CHINESE STUDENT-ATHLETE? A SOCIO-CULTURAL EXAMINATION OF EDUCATION FOR ELITE CHINESE ATHLETES

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Market reforms in China are generating new initiatives in the sports industry, which has opened this sector to innovative development programs that correspond to citizens' changing needs. This dissertation is based on my doctoral studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and on research conducted while I was a Fulbright scholar in China from August 2017 through November 2018, as well as six years of living and working in China as coach and consultant. The project uses archival, policy, ethnographic, and interview data to study Chinese athletes, their formal education, and athletic training in the context of the neoliberal and transnational reforms occurring within China's sport industry. I read Chinese government policy documents in the original Mandarin Chinese and conducted interviews in Mandarin.

Many of China's elite athletes devote a substantial amount of time toward their athletic training, which hinders their ability to obtain a quality formal education. Since there is often an educational gap for athletes, the central questions studied concern the cultural values and attitudes that Chinese citizens associate with combining athletic and academic education. Are those involved in China's sport industry adopting the notion of the student-athlete? If so, what are the causes and consequences of this shift? What role does the US model of student-athlete play in developing initiative programming within the Chinese sports industry? These are the main questions pursued within.

I asked stakeholders involved in the athletic industry--Chinese officials, parents, coaches, athletes, and practitioners-- to provide feedback on their values and perceived societal changes associated with combining an athletic and academic education. This study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the history, politics, and socio-cultural nuances that create

obstacles in China's attempt to combine sport and education. Based on my research and experience in China, as well as critiques and ideas associated with neoliberalism and sport development, I make suggestions throughout the dissertation regarding new and future models and reforms for Chinese student-athletes. The investigation will generate a cross-cultural exchange between the US and China of best practices in the academic schooling of aspiring athletes and identify developmental models that can assist Chinese athletes in studying academic, technical, or professional subjects at the same time that they are engaged in sports training.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBA	Chinese Basketball Association
CCTV	China Central Television
CCP	China Communist Party
CLEA	Critical Language Enhancement Award
CSL	Chinese Jia-A Soccer League
CUBA	Chinese University Basketball Association
DKR	Daryl K. Royal
EOCCS	Elite, Organized, Competitive, Commercial Sports
GPA	Grade Point Average
HFLA	Haidian Foreign Language Academy
MLB	Major League Baseball
MOE	Ministry of Education
NAIA	National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics
NBA	National Basketball Association
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NFHS	National Federation of State High School Associations
NFL	National Football League
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NHL	National Hockey League
NSI	Nanjing Sport Institute
PE	Physical Education
PRC	The People's Republic of China
SD	Development of Sport
SFD	Sport For Development
SGAS	State General Administration of Sport
TAC	Tennis Academy of China
UIL	University Interscholastic League
UIUC	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
UNC	University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill
US	United States of America
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

PRELUDE: MY EMPHATIC MOMENT AND FOUNDATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF THE CHINESE SPORT INDUSTY AND EDUCATION FOR ELITE ATHLETES

On a summer evening in 2006, I sat with my work colleague Marcelo, a newly anointed American citizen, from Uruguay who had lived in the US for the past 12 years since arriving at the young age of 18. Marcelo and I had spent eight hours on the court that day in the grueling sun, teaching tennis at the Misquamicut Country Club, attending to members' needs, and fixing forehands. One tends to build quite a thirst in the summer sun hitting tennis balls, and as we often did at the end of a long day, we headed to the local beach bar for a beer.

This particular evening started no different than most of our excursions. Pleasant conversations with a good friend drown out by the waves in the background and the ever-building crowd of locals and tourists looking to quench their thirst. The served and the servicers, mingling in a relaxed, carefree environment where mutual interest was found in a glass of cold suds.

My friend Marcelo and I enjoyed more than our fair share of drinks that night, and as the evening wore on, the tone of our conversation changed, not toward each other but toward those that enjoyed the fruits of our hard labor throughout those grueling summer months. My attention had been sufficiently diverted, and my eyes wandered to the faces in the bar that seemingly had more than me; more money, more resources, more opportunity, more, more, and more.

I turned to Marcelo and said, “You see that guy at the bar?”

“Which one?” he said.

“The one with the pink shirt, backward hat, and popped collar,” I said.

