

Actually, Esports Is Sport: A Response to Parry's (2019) Misguided View

Michael L. Naraine

In 2019, Jim Parry, a sport philosophy and Olympic scholar, wrote an article titled “E-sports are Not Sports.” While their position is admirable, their commentary is rife with inaccuracies. In short, Parry panders two key myths that sour a balanced discussion of esports as a sport: (1) esports is seeking to become an Olympic sport and (2) esports does not fit the definition, however arbitrary, of sport. In this response piece, both myths are dispelled and, ultimately, esports is positioned as a form of modern sport that should be accepted (but perhaps not actively supported) by traditionalists. The argument is made that sport can fall into either traditional or modern forms, and that given more technological innovations are on the way, it is critical that sport is not restrictive and remains inclusive to new forms.

Keywords: esports, innovation, technology, modern sport

Introduction

“Competitive computer games do not qualify as sports, no matter what ‘resemblances’ may be claimed” (Parry, 2019, p. 4). This provocative thesis was asserted by Jim Parry, a sport philosophy and Olympic scholar based in the Czech Republic, at a period when the debate about esports’ “sporting merits” was already engulfed with polarized opinions (cf. Hallmann & Giel, 2018; Heere, 2018). But, Parry’s piece took the debate to a different, less balanced level. Laced with hyperbolic analogies of animals and board games, and crass innuendo, their argument rested on two prominent pillars: (1) esports has been trying to legitimize itself as sport by seeking entry into the “Olympic club” and (2) esports simply does not fit the defining characteristics, while arbitrary, of traditional sports. While navigating through the odd examples and insipid testimony,

Michael L. Naraine, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Sport Management at Brock University in Ontario, Canada. His primary research is in the area of digital sport management and marketing, examining the strategy, fan engagement, and analytics related to new developments in the sport business landscape (e.g., social media, eSports, blockchain). Email: mnaraine@brocku.ca

there are glimpses of support for the idea that perhaps esports just doesn't quite resemble traditional, Olympic sport.

However, esports should not simply be discounted because it looks different than traditional sport offerings, Olympic or otherwise (Cunningham et al., 2018). With a more stringent look, naysayers like Parry would be surprised to learn that esports actually does meet their defining characteristics of traditional sport (Walton et al., 2020). Furthermore, upon closer inspection, Parry's other pillar appears quite weak. In fact, Parry provides no considerable, conclusive evidence to suggest stakeholders are advocating for esports to be an Olympic sport. Rather, the evidence suggests that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Olympic Movement is trying to capitalize on esports' growth and salience among youth demographics (IOC, 2019; Tarrant, 2018). Consequently, it is important to counter Parry's inaccurate claims and provide further color to an important topic that will become more prominent with the ever-increasing digitization and virtualization of our world (Mastromartino et al., 2020). Thus, the following rebuttal to Parry's (2019) piece highlights the instability of both foundations, and emphasizes why it is important to not discredit new sport forms without a substantive argument.

At this moment, I want to briefly explain the reasoning for presenting this response in the *Sport Innovation Journal (SIJ)* instead of addressing Parry's claims in the same outlet in which they were published. For one, *SIJ* is an open-access journal, and I believe it is important for students, researchers, and others in the sport industry to access this piece unencumbered. Allowing Parry's piece to stand, uncontested, does a disservice to those looking to take the industry to new heights. Second, it is becoming increasingly evident that esports is a sport innovation. It's an innovation that some wish to reject because it is not traditional in nature, but it's an innovation, nonetheless. Thus, rather than burying these arguments in an outlet about ethics, those seeking to change the sport industry in positive ways will find solace that there are outlets that wish to embrace new forms, and not just publish jaded commentary about the new, different, and unknown. Finally, *SIJ* has already become home to some important commentaries (e.g., Goebert, 2020; Naraine & Wanless, 2020), so here's hoping this response stimulates others to enlighten the masses, and illuminate more sport innovations that can advance the industry forward.

