



Femininities, sport and physical culture in postfeminist, neoliberal times

This is a post-peer-review, pre-copyedit version of a paper published in *New sporting femininities*:

Toffoletti, Kim, Francombe-Webb, Jessica and Thorpe, Holly 2018, Femininities, sport and physical culture in postfeminist, neoliberal times. In Toffoletti, Kim, Francombe-Webb, Jessica and Thorpe, Holly (ed), *New sporting femininities: embodied politics in postfeminist times*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland, pp.1-19.

The final authenticated version is available online at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72481-2_1

This is the accepted manuscript.

©2018, the authors

Reprinted with permission.

Downloaded from DRO:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30113824>

This is the pre-proofed version of the chapter, accepted for publication mid 2017.

Full Citation: Toffoletti, K., Francombe-Webb, J. & Thorpe, H. (2018). 'Femininities, Sport and Physical Culture in Postfeminist, Neoliberal Times', in K.Toffoletti, H.Thorpe & J.Francombe-Webb (Eds.). *New Sporting Femininities: Embodied Politics in Postfeminist Times*, Palgrave Macmillan pp.1-20.

Abstract: This chapter details the significance and relevance of a critical engagement with post-, neoliberal and popular feminist discourses to studies of the female moving body, sport and fitness. It establishes a framework through which to approach emerging writing in this field by evaluating how feminist critiques of postfeminism, neoliberal feminism and popular feminisms can transform and reorient established paradigms through which sporting femininity has been traditionally theorised. It outlines the utility of these approaches for feminists seeking to respond to the cultural conditions under which athletic women and girls come to understand and engage in physical activity and the sporting domain, and reflects on the impacts of postfeminist and neoliberal paradigms on the enactment of gender power and politics in sporting and fitness contexts.

Introduction

This book explores the changing nature of gendered sporting subjectivities, bodies, practices, politics, agency, and experiences in a period characterised by postfeminist sentiments and the emergence of new strands of feminism including popular feminism and fourth-wave feminism. The decision to put this collection together came about at a moment of

considerable academic and popular debate about the renewed interest in feminism in political, cultural and corporate life (Gill, 2016; McRobbie, 2015; Rottenberg, 2014). This growing visibility of feminism has been tied to wider cultural shifts over the past decade, which have seen women and girls reimagined as agentic, empowered and active subjects in globalised economies (Dobson & Harris, 2015). For a sustained period throughout the '90s and into the 2000s, the celebration of "girl power" was largely understood in the Western popular mindset as part of the "postfeminist" view of feminism as redundant in an era of women's apparent "equality" (Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 2009). This is despite ongoing feminist activism to address issues facing diverse groups of women globally in tandem with rigorous academic engagement with various forms of feminist praxis and critique. In more recent times we have witnessed feminism, as well as a more general interest in women's issues, brought to the fore of public debate, complicating the idea that feminism is "over." Online media forms, such as social media, have been instrumental in facilitating the increased visibility granted to women's and girls' endeavours, achievements and activities, as well as drawing attention to the ongoing systemic issues and everyday challenges encountered by women. A resurgence of feminist activism online (Keller, 2015) has been a notable feature of recent times, as has a growing awareness of intersectionality, cultural difference and gender and sexual diversity in relation to discussions of women's issues in more mainstream media forums.

The domains of contemporary sport, fitness and physical activity offer many instances that speak to the complexities of our current post/anti/resurgent/multiple feminist moment. Given the centrality of the body to women's experiences of active recreation, studies of movement and physical cultures ideally lend themselves to explorations of the cultural practices and everyday processes through which contemporary postfeminist femininities are produced. Not only are women participating in a wider range of sports than in generations past, but women's athletic endeavors are being given greater prominence and attention, as

noted in Simone Fullagar's insightful foreword to this collection. The heightened focus on women's sporting achievements can be seen in the naming of 2015 as the "Year of Women in Sports," with African American tennis player Serena Williams recognised as "Sportsperson of the Year" by Sports Illustrated (SI) magazine (see Cooky, this volume). On its front cover, Williams appears resplendent in a black lace leotard and heels. Seated on a gilt throne, she casually slings her leg over the armrest and looks assertively down the camera lens.

Williams' "crowning moment" on the cover of SI does not elicit a straightforward response. In a postfeminist moment this rendering of "empowered femininity" could be interpreted as both "sexist" and as an act of "freely-chosen," "self-pleasing," feminine expression.