“Yeah, what about him?” he asked unassumingly.

“He looks like a douche, just look at him, standing at the bar, pretending to be something he’s not. With daddy’s credit card at his disposal, buying drinks with money he’s not earned or worked a day in his life for.” I said.

“Oh yeah,” Marcelo exclaimed, “Have you had a conversation with him recently?”

“No.”

“And do you know anything about him? Where he is from, and what he does?”

“No. I don’t have to. Look at him. It says everything I need to know, why would I waste my time,” I scoffed.

“Why would he waste his time?” Marcelo refuted, “You are ignorant…. How can you judge him without knowing one thing about him? Never having a conversation with him?”

I sat there a little shocked my friend had just called me ignorant, a little hurt and still in dismay, Marcelo said one thing that would change my life forever.

“You need to travel. Open your eyes to the world. I’ll bet you a six-pack that by the end of the summer, you will not buy a ticket to travel in South America!”

Drunkenly I replied, “You’re on!”

And that is where it started. I didn’t think that after that conversation, I would go through with it, what was the loss, $9.99, and a few more drinks with a friend. But for some reason, being called ignorant bothered me. I was a recent graduate of Kenyon College, a prestigious liberal arts school, which versed students to be open, inclusive, and have a philanthropic attitude toward life. My family was comprised of well-educated people who had lived and worked all over the world, Holland, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, Brazil, to name a few places. I had grown up

with family influences that had taught me better; taught me to think outside the box and not turn my nose up at others, but that is what I had done. I had failed as a human being. It suddenly occurred to me that at the age of 23, I had never traveled outside of the US. I needed to travel. By the end of the summer, I told Marcelo, I was going, going to change my perspective, grow up, and go for a journey to find myself in South America. He presented me with a book, Che Guevara's adventurous, Motorcycle Diaries, for inspiration. I worked for a year to save my money, spent a winter season working in Florida, pinched my pennies, bought a backpack, a tent, and a few essentials and set off for a six-month adventure to find myself.

During those six months, I hiked through Patagonia, took a cargo ship through the fjords of Chile, hitchhiked to Uruguay, shot up the coast of Brazil, climbed Machu Pichu, and lost myself in the Salt Flats of Bolivia. I traveled alone, but everyone I met along the way guided my journey. There were locals, plenty of them that fielded my questions, fishers, farmers, families that took my considerations to heart and steered me back on track. I realized that the world was much bigger than I ever knew or gave it credit. It had more to offer than my isolated view from the ivory tower. I was not learning unless I was involved in finding myself through travel.
I was hooked. I learned more about myself than anything I read in a textbook or had gotten out of a lecture. I had real-life, real world discussions that mattered. The conversations brought me back to reality, a conversation that had been initiated at a beach bar with a friend who was wise beyond his years. That night he told me how it was, and I listened.

After my travels through South America, I came back and followed the same journey John Steinbeck had written about in his book 'Travels with Charley," although I didn't know it until I read the book two months after I had arrived home from my tour of North America. I figured it was fate and that I was still on track. I then applied for the Peace Corps and was

accepted to start an eco-diversity project in Ecuador. One week later, my father called and mentioned that he had a conversation with one of his former players, Howard, who had recently opened a tennis academy in China and needed help. Howard couldn't offer much more than housing, food, and occasional travel excursion. But I didn't need convincing; I wanted to know how the other half of the world lived. I called Peace Corp to turn down my placement.

I spent the next year, 2008, the year of the Beijing Olympic Games in Zhongshan, Guangdong, China working with elite tennis players that had been dismissed from their government programs, many of whom had no traditional education to fall back on and no resources or training to find themselves in any endeavor other than sport. The premise of these Chinese athletes was so different from what I had experienced growing up. As the son of a college tennis coach, I had been socialized at a young age to think that the only reason to play sport was to get into a good university. My childhood was spent in the shadows of Texas Memorial Stadium, and world-class athletes who were engaged in a world-class educational institution surrounded me. I knew I had to understand the Chinese sports system better and how its athletes were trained and developed. Charged with a cause to examine, I left that year in China with more than a simple experience working with undereducated tennis players. I saw the enthusiasm and excitement that the Beijing Olympic Games had on its Chinese citizens. Patriotism was rampant, glory and gold medals abound; the Olympic games had captivated a nation and were spurring its citizens onto increased participation and engagement with sport. I had watched and been a part of a pivotal movement in the development of China's sport industry. Sport had engulfed the Chinese nation, and the ways that its citizens were involved in the industry were on the precipitous of monumental change.

