Introduction

The contemporary landscape of sport advertising

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[Advertising] is a commercial tool, a social language, a genre of spectator/reader experience, a technique of persuasion; in fact, it is almost a world in its own right, with its own languages, customs and history, and one that sets the tone and pace for large parts of our lives.

(Davidson, 1992: 3)

From Raymond Williams (1961) to Jean Baudrillard (1975; 1981; 1983), advertising has been conceptualized, defined and vilified by cultural critics from a range of social and political perspectives. As Leiss and colleagues (1990: 17) observe: ‘It is difficult to think of another contemporary social institution that has come under such sustained attack from so many different directions.’ A cursory view of the myriad ways in which advertising has been characterized highlights its shifting, enduring and inextricable position within contemporary existence (cf. Brierley, 1998; Cook, 1992; Ewen, 1976; Goldman, 1992; Jhally, 1990; Twitchell, 1996).

For example, over the past century, advertising has been varyingly described as: ‘a system of organised magic’ (Williams, 1980: 186), a science (see Rothenberg, 1999), a hidden persuader (Packard, 1960), a form of subliminal seduction (Key, 1972; 1989), a form of myth making (Barthes, 1972), a language and form of social communication (Goddard, 1998; Leiss et al., 1990; Cook, 1992) ‘a discourse through and about objects’ (Leiss et al., 1990: 5), ‘an ideational image system’ (Lull, 2000: 18), a cultural system (Jhally, 1990), ‘the official art of capitalism’ (Harvey, 1990: 63), one of the ‘fixers of capitalism’ (Thrift, 1987), a form of popular culture (Fowles, 1996), a cultural intermediary (Nixon, 1997; 2003), a cultural industry (Lash and Urry, 1994; Sinclair, 1987), the ‘most influential institution of socialisation in modern society’ (Jhally, 1990: 1), and a ‘sphere of ideology’ (Goldman, 1992; Williamson, 1978).

The multiplicity and even contradictory nature of these characterizations is both puzzling and intriguing. Arguably, this situation has emerged, in part, because of advertising’s changing, but always strategic, location within the circuit of culture and commodification (cf. du Gay, 1997; Johnson, 1986). In brief, the circuit is a conceptual model that traces the life and meaning of...
cultural commodities as they move through various phases or moments including production, representation, consumption, regulation and, in turn, how they shape our lived experiences and identities. Furthermore, the fervent debates over advertising are also likely due to the historical transformation between a capitalist system driven by production to one based increasingly on consumption (Giroux, 2000; Miller, 1995). Stated another way: we used to live in a system where people needed commodities but now commodities need people. This has led Miller (1995: 1) to acknowledge that consumption is now 'the vanguard of history'. If we add to this the dramatic global and technological changes that have accelerated this shift over the past 100 years we may begin to better understand advertising’s enduring political, economic and cultural importance. In turn, we may comprehend why different generations of cultural observers have erroneously envisaged their particular historical era to be ‘the age of advertising’ (Williams, 1980).

The definitive role of advertising as industry, ideology and form of popular culture will remain debatable for the foreseeable future. However, what we can assert with some degree of certainty is that advertising is at the forefront of the expansion of the global economy and postmodern promotional culture (Wernick, 1991). Beyond its purported, yet contentious, role in stimulating consumption (Featherstone, 1991; Miller, 1995), advertising has been identified as playing a key ideological role with respect not only to the legitimation of capitalism and consumer culture (Bell, 1976; du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Ewen, 1976; Lury, 1996) but also within the politics of representation and identity formation (Bonney and Wilson, 1990; Cronin, 2000; 2004; Goldman, 1992; Kellner, 1995; Kilbourne, 1999; Mort, 1996; O’Barr, 1994).

Strikingly, despite the expansive range of theoretical and methodological positions adopted and the wide range of issues and topics related to advertising covered by those in cultural studies, including everything from fashion to body image, sport has been largely overlooked. Given its global popularity and its prevalence across the spectrum of cultural and commercial life it is somewhat surprising that, with a few exceptions (cf. Goldman, 1992; Goldman and Papson, 1996), scholars interested in the cultural politics of advertising have tended to ignore sport; conversely, scholars interrogating the cultural politics of sport have begun to recognize advertising as an important site for the analysis of power relations, cultural politics and cultural representation.

Thus there have been an increasing number of critical sport studies that have at least made reference to the role of advertising in reproducing power relations related to: race (Andrews, 1996; Cole, 1996; Cole and Andrews, 1996; Jackson and Hokowhitu, 2002; McKay, 1995; Wilson and Sparks, 1996), gender (Arsenault and Fawzy, 2001; Cole and Hribar, 1995; Davis and Delano, 1992; Duquin, 1989; Helstein, 2003; LaFrance, 1998; Messner, 2002; Wenner, 1991; White and Gillett, 1994; Worsching, 2000), social class (Renson and Careel, 1986), disability (Maas and Hasbrook, 2001), nationalism and national identity (Jackson et al., 2001; Perry, 1994; Wenner, 1994) as well as the role of advertising in the global economy of sport commodities (Andrews, 1996; Jackson and
Andrews, 1999). In addition, there have been a few studies that have examined the politics and contradictions associated with sport advertising and its confrontations with social policy related to tobacco and alcohol products (Blum, 1991; Crompton, 1993; Dewhirst and Sparks, 2003; Ledwith, 1984) and violence (Grainger and Jackson, 2000; Jackson and Andrews, 2004).

