

FUTEBOL/FÚTBOL, IDENTITY, AND POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA

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Citizens and Sportsmen: Fútbol and Politics in Twentieth-Century Chile. By Brenda Elsey. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011. Pp. ix + 315. \$30.00 paper. ISBN: 9780292743939.

The Country of Football: Politics, Popular Culture and the Beautiful Game in Brazil. Edited by Paulo Fontes and Bernardo Buarque de Hollanda. London: Hurst and Company, 2014. Pp. xvii + 274. \$16.99 paper. ISBN: 9781849044172.

Futebol Nation: The Story of Brazil through Soccer. By David Goldblatt. New York: Nation Books, 2014. Pp. xxiii + 290. \$16.99 paper. ISBN: 9781568584676.

The Country of Football: Soccer and the Making of Modern Brazil. By Roger Kittleson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014. Pp. xiii + 328. \$26.95 paper. ISBN: 9780520279094.

Fútbol!: Why Soccer Matters in Latin America. Joshua H. Nadel. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014. Pp. 288. \$24.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780813049380.

Fútbol, Jews, and the Making of Argentina. By Raanan Rein. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014. Pp. xii + 226. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9780804793414.

The 2014 World Cup in Brazil and the rather sudden emergence of soccer as a popular and effective lens to explore identity and politics resulted in an abundance of recent academic books on the beautiful game in Latin America.¹ Journalists, general writers, and biographers, such as Alex Bello, Eduardo Galeano, Mário Rodrigues Filho, and Chris Taylor, examined the sport over many decades to illuminate such issues as identity, race, passion, joy, corruption, genius, and political manipulation.² In the past decade, sociologists, geographers, and historians in the Southern Cone embraced soccer as an inspiration for systematic academic inquiry, including academic centers involving such scholars as Pablo Alabarces in Buenos Aires and Ronaldo Helal in Rio de Janeiro. While it was largely ignored initially in the English-language press and scholarship, this academic movement

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1. Football, *fútbol*, *futebol*, and soccer are all used throughout the books and in this essay to refer to association football.

2. For example, Alex Bello, *Futebol: The Brazilian Way of Life* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002); Eduardo Galeano, *Soccer in Sun and Shadow*, trans. Mark Fried (London: Verso, 1998); Mário Rodrigues Filho, *O negro no futebol brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Mauad X, 1947); Chris Taylor, *The Beautiful Game: A Journey through Latin American Football* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998).

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nonetheless generated momentum and contributed to a burst of English-language academic research.

This essay examines six books, five of which were published in 2014, utilizing three principal foci to gauge the collective value of scholarship in this emerging field. First, does the research inform and help us explain current manifestations of soccer, society, and politics in the region? For example, in 2013 national governments in both Argentina and Brazil unsuccessfully attempted to use soccer as a distraction—bread and circuses—from criticism of unpopular policies. Argentina enshrined the television viewing of club soccer almost as a human right in 2009, expropriating the broadcast rights from the private sector and showing all first-division games on public television's *Fútbol para todos* (Soccer for All) transmissions. This gave Cristina Kirchner's government the power to reach into almost all homes with an onslaught of official propaganda during the matches. In May 2013 the government manipulated the national game, scheduling the most popular teams opposite the Jorge Lanata–hosted television show (*Journalism for All*), which is highly critical of the government. This maneuver became a public-relations disaster as more viewers tuned into Lanata than to the Boca Juniors and River Plate games, in part as a form of popular protest. And in Brazil, the government of Dilma Rousseff postponed two highly unpopular policy issues, the increase in bus fares and a constitutional amendment to weaken the investigation and prosecution of corrupt officials (PEC-37), from January 2013 to June 2013. Brazil was hosting and winning the Confederations Cup in June 2013, and many thought that watching Neymar and his teammates would consume the attention of soccer-crazy Brazilians and the government could simultaneously implement unpopular measures under the radar. In a complete shock to the Brazilian government and to FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), Brazilians staged enormous protests throughout the country, leading to a retreat on the fare hikes and the PEC-37, embarrassing the government and FIFA, and initiating a protest movement and demands for greater accountability that have endured until today. Does this new burst of scholarship assist us in understanding and analyzing these events?