Existing alongside the proliferation of glamorous images of celebrity sportswomen are debates in the popular media concerning the sustained injustices experienced by female athletes worldwide, such as disparities in pay, quality and amount of media coverage. While this indicates that discussions of gender inequality are back on the agenda, popular discussions around women in sport expose some of the challenges raised by postfeminist rhetoric that emphasises women's individualism, choice and agency, often at the expense of actions directed towards redressing structural inequalities and advocating social change (Gill, 2016). Indeed, the multiple discourses circulating around women in sport generate complex and often contradictory messages that belie binary understandings of women as "empowered" and "equal" participants in sport, or as "victims" of a patriarchal sports industry. Indeed, it is within this dynamic context that we call for a focus on postfeminist times in the study of women's sport and physical activity. In locating a study of sporting femininities in the context of "postfeminist times," we do so in order to trouble both the idea that feminism is "over," as well as accounts that suggest it is "back."

Conceptualising Postfeminism in Sport and Physical Culture

Our conceptualisation of postfeminism in this collection acknowledges the multiple uses and meanings of the term, as well as its intersections and overlaps with other feminist sensibilities and movements. Determining what constitutes postfeminism is not clear-cut and while it remains a contested term, feminist understandings of postfeminism can be broadly characterised along the following lines: as an epistemological position; a historical shift; a backlash against feminism; or a cultural sensibility (Gill, 2007). In keeping with the approach of feminist analysts of postfeminism such as Angela McRobbie (2009) and Rosalind Gill (2016), we view postfeminism through a critical lens. That is, postfeminism does not simply stand for the rejection of feminism or a period after feminism but constitutes a distinctive cultural condition that invites and produces new articulations of femininity. A number of feminist critics have sought to identify the characteristics of postfeminism, noting its emphasis on women's empowerment and independence, the expression of femininity as a bodily property, the centrality of consumption to women's acts of bodily maintenance and transformation, and a preoccupation with expressions of hetero-sexy femininity that "extends beyond the body to constitute a remaking of subjectivity" (Gill, 2016, p. 613). These shifts are understood relative to a proliferating media culture, and viewed as inextricably linked to ideologies of neoliberalism and consumerism. Within these frameworks, assertions of women's personal "choice" become the dominant mode through which gender "equality" is understood, taking precedent over more collectivist forms of politics (Genz & Brabon, 2012; Gill, 2007; Gill & Scharff, 2011; McRobbie, 2009; Tasker & Negra, 2007). Although "the tendency has been to understand post-feminism itself as Western," more recent intersectional approaches to postfeminism have exposed how postfeminist logics can account for racial and other forms of difference (Dosekun, 2015, p. 961; see also Butler, 2013; Samie & Toffoletti, chapter 5).

Viewed in this way, postfeminist sentiments shape the way gendered subjectivities are enacted and inform how contemporary gender relations are understood. Accordingly, we advocate for the utility of a critical engagement with postfeminism as a means to understand women's contemporary embodied experiences of sport and physical culture. This approach treats postfeminism as a critical analytical category rather than an analytic perspective. We follow Gill in arguing that rather than dismiss postfeminism as irrelevant in a current moment of heightened visibility around feminism in Western popular culture, we must pay continued attention to the persistence of postfeminist sentiments to promote emergent forms of popular feminism and pro-women address. For instance, Gill observes the "distinctly postfeminist move" of popular feminism to take "a lexicon borrowed from activist feminism, yet put (it) to work in the service of ideas and perspectives that apparently offer little to no real challenge to gender power relations" (Gill, 2016, p. 623). Extending beyond definitional accounts of postfeminism (Gill, 2007, 2016) encourages feminist thinking to critique the practices and conditions associated with postfeminism, generating new possibilities for feminist intervention and activism in sport and physical cultures.

Postfeminism and Sports Feminism

While the gendered impacts of postfeminism are a source of ongoing interrogation and debate in feminist media, cultural, sociological and political analysis, a critical engagement with postfeminism as a cultural sensibility has yet to be fully explored in sport studies. Although a number of sport scholars have engaged with, and critiqued, third wave feminism (Bruce, 2016; Caudwell, 2011; Chananie-Hill, Waldron & Umsted, 2012; Heywood, 2008; Thorpe, 2008), it is only fairly recently that feminist analysts of sport, physical and movement cultures have begun grappling with the concept of postfeminism and its entanglements with