I came back to the US, enrolled in a graduate program at Boise State, and spent the first year postulating about how to solve the problem of the lack of a student-athlete in China. I called Howard and asked him if there was a place I could conduct research in China, preferably at a government program. He said I was crazy, and the Chinese government would never allow it. I was back to square one, theorizing how to pull off my research project, and the phone rang. Howard, on the other end, said he had found me a job as the head tennis coach of the Hebei Province government program in Shijiazhuang China, managed by the Hebei Province Sports Bureau[1]. But I had to be there in two weeks to go through a month-long interview process. Without thinking, I packed my bags and left. I ended up spending three years working under the auspices of the Chinese government sports system training Hebei's top professional players and competing in domestic and international tournaments culminating with the 2013 China National Games. The national games occur every four years and are considered to be China's most prestigious domestic competition, rivaling in importance only the Asian and Olympic Games.

Shijiazhuang, the capital of Hebei, is a coal mining province that borders Beijing, and a place that few Westerners ever take the time to visit. People often ask if I ended up there by mistake. Still, I believe it was fate. Living in Shijiazhuang allowed me to situate myself at what I believe to be the center of my China experience, away from the glamor and glitz of Shanghai, and far removed from other foreigners that choose the more friendly confines of Beijing or Guangzhou. The three years I spent working in Hebei grounded me in a way that is hard to put into words. There were days of incredible exultation brought by competition, winning results, and building friendships with my players and colleagues. There too, were days of

[1] The Province Sports Bureaus are management centers where China's elite athletes train for Olympic sports. The State General Administration of Sport (SGAS), is the government agency that is responsible for funding and maintaining these management centers, which are the backbone of China's state-sponsored, national and elite sports framework.

disappointment and frustration in the losses, of homesickness and cultural misunderstandings. Overall my time in Hebei allowed me to learn, of course, learn about myself, but more importantly, to learn about the people, the language and the culture of China, its past and present history, politics, and socio-cultural structures. But I left Shijiazhuang with more questions than answers. I felt like I had done little to solve the educational gap problem of China's elite athletes. In many ways, during my time working with for Hebei Provincial Sports Bureau, I had directly participated in and was part of a system that used the results of my athletes for my personal and monetary gain. I had arguably left them without the skills necessary to succeed once they transition out of sport and no better off than when I had first arrived. And while I had gained a wealth of knowledge on the issue, I knew there was more work to be done if I wanted to take up this social cause and make actionable change.

After coming back to the US and spending two years as a collegiate tennis coach, in the fall of 2015, I enrolled at the University of Illinois, in the Department of Kinesiology, which has a long line of cultural theorists who have paved the way for me to examine this dissertation topic. Many of the scholars who graduate from our program draw their foundational theoretical and methodological techniques from the works of scholar and prominent sociologist Norm Denzin (1997, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2017, 2018, 2018a, 2018b). His class, a seminar on advanced interpretive methods (in its eighth iteration at the time), was the first course I took when I arrived on campus and it challenged us to see ethnographic research as a performance.

As a process, the performance of ethnography involves extended observations of a group, most often through participant observation, in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants (Creswell & Poth 2018, p. 68). Researchers working in critical ethnography seek to take an advocacy perspective

to fight against institutions where "power, prestige, privilege, and authority serve to marginalize individuals who are from different classes, races, and gender, and in which the author advocates for the emancipation of groups marginalized by society" (p. 70). Since 2008 until the time of the writing, I will have spent nearly six full years living, working, and researching the Chinese sport industry. During that time, I was immersed in the culture and engaged with numerous citizens throughout China, who also actively participate in the Chinese sport industry. I spent time learning the language so that I could better engage with people daily and feel more a part of their community. I spent time learning about the challenges and barriers athletes face when it comes to combining sport and education. Over time I began to understand the plight of the athletes, and I wanted to help challenge certain cultural assumptions that athletes could not study while at the same time train. After all, I had seen this done in the US, and I thought, why not in China too?