The second important focus is to gauge the collective analytical value of this collection of books. Is there scholarly leverage in this body of literature? Can we identify theoretical or empirical threads across the books that enrich descriptive or theoretical analysis? If soccer is more than merely a fad in scholarship, then a group of six books should produce new research questions, rich areas of contrast and comparison, and some intriguing disputes or disagreements. A sustainable research field requires foundational literature, shared concepts, multiple researchers focusing on similar questions, and the publication of a corpus of work that expands previous scholarly work. Too often research on soccer, politics, and society reads like a travelogue of a journalist with a ball and a backpack. Is the field evolving?

Finally, is there something specifically unique and important about Latin American football for shaping politics and society? One reason why soccer generates this boom in research may be because scholars conducting fieldwork in the region sense that there is something important about the game for understanding

society, class, gender, politics, power, violence, corruption, elections, regionalism, the media, caudillos, religion, and more. Can we systematically explain the singular importance of this small, round ball for explaining history, politics, and society in Latin America?

THREE BOOKS ON BRAZIL

With a record five World Cup titles and as host of the 2014 mega-event, Brazil is regularly portrayed as exceptional and singular in regard to the role of *futebol* in shaping the nation and its people. This is certainly true of the authors and editors of the three books on Brazil reviewed here.

Two of the books even share the same title, *The Country of Football*, while the third makes a similar claim with the title *Futebol Nation*. In spite of the matching titles, they are complementary. David Goldblatt, the author of *Futebol Nation: The Story of Brazil through Soccer*, is a journalist, documentarian, and lecturer who penned the outstanding thousand-page opus on the global history of soccer—*The Ball Is Round*. His comparative knowledge heightens his sensitivities to what is unique about Brazilian soccer, and he begins the book with a superb treatment of the centrality of soccer to identity in Brazil, and by extension, throughout Latin America. Identity scholars point to two principal sources of ethnonational identity. The first is the “relentless demand of industrialized warfare” (xvii).³ Latin American countries rarely fight each other on the battlefield, so this does not obtain. The second is the imagined community of reading newspapers and other literature in the vernacular, and Goldblatt points out that given “Brazil’s calamitously low level of literacy, the creation of a national public sphere through a shared language and literature was not a plausible strategy either” (xviii).⁴ Thus, Brazil is left with soccer as the source for identity and nationalism. Brazil is blessed with a rich and clear tradition of how scholars and elites effectively used soccer to dispel the racist national doctrine in place through the 1930s, which alleged that successful national development required the whitening of the nation and that miscegenation produced an inferior mongrel people. The intellectual and popular culture roles of the anthropologist Gilberto Freyre, trained at Columbia by Franz Boas, and his influential sports journalist friend Mário Filho—who together heralded a new Brazilian people, superior due to the mixing of the races—are well known and covered by every serious analysis of Brazilian identity and nation building.⁵ The books by Goldblatt and Roger Kittleson contribute additional depth to that historical process. Kittleson is a historian of Brazil who has written extensively on politics in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul and adds significant details out of his deep familiarity. He informs us, for example, of the regular meetings of

3. See Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States: AD 990–1992*, rev. ed. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992); and for Latin America, Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press).

4. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

5. See Jerry Dávila, *Diploma of Whiteness: Race and Social Policy in Brazil, 1917–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); and Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Filho, Freyre, and other influential journalists in the José Olímpio bookstore; the importance of a Freyre column written during the 1938 World Cup titled "Mulatto Soccer," which praised the blending and fusion of the Brazilian national character and soccer; and President Vargas's "official sanction" of soccer and Carnival for the mythic formulation of Brazilian identity (50).