Further, before "diving in to the deep," I will begin with a positionality statement to acknowledge my worldview and biases, a notion omitted from Parry's commentary and instead replaced by numerous comedic attempts. I grew up playing video games. At a young age, I had a Nintendo Entertainment System, and can fondly remember shooting virtual ducks in Duck Hunt (eerily similar to the Olympic discipline of shooting, but I digress at this early stage),

and competing against the Soviet Union for ice hockey supremacy. Gaming, in my experience, was an important community builder; playing Counter-Strike or Unreal Tournament at Internet cafés during middle-school lunch hour was critical in forming my social identity and being part of an in-group. Today, I continue to game, mostly sports-based titles (e.g., NBA2K, Madden), and have attended two Intel Extreme Masters events, one of the elite esports competitions held in various locations around the world. While I would consider myself a gamer (recreational, not elite), and fan of the esports movement, I certainly know elite (traditional) sport, too. I have conducted research at two Youth Olympic Games for their Olympic Solidarity program, and have published several pieces on the Olympic Movement across marketing and network governance. Furthermore, I am a former intercollegiate athlete in the sport of lacrosse, a discipline once demonstrated at the Olympic Games, and which is likely to reappear in the Olympic program in the near future (Drehs, 2020). Thus, I can appreciate both sides of the equation, especially as it relates to “Olympic” sport.

Contextualizing Esports

For some, engaging in this discussion may prove difficult given the complexities and unknowns involved in the esports ecosystem (leading to some of the misconceptions perpetuated by Parry), thus, it is important to highlight some important nuances. One of the least contentious elements of esports is its concise definition as organized video game competitions (Funk et al., 2018; Jenny et al., 2017). However, unlike traditional, Olympic sport in which there is one dominant form (e.g., five-on-five basketball) or similar variations for para-athletes (e.g., wheelchair basketball) or emerging markets (e.g., three-on-three basketball), esports represents a wide gamut of video game “titles,” including simulation sport-based games like Madden and multiplayer online battle arena titles like League of Legends (Schaeperkoetter et al., 2017). Thus, a title is one form of esports, akin to the National Basketball Association (NBA) serving as one brand, one form of basketball.

Similarly, one of the misnomers that remains is the distinction between recreational “video gaming” and elite esports competitions. In the same way that someone could play ice hockey but not play in the National Hockey League, it is analogous to a video gamer not engaging in high-performance competitions. Esports athletes experience intense, hostile environments like their traditional sport counterparts (Darvin et al., 2020), and there are thousands of spectators in-stadium and millions watching, unlike a local gaming session between friends (Wells & Harrolle, 2019). Furthermore, esports is experiencing much of the same issues as traditional, elite sport, such as gambling and doping (Holden et al., 2017), emphasizing the need to understand this sport as it grows in interest worldwide.



COURTESY OF ALEX HANEY/Unsplash

Subsequently, it is important to recall that sport is polymorphic by design (Heere, 2018), and that esports' rise highlights two potential distinctions for sport: traditional and modern. Traditional sport are those forms that dominated in the 20th century; they are overtly “physical” and have long-standing histories. These are the “sports” that Olympic disciples like Parry cannot relinquish. However, there is a second group: modern sport. Modern sport encompasses emergent forms in the 21st century, whether they are digitally enhanced like esports or innovative modifications to improve accessibility (e.g., three-on-three basketball, twenty-over cricket). This is an important classification because while esports has been subject to much dissent, so, too, have short-format versions of their 20th century counterparts. For instance, loyal cricket fans are very much opposed to twenty-over (T20) cricket because it threatens the more traditional, longer “test” format of the sport. But, both are still a version of cricket.

Moreover, consumers are not forced into liking one format over the other; there is choice to like one, both, or neither. A similar sentiment applies to esports. Using the NBA2K example, fans of basketball can consume traditional forms of the sport, or opt for modern formats like the esports version or the three-on-three physical format. Consequently, there is choice for the consumer and other stakeholders in the sporting ecosystem (e.g., broadcasters, sponsors). In this polymorphic view, both traditional and modern sport can co-exist; there's no

rule that says all sports have to be supported, but to reject modern sport as sport without a substantive argument remains ill-conceived. I say, let the interest and salience of the sport determine its standing in the public eye, not the nonsensical ramblings of a traditionalist, the perfect segue to debunk Parry's (2019) two unsubstantiated claims.