neoliberalism in ways that move beyond accounts of postfeminism as signalling the demise of feminism (Fullagar, Pavlidis & Francombe-Webb, forthcoming; Thorpe, Toffoletti & Bruce, 2017; Toffoletti, 2016). As such, this anthology marks a distinct intellectual intervention in feminist studies of sport, physical activity and movement cultures, as well as providing another perspective to current postfeminist literatures. For some time now, feminists of sport and physical cultures have examined the impacts of consumerism, the emphasis on the body and appearance, and highly individualised strategies for thriving and surviving in late-capitalism—all central concerns for analysts of postfeminist cultures (Cole & Hribar, 1995; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Kennedy & Markula, 2011)—while others have critically explored the intersections of neoliberalism and feminism (e.g., Heywood, 2008; McDonald, 2012, 2015). As a feminist project that is committed to understanding women’s experiences relative to the cultural forces and social circumstances they are subject to, *New Sporting Femininities* contributes to ongoing feminist scholarship and dialogue around women’s participation in sport and physical activity. It does so by seeking to account for the increasingly sophisticated and complex operations of gender inequality and power in contemporary culture at the intersections of postfeminism and neoliberalism (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Gill, 2011, 2016; McRobbie, 2015; Prugl, 2015; Rottenberg, 2014).

In this regard, our collection seeks to build on a tradition of feminist sport scholarship that is plural, diverse and situated in terms of the perspectives and knowledges it has produced. Although it is not possible to address them all here, we acknowledge that this project takes its lead from feminist scholars of sport and culture to interrogate the social realities of postfeminist subjectivities relative to systemic patterns of able-bodied, age related, class, heteronormative, race and religious hierarchies (see, for instance, Birrell & Cole, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994, Hargreaves & Anderson, 2014; Markula, 2005; Ratna & Samie, 2017; Scraton & Flintoff, 2002). Far from abstract and timeless impressions, feminists of sport and

movement cultures have taught us that “these modes of address are embodied and historical and there is still much work to do in order to understand the way that gender is governed and how women’s everyday encounters with sport are reconstituted through these postfeminist rationalities” (Francombe-Webb & Toffoletti, forthcoming). A unique contribution of this project thus involves recognising new feminist interventions and framings of contemporary culture, as well as situating contemporary women’s sport and active recreation experiences relative to ongoing feminist interventions, and within these changing politics.

Critically Engaging Postfeminism for Studies of Sport and Physical Culture

In advocating for a deeper engagement with postfeminism in the study of sport and fitness institutions, cultures, practices, subjects and bodies, we wish to highlight the distinct theoretical and conceptual interventions that a critical emphasis on the conditions of postfeminism can bring to understanding the increasingly globalised, fragmented, dislocated, flexible and self-actualising nature of female athletic subjectivities. There are a number of ways in which we consider a critical engagement with postfeminism to be useful for advancing feminist thinking about contemporary sport and physical cultures.

We are currently witnessing a renewed feminist interrogation of neoliberalism as a dominant cultural phenomenon shaping women’s everyday experiences across a range of social institutions such as the workplace, education and the media (Dobson & Harris, 2016; Prugl, 2015). Engaging critically with “postfeminist times” offers a means to examine how gender identities and assemblages in sport and fitness contexts take on new forms in response to the prevailing climate that frames sporting and exercising actors in terms of individual capacity, management, self-making and responsibility. The contributions to this anthology extend current approaches to the field by revealing how concepts of female autonomy,

choice, agency and empowerment take on particular meanings in the context of the global sports and corporeal economy, where they are appropriated to advance an account of sporting and fit subjects as personally responsible for their own successes or failures. A critique of postfeminist sporting femininities and gender politics contributes new insights to studies of women's participation in sport and exercise by encouraging an exploration of the ways neoliberal ideologies, which place emphasis on individual empowerment, personal responsibility and entrepreneurial subjecthood, intersect with feminist notions related to female opportunities to produce gendered subjectivities, relations and experiences in sport, leisure and fitness contexts. Here, postfeminism's intersections with the governing logics of neoliberal capitalism are not treated as generalised arguments about neoliberalism's "negative" effects but explored in ways that bring to the fore emerging forms of individualistic, entrepreneurial, media-savvy, and often body-focused, strategies being adopted and adapted by women in sport and movement cultures in site specific contexts.

There are other important ways in which a focus on postfeminism can move forward feminist thinking about women's participation and representation in sport and physical activity. Whereas once the discussion about women's relationships to sport, leisure and fitness was largely framed in terms of their exclusion, marginalisation, trivialisation, sexualisation and objectification under patriarchy, researchers of sport and physical cultures are now faced with new conceptual challenges. Namely, it is becoming increasingly difficult to speak about female athletes and women who partake in physical activity as objects of a patriarchal economy in a postfeminist and neoliberal context that characterises women as active and knowing agents in the making of their own identities. In this regard, we advocate for the development of new critical vocabularies through which to understand the effects and affects of gendered forms of power operating in sport and physical culture, as well as the new

framing of old modalities of sexism and inequality, in a period characterised by neoliberalism and postfeminism.