Goldblatt and Kittleson both examine soccer and politics through distinct phases of modern history. Goldblatt's eight chapters match with clear periods of Brazilian political development. Chapter 4 is "Brasilia and the Ball: Inventing the Beautiful Game, 1950–1964"; chapter 5 is "Playing the Hard Line: Football under the Dictatorship, 1964–1986"; and chapter 7 is "Futebol Nation Redux: The Game in Lula's Brazil, 2002–2013." We learn a great deal about the role of soccer in politics and society in each of these periods, and also about the effect of politics on soccer, most notably during the dictatorship, when the military leaders, like Mussolini in Italy or Argentina's generals in the 1978 World Cup, expressly used the sport, the coaches, and the players to reinforce the legitimacy of the dictatorship.

Both authors describe in detail the game's role in harnessing soccer and celebrity to press for a democratic opening in the early 1980s, most notably the noble and erudite player Sócrates and the fascinating case of Corinthian Democracy, where the team voted on absolutely everything and used their celebrity and kits (or jerseys) for political expression. Kittleson's presentation goes beyond the national-level analysis and includes a great deal more regional and local content. He notes, for example, that the Fluminense and Internacional teams also experimented with some forms of democratic practice at the same time as the Corinthians (151). Goldblatt's account is that of an outsider, from the top down, based more on interviews and the popular press. Kittleson's book works from the city and state level upwards, with a far wider range of academic sources.

Both books end with powerful chapters on the mega-events of the FIFA Confederations Cup of 2013 and World Cup of 2014, the massive and unexpected protests of 2013, the high levels of corruption in preparing for the World Cup, and the violence that accompanied the games and resulted in low attendance figures. There was something quite ugly about the beautiful game in 2014. Goldblatt concludes that "it is hard to imagine that they (football victories) could unite the *futebol* nation the way they have in the past, for they have been bought at the cost of making Brazil's divisions and injustices starker than ever" (248). Kittleson is no less pessimistic: "As patriotic displays and success of the national team stoked emotions inside the 'FIFA standard' stadiums, protestors and bystanders found themselves the target of tear gas and rubber bullets from police shock troops in the streets outside. . . . The relationship between soccer and nation persists and with it the complex, overlapping discussions of power relations in the country of football" (225).

While both of these general histories of Brazilian football are to be recommended, the writing is largely descriptive and linear and the reader must tease out analytical contributions. This is the downside of books written for a wider audience and not for scholars and students. This is not true of the remarkable anthology edited by Paulo Fontes and Bernardo Buarque de Hollanda. The power of the work is both in the uniform excellence of its chapters and in its organization.

The book examines the role of soccer in politics and popular culture with nine chapters organized chronologically from the arrival of the game in Jesuit schools in 1886 through the preparations for the 2014 World Cup. Instead of a general history, the chapters focus on very specific topics in each time period, giving a sense of discovery and intrigue even to readers who are well acquainted with futebol in South America.

Each chapter warrants a brief note. Chapter 1, by Fatima Martin Rodrigues Ferreira Antunes, tells the story of the birth of Brazilian football, going well beyond the common descriptions of the emergence of the elite clubs and the famed Bangu factory club in Rio de Janeiro, highlighting the early (1902) blossoming of factory clubs in São Paulo. The popularity of football at the factories created a dilemma for the communists and the anarchists, who “viewed football as a bourgeois sport, a powerful opiate that would undermine the unity and organization of the working class” (28). Eventually both the anarchists and communists realized that the adoption of the sport by the working class was irreversible, and both groups attempted to harness the sport for their own purposes.

Chapter 2, by Gregory E. Jackson, examines race, nation, and professionalization from 1930 to 1950, including the 1932 Copa Rio Branco in Montevideo as the event that propelled Freyre’s and Mário Filho’s thesis, since the mixed races and social democracy exemplified on the football pitch “give credence to the eugenic qualities that lie within our *mestiços*, the energy and intelligence of men throughout the vast Brazilian territory that are filled with diverse bloods that generate an originality that one day will be the hope of the world” (57). Jackson challenges Brazil’s racial democracy, even in football, through the story of the great Afro-Brazilian star Leonidas and his confrontation with the powerful Flamengo club, along with the social hierarchies correlated with skin color that have always cursed the country. Football produced stars of all colors, but players were still commodities and the white elites still retained “many of the power relationships between masters and slaves that characterized pre-emancipation Brazilian society” (66). Even a global sports star could suffer indignities and incarceration for not knowing their place if they were black.

