wellbeing; and by paying taxation on sport services and products. (p. 4)

CAS believes that 'If the Australian Government is genuine in its intent to make Australia the healthiest nation by 2020, as stated in the *National Preventative Health Strategy—the roadmap for action* (Australian Preventative Heath Taskforce 2009)' they should increase their national and state/territory funding for sport and physical activity from $1.3 billion to $5.5 billion a year to maximise sport's potential (p. 4). The case being made by CAS becomes even more striking when one considers that a UK-based study found 'there is no evidence that sport is effective as a public health intervention to improve physical health' (Weed 2016: 559, see also Bailey et al. 2009; Green 2014). Arguably, CAS seem to be advocating for the shifting of government resources from programmes that are collectively based, such as education and welfare, to those that promote individual responsibility, such as sport and physical activity participation through private providers and increasingly corporatised sports organisations. Block and Sommers (2014: 20) would see this as an example of "reregulation" where the state is not downsized but rather re-tooled to serve the interests of private capital rather than the public good:

> By the term reregulation … we aim to push back against the belief that the success of neoliberal ideology since the mid-1970s has been matched by markets being increasingly freed from regulations and government management. On the contrary, regulations did not go away; they simply changed. Those that had previously been written to protect employees or consumers were systematically rewritten to support business interests and reduce previous restrictions on business practices.

Proponents of neoliberal policies promote self-responsibility and individualism in an effort to lower government health expenditure. The reduction of spending in areas such as health care means that more money can be siphoned off into private capital.

The increased commodification of mass sport participation among previously marginalised groups, such as the old and gay and lesbian communities, and the growth in businesses "selling" sports to all age groups, including the very young, are further examples of how neoliberalism has found its way into sport. For instance, in Chap. 1, we drew attention to just one of the many franchises that creates sporting opportunities for children as young as 16 months old (sportball.ca) under the guise of

active and healthy lifestyles. Similar programmes exist in Australia, such as Fun 4 Sports, which claims to be the:

Best sports program for children
Locally owned and a true pathway to team play!
Fun 4 Sports is proud of its quality program delivery for children aged 18 months to 7 years. We offer quality structured FUN weekly sessions to improve your child's confidence, team play and coordination. We also deliver fundamental healthy messages and the importance of practicing (which we provide the motivation to do!). (http://fun4sports.com.au/)

Also, Sporty Kids Australia proclaims to be "all about fun!" and promotes outdoor play. Unlike the above programme, it does not include parents in the 2–6 years sessions:

Sporty Kids has great programs for Kids aged 2.5 to 6 years
At Sporty Kids we have a variety of programs and locations so you are sure to find something that suits your busy schedule.
Our programs are aimed to teach your preschooler sporting skills, teamwork, and socialisation all while making sport fun in an awesome outdoor environment.
As we do not require a parent to participate, you get to become their biggest supporter, watching them have fun and develop from the sideline, cheering them on. (http://www.sportykids.net.au/)

While the above programmes may provide children and parents with many benefits, such programmes also point to the way organised, adult-led, corporate sporting structures attempt to shape, regulate and dictate early childhood play and parenting behaviours under the banner of healthy and active lifestyles. (For more on this topic see Fraser-Thomas and Safai, this volume).

In other contexts, such as sports participation amongst previously marginalised groups, academics have explained how, despite being grounded in participatory and inclusive discourses, the Gay Games has become financially exclusive and most participants are gay, white, middle-class men

(Davidson 2013; Litchfield and Osborne, this volume; Symons 2010). Dionigi and Litchfield (this volume) draw attention to the growing marketisation of mega multi-sport events for middle-aged and older people, such as the World Masters Games and the Pan Pacific Masters Games. They show how the traditionally local, club-based Masters sport movement has become a 'middle-class playground' built on the needs and desires of the already-active and privileged individual (many of whom wish to relive their youth through sports participation at increasingly commercialised major events). At the same time, such events claim to promote Active Ageing for all and are grounded in Healthy Lifestyle ideals, the latter of which are not reflected in the actions of Masters sport participants who smoke in between games, drink alcohol immediately after their daytime game and consume large amounts of alcohol over the course of several social events during the games (see Dionigi and Litchfield, this volume). We are not saying that such practices are any less meaningful than any other social practice, it is the juxtaposition of such practices at a sporting event that was established and justified on Sport for All and Healthy Lifestyles discourses that we wish to expose.