The impetus of this current project begins with my personal lived experience working and living in China. At its core, this project is Mystory (a term used by Ulmer, 1989; Denzin, 2017) and my emphatic moment, which brought me to China, and the proceeding moments in time that are intersected by historical, social, political, cultural, and structural ideologies. (Denzin, 2013). And while my time in China has allowed my personal experiences to grow into a foundation for a unique story, a critical ethnographic account is not a singular experience. It is bodies at work, movements happening in a corresponding time, and a familiar place. The act is a performance of critical and self-reflexive thought, where the body takes on a meaning and creates knowledge. But in the action of research, the performance is a co-creation of knowledge, there are often multitudes of actors, and while my experience is singular, it was undoubtedly influenced by the people that I met. I was constantly surrounded by others who inspired my thoughts, engaged with me in conversation, and taught me about their lives and experiences of

playing sport in China. While the research begins as Mystory, through shared interactions with those in the Chinese sport industry, and through our willingness to build meaningful relationships, the final story shared is in fact Ourstory.

When conducting research, even in the simplest of forms, it becomes an embodied experience between two or more people in what Madison (2006) terms a dialogic performative. Interactions between the researcher and the researched become a performance, one where a co-inhabitation of space becomes a form of movement, a play between words, and in some cases between different worlds. In my case, it was between the worlds of the US and China. A well-designed research project is "charged by a desire for a generative and embodied reciprocity, sometimes with pleasure and sometimes with pain. It is a mutual creation of something different and something more from the meeting of bodies in their contexts" (p. 320). The act is a performance of critical and self-reflexive thought, where the body takes on a meaning and creates knowledge. "The performance does more than interpret and express, it initiates and incites" (p. 322). Madison argues that critically embodied research is "paying attention to the 'being with' in body to body presence with Others that makes the present realizably present…and in a body-to-body convergence that pays attention to the right now and newly comprised by all the representations, histories, and longings that came before this moment to make the now extraordinary" (p. 323). My research, all of our research, becomes a fully embodied experience. This project compounds time, politics, and history as I live between worlds, the US, and China, as I aim to disseminate knowledge about the socio-cultural experiences of one another's sporting experiences. My research would not be possible without the support of my participants and without being invited into a space where I chose to immerse myself. The result is not a linear path from A to B, but rather a messy decomposition of living

stories and shared experiences tethered to theoretical foundations that shift with the track of the research.

Our departmental approach to autoethnography can be surmised as a "living body of thought," which allows the story to be interwoven with theoretical frameworks, where the theory is not static, but rather a dynamic symbiotic relationship that explains the nuances of an experience and the happenings of a culture (Jones, 2016). The world of sport and the space of physical cultural studies offer an area to delve into a rich narrative of understanding about the body. The body, its movements in time and space, its health, and well-being, is a site where knowledge is inscribed and is an important place to construct a dialogue between researcher and researched. However, this liminal space is messy, untethered, and can create a chaotic understanding of the body, how it is analyzed and where it "belongs." There were many times throughout this process that I questioned what I was doing, whether I was going about it the "right way," and whether my finished work would create impact by inciting social change. Regardless of the result, I pressed on knowing that through a shared sporting experience between Chinese counterparts and myself, our work would create a better pathway to understand one another.

In many ways, sport and physical activity are the epitome of performance, and through these acts of movement, we can ascribe meaning based upon context and culture as living bodies. Sport is an essential realm of inquiry because "it provides a nexus of body, multiple identities, and multilayered governance structures, combined with performance genre that possesses qualities of play, liminality, and storytelling that enables us to explore the connections among these dynamics in a unique way" (Besnier & Brownell, 2012, p. 454). Besnier and Brownell go on to say that, "reconceptualizing the body as a cultural construction makes it possible to look at

how sport 'travels' across boundaries and opens up a space for examining how sport creates connections between peoples at the same time that it strengthens local and national identities." Thus, sport can be utilized and leveraged to form and transform not only individuals, but entire societies. Sport is a powerful entity that can be ascribed meaning and embody multiple constructs. Sport itself and ethnography of sport thus allow scholars to explore critical issues of movement and ways in which the body is "trained, disciplined, modified, displayed, evaluated and commoditized" (p. 444). Though the above descriptions of critical ethnography and critical sports ethnography seem relatively straightforward, assigning culture and identity to the body is a complicated process. It is especially complicated when trying to represent other persons' culture or heritage through your own story. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that my biases stem from growing up in the Global North, specifically the US, where the idea of a student-athlete is commonplace. Thus, Mystory projects that offer interpretations of shared experience can be criticized.