Chapter 3, by social anthropologist Marta Cioccarri, concentrates on dreams of professional football careers among coal miners in southern Brazil from the 1940s to the present. Through a focused study on one town of eight thousand inhabitants, Cioccarri explains a lot about working-class football, upward mobility, and the deterioration of working conditions, where contemporary miner-players lack the “prestige and possibility of career or social ascension of the old miner-players in Minas de Leão” (85). She also shows that social mobility is less likely for this subset of Brazil in 2014 than it was for previous generations.

The 1940s and 1950s witnessed an explosion in industrialization and population in São Paulo. Social historian Paulo Fontes, in chapter 4, explains these forces through an examination of *futebol de várzea*, amateur municipal or neighborhood football leagues that accompanied the expansion of the city. “These clubs are fascinating examples of the connections between popular leisure and political and social organization. They are often associated with local political forces, companies or other institutions, such as trade unions, and frequently

played an important role in the creation and support of neighbourhood and householders' associations" (88).

Chapter 5, "The 'People's Joy' Vanishes," is a reprinting of the influential article by anthropologist José Sergio Leite Lopes on the life and death of Garrincha, the textile factory worker who became one of the greatest Brazilian football stars and the anti-Pelé, who dazzled despite serious deformities of the legs and who died broke and an alcoholic. Chapter 6, by Clément Astruc, presents data and analysis from a large and systematic survey of professional players. Astruc provides fascinating new evidence in three associated areas: the sociological profile of players; the powerlessness of players due to the recently ended "Pass Law," which gave all control over players to the club officials; and finally to attempts by players to form unions and associations.

José Paulo Florenzano's chapter on football, the dictatorship, and redemocratization goes far beyond the well-known policy of the military governments to embrace the game and the national team's victories to legitimize the generals and enhance patriotism. Florenzano paints a much more holistic and systematic strategy by the government, which also included Army Olympics, Workers' Olympics, the creation of the National Championship (Brazilian football had previously held only state and regional tournaments), and the promotion of football matches involving indigenous communities. "The authoritarian regime took control of and reinterpreted 1 May to negate the historical significance of the day represented, erasing all traces of the struggle between capital and labour. Stripped of its original character and repressing all demands and protests, 1 May was essentially reduced to 'Football Day'" (153). Florenzano also expands the role of the Republic of Football democratic movement far beyond Sócrates and Corinthian Democracy, bringing in other actors and workers who resisted the authoritarian regime and who used the sport to press for political liberalization and individual rights.

Chapters 8 and 9, by cultural historian Bernardo Buarque de Hollanda and geographer Chris Gaffney, respectively, are brilliant contributions about stadiums. Buarque de Hollanda focuses on the historical aspects while Gaffney examines the preparations for the 2014 World Cup. The building of the Maracanã (Mário Filho) stadium was a statement about identity and democracy. It was placed in the geographic center of the then-capital city of Rio de Janeiro in 1950, able to handle up to two hundred thousand spectators, or 10 percent of the entire population of the city. The stadium had an unobstructed circular arrangement that permitted a freedom of movement and sense of shared community where fans could change ends at halftime to better follow the offensive displays of their team. The Maracanã also featured large standing sections, or the *geral*, where working-class and poor Brazilians could stand and dance and cheer on their teams. The stadium was conveniently served by inexpensive public transportation. "This meant that the stadium would symbolically link the two extremes of the nation's capital, from the most affluent areas to some of the most impoverished, becoming what anthropologist José Sergio Leite Lopes called the 'heart of Brazil'" (171–172).