Many of the previous analyses have used advertising for illustrative purposes or as case studies. Others have offered simple deconstructions. However, an increasing number are providing critical contextual analyses that locate their readings and interpretations within wider socio-historical and political economic conditions. It is this type of analysis that underpins the contributions within this book. This anthology examines the politics of advertising about and through sport and the relationships between representation, consumption and identity. Several questions guide our analysis including: (1) What makes sport such an appealing global commodity for both producers and consumers and the cultural intermediaries (advertising agencies) that are charged with connecting production and consumption? (2) How are particular identities (markets) constructed and represented through sport advertising? and (3) How are particular hegemonies (gender, race, sexuality, class, nation) produced and reproduced by sport, and advertising associated with sport?

Without a doubt this is a rather broad and complex cultural terrain to navigate. What we hope to provide is a preliminary analysis of the ways in which advertising, as a key driving force within consumer capitalism, plays a role in socially constructing and reproducing particular social identities. In doing so it is important to heed Michael Schudson’s (1993) reminder that advertising operates as a form of capitalist realism that does not represent society as it is but rather as it should be according to the logic of capitalism. Thus, the images of idealized lifestyles and identities constructed and represented through advertising are those that contribute to a particular social order, economy and cultural belief system. The consequence is that based on their perceived value to the marketplace certain imagined groups and categories of people are either empowered or disempowered.

Similar to Birrell and McDonald’s (2000: 3) Reading Sport, we assert that advertising about sport and through sport offers ‘unique points of access to the constitutive meanings and power relations of the larger world we inhabit’. Indeed, perhaps this book could have been called Reading Sport Advertising given that most of the contributions examine, in their own particular way, structures of dominance along the ‘power lines’ of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability and nationality. However, to be fair, some of our contributors address issues beyond representation in order to examine other moments within the circuit of commodification including aspects of production and lived experience/lifestyle.

To put our overall analysis in context the introduction consists of four interrelated sections including: (1) The contemporary landscape of advertising from its political economy to its colonization of public space; (2) a discussion of the appeal and uniqueness of sport as a cultural form and theme within advertising; (3) a brief overview of the chapters in the book; and (4) a summary which includes a call for further projects in this area.
The contemporary landscape of advertising

As a pervasive culture industry reliant on media imagery, advertising plays an integrative role in cultural practices and the process of globalization (Harvey, 1990). Global capitalism, new media technologies and transnational advertising have enormous implications for the economies and cultures of the world. For example, current global spending on advertising is estimated at US$435 billion (Klein, 2000: 8) and is expected to reach US$2 trillion by the year 2020 (Herman and McChesney, 1997). To put things into perspective, according to a United Nations Human Development Report, global ad spending ‘now outpaces the growth of the world economy by one-third’ (Klein, 2000: 9).

While these figures provide some basic indication of the economic influence of corporate advertising, we should not overlook the structure of the advertising-media complex itself. The advertising industry both mirrors and facilitates global capitalism. Through acquisitions and strategic alliances today’s advertising firms have become integrated communication conglomerates (Leslie, 1995). For example, the ten largest ad agencies now have offices in more than fifty different countries with the largest global firm, McCann-Erickson, having over 200 offices in 130 countries. As further confirmation of the increasing advertising-media complex synergy, in 1996 the leading world advertising and broadcasting associations devised a single global standard for the purchase and production of television advertising (Ross, 1996: 3). In combination, the consolidation of these major global political, economic and cultural power brokers is driving a ‘new culture of enterprise that enlists the enterprise of culture’ (Harvey, 1987; Morley and Robins, 1995). As evidence of advertising’s enterprise of culture we only need to scan our everyday surroundings.

Contemporary social life is not only dominated by advertising, it is defined by it. Corporate and even anti-corporate signs, logos and other forms of symbolic representation permeate our personal, organizational, national and global landscapes, leading Jhally (1990) to suggest that we are witnessing the ‘colonization of culture’. One effect of this colonization is that almost every conceivable public, private and even virtual space is inhabited by advertising. Consider a few examples:

- Facing ongoing budget cuts many schools have survived by selling space to corporations. For example, in order to reach an estimated 43 million children in the USA with over US$108 billion in buying power, Channel One provides schools with up to US$50,000 in televisual equipment in exchange for the right to broadcast programmes consisting of news along with two minutes of advertising (Giroux, 2000). Moreover, McDonald’s and Nike are just two of the many transnational corporations which are now sponsoring curriculum development. According to Henry Giroux (2000: 19), the result of this commercialization of culture is that ‘the only type of citizenship that adult society offers to children is that of consumerism’.
• Space platforms that first gained notoriety in director Ridley Scott’s futuristic movie Bladerunner are now a reality. Advertisers are now capable of buying advertising space on mile-wide billboards that can appear in the sky. Described by some critics as ‘intergalactic pollution’ it could lead to a situation where ‘this sunset is brought to you by Coca-Cola’.

• As one indicator of the power of the relationship between our consumer-based society and advertising we note a recent billboard campaign in Auckland, New Zealand. The campaign, which appeared on twenty-seven city billboards, simply featured a cropped image of the side view of a woman’s face and shoulders with text stating: ‘NOTHING. What you’ve been looking for.’ A young graphic designer created the billboard as a way of highlighting the absurdity of our consumer-based society. Notably, the billboard company received a number of calls from people wanting to know where they could buy ‘nothing’.