In identifying the entanglement of feminist and antifeminist themes as a dominant feature of postfeminist sentiment (McRobbie, 2009), a critical analysis of postfeminism encourages ongoing interrogation of what is distinct about the dynamics of power in a cultural landscape that cast women who participate in sport and fitness as empowered agents yet fail to dislodge the devaluing and commodification of women's physical pursuits (see, in particular, chapters 2 and 6 of this volume). Collectively, the interrogations of postfeminist sport and fitness practices developed in this collection help draw attention to how narratives of female empowerment often overlook the intersections of class, race, religion, age, disability, sexuality (a far from exhaustive list) informing how women from different cultural, ethnic and national contexts embody (in)active femininities. A number of chapters in this collection critically interrogate the cultural reach and impact of postfeminism, exploring how postfeminist agency is taken up and expressed locally and specifically on Other bodies—distinguished as such for their difference from cultural norms valourising able-bodiedness, heterosexuality and Whiteness. Critical engagement with postfeminism can go some way toward revealing the ways that diverse groups of women are making meaning of contemporary discourses of female empowerment and choice and the various strategies—some highly political and others complicit and/or apathetic—being developed by girls and women in response to such discourses relative to their own and others' moving bodies.

Discussions of postfeminism as a cultural sensibility draw attention to the importance of interrogating different forms of privilege evoked by postfeminist sentiments within culture (see chapters 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13). *New Sporting Femininities* contributes to feminist sport studies literatures on power and difference by problematising emerging forms of feminine expression centred around “empowerment” and “capacity” and the terms by which certain

physically active bodies are accorded visibility and currency over others. Concepts such as the “top-girl” and “can-do” girl forwarded by Anita Harris (2004) speak to the formulation of girlhood/womanhood, within contemporary Western cultures, as distinctively middle class, White, able-bodied, heterosexual, cisgendered, tech-savvy and toned. Exponents of critical postfeminism raise questions and challenge this normalisation. Harris (2004, p. 170) discusses the way that the assemblage of class and race relations reconstruct and divide girls into subject positions of “can-do” versus “at-risk”; rationalities that require deconstructing in order to address the normalisation of, among other things, Whiteness (also see Azzarito, this volume). As such, critical postfeminists analyse and interrogate creative and diverse future girl politics that link “at-risk” “experiences, attitudes, and behaviors to particular populations based on class, race and community” (Harris, 2004, p. 170).

Sporting Femininities

Our utilisation of “sporting femininities” within this book is a direct reflection of our endeavours to challenge essentialist understandings of femininity as occurring within both sport settings and wider society as well as to challenge binary modalities of gender and femininity that—as Fullagar outlines in her foreword for this anthology—limits fluid and plural expressions of gendered subjectivities that are trans, queer, non-binary etc. The athletic bodies of women such as Caster Semenya and Serena Williams, for instance, “trouble” gender prescriptions of “masculinity” and “femininity” yet we also recognise the way these “Other” forms of embodiment work to construct and divide women according to, among other things, racialised and heteronormative assumptions. Such observations lead us to question the extent to which postfeminism is in need of decolonising “in order to assess its applicability and relevance to understanding the lives of women beyond the West, or who are

framed as Others by those who occupy privileged subject positions” (Samie & Toffoletti, this volume). Acknowledging the fluidity of gender expressions and the intersectionality of gendered experiences demands ongoing interrogation of how women’s athletic bodies are monitored for feminine attributes, the ways that athletic femininity is produced and regulated along the lines of race, class, sexuality and ability, and the imperative for women to perform articulations of successful femininity under postfeminist conditions that foster intense scrutiny of women’s bodies.

