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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Playing on the global periphery: Social scientific explorations of rugby in the Pacific Islands

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In this prologue, we will briefly revisit some of the main research findings that have emerged from our collaborative work on Fiji rugby, as well as reflecting on some of the recommendations derived from our empirical investigation. We discuss issues in relation to national identity and migrations, post-rugby career-related retirement issues and alternative emerging cultural practices that challenge the dominant discourse around Fiji rugby. We then turn our attention to the content of this special issue and briefly introduce the articles included, with the main recommendation that there is a growing need to explore absent and emerging voices and cultural practices in regard to sport-related migration in, from and to the Pacific Islands.

Keywords: Fiji; rugby union; retirement; migrations; identity; emergent

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Introduction

That research always entails a modicum (or more) of serendipity is a proven fact. Whether we consider the discovery of penicillin, radioactivity or the echoes of the origin of the universe, serendipity, along with open-mindedness on the part of the researcher, has always been present (McCracken, 1988). We, the editors of this special issue, also have serendipity to thank for helping initiate our collaborative work, which has been ongoing since 2010. Four years of joint effort led to organization of the Fiji Rugby Centenary Conference in 2013 – the basis of this special issue and of our exploration of a range of key issues in Fiji rugby, including migrations, cultural identity, cultural frictions in and around rugby and career termination/retirement. We have examined these issues in depth through the collection of primary, interview-based evidence as well as secondary mass media (mostly online) data, to which we applied rigorous qualitative socio-cultural analysis guided by a cultural studies approach.

As we progressed with our investigation into the cultural complexities of Fiji rugby, we recognized that despite its being a significant donor country in global rugby, Fiji, and by extension Fiji rugby, has lacked not only the level of academic attention given to Western societies and their issues , but also the forms of scientific support which most elite and high-level sports and athletes enjoy (and perhaps take for granted) in metropolitan countries. We have argued elsewhere (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2013a) that even elite-level domestic players have to assume (largely) amateur status and play in rudimentary conditions due to a severe lack of financial and structural support in Fiji. Domestic rugby players at the highest level often have to go without dietary, physiological, psychological and medical support and insurance. In other words, Fiji, along with many other developing

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small island nations, is not only on the geographic and economic periphery, but is also on the margins of sport science. For instance, so far there has been no globally publicized academic research looking into the psychology and physiology of Pacific Island rugby players; nor has research ever investigated their dietary habits and needs in relation to performance. In other words, Pacific rugby is still an academic *terra nova*; thus, one of the key aims of our line of research (see Kanemasu & Molnar, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014a) and of this special issue is to generate more research interest in Pacific Island rugby. We would hope that our socio-cultural investigations, along with the others included in this special issue, will be followed by psychological (see Mumm & O'Connor, this issue) and bio-scientific explorations which, as well providing a much needed academic foundation, will in turn provide support for both developing and elite Pacific Island players.

Consequently, and to encourage future investigations, in this prologue we will briefly revisit some of the main research areas and findings that emerged from our collaborative work, along with reflection on some of the recommendations derived from our empirical investigation. Then we will turn our attention to the content of this special issue and briefly introduce the contributing articles in sequential order.

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Negotiating collective identity in a multicultural world

The professionalization of rugby union triggered a number of changes in the content, form and structure of the game (Ryan, 2008; Harris, 2010). One of these changes is related to the movement of an ever-growing number of players across different countries and continents, driven by the expanding and diverging commercial opportunities available. While migration of professionals (Castles, de Hass, & Miller, 2013) in general, and professional athletes (Maguire & Falcous, 2011) in particular, has been extensively investigated, we identified a gap in the existing literature relating to Fiji which had only been partially addressed by a few conference presentations and Robert Dewey's (2008) exploratory historical research. In addition, the significance of Pacific Island players in global rugby has been on the rise (Horton, 2012, 2014), providing further impetus for investigations centring on their migratory experiences and cultural challenges in an ever-globalizing world. We have argued that 'from a migratory perspective, Fiji has assumed a similar role in rugby to Brazil's role in football' (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2013a, p. 864). In this special issue it will become clear that other Pacific Island nations and peoples have also had similar experiences and have been facing the challenges concomitant with migrations. To explore some of these challenges, we have focused our research on the personal issues which migrant Fijian players experience in the host culture, and in which ways and to what extent they are influenced by migrations.