These examples verify some of the assertions put forth in Goldman and Papson’s (1996) Sign Wars: The Cluttered Landscape of Advertising. Increasingly, every conceivable space and strategy is being used in order to attract potential consumers and, just as importantly, to differentiate corporate signs and brands. As a result the advertising industry seeks out cultural sites, images and themes that shock, cannibalize and contribute to a ‘haemorrhaging of meaning’ (1996: vi). As they note:

At every turn, the pressure is on to find fresher, more desirable, and more spectacular images to enhance the value of products. . . . As sign value competitions intensify, advertisers invent new strategies and push into fresh cultural territory, looking for ‘uncut’ and ‘untouched’ signs. Under such circumstances no meaning system is sacred, because the realm of culture has been turned into a giant mine.

(Goldman and Papson, 1996: v)

Notably, sport, as a global cultural form, practice and institution, has not been immune from advertising’s cultural excavation and exploitation. Indeed, for a variety of reasons sport has arguably been at the cutting edge of developments in contemporary advertising technology. A brief discussion of the appeal of sport to the advertising-media complex follows but to begin with let us consider the following examples of ‘sporting sign wars’.

The contemporary landscape of sport advertising: sporting sign wars

• The concept of ‘virtual’ advertising was basically designed for sport. This technology enables global advertisers to have access to a blank canvas in terms of major sporting events. As such beer companies in Brazil, Germany, India, Spain and South Africa have the potential to rent the same virtual space at the same time in order to capture a particular market.
In addition to sporting events and venues, the bodies and equipment of athletes are now an integral part of advertising and promotion. From Tiger Woods’ Nike ‘swooshed’ golf balls to Adidas’ tri-striped logo on the trigger finger of the glove of Winter Olympic biathletes, transnational corporations are constantly seeking brand exposure. The sport of auto racing may be one of the most interesting with respect to sporting sign wars. A strict hierarchy of sponsor signs determines the size and placement of logos on every inch of the car including the driver’s suit, steering wheel, even under the hood. Even occasional accidents, though tragic, offer ‘advertising opportunities’ as announcers fit sponsor soundbites into their narratives. Corporatized bodies are also emerging in professional boxing (McKelvey, 2003) where athletes are permanently or temporarily tattooing their torsos with sponsors’ logos for upwards of US$100,000. The fact that there are people employed to measure the visual and auditory exposure of each sponsor during media broadcasts attests to the economy of sporting signs and spaces.

In 1995 the IOC established the Olympic Television Archive Bureau (OTAB), a repository of over 20,000 hours of film and television footage of the modern games. Astute sponsors, marketing firms and television production companies can now purchase images of the past so that they may be used in advertising and other commercial projects. In this way sporting images of the past become part of the promotional efforts of the present through the marketing of nostalgia. The IOC’s new archive is but one example of perhaps the most important development regarding sport, culture and advertising; that is, intellectual property rights (IPR). IPR debates have manifest themselves in many ways both within and outside of sport (Coombe, 1998; 1999; Jackson, 2001; Sebel and Gyngell, 1999; VanWynsberghe and Ritchie, 1998) and highlight the increasingly critical relationship between culture, image and identity. A key issue in a world dominated by images, both past and present, is ownership. As a consequence we find Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech being used to promote telecommunications companies, and indigenous cultures being appropriated to market alcohol and sports teams (Jackson and Hokowhitu, 2002). As Naomi Klein (‘Brand Klein’, 2001: C13), author of No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies notes: ‘This new kind of branding is not about advertising. It’s essentially about creating self-enclosed branding cocoons, which . . . is . . . all about owning intellectual property. And [he] who has the most intellectual property and the least actual property wins.’

As a result of these examples, and many others, cultural studies critics have incriminated advertising ‘as the iconographic signifier of multinational capitalism (Nava, 1997: 34). Yet, as with other ‘common-sense’ institutions, ‘we tend to take for granted the deep social assumptions embedded in advertisements. We do not ordinarily recognize advertising as a sphere of ideology’ (Goldman,
1992: 1). Conceptualizing advertising as a sphere of ideology provides us with a powerful framework for analysing the links between particular social problems and inequities and the discourses that represent, reproduce and resist them. Indeed, we can think about advertisements as ideological discourses that: (1) reflect the logic of capitalism; (2) promote a normative vision of our world and our relationships; (3) socially and culturally construct our world; and (4) disguise and suppress inequalities, injustices, irrationalities and contradictions (Goldman and Papson, 1996: 18).

Given that advertising is located in the ‘pivotal position between production and consumption’ (Leslie, 1995: 402), we focus primarily on issues related to representation and ideology and the articulation of particular cultural meanings to commodity signs and by extension socially constructed identities. The role of advertising as representation is important because it is one of the key processes in the circuit of culture that connects meaning and language to culture, thereby constituting socially constructed identities in specific contexts (Hall, 1996). Indeed, because the representations within contemporary advertising are often complex and contradictory they cannot be understood outside of or separated from their context of articulation (Grossberg, 1997). As Hall (1996: 4) notes, it is: ‘Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies.’