The Maracanã has been extensively remodeled many times, most recently for the 2014 World Cup, in a process of gentrification that has torn asunder the heart of Brazil. Movement has been eliminated, prices have increased dramatically,

samba musical instruments are prohibited, and the *geral* was eradicated. Many observers noted the absence of Afro-Brazilians in the stands at the World Cup, as the poor have been priced out of not only this mega-event but of Brazilian soccer in general. As Gaffney notes, the creation of FIFA-model stadia and the private-public stadium partnerships that transferred the taxpayer-financed World Cup stadiums into private hands resulted in the highest soccer ticket prices in the world, adjusted for average salaries. It is no surprise, therefore, that what followed was a collapse in the number of fans who attend games. Brazil may be the football nation, but Argentines attend soccer games in much higher numbers, and even the fledgling Major League Soccer of the United States and Canada has a higher average attendance than the first division in Brazil! Brazilian football now takes place in a hypercommercialized context aimed at elites that “change[s] the form and function of Brazilian stadiums as well as the ‘kind’ of people that go there. These processes have the potential to permanently alter an essential element of Brazilian cultural identity” (Gaffney, 206).

Multiple threads of analysis run throughout the volume, including power relations, political manipulation, race, class, and social mobility. One topic that receives short shrift in all three Brazil books is women’s soccer. In fact, Brazilian women as protagonists are barely mentioned, reduced instead to their roles as girlfriends, wives, and mothers. In that sense, not much has changed since the work of Freyre, in which the Brazilian woman is largely a hypersexual contributor to the miscegenation process. At the same time that the men’s national team abandoned stylish soccer (*futebol arte*) for grinding out wins (*futebol resultado*), the world was treated to beautiful soccer by the Brazilian women’s team, which won silver medals at two Olympics and at one World Cup from 2004 to 2008. Led by five-time Golden Ball winner Marta as the world’s greatest female player, Cristiane, and Formiga, women’s futebol was largely disregarded and has deteriorated in recent years. A fledgling professional league with a tiny budget began in 2013. If Brazil is the country of football, an understanding of the gender dynamics of the sport is an important topic to explore and understand.

FOOTBALL, IDENTITY, AND RELIGION IN ARGENTINA AND CHILE

Raanan Rein’s wonderful book traces modern Argentine history through the story of the secular Jewish Buenos Aires neighborhood of Villa Crespo and its team, the Bohemians of Atlanta. Rein, a leading scholar of ethnicity, has a strong personal connection to the neighborhood and the team, and the book reveals his passion for both. The book contains lengthy sections that are largely descriptive, providing a rich and detailed history of the neighborhood and the team, the early days of the players wandering from stadium to stadium that gave rise to the nickname of the “bohemians,” and the principal characters such as the mythic Kolbovsky, a Jewish immigrant from Poland who became involved in Atlanta football only as a mechanism to expand the influence of the Communist Party in the neighborhood and who tirelessly spearheaded efforts for a large stadium and ushered in the golden age of the team.

Other chapters of *Fútbol, Jews, and the Making of Argentina* are much more analytical, exploring such themes as Jewishness, ethnicity, and Argentine nationalism; Perón's extensive political use of sport and stadia construction; and the backlash against Atlanta by the new regime after the coup that ousted Perón in 1955 amid "accusations against the Jews and Masons who supposedly surrounded President Perón and were responsible for the conflict between the regime and the Catholic Church" (109).

Rein's book is a perfect analytical companion to Brenda Elsey's brilliant book on football and politics in Chile, one of the very best scholarly books ever written on soccer and politics. Unlike Goldblatt and Kittleson, Elsey resists the temptation to provide a general history of the game, focusing instead on the neighborhood teams and the struggles between amateurism supported by the popular class and professionalism supported by the elites. This provides considerable theoretical and analytical leverage while still allowing an ample general discussion of the game and politics in Chile. Elsey provides fascinating analytical threads that link together with the other books. For example, middle-class physician Nicolás Palacios published *La raza chilena* in 1904, using crime statistics and migration patterns of Visigoths and their miscegenation with the native Araucanians to "set out to prove that the Chilean racial mixture exhibited characteristics superior to those of any of the 'pure' European races or other mixes in Latin America. . . . His ideas became important within the Radical and Liberal party circles as well as in popular discussions of race" (25). Palacios predates by a couple of decades José Vasconcelos and his "Cosmic Race" in Mexico, and Freyre and Mário Filho, with their purportedly superior mestizo Brazilian, and provides yet another example of a national foundation myth of ethnic superiority.⁶

Other important common themes include the political role of the stadium—particularly important in Chile, as the national stadium was the site of the largest national detention center set up immediately following Pinochet's coup⁷—, the role of professionalization in the depoliticization of the sport, the attempt of parties and politicians to harness the sport for electoral advantage, and the connection between soccer, neighborhood, and identity.