We have argued that, similar to other migratory fields, rugby migrations take place in the context of unequal global–local power relations and serve to perpetuate core–periphery inequity by depriving Fiji rugby of its critical human and associated economic and political capital (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2013a). In other words, Fijian rugby migrations can be explained, by and large, through a world-systems approach (Wallerstein, 2004), as an instance of 'muscle trade' and 'brawn drain' (Bale, 1991) driven by supply and demand in global capitalist networks at the expense of peripheral athletic labour. At first glance, it may appear that there is clear exploitation at play within these networks of migration, but our in-depth analysis of interview data with migrant Fijian athletes revealed a more complex situation.

Despite the fact that in this finance-driven, exploitative athletic talent trade, oppositional voices are not always recognized and/or documented, we have identified their presence and captured them through our interviews. The emerging voices of our participants revealed the significance of rugby migrations as a context for collective

identification and a site of symbolic resistance. Rugby as a symbolic marker of national identity provides emigrant players with a vehicle for cultivating a sense of collective belonging and pride in the commercial global rugby arena. We observed that this symbolic dimension of rugby migration has a notable oppositional nature whereby emigrant players have claimed rugby migration as a medium through which they could challenge the dominant western discourse that defines Fiji and the other Pacific Islands as the ultimate periphery: small, poorly resourced and isolated. We found examples of Fijians who, even as they submit themselves to the constraints of the global muscle trade, claim sport as a space to present an alternative, affirmative self-definition. Thus rugby migrations, despite divergent opinions (Bale, 2000), constitute a site of both structural subordination and symbolic resistance.

The power imbalance between Fiji and metropolitan countries becomes even more pronounced during international competitions. The lack of financial, institutional and infrastructural resources in Fiji and the political and economic pressures from metropolitan clubs and unions often deter elite players from making autonomous decisions regarding their official national allegiance. To compound the matter still further, once they have played for the national team of another country, the IRB eligibility regulations disqualify them from representing their country of origin. Their cosmopolitan freedom to transcend national borders is restricted by institutional requirements to make a formal and profoundly consequential commitment to one nation, which is often not their country of birth. Here, the symbolic resistance of rugby migrants comes into conflict with the politico-economic dynamics of international rugby. While migrant players may appropriate rugby migration as a symbolic arena of resistance, it is also an area of material struggle in which the metropolitan–corporate dynamic exerts power over athletes, often coercing them into relinquishing formal allegiance to their home, with significant implications for the perpetuation of politico-economic disparity between these nations.

In this context we have outlined two competing discourses on rugby migration and collective identification. On the one hand, athletes' symbolic resistance transcends national borders and formal allegiance. Even those who decide to represent another nation in international competitions continue to exert this power, as they perceive themselves and are perceived by many Fijians to be symbolically representing Fiji. On the other, the politico-economic dynamics of international rugby render formal national allegiance a highly consequential act, and athletes' commitment comes under the critical scrutiny of other Fijians. Those who fail to commit to their home country no longer represent an alternative, empowering vision of their people, but rather their continuing disempowerment. Even those who do commit are scrutinized as to the genuineness of their allegiance: what they symbolically represent to the nation becomes highly ambiguous and contested. Therefore, global rugby competitions as a context for collective identification crystallize and embody the tension between the two discourses and agendas – the politico-economic dynamics of the global athletic system and the agency of rugby migrants to cultivate room for manoeuvre and for self-expression. As Niko Besnier reminds us in this issue, 'sport can include and exclude, as well as create and maintain structures of inequality with implications far beyond the confines of sport'. Our research has reaffirmed the multiplicity of the meanings and effects that rugby has had in Fiji.