The focus on texts, discourses and representation is not without its limitations or critics. For example, Frederic Jameson has critiqued the tendency within cultural studies to produce textual analyses of advertising without considering ‘real markets’ (1993: 264). However, as Sinclair (1987: 97) notes, we must also recognize that: ‘Contrary to marketing ideology, markets do not already exist “out there” in social reality but are “constructed”: the selection of the advertising medium and the way in which audiences are segmented, that is selected to be addressed by advertising, are both ways in which social categories become transformed into markets.’ Thus, while we are fully cognizant that any critical textual analysis of advertising can only be understood in relation to an underlying ‘real’ political economy we are also aware that the so-called real world market segments of consumption (e.g. ‘Generation-X’, ‘baby boomers’) are themselves social constructions (Turow, 1997).

As a final point before we discuss the cultural significance of sport in contemporary advertising it is worth highlighting the important link between representation, cultural theory and the advertising industry. Perhaps the best way to do this is by referring to one of the key innovators in the world of sport advertising. Wieden + Kennedy have been the creative force behind Nike, arguably the most successful sports company in history, for the past twenty years. Advertising agencies such as Wieden + Kennedy are important because they ‘play a pivotal role as cultural intermediaries in articulating production and consumption. This articulation of production and consumption itself constitutes a determinant moment in the circuit of culture: the
moment of circulation’ (Nixon, 1997: 181). Notably, the company’s website provides some key insights into their role as cultural intermediaries and their philosophy about linking production and consumption, commodities and identities:

Our key strength is brand building. Finding the cultural truths about, or intersections between product, consumer and business. We specialize in understanding cultural trends. As a result we have made Nike, ESPN and Miller Lite part of our shared cultural influence. Once brands are accepted on this level, they are infinitely more powerful.

(www.wiedenkennedy.com)

The very language they use to describe their company resonates with current cultural theory. Thus, while scholars in cultural studies, including sport studies, are working to analyse and critically assess the advertising industry, agencies such as Wieden + Kennedy not only draw upon the same cultural theories but they also appropriate and incorporate the critiques levied against them. Needless to say, the question of opposition and resistance is becoming increasingly challenging because the avenues and strategies to do so are disappearing.

Up until this point we have outlined the contested terrain of advertising as an industry and its role as a discourse of ideology that constructs and represents identity. We now turn to sport in order to highlight some of its distinctive features that make it such an attractive avenue to reach consumers as well as a popular cultural theme for the advertising industry.

**Sport, culture and advertising**

Arguably, sport is a powerful vehicle for transnational corporations and their allied advertising and promotional armatures. As such it has an appeal that stretches beyond the field of sport per se with sporting themes, images, narratives and celebrities located within and across a complex and increasingly global system of intertextual promotional cultures including movies, art, fashion, music and politics. As Clarke and Clarke (1982: 64) note: ‘sport has become a significant international currency’.

Even a glance at present-day sport provides insights into its unique and enormous appeal to the advertising industry. Whether it be the Summer or Winter Olympics, World Cup Soccer or Rugby, the Champions League, Super Bowl, World Series or Stanley Cup, major global sporting competitions have become regular features of our emotional calendars. As one macro indicator of the political economy of sport we note that it is now a global industry and accounts for more than 3 per cent of world trade (Blackshaw, 2001), approximately 2 per cent of GDP in the United States, Europe, Japan and Australia (Marqusee, 2000) and more than 1 per cent of the GNP (Gross National Product) of the European Union. As further evidence of the promotional value of global sport, consider the following examples:
• The current National Football League (NFL) television contract is worth more than $2 billion per year.
• In 2003, Britain’s BSkyB signed a three-year, US$5.1 billion deal with Premier League soccer.
• In 2000, Tiger Woods signed a five-year deal with Nike worth over $100 million. In 2003, 18-year-old high school basketball player LeBron James signed a deal with the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers and a $90 million sponsorship contract with Nike. Soccer sensation Freddy Adu at age 13 signed a $1 million dollar contract with Nike. In each case the athlete earns more from endorsements than in salary. It is their manufactured image that truly counts. Thus it is evident that 'within today’s multi-layered “promotional culture” (Wernick, 1991), the sport celebrity is effectively a multi-textual and multi-platform promotional entity' (Andrews and Jackson, 2001: 7).

These examples demonstrate the economic value of sport within the global economy. However, important questions remain. Why is sport such a valued cultural commodity? And, in turn, why is the advertising industry so enamoured with sport? To begin with, we can simply acknowledge that sport is one of the oldest and most universal forms of performative culture. History and tradition are the cornerstones of many sports. These are important because they provide strong identities that have the potential to form a lucrative consumer base. At the same time it is the strength of local sporting identities (soccer in the UK, Europe and Central and South America, ice hockey in Canada, rugby in New Zealand and South Africa) that make sport such an attractive and powerful commodity for global corporations. As such, sport is an ideal vehicle for capturing ‘massive and/or committed audiences with consumption profiles attractive to advertisers/sponsors’ (Arundel and Roche, 1998). Moreover, it has the ability to cross spatial, linguistic and cultural divides enabling it to unite distant people, however temporarily. As Singer (1998: 36) notes: ‘Only sports has the nation, and sometimes the world, watching the same thing at the same time, and if you have a message, that’s a potent messenger.’