The emphasis on barrio football, which "constructed a model of masculinity that championed rebellion, class solidarity, and community responsibility" (190), includes an enlightening section on women and soccer. As in many other countries, soccer and discourses of femininity were constructed in ways that did not mix. Nevertheless, women began playing on organized teams in the working-class barrios in the early 1950s, leading conservative politicians to blame "effeminate qualities of Chilean footballers for their poor international standing" (193).

The single best chapter focuses on Club Deportivo Palestino. By the early 1900s,

6. Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande e senzala* (Rio de Janeiro: Maia e Schmidt, 1933); José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica* (Madrid: Agencia Mundial de Librería, 1925).

7. For more on the use of the stadium by the Chilean repressive apparatus, see Thomas Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

Chile had a large population of Syrians, Palestinians, and Lebanese, and those communities prospered in textiles, finance, and other businesses.⁸ Palestino FC formed as the exclusive organization of the Palestinians in 1920, revealing a strong early sense of Palestinian identity, as well as divisions within the Arab community, roadblocks for equal treatment of Arabs in Chile, and ongoing tensions between Arab Chileans and Chilean Zionists. Those tensions have not abated, and controversy swelled in January 2014 when Palestino kits featured the number 1 in the shape of the Palestinian state, leading to an outcry and a ban on the jersey by Chilean officials. Players responded by tattooing the map of Palestine on their forearms. While this event is not covered in the book, it is much better understood in the context of Elsey's account. Despite these tensions, there are both similarities and contrasts between the Arab football team of Palestino in Santiago and the Jewish football team of Atlanta in Buenos Aires, with both communities battered by accusations of disloyalty, stereotyped in caricatures as materialist and greedy, and suffering political harassment for their ties to communism. Taken separately, these books on Argentina and Chile are significant contributions. Taken together, they reveal the potential of a rich analytical research arena encompassing soccer, identity, and politics.

THE LATIN AMERICA QUESTION

Joshua H. Nadel's *Fútbol!: Why Soccer Matters in Latin America* starts with the claim that Latin Americans are more passionate for the beautiful game than are others: "Because of when soccer arrived and how it evolved with the nation, it has come to reflect identities—be they local, regional, or national—in ways that other institutions do not. This makes soccer incredibly powerful" (5–6). Nadel supports this claim through an examination of soccer "as a window into both the dominant and hidden histories of Latin America" (8), selecting as cases the seven countries of the region that qualified for the 2010 World Cup. This is a fortuitous strategy, for while the information on Argentina and Brazil, and the vignettes of superstars like Maradona, Messi, and Pelé break little new ground for even casual observers of Latin America, the book also covers important but largely ignored cases such as Honduras, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The coverage of Honduras focuses on the maligned and often invisible Afro-Honduran populations of Garifunas, Miskitos, and *negros ingleses* or creoles of the Honduran northern coast. The Honduran national identity myth is that of a mestizo country of Europeans and Mayans, excluding black Hondurans. This image clashes with the Honduran national soccer team, and one can imagine a good many Hondurans mimicking Jean-Marie Le Pen's infamous xenophobic quip regarding the French national team (then comprised of many French players of African descent) when they delighted the world in winning the 1998 World Cup, wishing that the national team looked more French. This chapter provides a rich comparative case alongside cases such

8. For more on the wide range of immigrant groups to Latin America, see Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

as Colombia, Costa Rica, and Uruguay, where glorious players of African descent are first-class citizens on the pitch and largely “invisible” on the streets of the capital cities.