As physical and cultural studies scholars, "we study social bodies and physical cultures often situated at the intersecting vectors of power, knowledge, and identity, mingling about those subject positionalities upon which power is either challenged or reaffirmed through bodily performance or practice" (Giardina & Newman, 2011, p. 524). By no means is this a seamless process, and allocating a symbolic representation is muddled by differences in values, attitudes, and beliefs. Madison (2005) argues that critical ethnography (Thomas, 1993), and in this case critical sport ethnography must begin to extend its political aims, because "politics alone are incomplete without self-reflection. Critical ethnography must further its goals from simply politics to the politics of positionality. The question becomes, how do we begin to discuss our positionality as ethnographers and as those who represent Others?" (Madison, 2005, p. 6).

Furthermore, "positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects" (Madison, 2005, p.7). Assigning cultural representations to Others, combined with the complexity of how to situate our own researching body to a social production of scholarly work, and one begins to see the challenges with this research methodology. I recognize that as a researcher I am in a position of power in the ways that I convey the understanding of this subject, and such a politically loaded project, "bound as it is to our own politics, our own biases, our own theoretical and methodological dispositions can be a very complicated enterprise," (Giardina & Newman, 2011, p. 524). Despite its problems, critical sport ethnography is the best methodology for my research project. It allows me to explore the idiosyncrasies associated with the Chinese student-athlete and allows my engagement with the co-participants in the research to create a scholarly representation of sports culture in China.

Given these statements, it is important that I recognize my American culture, heritage, and values, and the ways they are represented in this dissertation. At times my upbringing conflicts when I interact with my Chinese counterparts, probably both helping to inform and hindering the study at the same time as they may bring comparative breadth to the project. In no way do I want neocolonial attitudes and Western white privilege to be represented in my research, yet I also understand my biases, am cognizant of how they may interfere with my project, and how they may filter into my interpretations. But I also appreciate my ability to embed myself in this project and, in doing so, let go of methodology to be culturally aware, present, and in the moment. During this project and throughout my scholarly career, I can interconnect with Chinese citizens and society to create a multicultural understanding of the differences that bind us together. I hope that through this project and throughout my scholarly

career that I can become a diplomat for bilateral relationships between the US and China and embark on a career as an applied researcher that helps create solutions to problems in both the US and Chinese sports industries.

To that point, my time spent in the kinesiology department at the University of Illinois has uniquely prepared me for a future career as an interdisciplinary scholar, as well as the task of unpacking a dissertation that incorporates sub-disciplines such as socio-cultural studies, physical studies, and sport management. The American Kinesiology Association states, "Kinesiology is an academic discipline that involves the study of physical activity and its impact on health, society, and quality of life. It includes, but is not limited to, such areas of study as exercise science, sports management, athletic training, and sports medicine, socio-cultural analyses of sports, sport and exercise psychology, fitness leadership, physical education-teacher education, and pre-professional training for physical therapy, occupational therapy, medicine and other health-related fields" (American Kinesiology Association, n.d.). The breadth and the expansiveness of research under the umbrella of kinesiology are practically endless. In an ideal department, the goal of its scholars ought to be a coalescence of ideas that inform and substantiate the validity of one another's research. There are opportunities to work together, collaborate, and draw from the extensive expertise in the field of kinesiology. Even in the face of evident epistemological differences, a reimagination of our pedagogical approach is needed to integrate the historical, social, political, and scientific contexts that intersect the field of kinesiology. By recognizing kinesiology's interconnected relationships, we can create a field that organizes, educates, and produces both social and scientific truths through which the active body and movement are utilized for positive social change.