Arguably the entire structure of sport as a form of popular culture is ideally suited to advertising and promotional culture. It is global, yet local and particular. It is exciting for consumers because of its uncertainty of outcome, yet attractive to producers and advertisers because it is increasingly certain in terms of scheduling, rules and commercial breaks. Sport, according to recent IOC advertising campaigns, allows us to ‘celebrate humanity’ despite the fact that this may occur through violent physical contests. Theoretically it is open and accessible to all, with consideration being given to: gender, race, class, sexuality (e.g. The Gay Games), abled and disabled (e.g. Para and Special Olympics), age (Master’s Games), amateur and professional, and it occurs across a vast array of seasons and geographic locations. Of course, these inclusive features operate more in the ideal than in reality. For example, although global sport
sponsorship expenditure trebled during the 1990s its distribution was far from balanced, with 37.8 per cent going to North America, 36.4 per cent going to Europe and 20.8 per cent to Asia with South America and Africa hardly registering (Marqusee, 2000). The message is clear: it is not just the size of the consumer market, it is the nature (wealth) of the audience.

Beyond this we suggest that sport is highly desirable because: (1) it attracts large and passionately devoted audiences; (2) in a relative sense it is cheaper to produce than many other types of programming; (3) it is human drama at its finest, providing a stimulus and an acceptable arena for the full range of human emotion; (4) it reveals real people demonstrating the limits of the body; (5) it is sexy and erotic (Guttmann, 1996); (6) it provides us with carefully crafted narratives of heroes and villains (Whannel, 2002); (7) it is associated with positive images of health and nationhood (Rowe, 1996). Finally, it is important to note that sport is an ideal conduit of promotional culture because in many ways it mirrors the idealized version of capitalism; that is, it is based on competition, achievement, efficiency, technology and meritocracy.

In combination, all of these factors provide insights into what makes sport a unique and highly valued cultural commodity. They also help explain why sport sponsorship and advertising have risen from US$0.5 million to $20 billion annually in the past thirty years (Marqusee, 2000). Moreover, these factors confirm why advertising and sponsorship are at the very nucleus of what has varyingly been described as: the sports/media complex (Jhally, 1989), the media/sport production complex (Maguire, 1993) or the media sports cultural complex (Rowe, 1999). There can be no greater model of this complex than Rupert Murdoch. It is almost an understatement to describe his overall media holdings as an empire. Murdoch’s sport-related portfolio alone includes: Fox, SKY and Star TV networks and various football, baseball and rugby clubs (Harvey et al., 2001). What is even more striking are his synergistic partnerships which include Star TV (Asia)’s relationship with ESPN which is owned by the Disney Corporation, which itself controls the Anaheim Angels baseball team and the National Hockey League’s Mighty Ducks whose name originated with the movie of the same name (Marqusee, 2000).

Clearly the strategic location of sport within the wider media production complex makes it an attractive channel to reach consumers. But it may also be that sport is such a potent cultural force because of its increasing permeability with other areas of social life: fashion, music, movies, television, politics; that is, it has the ability to leak, and be leaked into, key sites and moments that shape our contemporary existence.

Overview of chapters

Taken collectively, the diverse set of studies in *Sport, Culture and Advertising* provide a unique insight into the role of advertising and the politics of representation. Each of our thirteen chapters helps to illustrate a particular set of power relations as they relate to, emerge from and articulate with contempor-
ary advertising. To this extent they highlight ongoing issues of social inequality and identity politics within our increasingly global and market-driven society. Furthermore, each chapter underscores the importance of the links between the author’s analysis and wider social conditions. As such, the authors have gone to great lengths to ensure that particularity and context are paramount. We are cognizant of the fact that often specificity limits the extent to which wider generalizations can be made across temporal, geographic, political and ideological terrains. Yet this should not really be seen as a limitation, rather as an accepted and integral part of the work involved in critical sport and culture studies. Indeed, we believe these historically situated analyses of fundamental social problems will not only remain relevant for the near future but will also become significant markers for future scholars who wish to conduct comparative analyses of shifting trends over time.

It should come as no surprise that a book about contemporary sport, culture and advertising includes recurring reference to Nike. Nike has been the most awarded brand at the Cannes International Advertising Festival for the past five years and was Advertiser of the Year for 2002 and 2003. Notably, Festival Chairman Roger Hatchuel said that the awards ‘recognised not only the quality of Nike advertising but also its major influence on creativity and lifestyle of the last decade’ (Nike, 2003: 2). Furthermore, as Goldman and Papson note in their book *Nike Culture* (1998), the company, in conjunction with their main advertising agency Wieden + Kennedy, have become leaders in the ‘cultural economy of images’. At times Nike rival Benetton for the title of popular provocateurs in the realm of advertising based on a style ‘situated at the intersection between public and private discourses where themes of authenticity and personal morality converge with the cynical and nihilistic sensibility that colors contemporary public exchanges’ (1998: 3). As a consequence the Nike trademark swoosh and all that it represents has become ‘the sign some people love to love and the sign others love to hate’ (1998: 2). While there was no intention of becoming fixated on Nike there was really no way of ignoring it.

The book is not structured into discrete sections but the reader will see an emerging pattern. For example, the first seven chapters take varying tacts on advertising and identity politics related to gender, race, sexuality and disability. In turn, Chapters 8–10 examine the role of advertising between the global and the local. In particular they highlight the strategies used by transnational corporations to appropriate the nation along with the politics, contradictions and forms of resistance to these promotional re-imaginings. The final three chapters drawn our attention to the relationship between advertising, consumers and commodities, and the way in which these shape and define lifestyles.