The three Rs of Fiji

In further exploring both the oppressive and the empowering aspects of the sport, we have examined the dominant discourse that has developed around Fiji rugby since its colonial

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origins as well as its continuing implication in the dynamics of ethnic and gender politics in Fiji. This dominant discourse defines rugby as a privileged cultural practice deeply grounded in the unique heritage of the *vanua* (land), especially the indigenous chiefly system, martial/masculine traditions and Christianity. The emergent literature on Fiji rugby has contoured this discourse by highlighting the sport's connections with *i Taukei* (indigenous Fijian) institutions and traditions (see Dewey, this issue). We provided a closer and critical examination of these linkages and argued that the cultural anchoring of rugby, as well as the unquestioned prestige that it has come to command, is profoundly implicated in the historical making of the colonial (and, later, postcolonial) hegemonic order in Fiji. Fiji's localized form of rugby emerged out of the dynamics of the colonial rule that rested on, among other things, a hegemonic alliance with the chiefly establishment and the church. Rugby thus developed as a hegemonic *i Taukei* cultural practice, a cultural expression and a medium of a hegemonic socio-political order embedded in particular social relations and hierarchies of ethnicity, religion and gender. That is, rugby has both underpinned and reproduced the prevailing social relations in colonial and post-colonial Fiji.

However, and most importantly, we have argued for the pertinence of examining rugby's contested nature and the challenges presented by emerging and alternative discourses. While acknowledging the hegemony of traditional cultural definitions of Fiji rugby, we have recognized that an exclusive focus on the dominant is problematic, first because of its essentialist effect of fixing Fijian rugby players in a timeless 'tradition' and denoting that an immutable, primordial quality persistently prevails by appropriating rugby as its modern medium, and second because of its tendency to reproduce the asymmetrical relations of power inherent in the hegemonic order. That is, preoccupation with the pre-colonial cultural origins and meanings of rugby conceals the multiplicity of meanings and realities of the game in contemporary Fiji, and the reproduction of the gendered and ethnicized nature of the game has the effect of muting the voices of women and Indo-Fijians (among others) in Fiji rugby (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2013c, 2014b).

This has led us to deconstruct the dominant rugby discourse by shedding light on alternative and competing cultural meanings. We have recognized that, to many players today, rugby is not only a modern expression of indigenous cultural heritage but also, and sometimes primarily, one of the few open avenues for alternative cultural self-expression. For Indo-Fijian and woman players, rugby is a site of emergent, counter-hegemonic discourses that contest the binary opposition and hierarchy between the indigenous/masculine and the non-indigenous/feminine inherent in the dominant discourse (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2014b). The experiences and voices of Indo-Fijian and women rugby players which were represented and heard at the Centennial Rugby Conference in 2013 illustrate both the formidable power of and the limits to hegemony. These players remain marginalized through their positioning as minority categories, defined by and against 'mainstream'/'malestream' rugby, which manifests itself in uneven distribution of institutional support and resources and various, sometimes severe, forms of negative social sanction. However, at the same time, their unrelenting pursuit of self-assertion through the game constitutes a significant act of counter-hegemony, an expression of oppositional voices emanating from the social groups that have been at least until recently excluded from the hegemonic rugby discourse as well as from the wider hegemonic social order in post-colonial Fiji. While some may describe this as 'transgressive' rather than directly oppositional, we have argued that this act nevertheless powerfully questions the totality of the seemingly undisputed dominant discourse.

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Post-career prospects in Fiji

Developing the theme of marginalization and domination, we have explored the realities of Fijian ex-rugby players' lives. Drawing on the lived experiences of former players, we have depicted Fijian rugby players' pursuit of the 'rugby dream' and their 'post-rugby dream' realities. To appreciate the motivation for their devotion to and sacrifices for the goal of attaining a professional contract, we have examined the immense socio-cultural prestige and economic rewards associated with a professional rugby career. We have also noted that the athletes' decisions to pursue this goal are based on rational assessments of their own life chances and the structural conditions in Fiji. With limited livelihood options available to them, aspiring rugby players make conscious and focused efforts to secure overseas contracts, receiving little to no formal support or guidance from rugby (or any other) bodies. Thus, many forsake formal education, vocational training and employment to devote themselves to rugby while they are sustained by their immediate/extended families. At the end of this process, many are left without livelihood skills, formal qualification or knowledge relating to finance management, health and safety or career development.