This dissertation examines the topic of a Chinese student-athlete from the perspective of combining socio-cultural physical studies and sport management. The writing and analysis performed in this study seeks to inform the reader and ascribe meaning to the development of sport, and the social and cultural influence sport has on society. I have come to see sport as a universal mirror for examining society and its problems, and as a vehicle for academic exploration. Through sport, we can analyze patterns in society and culture. Sport offers a way to inspect social phenomena such as race, multinational capitalism, media, gender, and politics. Sport, its impact on society, and the ways that it is developed are not mutually exclusive. The way that sport is leveraged, designed and implemented impacts society in the way that citizens engage with sport, and ultimately alters the national and international representations of its physical culture. In this research project and my future career as an academic, I will explore the interplay between sport and Chinese society, using a critical lens to interpret both the positive and adverse effects of the profound and meaningful connection between the way that sport is developed and managed and the evolving history of Chinese physical culture, the body, its movement and the structures of social life.

My role as a tennis coach working with high-level professional athletes in both the Chinese government-sponsored and independent systems allowed me to embed myself into the project. My training as a scholar and my practical experience in the field has allowed me to see the genuinely interdisciplinary nature of our systems: in my experiences as a tennis coach to think more broadly about the role that I played in providing an avenue for the physical and mental development of my players; and later how I could affect or change policy or create solutions to problems within the space of Chinese athletic development. Moving forward in my scholarship, my job is to aid in the conceptualization of boundaries as a basis for critically

examining the notion of policy problems and solutions in contemporary physical culture (Penney, 2017). Furthermore, my involvement in both China and the US will allow me to utilize different international contexts to illustrate complex interrelationships that define policy and pedagogical directions that can legitimately be used in physical studies. As noted by Penney, knowledge of physical studies allows one to draw insight and examine the sociological nature in which broader policy processes and contexts are framing equity in physical education. My past experiences and future academic career will help to define what actions need to be taken to improve the development of systems, institutions and managerial practices that impact the nature of sport, physical health, activity and education practices in both the US and China.

Often how sport is utilized and delivered will have a direct effect on the nature of sport in society as well as the issues and controversies that arise when implementing sport. Effective sports management can provide positive benefits physically, socially, and psychologically for those who participate. As Chalip (2006) discussed, sport can offer legitimation in the realms of health, salubrious socialization (moral development, self-esteem, character building), economic development, community development, and national pride. In essence, sports development, when leveraged correctly, can positively impact society. But as Chalip asserts, sports management and physical studies needs to shift their paradigms to focus on how to leverage sport for the betterment of society, rather than focusing on its retroactive impacts. As the sports industry continues to grow worldwide, the globalizing effect that sport has on societies will change systems, structures, and ideologies. If sports are implemented correctly, it can lead to positive outcomes, implemented poorly, and it can lead to detrimental outcomes.

My areas of interest are diverse yet interrelated, and my personal experiences drive me to create relationships and find correlations between these areas of scholarship. There is a need for

comprehensive kinesiology and for the learning that utilizes its interdisciplinary platform, which can provide positive interactions between theoretical, empirical, and applied scholarship. In this dissertation, I draw from expertise in sports sociology, physical studies, and sports management and bring in multiple disciplines such as education, cultural studies, language studies, history, politics, and more to encompass an interdisciplinary approach to academia. As a scholar, I believe in interdisciplinary research and extol the virtues of integrated learning. Kinesiology offers numerous ways to become involved by bringing together research that transcends boundaries and highlights the ability to work together, in spite of the highly fragmented world of academia.

As an interdisciplinary scholar of physical culture and sports management, a scholar who has worked in different cultural settings, I believe that I have an increased awareness to alleviate neocolonial attitudes, and instead develop sport by creating culturally sensitive partnerships. This research project will produce critical inquiry that translates beyond paper, applies to the real world, and delivers tangible results that transform into positive social change. In this project, through the inspection of the notion of a Chinese student-athlete, I aim to strengthen bilateral relationships between the China and the US and improve how sport can play a role in not only fostering conversations but also to generate cross-cultural exchange between the US and China of best practices in the building and expansion of the Chinese sports industry while creating an environment of positive social change for athletes in China.

As Professor Denzin would argue, as a researcher I have a moral and ethical obligation to myself and to those in Illinois' cultural and interpretive studies program who have come before me, to understand my positionality and use my platform to combat social issues and become

change agents through the lived experience, the shared stories, the performance of movement and the exposé of action.