We begin by noting that the first three chapters examine one of the most intriguing and timely issues of contemporary advertising both from a critical and corporatist perspective: the female consumer. The common thread running through them is the recognition that although various feminist movements have contributed to a growing sense of empowerment for women, their ‘potentially alternative ideological force is channelled into the commodity form so
that it threatens neither patriarchal culture nor capitalist hegemony' (Goldman, 1992: 131).

In Chapter 1, Mary McDonald highlights the role of cultural criticism as a strategy of intervention (cf. Howell et al., 2002) into the contemporary power relations of consumption. In her analysis of Women’s Sports and Fitness (WSF) magazine she explores how contemporary women’s publications and their advertisements serve as culturally significant discursive sites where new post-feminist ideologies are represented and struggled over. Discussing correlative changes in America’s New Right politics in the 1980s to 1990s as they impacted on second-wave feminist movements, McDonald provides important insights into how these were translated into creating new subjectivities for women. Driven largely through consumer capitalism, including sport advertisements featuring athletes such as Gabrielle Reece and Anna Kournikova, these subjectivities served to ‘reassure women that the dominant ideological life-choices offered by society at large (heterosexual monogamy, pro-capitalist democracy, aspirational individualism, a high value placed on physical beauty, familial norms, etc.) are indeed’ the new Right ones (Sonnet and Whelehan, 1995: 84).

Debra Capon and Michelle Helstein further our understanding of the notion of female subjectivity within the realm of sport advertising in Chapter 2. Tracing the historical basis of ‘the myth of the hero’ they conceptualize both the myth and the contemporary advertisements that reproduce it as forms of representation at work. Referring to Featherstone’s (1992) article ‘The heroic life and everyday life’, Capon and Helstein identify the juxtaposition between a ‘heroic life’ which is defined as masculine and the rather mundane ‘everyday life’ that women are often restricted to. To illustrate the historical and ideological power of myth they focus on Nike because, in their words, ‘as legitimate speakers their popular knowledge of what/who the “hero” is continues to increase, so too, does their control of what/who can be constituted or intelligible as the “hero” and vice versa’. Their analysis, like Mary McDonald’s, confirms that despite the new economic power of women in the consumer marketplace conventional markers of gender boundaries are reproduced because sport remains an arena for dominant masculinities.

Consolidating themes developed by McDonald, and Capon and Helstein, in Chapter 3 Mike Giardina and Jennifer Metz interrogate contemporary notions of women’s empowerment through sport as articulated in Nike’s ‘Everyday Athletes’ campaign. Locating their analysis within current discussions of body politics and in particular the female body within global consumer culture, Giardina and Metz examine the emergence and commodification of empowerment rhetoric. Tracing the discourses surrounding concepts such as ‘girl power’, they reveal how Nike has successfully merged previously oppositional notions of femininity and athleticism through consumption. In other words, while there is more latitude with respect to the range of sporting practices and bodies that female athletes can occupy, the ideals are still set within a largely white, middle-class, conservative and hetero-normative framework. Thus, social acceptance remains dependent upon, and articulated to, a consumerist lifestyle.
In Chapter 4 Jim McKay provides a contextualized examination of the interrelated processes of appropriation, mythologization, nostalgia and commodification with respect to gender and race in sport advertising over the past thirty years. To do this McKay astutely links Cole and Hribar’s (1995) notion of celebrity feminism to Jhally and Lewis’ (1992) concept of enlightened racism. As with several previous chapters, McKay focuses on myths which ‘disavow or deny their own existence’ and which ‘accentuate particular versions of reality and marginalize or omit others’ providing further transparency into how particular relations of power are naturalized and hence depoliticized. With examples ranging from the 1968 Black Power salute at the Mexico Olympics to Cathy Freeman’s role in cleansing Australia at the 2000 Sydney Games, McKay highlights how particular historical moments and celebrities are commodified, thereby transforming human capital into corporate capital (Willis, 1993).

Expanding the analysis of advertising and racial identities in sport, Brian Wilson (Chapter 5) examines the politics of racial representation within the Canadian context. Noting a relative absence of research into sport and racial representation in Canada, Wilson studies African American NBA stars as they are located and defined within a Canadian context. Drawing upon the concept of enlightened racism (Jhally and Lewis, 1992) along with the notion of floating racial signifiers (Andrews, 1996; Jackson, 1998a; 1998b), Wilson sets out to answer a number of key questions including: How are African-American athletes portrayed in Canadian media and how do these depictions compare to portrayals in American media? To what extent has the mass-mediated promotional culture of the NBA spilled over into Canada and what impact might associated images play in perpetuating racism in Canada? The findings reveal that the Canadian media reproduce Wenner’s (1995) notion of ‘Good Blacks’ and ‘Bad Blacks’ when describing African-American athletes but that these representations are often subtle, shifting and operate within a complex and often contradictory framework.

