

## Editorial

Decades seem to be quite meaningful units of time. They have been regularly used to characterise periods of time over the last century. I recall as a young man living for a brief period in London during the swinging sixties. It was an exciting time. British rock groups dominated the music scene and Carnaby Street was the centre of youth fashion. The new generation was pushing against the previously little questioned boundaries of the staid and restrained fifties – a decade built more cautiously and patiently as the world, families and individuals recovered from the losses and ravages of a devastating war.

In a reminder that such things are often cyclical, our parents at that time looked back nostalgically to the roaring twenties. The 1920s was a decade similarly characterised by upbeat music, raised hemlines and the desire for joy and fun. Of course, the 1930s followed on all too quickly – a decade to be remembered for the great depression and the world war that raged as it came to a close. So it was with the 1970s following the liberating sixties. This was a period according to *Wikipedia*

On a global scale, it was characterized by frequent coups, domestic conflicts and civil wars, and various political upheaval and armed conflicts which arose from or were related to decolonization, and the global struggle between the West, the Warsaw Pact, and the Non-Aligned Movement. Many regions had periods of high-intensity conflict, notably Southeast Asia, the Mideast, and Africa.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1970s>

On a more individual scale it was characterised in the US as the ‘me decade’, reflecting increasing interest in individualism, with fads and crazes and the continuing breaking down of the more communitarian values that had featured strongly in previous decades.

Why this sudden interest in time and change you may ask? Well, it is admittedly somewhat both egocentric and indulgent. It arises from reflection around the fact that this will be my last edition of *International Sports Studies* as your editor. For myself, associate editor Martin Holzweg and our team of hard-working reviewers, this edition represents exactly ten years of working together. For myself it is time to step aside although I hope that Martin and the bulk of the review team will be able to continue with our shared mission and move on forward to even better things.

Retirement, as admittedly with any major job/life change, presents as a significant transition in life. I suggest that we all face them at several key points along the way. They will hopefully be a stimulus for new personal growth, but they also should provide opportunities for reflection and analysis that provide guidance for that new growth. In my own case, that reflection has included the opportunity to return to the land of my birth and upbringing. I write this editorial at a temporary and borrowed desk in Wales, in the small town in which I grew up. Over the last few weeks, I have revisited familiar sites of my youth and childhood and met up again with old friends with whom I played, studied and shared many of life’s initiations. On such occasions many decades have flown away and rekindled themselves afresh in my mind. Examples are too many to

enumerate here, but they have a freshness which matches the daily experience of my life in Brisbane 16,674 kilometres away on the other side of our planet. They have made me realise again, that we are each of us a collection of the unique personal experiences that have made us what we are. I should perhaps add here that the Welsh are notoriously sentimental and even have a special word- ‘hiraeth’ – which conveys the intense and continuing longing for home experienced by those who travel from their native land.

Of course, special times like retirement and significant birthdays are the occasions when we all tend to look backwards and evaluate. It is important though to also look forward at such times as we grapple to comprehend the time-based continuum that is our life. It is after all, the basis of perspective to be able to see events in their context. So how has our most recent decade the ‘twenty-tens’ been characterised? Not it seems entirely positively – if we scour the web pages for guidance. At least one US commentator has labelled it “an era of venomous division,” (Bacevich, 2019) characterised by “massive racial, economic and political divisions”. Others have taken a more positive view. While acknowledging the discord, they have chosen to interpret it as a catalyst for much needed reform. It is here where the importance of perspective can be seen. We cannot judge the relative value of any event without an understanding of what the events that have preceded it were like. Comparing current day statistics with their predecessors some have chosen to mount an argument that 2010-2020 has in fact been the best decade in human history (Mount Desert Islander, 2021). Some of the calculations that they marshal in support of this argument include:

- 2019 was the year children were least likely to die.
- Adults were least illiterate.
- People were least likely to suffer excruciating disfiguring diseases.
- As recently as 1950, 27 percent of children died by age 15. Now it has dropped to 4 percent.
- In 1981, 42 percent of the planet’s population lived in extreme poverty, less than \$2 per day. Now, it’s less than 10 percent.
- Every day for a decade, 170,000 moved out of extreme poverty, and 245,000/day live >\$10/day.
- We are living through the greatest improvement in human living standards in history.
- Famine virtually went extinct, with malaria, polio, and heart disease all in decline.

I must confess I am unable to verify these claims personally. We have become very familiar today with the concept of ‘fake news’. In other words, the cynical use of propaganda and untruths to support particular points of view and delegitimise others. Yet that does not negate the point. All of these claims have been made by referring back to evidence of these facts from previous years. Herein lies one of the major problems we have faced in today’s use of the power of the social media, namely in seeking to cancel views of which some ‘opinion leaders’ may disapprove. This is particularly harmful in attempts to rewrite history and remove symbols and works of art that do not match some ideals of what the mob feels should be. It is harmful because by destroying history we lose the means of being able to evaluate the real worth of current practices. Basically, without a perspective, without the ability to see and interpret events in their context, meaningful judgement becomes impossible. Personally, I have found this particularly important when trying to understand humans and explain their behaviour.

It has been my fortune to meet a range of people from a variety of backgrounds and I doubt that I am unique in that. The more I meet, the more I am amazed by the capacity of humankind to make use of and adapt to the range of environments and experiences that they encounter. The fact that each individual is unique given that there are eight billion versions of us today, is really quite remarkable. It is impossible to reduce us to the product of our genes alone. Rather we can only be understood in the unique interaction there has been between our genetics and our individual environments. Certainly we can never nor ever will be able to be defined by the partial identities or the artificial categories into which purely data driven analyses seek to place us. A process used far too often to drive current decision making and judgements.