By approaching postfeminism as a site for critique, our aim is to develop a better understanding of the new forms of politics being practised by women in physical and digital spaces, and offer new frameworks to interpret how gender power relations in sport operate relative to local social conditions and wider global forces, as well as to evaluate their effects. Crucially, we advocate for critical engagements with postfeminism that explore how postfeminist sentiments manifest, are made sense of and expressed in particular ways that are attuned to local contexts and the cultures and practices of different sports, moving bodies and physical activities. This collection highlights the possibilities that a critical engagement with postfeminism can generate for making sense of gendered subjectivity relative to specific sporting, fitness and physical cultural settings (athleisure, classrooms, fitspo, mixed martial arts, NFL football, Olympics, Paralympics, roller derby, skateboarding, soccer, sport-for-development NGOs, sport media, tennis) and to trace connectivities between how postfeminist sentiments are embodied and represented across geographical, discursive and material/virtual borders. Situating our analysis within a distinct cultural moment of postfeminism and neoliberalism offers a means to make sense of the complex and often contradictory ways that women’s athletic participation is promoted, represented, experienced and embodied within localised settings (for instance Afghanistan, Australia, China, the UK and USA), as well as connecting these situated practices to wider global flows of media and

consumer cultures that invoke postfeminist ways of being (Doeskun, 2015). We suggest that a focus on the various forms of new (and old) politics and praxis that are being practiced by (particularly young) physically active women in differing geopolitical and sociocultural contexts, as well as digital spaces, has much to offer contemporary feminist engagements with the intersections of moving bodies, subjectivity and representational politics.

Postfeminism and the Digital

Our engagement with postfeminism needs to be mapped alongside our engagement with wider academic and popular debates about the rise of an apparent fourth wave of feminism that is articulated in terms of technology, online activism and the new media-ecology (Darmon, 2013; Keller, 2015; Rivers, 2017; see also Fullagar, Pavlidis & Francombe-Webb, forthcoming, for a fuller mapping of these relations). While it is beyond the scope of this project to offer a detailed account of the feminist fourth wave, we recognise that a critical engagement with digital leisure, sporting and physical cultural practices from a feminist perspective cannot ignore the rise of the digital and the way that this offers new forms of “doing” and “undoing” feminist politics. We see these tensions and possibilities explored in analyses of the online fitspo movement by Evans and Riley (chapter 10) and Lucas and Hodler (chapter 11), which illuminate the complexities of women’s encounters with digital fitness. Inasmuch as the fitspo phenomenon produces and represents fit feminine subjectivities in terms of self-transformation and body management, the interactive and accessible features of social media offers radical potential to expand notions of gendered embodiment, pointing towards the kinds of nuanced critiques required to make sense of the representation and production of diverse gendered sporting subjectivities under postfeminist conditions.

Feminist scholars of physical and digital cultures therefore face a number of challenges when looking to understand better women's experiences, their engagement with media, health, sporting and physical practices, and moments of resistance as they negotiate postfeminist physical and digital spaces, or what Renold and Ringrose (2016) term "digital corporeal culture." An important feature of this edited collection is its contemporary cultural focus on the different possibilities opened up by digital practices to extend understandings of sport, fitness and embodiment beyond conventional framings. It does so by recognising the growing popularity of informal and DIY active recreation practices online (chapters 10 and 11), as well as the uptake of social media by female sporting actors who have conventionally been marginalised and invisible in mainstream sport and leisure discourses (chapters 11 and 12) and by sporting organisations and NGOs seeking to reach the young female demographic (chapters 13 and 14). We do not take for granted that women's leisure, sporting and physical practices are taken up, and made to feel their own, by the cultural discourses of postfeminism, neoliberalism, consumerism and digitisation that shape the present day and speak to debates about the relevance and position of fourth-wave feminism. In this regard, an investigation of online sport and fitness practices in postfeminist times prompts us to further interrogate what is at stake for the material practices of women who are socially prescribed "different" in terms of ability (chapter 12), sexuality (chapter 11), ethnicity (chapters 8, 14), race (chapters 2, 4, 7) and religion (chapter 5), as debates around diversity, inclusion and equality gain greater traction in sport and other institutional settings.

Limitations and Future Directions

Our anthology acknowledges the limitations of postfeminist scholarship thus far, including a predominant focus on the experiences and representations of White, Western, able-bodied,