In a study of the relationship between advertising, market segments and representation of identity, Robyn Jones and Roger LeBlanc (Chapter 6) explore the political economy of the pink dollar. They begin with a basic outline of the growth and economic impact of gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) consumers within the world of sport and leisure, including the remarkable growth of the Gay Games. In turn, they discuss a fundamental shift in corporate thinking, strategy and policy concerning GLBs. Noting that corporations and their allied advertising and marketing agencies adopted a rather cautious approach to the gay and lesbian community during the 1980s, Jones and LeBlanc outline the various ways in which the gay and lesbian market segment is both identified and represented. Drawing upon four contemporary advertisements they examine the range of representations of gays and lesbians: from the ambiguous, to the humorous to the openly political. Their analysis, along with the growing list of corporates which deliberately include and/or target gay and lesbian consumers (including Benetton, IKEA, Nike, Toyota, American Airlines, Qantas Airlines
and many others), highlight the fact that diversity is now ‘not only accepted by
the culture industries, it is the mantra of global capital’ (Klein, 2000: 115).

While the notion of the pink dollar points to an increasing awareness of the
economic power of GLB consumers another group remains largely invisible: the
disabled. Focusing on a selection of magazine print advertisements Alan
Aycock and Margaret Duncan (Chapter 7) note that we are witnessing a
‘radical splitting of hierarchies of attention between those who are always seen
and those who are never seen’. Embarking on the type of research that cultural
studies scholars have been demanding, Aycock and Duncan examine the media
representation of disabled persons, not in isolation, but across a range of other
identities including gender, race, sexuality, age and class. In combination all of
these configure with a dominant form of ‘ableism’ which works towards defining
the disabled as ‘the Other’. According to the authors, sport is a key site for
studying the notions of ‘abled’ and ‘disabled’ – it is a cultural practice that cele-
brates not just what the ‘normal’ body can do but what the superhuman athletic
body might achieve. Generally speaking their findings confirm those of Davis
(1995; 1997) who found visual representations of disabled people to character-
ize them as ‘dependent, childlike, passive, vulnerable, and less competent than
“normal” people’ (Davis, 1995; 1997).

In the first of three chapters examining advertising and national identity
within the context of globalization, Nick Perry (Chapter 8) examines one
particular site to demonstrate how promotional cultures are shaping national re-
imaginings. Building on his successful (1994) book The Dominion of Signs: Tele-
vision Advertising and Other New Zealand Fictions, Perry examines the process
of national myth making within the context of globalization. Focusing on New
Zealand he explores changing notions of popular nationalism within and
between the national sport of rugby, broadcasting media and advertising.
Specifically, Perry traces the historical development of advances in media
technology and how this impacted on the way in which rugby was defined and
appropriated by particular power brokers, both political and commercial.
According to Perry the 1980s served as a key period for the transformation of
the sport, advertising and national identity nexus. As a result of the 1981 South
African Springbok tour controversy, rugby was temporarily decentred (Fougere,
1989) as the cultural centre of national populism. Notably, it was the lessons
learned from the corporate investment and success with another, unlikely sport
that helped restore rugby’s national stature. Corporations looking for a vehicle
through which to reach the national market astutely shifted their strategy to
creating a national market through the 1986 America’s Cup challenge in Free-
mantle. The overwhelming success demonstrated that within the emerging
global economy ‘representing the nation’ became subordinated to building a
market’ (Perry, 2004: 295). What followed was a reinvention of rugby through
major corporate sponsors such as Steinlager which helped develop the first
rugby-themed television commercials in conjunction with the 1987 Rugby
World Cup hosted by New Zealand. Perry refers to this symbolic transformation
as close encounters of a third kind. Perry’s analysis, like Gruneau and Whitson’s
previous work, illustrates that: ‘What is crucial to the success of such “representational” projects is the linking of national symbols and myths of national character with the ordinary lives of people and with widely shared popular experiences.’

David Andrews and Michael Silk (Chapter 9) examine the role of transnational corporations and their promotional armatures in re-imagining national cultures. They note that although global forces are clearly undermining significant aspects of sovereignty as a cultural object, the nation plays an increasingly important role within the machinations of transnational corporate capitalism. They draw on Manuel Castells’ (1996) concept of Toyotism, a system ‘designed to reduce uncertainty rather than to encourage adaptability [and where] The flexibility is in the process, not in the product’ (Castells, 1996: 158). Developed within the Japanese industrial and economic context, Toyotism has been both imitated by other companies and widely transplanted to other national locations. Andrews and Silk contend that the core aspects of Toyotism in a material production sense – flexible, adaptable and globally contingent regimes of production – can be discerned within the corporation’s marketing and promotional strategies; in other words, the realm of cultural production upon which the late capitalist order depends (Jameson, 1991). Andrews and Silk use the concept of ‘cultural Toyotism’ as a means of understanding the manner in which transnational entities negotiate the global–local nexus, and explicate empirical examples of the contrasting processes whereby sport has been used as a means of constituting the nation. Through a series of global sport advertisements they illustrate the different ways in which various strategies are used to globalize and localize brands within specific national contexts.