That is, life after rugby – with or without securing a fat international contract – offers limited employment options for ex-players in Fiji. While farming appears to be a popular choice, unemployment is not uncommon among both former international/professional and domestic/non-professional athletes. Indeed, former athletes often face grave difficulties, with even some ex-international stars struggling to find employment or working in unskilled, low-paid jobs. In addition, retired players face emotional difficulties. Former domestic players in particular face the risk of societal humiliation and loss of face. The prestige associated with the 'rugby dream' is a double-edged sword in that it gives successful players continuing respect from their communities long after their career is over, but creates a deep sense of embarrassment and shame for those who fail to make it. Economic and emotional difficulties in some cases escalate into serious physical, emotional and mental health problems, compounded by substance abuse.

As the resource-strapped state welfare system is grossly inadequate and virtually no social security services are available to ex-players in Fiji, retired players' (immediate and extended) families and communities play a vital role as one of the few, and critical, sources of support. The significance of such informal support based on social and economic cooperation is enormous. In the absence of formal social protection, it has shouldered the economic and emotional costs of player development and life after rugby. However, we recognize that this informal support mechanism is beginning to erode, especially in urban areas, and there is evidence that some athletes are already facing severe difficulties as a result.

Fijian rugby players' life after rugby exemplifies the consequences of a neoliberal approach to sport. Professional rugby operates according to the principles of free markets, deregulation, privatization and individualism, among other things, and in the case of Fiji (and arguably other rugby-playing Pacific Island countries) transfers the risks and deficits of the 'muscle trade' to individual athletes, their families and larger communities. By making little or no investment in player development and no social protection provision, rugby bodies – both national and international – engage in unequal exchange with the local communities who absorb these costs and thereby subsidize the operation of commercial rugby. We made particular note of metropolitan clubs and unions, which systematically procure Fijian talent in pursuit of professional and commercial interests, yet make little investment in or contribution toward local player development other than the

compensation paid to the Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) for migrant athletes. Fijian rugby players represent low-investment–high-return athletic capital, since much of the necessary financial and human investment, as well as social insurance, is provided by local communities. The struggles of ex-players and their families are the end product of the inequity inherent in both commercial sport and the core–periphery relations.

Consequently, we recommend the establishment of formal, centrally driven support structures to complement and relieve the informal ones. The rationale for this is twofold. First, in light of the predicted erosion of the traditional cultural support system, the continued success of Fiji rugby requires that athletes are provided with adequate centralized professional and livelihood support. Second, the costs of player development/retirement in Fiji are currently incurred by individual athletes, families and communities; however, it should not be the community who 'picks up the tab' of player development/retirement: the FRU and especially metropolitan professional clubs, who benefit the most from Fiji's talent development, should share these expenses. The establishment of formal support structures would be a first step towards greater equity in the global rugby system.

Our investigations so far have been intended to add to the existing literature a more holistic perspective on Fiji rugby as a social phenomenon that shapes, and is shaped by, the dynamics of wider global–local social relations. Like other cultural practices and experiences, sport constitutes a 'sort of constant battlefield' (Hall, 1981, p. 233) or an arena of 'cultural battle' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 348), 'pitting the powerful against the less powerful in a competition to define the dominant' (Molnar & Kelly, 2013, p. 87). Our chief aim, therefore, has been to illuminate the interaction and contestation between a multiplicity of (dominant as well as emergent) discourses, practices, interests and social groups in this cultural arena of Fiji rugby, for a greater understanding of the game that is indeed much more than a 'gift' from colonial masters.