cisgendered women. As editors, our location as scholars from Western nations (Australia, New Zealand and the UK) has no doubt played a part in the kinds of contributions that appear in this volume, the range of voices and perspective on offer, and the kinds of physical activities covered. We recognise the need for more sustained engagement with issues around sexual and cultural diversity, as well as the spectrum of abilities and ages, in order to fully address the importance and significance of movement, physical culture, exercise and sports participation for diverse groups of girls and women. In identifying some of the critiques of postfeminism, our anthology extends critical postfeminist debates by seeking to address such gaps. We welcome contributions that complicate traditional centre-periphery relations and promote encounters with diversity and difference both within and beyond the “West.” For instance, Pavlidis’ exploration of Roller Derby in China can be viewed in light of the geopolitical positioning of Australia as part of Australasia, the flows and connectivities of people, media and culture occurring within this region, and the transnational dimensions of postfeminist discursive regimes. So too, does Samie and Toffoletti’s consideration of Muslim American Olympians Ibtihaj and Dalilah Muhammad raise questions regarding the kinds of sporting bodies that can be mobilised for the nation and the limits of such encounters relative to a postfeminist vernacular of “women’s empowerment.” The chapter by Thorpe, Hayhurst and Chawansky also considers how postfeminist sentiments from the Global North are imposed upon young women in the Global South when international sporting NGOs use their images in marketing campaigns. We hope this collection is the starting point for sustained debates in the feminist analysis of sport and physical culture, which open up further dialogue and critique of the limits and possibilities for diverse sporting actors who are subject to the conditions of postfeminism.

Structure and Content

The collection is divided into three sections that address the representations (section 1), embodied experiences (section 2) and digital worlds (section 3) of physically active women under postfeminism. Collectively, the chapters showcase a range of disciplinary approaches to the study of sport, physical culture and postfeminism, including qualitative methods (chapters 7, 8, 9, 14) and cultural and media studies analysis of texts and discourses, as well as a strong focus on the intersections of gender and cultural difference. The first section, “Postfeminism and the Sport-Media-Industrial Complex,” features five original chapters that each contribute to new understandings of the varied and multiple ways the sporting industry reproduces and challenges particular understandings about women as athletes and sport consumers. In Chapter 2, Cheryl Cooky asks “What’s *new* about sporting femininities?” and critically examines two examples from the 2015 “Year of Women in Sports.” These examples—Serena Williams’ selection as ‘Sportsperson of the Year’ and the United States Women’s Soccer Team’s World Cup Win—reveal new and ongoing challenges for sportswomen in the US in the context of postfeminism. In the following chapter, Jennifer McClearen engages with popular feminism to explain the significant rise and popularity of Ultimate Fighting Championship’s (UFC) champion fighter and popular cultural icon, Ronda Rousey. In so doing, she explains how the UFC incorporated women into their brand by rejecting a White, physically weak femininity and instead celebrating self-discipline and individual empowerment through fitness.

The following two chapters in this section bring race, ethnicity and religion centre stage. In Chapter 4, Kristi Tredway works at the intersection of postfeminism and color-blind racism, to examine how the Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) selectively embraced Serena Williams as an “exotic Other” within the context of corporate globalisation. This chapter is important in highlighting the need for more intersectional postfeminist scholarship that seeks to understand the complexities of race and gender in the global corporate (sporting)

market. The next chapter by Sumaya Samie and Kim Toffoletti also expands postfeminist scholarship by working at the nexus of race, ethnicity, religion, gender and nationality in an analysis of print media representations of American Muslim sportswomen Ibtihaj and Dalilah Muhammad during the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. Their study reveals how postfeminist sentiments were used to frame these two Muslim sportswomen in quite different ways within this unique historical moment. The final chapter in this section by Jeffrey Montez de Oca and Molly Cotner engages with the concept of commodity feminism to examine how the National Football League (NFL) has marketed towards women for capital accumulation.

The five chapters in section one draw upon a range of different feminist approaches—postfeminism, popular feminism, commodity feminism—to reveal new and old workings of gendered power in the sport-media-industrial complex. It is worth noting that each of the chapters in this section are based in the US context. While this was not necessarily intended by the editorial team, we feel that collectively these chapters highlight the significant role the United States plays in defining the global sport-media industry, and (re)producing postfeminist and neoliberal discursive representations of female athletes and women’s sport.

The second section, titled “Everyday Athletic Girls and Women Negotiating Postfeminism,” includes three chapters focused on the routine negotiations of young women and girls within different sporting and physical cultural spaces. In Chapter 7, Laura Azzarito offers a critique of how contemporary media representations of the normative “superwoman” are working to circulate an image of a “healthy looking body” embedded in ideals of aesthetics and Whiteness. Drawing upon postfeminist scholarship and engaging with postcolonial research, she calls for new approaches that give space for the voices of ethnic minority girls in the US and particularly their experiences with visual self-representations. In Chapter 8, Adele Pavlidis continues to move us further from the White, Western centre of much postfeminist scholarship, via an examination of new sporting femininities in China.