Myth #1: Esports Is Seeking to Become an Olympic Sport

This is the party line that those who subscribe to the Olympic Movement continue to advance: non-Olympic sports want to be part of the Olympic “club.” The use of the term club is very interesting in its own right, seemingly drawing similar energy from the popular Mean Girls “you can’t sit with us” meme (The Guardian, 2018). For those unfamiliar with this popular culture reference, one only gains membership in the in-group by adhering to the group’s rules and guidelines, otherwise they’re discounted, discredited, and, of course, prohibited from association. This elitist, club mentality would suggest that membership is desirable, which, I concede, for many sports, tends to be the case.

As Parry (2019) rightly noted, there are significant financial considerations involved with being an Olympic sport. So, for traditional sports that do not generate revenue through increased media exposure and sponsorship, joining the Olympic club is certainly valuable. But, few club memberships are free from expense. There are significant, extant power structures within the Olympic system that subvert the interests of newer, less connected actors (Parent et al., 2017). Take snowboard’s inclusion in the Olympic Movement, for example. Sure, the sport’s inclusion in the Games brought upon increased mainstream attention, but it required being absorbed by the Fédération Internationale de Ski, a hostile takeover of sorts, and the sport lost its values of creativity and individuality in favor of the Olympic hegemony of bureaucracy and nationalism (Coates et al., 2010). A similar sentiment applies for global football, where the FIFA World Cup is perceived as more important to the sport than its inclusion in the Olympic Games (Molinario, 2014). Thus, the Olympic club is not *always* desirable.

Furthermore, it would be naïve for anyone to think that membership in this club is a prerequisite to be considered sport. In Parry’s discussion, the argument is that most sports have sufficiently similar proxies in their stead, but that point alone demonstrates that the Olympic Games are not the “be all, end all” in the modern sporting landscape. The club may be elitist, and that’s fine, but it is not the measuring stick for all sports (nor should it be).

This line of argument leads to the rejection of Parry’s notion that esports is somehow “strenuously” attempting to gain entry into the Olympic club. Rather, the opposite is true: the Olympic Movement is trying to offer membership to those



COURTESY OF ALEX SMITH/UNSPASH

sports that can demonstrate their currency and relevance in the sport market (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2011). To be specific, the IOC wants esports, not the other way around. As former Olympian turned scholar Nicole Forrester has explained, “It’s understandable why the IOC would want to partner with esports. Partnering with esports, where revenue is generated mostly through sponsorship but where more money is coming from broadcasting, could be complementary and attractive” (Forrester, 2018, para. 8).

For those who have drunk the Olympic “kool-aid,” succumbing to this realization is

more difficult than the alternative, which is the majestic, pristine Olympic Movement is being corrupted by a modern, disruptive sport form. Yet, it is important to look at the clues the IOC has left behind. First, there’s the embracing of new disciplines like surfing, skateboarding, climbing, and breaking (dance), demonstrative of its willingness to adapt to the changing winds of sport in society. Second, there are multiple attempts by the IOC to promote esports and the future of sport discussion.

One example is the panel discussions held at the Olympism in Action forum prior to the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina (IOC, 2019). The first panel discussed the growth of alternative and non-traditional sport forms, including esports, and challenged stakeholders of traditional sport to consider the future of sport at the Olympics. The second panel was squarely focused on esports, unlocking athletes’ mental and physical fitness, preparations for competition, and differences with new, alternative sports. Through both panels, the IOC is seemingly priming Olympic loyalists for the eventual conclusion, one that Forrester (2018) also contends, that esports will eventually be Olympic. However, that should not be misconstrued for esports wanting or begging to be Olympic; these pieces are evidence that the IOC wants to be youthful and relevant, and wants esports in its program.