To move on from the human experience of time to a consideration of the evolution of our discipline over the last decade. Culturally this decade has been dominated by the impact of technology and the social media. Yet there has been little that stands out as being truly original in this decade. Rather it has been a period when existing trends have continued to develop, perhaps further accelerated by the use of new technology. For example

Art trends that began in earlier decades continued into the 2010s, such as pop art, altermodern, cynical realism, the Kitsch movement, post-contemporary, metamodernism, pseudorealism, remodernism, renewable energy sculpture, street art, Stuckism, Superflat, Superstroke, urban art, video game art and virtual art.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010s\\_in\\_culture#Art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010s_in_culture#Art)

This just adds to the notion of a need to know what has gone before in order to make a judgement of the unique characteristics of this decade. Comparative studies – once popular in the 1960s and 1970s has continued to be listless in their uptake and development in both the ‘parent’ education area and within sport and physical education. The decision to rebrand our focus as International Sports Studies has well and truly been validated over this period. Sport science has continued to expand, particularly in the quantitative and performance-based domains. Sport management has been another major growth area. Physical education and sport pedagogy has largely remained aloof from sport science and sport management and nestled within education dominated frameworks. Sport studies has been perhaps the most lacklustre in terms of its development tending to stay within limited sociological and historical paradigms or, alternatively, veering towards sport management methodologies which have benefitted from a notion of increased relevance. This kind of distribution has been reflected not just in the publication domain, but also in the availability and popularity of university programmes worldwide. Our policy is thus currently reflected as follows

*Submissions are invited from any of the disciplines used in developing understanding and providing explanations of sport and physical education phenomena and commonly associated with sports studies, sport science, sport pedagogy and sport management.*

It is a policy that has been increasingly well supported by the authors seeking to publish with us. Thus, we have been able to publish research produced in a range of countries worldwide, which has produced and shared knowledge about the practice of sport and physical education from and about these countries in the English language.

We believe that this focus on international contributors and their practice together with a nonparadigmatic approach to the methodologies and disciplines involved, has enabled us to remain relevant to a broad range of professionals and scholars. The field of sport in particular is fast changing at this time. We also believe that physical education to be relevant, needs to maintain a vibrant pedagogy that maintains and develops its links with sport as well as places itself within a global setting and framework.

The current volume reflects the outcomes of this philosophy. Our first paper is a multinational collaboration focusing on football development in Brazil. The development of sporting talent is a global practice. Brazil remains one of the world's most well recognised sources of football talent. Uehara, Davids, Pepping, Gray & Button's contribution outlines how the football academy concept is being implemented in that country and how it interacts with more traditional sources of support for young sportspeople such as the family. In particular they remind us of the importance of social, emotional, psychological, and educational support in the development of young athletes in what can too often be a ruthless and highly competitive environment for these young people. Our second paper continues the theme of athlete development and support. In this case the paper of Mthombeni, Coopoo & Noorbhaib enquires into the support currently available in a range of Olympic level sports for athletes in South Africa. The authors show particular interest in identifying how that support filters through to those athletes who come from historically disadvantaged areas.

Our only physical education paper is from Germany. Wagner, Rayling, Geisler and Jekauc review studies that shed light on the role of emotions in disruptive behaviour encountered in physical education classes. They point out how such behaviour involves the participation of both teachers and pupils. They present a conceptual model which shows how the most commonly reported emotion of anger can be traced to a number of causes based in the conflicting expectations and evaluations of those involved.

A number of researchers have shown an interest in observing the impact of the Covid pandemic on teaching and learning and the role that physical education and sport participation might have in this unique challenge that has faced both students and teachers over the last two years, Cakir's study involves students in a Turkish university. Arising from a concern over the impact of the restrictions in normal social interactions experienced during the pandemic, he looked in particular at the happiness and loneliness experienced at that time and whether this was experienced differently by those who were either licensed athletes or were even just passively involved in sport -an under researched area. His findings were that those who were involved in sport both actively and passively experienced both lower levels of loneliness and higher levels of happiness in this challenging time.

Football remains the world's most popular sport and it continues to attract considerable attention within the worldwide academic sporting literature. Aycaan & Onağ's study looks at the ongoing reaction to the introduction of technology in the shape of the video assistant referee in Turkish football. They canvassed the views of key stakeholders in the game and found support for the positive impact of the technology on referee behaviour. The belief was that there has been a benefit of increased fairness in referee decisions as a result of a reduction in errors made and increased objectivity of decision making. However, some additional unexpected effects on the match

performance were raised. These included losses in playing time and the ‘naturalness’ of the game which had led to spectator feelings of becoming distanced from the match, resulting in a decrease in excitement, and loss of motivation. General conclusions were, however, that the benefits of the technology made it worth persevering with and continuing to seek improvement in its use.

Our final paper addresses another growing domain in the sport and health industry – that of the commercial fitness centres. Soleimani, Abdolmaleki, Afkar & Bahramzadeh have authored an Iranian study which explores the importance of peripheral service quality on the ongoing willingness of customers to continue within their chosen fitness centres. In particular, they examined the significance of a centre’s brand in influencing their clients’ decision making, specifically through the dimensions of personality, trust and equity. They conclude with some important recommendations for facility managers in their task of attracting new customers and ensuring the loyalty of existing customers such that they will continue to retain their memberships.

So, it only remains for me to commend the work of our various contributors to you, to thank our loyal readers and our publisher for their support over the last decade and to wish the continuing and incoming editorial and reviewing team every success in meeting the challenge of taking this long-respected journal the next step forward into the future. It is a mission which is important in a contemporary academic and publishing world which clearly needs quality leadership in continuing to shape the field of international sports studies

*John Saunders*  
*Brisbane, November 2022*

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