Drawing upon interviews with roller derby skaters in China and ethnographic data, she details the rise of roller derby and reveals how this new form of physical culture presents both possibilities and contradictions for women in China. The third and final chapter in this section, by Jessica Francombe-Webb and Laura Palmer, draws upon a feminist physical cultural studies approach to explore British girls' lived experiences of playing football within postfeminist times. In so doing, they reveal how young women in positions of privilege are articulating sporting choices alongside fears of failure and reluctance to risk their "can-do" (Harris, 2004) status. Overall, the three chapters in this section highlight the importance of local context for understanding how global discourses of postfeminism press upon young women's embodied experiences, and how young women accept, negotiate and challenge such discourses in ways that are attuned to locality, history and culture.

In the final section, the focus is on digital culture and the relationship between the physical and the virtual in the context of women in sport and physical activity. Titled "Postfeminism in Online Sport and Fitness Spaces," it begins with two chapters exploring the Fitspo movement. Chapter 10 sees Sarah Riley and Adrienne Evans critically engage with a key component of the postfeminist sensibility—the transformation imperative—to analyse Fitblr content. In focusing on user driven content emerging on Fitblr, the authors reveal how transformative body work is constructed as difficult, replete with failure, and requiring physical and psychological hard work. In so doing, they demonstrate an important shift in how media transformations have been previously understood, and locate such changes clearly within the context of postfeminism. In the next chapter, Cathryn Lucas and Matthew Hodler offer a refreshingly original interpretation of the fitspiration movement. Working from a queer world-making perspective, they focus on the creation and dissemination of #takebackfitspo memes and explain how such memes expand notions of gendered

embodiment, and encourage viewers to participate in ongoing re-definition of physical activity, beauty norms, and the self.

Kim Toffoletti offers a much needed examination of representations of disability in the context of postfeminism in Chapter 12. More specifically, her analysis of the social media usage of eight Australian female athletes competing in the 2016 Paralympic Games reveals how these women are crafting their feminine and sporting identities online to generate greater media exposure. In so doing, she explores how postfeminist sentiments within culture make possible greater visibility for sporting women with disabilities as well as the terms by which this public visibility is allowable. Continuing to explore discourses of postfeminism in the context of Australia, in Chapter 13 Meredith Nash conducts a feminist multi-modal critical discourse analysis of the retail website of Lorna Jane, an Australian fitness fashion company, to examine the discursive strategies used by the company to authorise a particular notion of “active living” for women. According to Nash, the semiotic choices on the website (including technologies, styles, fabrics, colours and cuts of clothing items) signify key postfeminist discourses and themes related to health and fitness which ultimately place the responsibility for fitness and health onto individual women. Then, in Chapter 14 Holly Thorpe, Lyndsay Hayhurst and Megan Chawansky engage recent feminist and postfeminist literature on the “Girl Effect” and changing humanitarian communication styles to critically discuss the politics of so-called “positive” representations of girls from the Global South in Sport for Development campaigns. Drawing upon interviews with staff of Skateistan—a skateboarding NGO based in Afghanistan—they highlight how postfeminist discourses of agency and empowerment—as well as neoliberal and colonial assumptions—are being reproduced in the production of social media representations of Afghan girls on skateboards. This chapter is particularly valuable for giving thought to how postfeminist times impact global phenomenon such as the lived reality of poverty experienced by many women and girls by illuminating

how postfeminist discourses are affecting women from the Global North and their relationships with women in the Global South, and visa versa. Framing the entire collection is a considered foreword by Simone Fullagar, where she offers her thoughts and reflections on the anthology and the opportunities and challenges for sporting girls and women, and feminist scholars of sport and physical culture, working and living in postfeminist times.

References

Banet-Weiser, S. (2015). Media, markets, gender: Economies of visibility in a neoliberal moment. *The Communication Review*, 18, 53-70.

Birrell, S. & Cole, C. L. (Eds.). (1994). *Women, Sport and Culture*. Leeds: Human Kinetics.

Bruce, T. (2016). New rules for new times: Sportswomen and media representation in the third wave. *Sex Roles*, 74, 361-376.

Butler, J. (2013). For white girls only? Post-feminism and the politics of inclusion. *Feminist Formations*, 25(1), 35-58.

Caudwell, J. (2011). Sport feminism(s): Narratives of linearity? *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 35(2), 111-125.

Chananie-Hill, R. A., Waldron, J. J. & Umsted, N. K. (2012). Third-wave agenda: Women's flat-track roller derby. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 21(1), 33-49.

Cole, C. L. & Hribar, A. (1995). Celebrity feminism: Nike Style post-Fordism, transcendence and consumer power. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 12, 347-369.