While Andrews and Silk provide an analysis of how transnational corporations localize within particular national contexts, Andy Grainger and Steve Jackson (Chapter 10) draw our attention to the power, politics and contradictions associated with the regulation of products and processes at the global–local nexus. Focusing specifically on the context of New Zealand, Grainger and Jackson examine how one particular global media ‘product’, televisual violence, is regulated and censored. Highlighting several sport-related advertisements banned from New Zealand television screens because they were deemed to be excessively violent, they discuss the politics and contradictions associated with state-policy censorship as located within wider debates about Americanization, globalization and global/local disjuncture. After initially outlining the context of state media policy in New Zealand – including the codes and responsibilities of the two key censorship bodies, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and the Advertising Standards Complaints Board (ASCB) – Grainger and Jackson show how the bans imposed against several American-produced commercials not only reflect the incongruity and uncertainty of Appadurai’s (1990) notion of disjuncture, but further disguise efforts to demarcate a unique national ‘identity’ in a time of growing inter-cultural connection.

In Chapter 11, the first of three chapters addressing the relationship between commodities, consumption, lifestyle and identity, Annemarie Jutel explores
how menstrual product advertisements have reproduced menstruation as a restrictive experience for women over the past century. In an extensive study of more than 200 advertisements from the twentieth century, Jutel confirms the enduring taboo against the very mention of the word menstruation with most using euphemisms. This is not to suggest that menstruation products and advertisements have not changed, for they certainly have. For many years menstruation was viewed as a pathological condition that demonstrated women’s frailty and vulnerability. Over time advertisements redefined their underlying theme towards products that served as support or solutions to ‘the problem’. Nevertheless, Jutel notes that although advertisements no longer focus on the pathological nature of menstruation, they promote discourses of restraint, control and caution. This results in strictly coded rules of feminine behaviour that highlight the female body and its social expectations at the expense of embodied physicality. As a consequence, advertisements that are often intended to enhance sporting and other active lifestyle opportunities for women, potentially end up reproducing existing barriers.

Exactly what does the ‘baby boom’ actually signify when it comes to health and fitness? What are the key sensibilities that have created, and continue to create, a cultural space in which the fit, active and sporting body is given economic and symbolic value to such a degree that it is seen to define a particular lifestyle formation? And, perhaps most importantly, how does this lifestyle formation turn around and impact upon future fitness and health industry promotional practices? These are the key questions examined in Jeremy Howell’s chapter. Citing the dramatic projected changes in marketplace demographics, Howell (Chapter 12) examines the meaning of the concept ‘generation’ within contemporary health and fitness promotional culture. Drawing upon five key marketing principles that frame his analysis he clearly demonstrates how the meaning of any given ‘generation’ itself does not exist outside of the very cultural signs, products and practices to which it is articulated. After providing strong empirical data on past, present and future trends, Howell concludes by noting that the way in which sport, exercise, fitness and health events, texts, symbols and activities overflow into the channels of our everyday world, in all their forms and regularities, tells us a great deal about the ways in which meanings, values, and social relations therein are produced, represented and lived.

Our book concludes with Fabien Ohl’s analysis that makes the link between representational aspects of advertising, ‘markets’ and youth consumption (Chapter 13). Drawing upon Goffman’s notion of ‘the presentation of self in everyday life’ in conjunction with Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, Ohl examines how changes in the nature of our relationships with objects and people are evident in contemporary sport and lifestyle consumption. Using empirical data from France, Ohl analyses more precisely the social context, meaning and ramifications of consumption. Ohl outlines how various segments of youth in France seek to construct identities through sport clothing and related products. Notably, the focus of consumption appears to be on authenticity and difference as a means of defining identity and a form of resistance to the establishment.
Ohl is quick to note that although France serves as the site of his analysis it is important to recognize that globalization is shaping consumer markets and the meaning of commodities worldwide. To this extent France is one of many 'global locals'.

**Summary**

Advertising, as a privileged form of discourse, provides a cultural kaleidoscope through which we can examine social relations, the construction and confirmation of identities and the appropriation of increasingly shocking and controversial themes through which the logic and power relations of capitalism are negotiated and reproduced. *Sport, Culture and Advertising* presents a first step towards understanding the relationship between advertising and identity with a focus on sport. We have endeavoured to achieve this through a range of contextually specific analyses that highlight the way in which advertising as an industry, ideology and discourse helps us to better understand particular power relations within a consumer-based existence in late capitalism.

While it was not the main goal of this book we do hope that it contributes to some degree of media literacy about advertising. As such we hope that our project, as a form of cultural politics, makes a scholarly, pedagogical and political contribution. Hence we have followed Giroux’s premise that ‘cultural politics is addressed as a particular practice and way of thinking. It is derived from the relationship between texts and contexts, meaning and institutional power, critical reflection and informed action’ (2000: 34). We encourage readers to use and adapt these analyses within their own national contexts for research and teaching.

There is much more work to be done in this area, and we encourage others to critique and extend this modest beginning. In particular there is a need for more ethnographic research that examines the cultural practices of advertising agencies (cf. Dewaal Malefyt and Moeran, 2003; Nixon, 2003). Likewise, there is a need for more work on how audiences read, interpret and resist advertising. We close our introduction with a quote from Graham Murdock that we believe underscores how vital it is for all of us to question the increasingly influential role of the media, and advertising in particular, to shape our identities and lived experience.

*We also need to ask who orchestrates these representations? Who is licensed to talk about other people’s experience? Who is empowered to ventriloquize other people’s opinions? Who is mandated to picture other people’s lives? Who chooses who will be heard and who will be consigned to silence, who will be seen and who will remain invisible? Who decides which viewpoints will be taken seriously and how conflicts between positions will be resolved? Who proposes explanations and analyses and who is subject to them?*

(Murdock, 1999: 28)
References