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Special issue content: Toward a 'second wave' of Pacific rugby research

When the FRU was founded in 1913, its membership consisted only of four European clubs based in Suva (the capital of Fiji). One hundred years on, there are more than 600 clubs in 36 regional and affiliated sub-unions and 60,000 senior and 20,000 junior players across the country (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2013a). Today, rugby is deeply entwined with the socio-cultural, economic and political tapestry of Fiji. The FRU's centenary thus provided an apt opportunity to discuss the historical and contemporary complexities of Fiji rugby at a conference aimed at conjoining academics and practitioners in a supportive forum and providing reflections on the past, present and future of Fiji rugby. This special issue features some of the key papers presented at that conference.

The first article, by Robert Dewey, sets the scene for the special issue and for rugby-related research into the Pacific Island nations. Based on archival and field research, Dewey provides a brief assessment of the types and strands of academic engagement with rugby as a socio-cultural phenomenon. So far historical and socio-cultural investigations have dominated the continuously expanding 'first wave' literature on Pacific rugby. Many studies have adopted qualitative, ethnographic approaches to unfold the local cultural complexities and to position Pacific Island peoples and communities in relation to global political undercurrents. Specific attention has been paid to rugby's relation to politics, migration, national identity, religion and masculinity in the post-colonial context. In the article, key sources covering the above topics are briefly discussed and their relations to the larger scope of Pacific rugby studies are indicated. Dewey importantly acknowledges that despite the growing research interest in this field, there are areas that have remained

almost completely uncharted, and makes useful recommendations for a range of essential future research topics. These include research on the smaller Oceania unions leading to greater comparative analysis of rugby cultures, more extensive attention paid to the multifaceted aspects of rugby migrations and diasporic engagement and further studies to analyse the religion–rugby interplay in domestic cultures and to explore multilayered gendered aspects of rugby's socio-cultural roles, including both masculinities and femininities. In our opinion, the greatest merit of Dewey's essay is the insight it provides into key research strands and sources on which future explorations are to rest. It is implicitly suggested that by building on the 'first wave' of academic investigations, the 'second wave' of research should further aid our understanding of the socio-cultural significance and idiosyncrasies of Pacific rugby to help us estimate the increasing local and regional significance of the game and to debunk some of the cultural stereotypes currently in existence.

Perhaps one example of the emerging 'second wave' of research around Pacific rugby is the sport psychology study in this issue, conducted by Gregory Mumm and Donna O'Connor, exploring the motivational profile of professional male Fijian rugby players. This study differs from the majority of the 'first wave' research in that it focuses on the collection and analysis of quantitative, structured evidence which are gathered through measured tools (Sports Motivation Scale and Cultural Awareness Questionnaire) used in post-positivist research. This is a clear distinction between previous qualitative approaches adopting constructivist standpoints, and perhaps a harbinger of the emerging rationalization of Pacific rugby as a consequence of metropolitan influences and rugby professionalization. Through a sample of elite Fijian players, Mumm and O'Connor indicate that their participants display high levels of intrinsic motivation, and that their motivation levels are sometimes affected by the ways in which they are perceived and treated in metropolitan host environments. The challenges of the host country and more structured rugby practices, coupled with existing rugby-specific stereotypes such as lack of discipline and natural flair associated with Fiji players, could dampen motivation and, thus, performance. To reduce the undesired effects of performance slump and amotivation triggered by relocation to a new host environment, participants highlighted, it is essential for metropolitan coaches to understand more about the cultural particulars of Fiji and other Pacific Island rugby players. Mumm and O'Connor specifically argue that strategies for coaching migrant Pacific Island rugby players should be 'in place to help athletes manage the external pressures associated with increased incomes, immediate or extended family and social welfare programmes'. By developing a more in-depth cultural awareness and sensitivity towards migrant athletes, metropolitan coaches could have a better chance of alleviating social and family pressures and, in turn, optimize individual as well as team performance (see Purdy, Molnar, Griffith, & Castle, 2014).