Among other things, the above examples show the increased appeal of sport among diverse groups, as well as how sport has become radically medicalised as a policy instrument to promote self-responsibility for health across the lifespan and increasingly corporatised. The problem is that not all of us have the resources, ability, knowledge and/or opportunity to take responsibility of our health through sport or physical activity, particularly the poor, old and uneducated. So, programmes and policies, such as those described above, that are embedded in the neoliberal argument for personal responsibility for health and lifestyle choices, marginalise and stigmatise those who cannot or do not want to be physically active. With respect to older people and sport, Dionigi (2016, 2017a, 2017b) explains how in the context of an overbearing healthy and active ageing agenda such policy action could heighten individual and cultural fear or denial of the biological ageing process by making ill-health and immobility in later life more difficult to accept than it otherwise would have been without lifelong sports promotion and participation. Masters athletes, a population who tend to identify themselves through the effective use and functioning of a sporting body, and a group who are answering the call to remain active across the lifespan, not only express fear of age-related diseases and disabilities, but typically argue that some kind of

physical activity is important for everyone as they age. Positioning sport and physical activity as a means to age well and as a 'cure' to an ageing body might convince some people that they can avoid old age by remaining active, which ultimately represents a denial of the realities of physiological ageing and could be maladaptive in old age (Biggs 1997, 2014; Dionigi 2010a, b; Dionigi et al. 2013; Gilleard and Higgs 2013). More broadly, Gard et al. (2017) discuss how the expectation of sport and physical activity participation for all across the lifespan can widen the social gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' and potentially lead to cuts in welfare support for the aged.

Neoliberal policies which have dominated over the past 30–40 years have resulted in increased income and wealth inequality, as described by Thomas Piketty (2014) in his seminal work entitled *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Rising income and wealth inequality has led to an increasingly fragmented populace, where the haves no longer mingle with the have nots (Sandel 2009) and where (as shown in this chapter and others in this volume) some can afford to participate in organised sport and others cannot. One example from youth sport is cricket in Australia, which has been commodified and is increasingly only accessible to young people with the means to pay registration fees and purchase equipment, while this same sport disappears from state school sports programmes. While there may have always been a separation of the wealthy and their sports from the commoners, such as the wealthy playing polo or fox hunting while the poor played football or soccer, now every sport is commodified and sold, from registration to t-shirts and souvenirs. This trend is not only seen in youth sport, but also in the Masters movement, the Gay Games and the Paralympics with those who can afford to participate and those who cannot being separated, distanced and increasingly alienated from each other.

Neoliberalism produces new class divisions that widen the gap between those that have the means, ability and desire to play sport and those who do not. Peck (2010: 212) describes an analogous occurrence in the rise of a Creative Class:

> The problem is that the Creative Class, having become a uniquely restless factor of production, motivated by extrinsic rewards and the 'pursuit of happiness,' is apparently sorting itself into like-minded enclaves, with little concern for the wider social consequences, maybe little concern for wider society.

To Peck, those in the Creative Class argue that anyone can rise to their level, ignoring the barriers to social mobility caused by rising income inequality and the privileges that got them there. The danger with such divisions in the case of Sport for All is that the class of "active people" assume that everyone can be like them if they merely "get off the couch" or stop being "lazy", as Gard et al. (2017) found among older Masters athletes. This way of thinking is problematic, not only in economic terms, but in a civic sense—it is divisive and corrosive to commonality and class mixing (Sandel 2012).

Inequality also has an effect on the spectating of sport. The wealthy are increasingly set apart from the general population at sporting events, with roped-off sections and corporate boxes, which has been described by Sandel (2012) as the 'Skyboxification of American life' or the marketisation of everything. This separation in sport participation and spectatorship is evident, albeit to a lesser degree, in Australia and it contributes to what Sandel (2009) calls the hollowing out of the public sphere. Here Sandel means that because the rich and poor are living, working, schooling, shopping and playing in different spaces, public services worsen because the affluent no longer use such services, including public transport, playgrounds, parks, community sport and recreation centres, so the rich become less prepared to support them with taxes. With 'skyboxification' comes a vicious spiral in which public services fall into neglect and further disuse, community solidarity declines and calls are made to remove more funds from the public realm (Sandel 2009, 2012).

At the same time, we have seen an increase in public funding for school sport in Australia (see Australian Sports Commission (ASC) 2010). For example, since 2015 the Australian Government has committed 160 million dollars 'to help schools to increase children's participation in sport, and to connect children with community sport' under the *Sporting Schools* programme which 'is part of the Federal Government's commitment to tackle increasing levels of obesity, particularly among children' (see www.sportingschools.gov.au/news/Playing-the-Game). This inititative is grounded in the commonly accepted rationale that 'Australians are living increasingly sedentary lives' (see https://soundcloud.com/australian-sports-commission-ais/sporting-schools-a-success-story). Sport in schools is perceived as another easy solution to a complex problem (obesity), with minimal expenditure needed from the state. The *Sporting Schools* programme is run in over 70% of Australian primary schools and in 2016 an ASC evaluation claimed it to

be 'well on track', despite no discussion on why or which 20–30% of schools are not involved (see https://soundcloud.com/australian-sports-commission-ais/sporting-schools-a-success-story). In addition, in 2017 the NSW (state) Government in Australia introduced an annual $100 active kids rebate for school-aged children involved in organised sport—another example of pandering to the already active, privledged individual—which will make no difference to the lives of the children/families receiving it nor population activity rates or health outcomes. Alongside this funding is a de-emphasis of sport in schools in place of an increased emphasis on physical literacy and the promotion of lifelong physical activity participation (Active Healthy Kids Australia 2014, 2016). Older Australians are also encouraged to maintain sport- and physical-activity participation, as evident in reports to government bodies and government recommendations (Brown et al. 2005; Van Uffelen et al. 2015).