In fact, the examples Parry (2019) presents to support their claim are actually prominent examples of how the IOC's pursuit of commercialism is shifting its interests in ways traditionalists might oppose. For instance, the IOC was not forced into sponsorship relationships with Intel or Alibaba, and feature executives from these corporations, major players in the esports ecosystem, on Olympism in Action panels and other symposia. Thus, esports as an Olympic sport is more about the IOC being beholden to its corporate overlords, and embracing new sport forms on its own accord, not necessarily at the will of the International Esports Federation (IEF), the governing body for esports, and its members.

Myth #2: Esports Does Not Meet the Criteria for a Sport

In October of 2018, I ended up in an impromptu conversation about esports with Anita DeFrantz, Vice President of the IOC, and Tricia Smith, President of the Canadian Olympic Committee, both of whom were former Olympic rowers. At their behest, I explained the merits of elite gaming, and the unique facets of esports that are often overlooked. Yet, for the former, it was still too large a challenge, stating, verbatim, "I just don't get it" (A. DeFrantz, personal communication, October 6, 2018). While Smith was more open-minded to the concept, DeFrantz's skepticism highlights this second myth. Because supporters of the Olympic Movement value traditional sport (because that is all they know), it is difficult and unfathomable to define or situate esports.

Parry (2019) uses a six-step process to define sport, but focuses on four elements to reject the notion that esports is a sport: human, physical, skill-based, and institutionalized. The first characteristic is the "human" element. In their distinction, sport needs human beings, even if they require machines, animals, or combustible engines. It is here where Parry directly contradicts himself. Esports is human. Avatars do not move on their own accord, they do so under the direction of a human, an athlete. Furthermore, unlike the Robot Wars example that is assumed to be the same as esports (which, if Parry had taken a moment to watch esports highlights on YouTube, they would know it is not the same), esports teammates are side by side, communicating strategy via headsets, flanked by a coach pacing back and forth, and are mere steps away from their opponent on the same stage. To say that esports is not human is indicative of a lack of research and, more importantly, the general disdain for anything that seeks to disrupt traditional sport forms.

Then the argument is made that esports is not "physical." Personally, I love the shooting comparison that Parry attempts to utilize in their favor because, again, it contradicts their argument against esports. Just as shooting is more than

squeezing a trigger, so, too, is esports. It is more than just humans sitting down clicking a mouse, as athletes have to control their breathing and heart rates, in addition to performing precise, manual dexterity operations (Funk et al., 2018); esports *is* physical. If Parry (or others) believed esports athletes were holding their breath, not moving their bodies, and also not succumbing to injuries like leg muscle fatigue, eye-strain, or sprained wrists, then perhaps they have been consuming some unique, post-modern form of esports that the rest of us have not heard about yet. Even when considering the “fine versus gross motor skills” element of the physicality debate, scholars glaze over traditional sports like shooting (e.g., Jenny et al., 2017). Thus, to discredit esports because of its “fine” motor skill seemingly contradicts the position of champions of other traditional sports, including those that are Olympic.

Third, Parry insinuates that esports is not skillful. It is rather facetious for someone to compare esports to jogging or dog-walking, but suffice to say esports is skillful, and even other detractors are accepting of that fact (e.g., Hallmann & Giel, 2018). When I play NBA2K against a colleague or friend, I don’t presume to imagine I could play for my national esports team, or for one of the NBA2K gaming teams that feature elite, skillful athletes, just as in the same way because I can make a mid-range jumpshot, I don’t presume I can make it in the NBA. With esports, elite athletes are training constantly, hours on end, to develop more skill, more precision in their sport. Athletes weight train, engage in cardiovascular activities, and maintain their hydration levels to facilitate their skill development (Wells & Harrolle, 2019). Those who claim a sport is not skillful have likely not participated in the sport at its highest levels, gaining an appreciation for its intricacies; esports *is* skillful.