The ever-present cultural pressures faced by Pacific Island rugby players are further investigated by Peter Horton, who argues that Pacific Islanders have become one of the most visible and prodigious forces in contemporary global rugby. With the growing professionalization of the sport and related employment opportunities, Pacific Island players have emigrated to core rugby countries in a quest for the so-called 'rugby dream'. While the pursuit of a lucrative international contract has become a widespread and culturally supported career choice for a high number of young island men, this career pathway is not without peril. In this essay, Horton provides in-depth consideration of the significant social, cultural, economic and personal issues faced by Pacific Island male rugby players in their host culture. Employing Appadurai's concept of ethnoscapes, it is observed that migrations motivated by the pursuit of a professional rugby contract have

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put enormous pressures on traditionally existing social ties and players themselves. In this sense, (first and second-generation) Pacific Island migrants have been under multiple and ever increasing culturally induced stresses, deriving from a range of sources: challenges of the host environment and/or securing a rugby position away from family; single-mindedness regarding their rugby career; cultural pressures to succeed and reach the 'rugby dream' and to provide financial stability for the (extended) family. A multiplicity of pressures accompanies Pacific Island youth along their rugby career and these can be severely damaging both socially and psychologically. In some extreme cases, the culmination of various types of social obligations has led to young island men ending their own life due to their perceived failure in rugby and, hence, in society. Horton provides two recent key examples, Mosese Fotuaika and Alex Elisala, to illustrate the pertinence of such pressures. Both of these athletes with a range of traditional cultural responsibilities of being close to their respective 'rugby dream' 'cracked' under the many demands that had been put on them and committed suicide. In his essay, Horton reveals some of the dark aspects of Pacific Island rugby migrations and argues that despite a few positive strategies implemented by metropolitan clubs, young men from the Pacific Islands or with Pacific Island heritage still ply their rugby trade under immense social pressures.

The next article, by Brent McDonald and Lena Rodriguez, further examines the specific social demands and stereotypes which Polynesian men experience in Australia in relation to immigration and sport. They argue that there is a strong functionalist attitude to sport in Australia that attributes predominantly positive, egalitarian features to all sport, and to rugby in particular; however, the reality of sporting spaces is extensively dependent on gender, race and ethnicity discourses and one's success is strongly influenced by one's ability to successfully negotiate between specific cultural, post-colonial discourses. In the context of migration, one of the most visible and desired employment options for Pacific Islanders in Australia is in the professional rugby codes. In this ethnically charged cultural milieu, migrant Polynesian men are considered successful, natural athletes with a rugby career pathway in focus. Rugby is their 'meal ticket'. Thus, via the social manifestation of Polycultural capital – the 'maintenance of Pacific values, cultural pride, Pacific language fluency and acceptance from Pacific peoples and others' (Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010, p. 14) – Polynesian men appear to buy into the dominant discourse regarding their hyper-physicality and thus their predestined road to rugby stardom. McDonald and Rodriguez point out that the number of sport star wannabes, driven by self-fulfilling prophecies, among Polynesian young men significantly surpasses the actual number of professional contracts available. Thus, there is a serious and ever growing issue of players who do not make the professional ranks and leave the sport pathway without other viable options available – a finding that is supported by our own previous work (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2014a). Moreover, the general perception of Polynesian men as 'hyper-masculine' and 'natural born athletes' has created dominant cultural discourses which have influenced both Polynesians and the wider Australian society as well. Due to such general racialized perceptions, Polynesian men have been led to believe that sporting success offsets the neglect of their education and health. To combat such racialized stereotypes, much greater structural engagement is required to develop essential dialogues between immigrants and the general public, which consequently would help Polynesian men realize their potential outside of contact sports.

While the Islanders have long established migratory pipelines with New Zealand and Australia, which have been active in channelling immigrants in ever increasing numbers, emerging rugby-specific migratory trends can also be observed. Dominik Schieder introduces the case of Fiji Islander rugby union players in Japan, one of the emerging host