Of course, initiatives which seek to promote sport- and physical-activity participation to improve public health outcomes among people who do not undertake sport, particularly as a person ages, are problematic due to the randomness of many age-related diseases, the inevitability of the physiological ageing process and the socio-cultural determinants of health outcomes. If funds that privilege sport are used at the expense of investing in other non-sport programmes, such as public housing, aged care services, education and welfare, then the outcome can be more harmful than beneficial to population health as the responsibility for whole-of-life maintenance shifts from the state to the individual. Our point is that sports participation is just another way (among thousands of other ways) for people to enrich their lives and find meaning or joy in play and movement. There is no need for sport to be in policy—it should not be positioned as a health imperative for all, but as a leisure option for people to experience, just like French cooking and crossword puzzles.

The Future of Sport?

It is hardly an insight to note that sport has historically been recruited to solve a wide range of social policy problems. The emergence of neoliberalism in sport policy and practice has turned sport into an enterprise which involves selling "Western" expertise overseas, profiting from vari-

ous age groups and segments of the population, or finding market solutions (with moral "healthy lifestyle" underpinnings) to save money on health-care expenditure through increased sport and physical activity participation across the lifespan. These strategies and so-called solutions to the ageing of populations and increased rates of lifestyle diseases, obesity and/or social alienation, which are communicated through policy, become an accepted way of thinking about the usefulness and purpose of sport in our lives. As Harvey explained:

> Neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has persuasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world. (2005: 3)

Programmes, documents, discourses and ideas like those discussed in this chapter not only shape the future of sport policy, but indicate that in some cases, sport advocates and sportspeople believe that promoting sport and physical activity is just plain common-sense and sports participation is inherently beneficial for all—a situation in which 'sport stakeholders either do not appreciate or do not accept, that the effectiveness of sport as a public health intervention is not proven' (Weed 2016: 561, see also Coakley 2015; Coalter 2013; Green 2006, 2007, 2012, 2014; Green and Houlihan 2006; Sam 2009).

For instance, in May 2017 the Australian Minister for Sport (who, tellingly, is also the Minister for Health) announced the Australian Government's development of a National Sports Plan - 'a long-term strategy for the whole of sport [that] will examine four key pillars of participation, performance, prevention through physical activity, and integrity,' (see http://www.ausport.gov.au/news/asc_news/story_659356_national_sports_plan). The Minister claimed that:

> The Commonwealth makes a significant contribution to Australian sport and the Plan will help to inform clear policy objectives across the entire sector.
>
> Australians love sport. It is one of the defining characteristics of our culture and it is in our DNA.

> We come together to play sport at local ovals, fields, courts, parks and beaches. We jump out of bed on a Saturday morning for junior sport and flock to the footy, netball and countless other sports to support our sporting champions. (http://www.ausport.gov.au/news/asc_news/story_659356_national_sports_plan)

While this rhetoric is not new nor specific to Australia, the assumption being made - that all Australians are genetically and culturally engineered to love, play, organise or watch sport - is absurd, to say the least. Yet, it is an assumption that is shaping our sport policy into the future. Therefore, understanding the shifting discursive resources recruited to create and frame social problems and sport's role in solving them remains an important task for scholars.

Polices are examples of culture in action—in this case, a culture that values sport and fears ageing. We have described some of the ways in which, far from being just one thing, sport's discursive flexibility continues to be expressed through its recruitment in a dizzying array of policy projections and agendas. Sport's mutation over time has allowed it to be many things to many people and public health 'crises' provide fertile ground for hyperbole and self-interested reasoning. As such, the Sport for All concept is reflective of the political and cultural context of its time. Under neoliberal capitalism, which is itself a contradictory and contested ideology, sport, and in particular the Sport for All mantra, is both a site of resistance and a site of conformity, an attempt to address growing health concerns while simultaneously creating new social issues, as well as a creator of new communities and a contributor to the erosion of the public sphere. Therefore, as academics and future or current sport and physical activity service providers, policy makers and practitioners, we must ask ourselves—are we valuing and enabling all forms of leisure and lifestyle across the lifespan through our (over)emphasis on Sport for All? How will the way we promote, shape and experience sport affect the way we age and live our lives? After all, what appears to be the most important difference between the past and present sport policies, and therefore the thing most worthy of explanation, is their increasing discursive ambition to re-shape the lives of all citizens, regardless of age or social circumstance.

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