Finally, Parry claims that esports is not institutionalized, and that esports has no rules, organization, or governing body overseeing activities (or that it is constantly being changed and manipulated). Again, this is factually incorrect. The IEF was formed in 2008, so to claim there are no governing bodies is incorrect. However, if one digs deeper, they will uncover a unique sporting ecosystem with athletes, teams, game publishers, tournaments, broadcasters and media, marketers and sponsors, and, of course, federations (Besombes, 2019; Hedlund et al., 2021). While this ecosystem might question the ownership of esports given the influence of certain stakeholders (e.g., game publishers), there are no single owners of traditional sport either. Basketball, one of the Olympic sports to which Parry clings, has multiple owners, such as FIBA and the NBA (Funk et al., 2018). Sure, the IOC may only accept what FIBA indicates for rules and regulations, but that’s a choice the IOC has made; it doesn’t restrict ownership of basketball in other contexts. With esports, tournaments formulate standard sets of rules such as time limits for “maps,” the number of athletes per team, coach

access, and other issues (Hedlund et al., 2021). Now, it's plausible that Parry and others might point to the governance issues to which esports has been subject (Holden et al., 2017), but that is no excuse for outright refuting the absence of any governing structure. Furthermore, traditional sport is not absolved from its governance issues either (Parent et al., 2017, 2018), which highlights the need for greater governance of all sporting activities and ongoing discussions about *who* "owns" sports (cf. Batuev & Robinson, 2019). Nevertheless, that still does not remove the fact that esports has governing structures (Hedlund et al., 2021; Wells & Harrolle, 2019). So, esports *is* institutionalized. Thus, despite Parry's best attempts, esports actually does meet the criteria to be considered sport.

It is very easy to be dismissive of esports for those who support traditional sport. It looks different and complex, and it is hard to situate among what is already offered in the market. On face value, it appears to be full of sedentary behaviors that, juxtaposed to a sprinter or jumper, does not *look* like sport. Then, there are the (negative) stereotypical connotations associated with gaming such as poor nutritional habits and a lack of socialization with others. However, appearances can be deceiving. Not only does esports embody many of the same characteristics of sport (as Parry grossly overlooked), but it features training regimens, proper nutrition, and facilitates fan and athlete socialization (Hedlund et al., 2021; Wells & Harrolle, 2019). One important anecdote that bears repeating is the story of one competitive gamer, Mats, a Norwegian, born with a muscle disorder that relegated him to a wheelchair and shortened his life. As Tjønndal and Skauge (2021) recounted, Mats utilized competitive gaming to escape his physical handicap and inability to socialize with others through traditional sport. After his passing, Mats' parents, who were concerned about the potential seclusion and loneliness associated with video gaming, were astounded to see his gaming companions (whom he had never met) attend his funeral. This is one of the elements that critics of esports often forget: sport is also about community (Hedlund et al., 2021). For Mats, traditional, Olympic (or Paralympic) sport did not have the same social inclusivity effect that esports provided, emphasizing the power of modern sport for able-bodied and parasport participants (Tjønndal & Skauge, 2021). So, the question becomes, how do critics like Parry reconcile esports?

Sport's Ongoing Evolution and Co-Existence

"Birds fly and lay eggs, whereas mammals are land-living and vivaporous. But the ostrich doesn't fly, the platypus lays eggs, and dolphins live in the sea like fish" (Parry, 2019, p. 7). Bizarre biology lesson aside, I could not agree more with Parry here: life evolves, and not everything has to fit into a predefined structure. Forrester (2018) questions what Pierre de Coubertin, father of the modern

Olympic Movement, would think about esports being in the Olympic Games, to which I pose the question: what would he say about skateboarding (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2011) or climbing (Batuev & Robinson, 2019)? In fact, de Coubertin himself had won a gold medal in the Olympic discipline of “literature” in 1912, indicative of the Olympic Movement’s fluidity and willingness to adapt. Indeed, what esports represents is an evolution of sport that is undeniable and inevitable, as evidenced with the de Coubertin example, and sport stakeholders should not be upset that “not all birds fly.” Instead, there should be greater recognition that the sport spectrum is widening and that is OK (Heere, 2018).