All because a friend once called me ignorant

CHAPTER 1: THE SUNRISE INDUSTRY: THE ECONOMIC BOOM OF SPORT IN CHINA, THE GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY OF SPORT IN SOCIETY, AND THE INTERSECTION WITH THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

To understand the global connectivity of sport in society and the emerging role that China is playing in the international sports sector, one must only look at the October 2019 events between the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). On October 4, 2019, Houston Rockets General Manager Daryl Morey sent a tweet in support of Hong Kong's anti-government protesters. The tweet went out only days before NBA teams were supposed to have exhibition games in Shanghai and Shenzhen as part of the NBA China Games. The tweet not only further exposed the growing political tension between China's central government and citizens in Hong Kong but also fractured a seemingly unbreakable business relationship between China and the NBA. Shortly after the tweet NBA commissioner Adam Silver muddled the situation, first calling the tweet regrettable, then making an official comment about the NBA's employees right for free speech, but also highlighted the importance of relationship it has built with China over the past 30 years (ESPN, 2019).

Amid the fallout, the Chinese government threatened to cancel the television broadcast, and even the games itself. Beijing's final decision was to nix the broadcast of the games. Additionally, nearly all of the NBA's relationship with Chinese businesses were either officially halted or temporarily suspended, including relationships with tech giants Tencent and Vivo (Lucas & Wu, 2019). Putting politics aside, for the two parties involved, it is perhaps the potential economic ramifications that are most concerning. According to Sports Business Journal, in September of 2019, the NBA's relationship with China was worth an estimated five

billion dollars. Silver was quoted as saying the recent snafu cost the NBA and its players millions of dollars. According to Fainaru-Wada and Malinowski (2019), before the incident, the NBA had expanded its deal with Tencent to stream live games, as well as share related content, which was reportedly worth 300 million dollars annually over five years. The NBA also has a contract with the government-run China Central Television (CCTV) to broadcast games live throughout the country. Furthermore, the NBA makes money in China through corporate sponsorships, NBA training academies, NBA themed play centers for kids in malls, video games, and youth development programs. Millions of dollars in individual sponsorships for NBA players through Chinese companies are also on the line (Fainaru-Wada & Malinowski, 2019).

Through this event, we see a small snapshot of the global connectivity sport has throughout societies all over the world, especially between China and the US. In this single incident, there are broader implications for sport concerning politics, media, and, most importantly, neoliberal transnational economics. Neoliberal policies are designed to encourage economic liberalization to spark growth by decreasing the reliance on state enterprises, and instead promote deregulation through privatization (Harvey, 2005). "Like other aspects of the Chinese economy, the sport industries have developed by incorporating transnational forces and neoliberal economic principles into 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', which refers to the infusion of capitalist market principles to spark economic growth while the state continues to holds the reins of political power" (Haugen, n.d.)[2]. Whether China is actually a neoliberal state is debated by sinologists and discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

[2] Small sections of this dissertation also appear in: Haugen, M (ND, in preparation) "Neoliberalism, Masculinity, and Social Mobility in Chinese Tennis" Niko Besnier, Domenica Gisela Calabrò, and Daniel Guinness, eds. *Sport, Migration, and Gender in the Neoliberal Age*. London: Routledge; and was authorized to be reproduced by the editor for dissertation purposes only.

The world is beginning to realize the economic pull of China's evolving commercial sport industry, which boasts access to over a billion potential consumers. Doing business in China's sports industry can come with rewards, but there are also inherent risks involved. "Both the state and Chinese people are aware of the leverage they have over profit-seeking entities that are desperate to maintain access to the Chinese market," said Jonathan Sullivan, the Director of China Programs at the University of Nottingham Asia Research Institute. "Of course, it is the state that sets, adjudicates, and enforces the rules. And if you transgress, you can expect to be punished, at a time and method of the state's choosing" (Fainaru-Wada & Malinowski, 2019). Regardless of the potential risks, the influx of both international and domestic resources and the number of entrepreneurs willing to make inroads into China's emerging sports market is showing no signs of slowing down…and for a good reason.