If there is a country of soccer, it is probably Uruguay. Uruguay was a buffer state, brokered by the English to weaken the rivalry between Argentina and Brazil. It was a small dot on the world map until Uruguay dominated three consecutive world championships in the 1924 Paris Olympics, 1928 Amsterdam Olympics, and the first World Cup hosted by Uruguay in 1930. The national identity myth of *garra charrúa*, with its mix of austerity, liveliness, physical and aggressive play, and an instinct to never give up—which probably flowed from the mixing of African and European immigrants at the time of the creation of Uruguayan national identity—was solidified with the upset victory of Uruguay over host Brazil at the 1950 World Cup.

Nadel’s chapter on Paraguay brings excellent information and analysis of this often ignored case. In Nadel’s hands soccer becomes a metaphor for national idiosyncrasies, isolation, corruption, caudillos, and Paraguayan politics. He also provides an excellent analytical chapter (“Left Out”) on women’s soccer in the region, providing significantly more coverage of Brazilian great Marta than the three books on Brazil combined, as well as comparative information on women’s soccer in Costa Rica and Uruguay and an introduction to concepts of masculinity, femininity, and quack science that pronounced soccer as unfit for women.

Combining all of the books under review, we have the beginnings of an English-language scholarly literature of soccer, society, popular culture, and politics in Latin America. This literature assists us in interpreting current manifestations of soccer and politics in the region. Multiple threads of analytical contrast and comparison are beginning to burgeon.

We can also make a compelling case for why the sport is different in Latin America. Identity often builds from three powerful forces that were not significant in Latin America: war making, a homeland myth such as in Japan or the Basque region,⁹ and the imagined community of print communication in a vernacular that is unique to a people and place. Fútbol arrived in the immigrant societies of South America in a period of massive population growth fueled by the arrival of peoples from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, and grew alongside the growth of the cities. This explains why there are sixty-nine professional soccer stadiums in metropolitan Buenos Aires. The sport provided a social and competitive outlet but more importantly contributed to identity building at the neighborhood, regional, and national levels. The beautiful game contains all of the elements championed by scholars of identity formation. The stadium is the mythical and sacred homeland. The hundreds of chants and songs belted out for the entire game is the vernacular of the imagined community. And the players and hooligans are the soldiers going out to war.

The 2014 World Cup in Brazil repeatedly showcased the role of South American football in identity formation and the resulting passion. Perhaps the clearest

9. For the most compelling argument on the role of the homeland in national identity, see Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

moment was the playing of the national anthems at the opening of the group stage game between the emerging soccer power Chile and the then-reigning world champion Spain. Spain is a country where football overlays existing contested identities and myths of national identity formation based on homeland, wars, and language. Those centrifugal forces between the centralists in Madrid and the regional national identities in the Basque region, Catalonia, and Galicia are so strong that post-Franco Spain can never even agree on the words to the Spanish anthem. When the Spanish anthem played, players with different identities and allegiances looked on uncomfortably as Spanish fans in the stadium hummed to accompany an anthem with no lyrics. In contrast, the Chilean anthem has a long section with words but no music. The heroics of the Chilean national team and their victory over Spain can rightfully be seen as part of the solidification of Chilean national identity. The players and the fans belted out the words in a communion of sacred covenant and shared community. In this ritual the players become fans and the fans become players, and the game itself is a nationalist effort akin to war. The players even adopted the roles of soldiers and were hailed as warriors. Chilean defender Gary Medel ran ten kilometers in a subsequent game on a torn muscle, earning a distinguished decoration from the Chilean army as the embodiment of the discipline exemplary in a soldier. Latin American soldiers no longer have foreign enemies to fight, nor is a democratic military permitted to label internal groups as enemies of the state and therefore legitimate targets of military force. Fútbol players are the only warriors available.

Football will continue to be an important lens through which to view power relations, politics, and society in Latin America; indeed, it actively mediates state-society relations in ways that traditional mechanisms such as political parties do not. These six exemplary books have different audiences and purposes. The academic subfield of sports politics will benefit from all high-quality research, but particularly from scholars who train the lens of football on clear and focused analytical subjects such as class, gender, corruption, political violence, migration, urban renewal, the media, and religion in the largely ignored cases in Latin America and beyond.