It is unsurprising that esports has witnessed the backlash it has, simply because sport tends to be rooted in conservative, traditional ideals. Sport tends to move slowly, resisting change and evolution (Slack & Parent, 2006). Just look at some of the modern technological advances in business that the sport industry has yet to fully implement like augmented reality (Goebert, 2020) and artificial intelligence (Naraine & Wanless, 2020). This industry “sits on the sidelines” and waits for innovations to occur elsewhere before truly taking it on. Esports appears to be no different. Rather than accept this modern sport form, there is resistance, a hesitance to change the status quo. As Heere (2018) rightly points out, this should not be based upon the will of the few, but by the actions of the many. In keeping with Parry’s animal farm, “if it walks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it’s a duck.” Just because this duckling is “ugly” and not what you expected does not preclude it from becoming a beautiful swan for all (or even some) to enjoy.

Esports *is* sport, whether traditionalists like it or not. But, to reiterate, that, too, is OK. Traditionalists do not have to like or support modern sports, and vice versa. Fandom or sport consumption is not a coercive activity and there exists freedom to choose and support. Moreover, as Cunningham et al. (2018) revealed, esports is an important avenue for further discovery. Rather than outright reject esports, scholars like Parry should embrace modern sport and continue to examine the differences and nuances between new forms and their traditional counterparts. But, to solely cling to the “old ways” or denounce something new and unknown on faulty merits is unfounded, and highlights the sport industry’s inability to evolve and adapt to the times.

Fifty years from now, sport may look much different than the present. In the last few years, sport has dramatically shifted due to economic turbulence, new legislative requirements, and technological forces (Parent et al., 2018), and it would serve traditionalists well not to outright reject new forms as more technological innovations occur in sport. Being more inclusive of sport vis-à-vis its polymorphic design can offer a space for both traditional and modern forms to co-exist, and embrace the future, too, whatever that should bring about. So,

for Parry and other naysayers, clutching to traditionalist ideals only serves to ostracize, isolate, and actively work against the ideals of innovation, necessary for growth in the sport industry (Naraine & Wanless, 2020) and, ironically, the Olympic Movement specifically (Batuev & Robinson, 2019; Thorpe & Wheaton, 2011). There's enough room at the zoo for both the tortoise and cheetah, Parry, or any new species that we may uncover in the future for that matter; evolution is inevitable.

References

- Batuev, M., & Robinson, L. (2019). Organizational evolution and the Olympic Games: The case of sport climbing. *Sport in Society*, 22, 1674-1690. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1440998>
- Besombes, N. (2019, July 29). Esports ecosystem and landscape. *Medium*. <https://medium.com/@nicolas.besombes/esports-ecosystem-and-landscape-3dbbd653dc2c>
- Coates, E., Clayton, B., & Humberstone, B. (2010). A battle for control: Exchanges of power in the subculture of snowboarding. *Sport in Society*, 13, 1082-1101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430431003779999>
- Cunningham, G. B., Fairley, S., Ferkins, L., Kerwin, S., Lock, D., Shaw, S., & Wicker, P. (2018). eSport: Construct specifications and implications for sport management. *Sport Management Review*, 21, 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.11.002>
- Darvin, L., Vooris, R., & Mahoney, T. (2020). The playing experiences of esports participants: An analysis of hostility and treatment discrimination in esports environments. *Journal of Athlete Development and Experience*, 2, 36-50. <https://doi.org/10.25035/jade.02.01.03>
- Drehs, W. (2020, November 17). The Iroquois' quest to compete in Olympic lacrosse: 'It's more than a game to us.' *National Geographic*. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/11/iroquois-quest-to-compete-olympic-lacrosse-more-than-game-to-us/>
- Forrester, N. W. (2018, July 24). Why e-sports should not be in the Olympics. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/why-e-sports-should-not-be-in-the-olympics-100430>
- Funk, D. C., Pizzo, A. D., & Baker, B. J. (2018). eSport management: Embracing eSport education and research opportunities. *Sport Management Review*, 21, 7-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.008>
- Goebert, C. (2020). Augmented reality in sport marketing: Uses and directions. *Sport Innovation Journal*, 1, 134-151. <https://doi.org/10.18060/24227>
- Hallmann, K., & Giel, T. (2018). eSports – Competitive sports or recreational activity? *Sport Management Review*, 21, 14-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.011>
- Hedlund, D. P., Fried, G., & Smith III, R. C. (Eds.) (2021). *Esports business management*. Human Kinetics.
- Heere, B. (2018). Embracing the sportification of society: Defining e-sports through a polymorphic view on sport. *Sport Management Review*, 21, 21-24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.002>
- Holden, J. T., Rodenberg, R. M., & Kaburakis, A. (2017). Esports corruption: Gambling, doping, and global governance. *Maryland Journal of International Law*, 32, 236-273. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2831718>
- International Olympic Committee. (2019, December 7). Declaration of the 8th Olympic summit. <https://www.olympic.org/news/declaration-of-the-8th-olympic-summit>