Darmon, K. (2013). Introduction: Protest in the New Media Ecology. *Networking Knowledge*, 6(3), 1-2.

Dobson, A. S. & Harris, A. (2015) Post-girlpower: Globalized mediated femininities. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 29(2), 143-144.

Doeskun, S. (2015). For western girls only? Post-feminism as transnational culture. *Feminist Media Studies*, 15(6), 960-975.

Francombe-Webb, J. & Toffoletti, K. (forthcoming) Sporting females, power, diversity and the body. In L. Mansfield, J. Caudwell, B. Wheaton & R. Watson (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Feminism and Sport, Leisure and Physical Education*. Houndsmills: Palgrave.

Fullagar, S., Pavlidis, A. & Francombe-Webb, J. (forthcoming). Feminist theories after the post-structuralist turn. In Parry, D. (Ed). *Feminisms in Leisure Studies: Advancing a Fourth Wave*, New York: Routledge.

Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist media culture: Elements of a sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10(2), 147-166.

Gill, R. (2011). Sexism reloaded, or, it's time to get angry again! *Feminist Media Studies*, 11(1), 61-71.

Gill, R. (2016). Post-postfeminism? New feminist visibilities in postfeminist times. *Feminist Media Studies*, 16(4), 1-21.

Gill, R. & Scharff, C. (2011). *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan.

Genz, S. & Brabon, B. (2009). *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Hargreaves, J. (1994). *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sport*. London: Routledge.

Hargreaves, J. & Anderson, E. (Eds.). (2014). *Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality*. London: Routledge.

Harris, A. (2004). *Future Girl. Young Women in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Routledge.

Heywood, L. (2008). Third wave feminism, the global economy, and women's surfing: Sport as stealth feminism in girls' surf culture. In A. Harris (Ed.), *Next Wave Cultures: Feminism, Subcultures, Activism* (pp. 63-82). London: Routledge.

Heywood, L. & Dworkin, S. L. (2003). *Built to Win: The Female Athlete as Cultural Icon*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Keller, J. (2015). *Girls' Feminist Blogging in a Postfeminist Age*. London: Routledge.

Kennedy, E. & Markula, P. (2011). *Women and Exercise: The Body, Health and Consumerism*. New York: Routledge.

Markula, P. (Ed.). (2005). *Feminist Sport Studies: Sharing Experiences of Joy and Pain*. Albany: SUNY.

McDonald, M. G. (2012). Out of bounds plays: The Women's National Basketball Association and the neoliberal imaginings of sexuality. In M. L. Silk & D. L. Andrews (Eds.), *Sport and Neoliberalism* (pp. 211-224). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

McDonald, M. G. (2015). Imagining neoliberal feminisms? Thinking critically about the US diplomacy campaign, "Empowering women and girls through sport." *Sport in Society*, 18, 909-922.

McRobbie, A. (2009). *The Aftermath of Feminism*. Los Angeles: Sage.

McRobbie, A. (2015). Notes on the Perfect. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 30(83), 3-20.

Prügl, E. (2015). Neoliberalising feminism. *New Political Economy*, 20(4), 614-631.

Ratna, A. & Samie, S. F. (Eds.). (2017). *Race, Gender and Sport: The Politics of Ethnic "Other" Girls and Women*. London: Routledge.

Rottenberg, C. (2014). The rise of neoliberal feminism. *Cultural Studies*, 28(3), 418-437.

Ringrose, J., & Renold, E. (2014). "F** k Rape!" Exploring Affective Intensities in a Feminist Research Assemblage. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(6), 772-780.

Rivers, N. (2017). *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave: Turning Tides*.

Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Scraton, S. & Flintoff, A. (Eds.). (2002). *Gender and Sport: A Reader*. London: Routledge.

Tasker, Y. & Negra, D. (Eds.). (2007). *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Thorpe, H. (2008). Feminism for a new generation: A case study of women in snowboarding culture. In C. Obel, T. Bruce, & S. Thompson (Eds.), *Outstanding: Research about Women and Sport in New Zealand* (pp. 7-30). Waikato, New Zealand: Wilf Malcolm Institute.

Thorpe, H., Toffoletti, K. & Bruce, T. (2017). Sportswomen and social media: Bringing third-wave feminism, postfeminism and neoliberal feminism into conversation. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 41(5), 359-383.

Toffoletti, K. (2016). Analyzing media representations of sportswomen—expanding the conceptual boundaries using a postfeminist sensibility. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 33(3), 199-207.