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countries for Pacific Island male rugby players. Based on ethnographic field work, Schieder provides a detailed socio-historical account of Japanese corporate rugby and the emerging presence of Fijian players in it. The pioneers of the Fiji–Japan migratory route appeared in the early 1990s, to be followed by others recruited in and outside of Fiji through both formal and informal channels. Fijian and other migrant players are contracted by corporate rugby teams to ply their physical and tactical skills for the benefit of the corporations. As corporate rugby slowly shifted from amateurism to professionalism, the role of migrant players increased greatly and became instrumental in both Japanese corporate and rugby development. Schieder identified two key reasons for recruiting Fijian players: rugby and social skills and lower employment costs. These Fiji Islanders arrive in Japanese corporate rugby via four different but interconnected routes that channel four types of migrants. These types we, the editors, categorize as *amateur*, *scholarship, nomadic* and *transnational*. *Amateurs* are born and recruited in Fiji, where they have an emerging rugby career. They are predominantly recruited by both formal (agents) and informal (Japanese holidaymakers with corporate links) channels. They are predominantly employed by lower-level clubs and retain amateur status. *Scholarship* athletes are young talented Fijian rugby players in the early stages of their domestic sporting career. They are offered places in Japanese high schools and universities where, during their studies, they are expected to contribute to the rugby team's performance. Upon finishing school these athletes are often approached by corporate teams with contract offers. The third category is *nomadic* Fijian rugby players, who were born and raised in Fiji but have successfully globally plied their rugby skills before moving to Japan. These players are formally recruited and offered better contract terms than migrants of other categories due to their extensive global playing experience. The final category is the *transnational* Fijians, who emigrated in childhood or were born outside Fiji, and came to be involved in rugby post-migration. Some of these players become part of a Fijian diaspora in the host country where they attended school and learned to play rugby. *Transnational* athletes, meanwhile, arrive in Japan through various talent pipelines and from different transit countries and, thus, can be found across the levels of corporate rugby.

The above categories in particular, and Schieder's article in general, provide relevant, detailed insight into the ever changing migration networks and contingencies with specific respect to Japanese corporate rugby and provide directions for further research.

Niko Besnier composed the coda for this special issue, in which he ponders upon the complexity of Pacific Island-related migrations and argues that sport-driven peregrinations of athletes from this geographic region are inherently connected to historical, political, social and global dynamics. Besnier observes that the cliché of natural 'Polynesian flair' present in, among other spheres, the global journalistic imagination, is an extension of colonial and post-colonial western perceptions of non-white bodies and thus is frequently used to make overarching assumptions regarding the general population of the region. This creates a highly problematic and myopic perception of the peoples of the Pacific, as this discourse exclusively focuses on young, trained male bodies and masks the corporeal features and realities of the people who do not belong to this exclusive circle. As Besnier (this issue) puts it, 'many other bodies in the same societies do not display the same characteristics or do not display them to the same extent, a fact that calls into question the basis upon which this flair can be characterized as "Fijian", "Samoan" or "Tongan"'.

Buying into such narratives grotesquely and inaccurately simplifies the socio-cultural tapestry of the Pacific Islands and the great variety of peoples and bodies sharing that geo-social space. Besnier's account of Fiji draws our attention to the heterogeneity of the

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population of this (and any other) small island nation, which consists of two dominant ethnic groups (*i Taukei* or indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, making up approximately just over 90 per cent of the total population) and a wealth of ethnic minorities, including peoples of other Pacific Island or Chinese ancestry and local 'European' descendants of traders and other settlers from Britain, to name but a few. Consequently, research that is significant and of value needs to embrace local history, coupled with a cognizance of indigenous political subtleties engulfed by globalization processes, especially post-colonial perspectives. In this way, we can critically distance ourselves from globally manufactured and perpetuated stereotypes and begin to understand alternative, emerging discourses (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2013c). As Besnier (this issue) succinctly puts it, 'To understand Fijian [and Pacific Island] rugby, we must understand who does not play it; to understand rugby players' mobilities, we must understand other mobilities; and to understand what drives these mobilities, we must pay attention to what discourages them.' Along with Besnier and others featured in this special issue, we suggest exploring absent and emerging voices and cultural practices in regard to sport-related migration in, from and to the Pacific Islands. Our special issue is intended to serve as a contribution towards this end – building a body of literature that engages with Pacific Island rugby with all its complexities, contradictions and multiplicities and thereby offers Pacific Island rugby researchers, players, officials and stakeholders critical insights into the game that matters so much to so many.

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