- Jenny, S. E., Manning, R. D., Keiper, M. C., & Olich, T. W. (2017). Virtual(ly) athletes: Where eSports fit within the definition of “sport”. *Quest*, 69, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2016.1144517>
- Mastromartino, B., Ross, W. J., Wear, H., & Naraine, M. L. (2020). Thinking outside the ‘box’: A discussion of sports fans, teams, and the environment in the context of COVID-19. *Sport in Society*, 23, 1707-1723. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2020.1804108>
- Molinaro, J. (2014, June 11). Why does the World Cup matter so much? *Sportsnet*. <https://www.sportsnet.ca/soccer/world-cup-2014/2014-fifa-world-cup-brazil-2/>
- Naraine, M. L., & Wanless, L. (2020). Going all in on AI: Examining the value proposition of an integration challenges with one branch of artificial intelligence in sport management. *Sport Innovation Journal*, 1, 49-61. <https://doi.org/10.18060/23898>
- Parent, M. M., Naraine, M. L., & Hoye, R. (2018). A new era for governance structures and processes in Canadian national sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 32, 555-566. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jism.2018-0037>
- Parent, M. M., Rouillard, C., & Naraine, M. L. (2017). Network governance of a multi-level, multi-sectoral sport event: Differences in coordinating ties and actors. *Sport Management Review*, 20, 497-509. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.02.001>
- Parry, J. (2019). E-sports are not sports. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 13, 3-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2018.1489419>
- Schaepkoetter, C. C., Oja, B., Mays, J., Krueger, K., Hyland, S. T., Christian, R., Wilkerson, Z., & Bass, J. R. (2017). The “new” student-athlete: An exploratory examination of scholarship eSports players. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 10, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jis.2016-0011>
- Slack, T., & Parent, M. M. (2006). *Understanding sport organizations* (2nd ed.). Human Kinetics.
- Tarrant, J. (2018, October 11). Unikrn CEO: ‘Esports doesn’t need the Olympics.’ *ESPN*. https://www.espn.com/esports/story/_/id/24959801/esports-need-olympics-unikrn-ceo-says
- The Guardian. [@guardian]. (2018, June 10). ‘You can’t sit with us’: How Mean Girls and gifs became part of global diplomacy [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/guardian/status/1005789872337010696>
- Thorpe, H., & Wheaton, B. (2011). ‘Generation X Games’, action sports and the Olympic Movement: Understanding the cultural politics of incorporation. *Sociology*, 45, 830-847. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511413427>
- Tjøndal, A., & Skauge, M. (2021). Youth sport 2.0? The development of eSports in Norway from 2016 to 2019. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 13, 166-183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2020.1836509>
- Walton, D. R., Lower-Hoppe, L. M., & Horger, M. (2020). Do esports classify as intercollegiate sport? Legal analysis of Title IX. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 13, 94-118.
- Wells, J. E., & Harrolle, M. (Eds.) (2019). *The business of esports: The wild wild west on fire*. MGH Research.