The Sunrise Industry

Sport in China is booming. China and its sports industry are now inordinately linked to its potential for economic growth, both domestically and internationally. With neoliberal economies and attitudes infusing China with shifting sport centric policies, ideas, and innovative programming to meet the individual needs and wants of its citizens, the Chinese sport industry is projected to reach new heights. However, behind the transnational waves of global connectivity, the driving force behind the proposed economic growth of sport in China is the central government. While government policies signaled a shifting emphasis from its centralized sports system for elite athletes to a commercially driven mass market as early as 1995, the movement to capture the market had to wait until after China's triumph in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Since 2008 it has been a full-court press by the Chinese government and its officials to capture the full capabilities of a consumer market to spur continued economic growth.

On September 29, 2008, then president of the PRC, Hu Jintao, first mentioned the idea of China, "moving from a major sports country to a world sports power" by developing a sport-for-all system that would co-develop elite and mass sport (Tan, 2015). Shortly after, in a 2009 State Council supported policy, *Regulations on National Fitness*[3], the document stated that "The State supports, encourages and promotes consumption in the field of physical culture and sports that is commensurate with the living standards of the people as well as the development of the sports industry." The individualistic needs and wants of the Chinese citizens are increasingly crucial to the growth of the sports sector, especially as China's bourgeoning middle-class sees sports and physical activity as an important cultural expenditure. As Zhang (2015a) described it, "as the world economy continues to develop and material living standards continue to increase... the sports industry has gained more and more attention from the state, society and the public, and has increasingly been seen as a sunrise industry of the twenty-first century" (p. 1089).

What has transpired in China's sports industry since 2008 is remarkable. Globalization has spurred the rapid industrialization of sport in China and spawned new patterns of growth through the cooperation of multiple economic sectors. "Many operating entities such as the state, collectives, privately-owned companies, and foreign merchants have entered the field of sport, and social participation in sport has grown considerably" (Zhang, 2015a, p. 1089). This growth can be attributed to changes in the public attitude toward health and fitness. The idea of spending money on health is connected to improvement in the quality of life which has driven the demand for the consumption of sport-related services to new heights in China. The sports

[3] Most policy documents were found on the China State Council Website at, www.gov.cn. In this dissertation policy documents are referred to by the English translations titles, and referenced in the bibliography under State Council, and its issuing branch of government, year of enactment, and title in English. While in China on my Fulbright, I was given a critical language enhancement award that allowed me to examine and translate all policies used in this document in the original Mandarin Chinese.

service sector, which includes the sports development and performance industries, and the fitness and entertainment sector, is leading the charge in China's consumption of sport. The value added to the economy of the sports service industry increased by 157% from RMB 16.815 billion in 2006 to RMB 43.226 billion in 2010, the sports agency industry increased by 388% from RMB 202 million to RMB 986 million, and the sport training industry increased by 744% from RMB 464 million to RMB 3.914 billion (Sports Industry Branch, 2011). Furthermore, from 2011 to 2012, the added value of sport rose 14.44% to RMB 313.595 billion, accounting for 0.6% of China's GDP (Zhu, 2014). As the sports industry grows year by year, it is increasingly becoming a target market to help China's economy continue to prosper.

Riding the early success of the industry in 2014, the State Council (2014) released another document, *Opinions of the state council on accelerating the development of sports industry and promoting sports consumption No. 46*. No. 46, as it is now termed, called for the continued and sustained economic growth of the sports sector in China. In the document, the ultimate goal is to grow the overall scale of the sports industry to RMB 5 trillion (USD 813 billion) by 2025 and to have more than 500 million people who regularly participate in sports activities by 2025. To do this, China is trying to utilize sports to not only improve the domestic marketability of its professional leagues, the physical fitness sector, and grassroots sports development programs but to also encourage and incorporate growth across various other sectors. According to document No. 46, this includes enriching the content of the sports industry to promote the integration of sports into age care services, cultural creativity, design services, education and training, and promote the development of sports tourism, sports media, sports exhibitions, sports advertising, sports and film, and other related formats.

Early indications are that China is well on its way to reaching the ambitious goals for the industry. A 2017 document called, *"China: Emerging Market Focus"* produced by Nielson Sports reported that 59% of the urban population were sports fans, which includes nearly 432 million citizens. Of those, 92% are fans between the ages of 26-45, and of that, more than 30 % had an average household income of more than RMB 200,000 approximately USD 29,000 (Nielsen Sports, 2017). By tapping into this emerging consumer base, it was reported in 2017 that growth in the sports industry had reached RMB 2.2 trillion (USD 326 billion), which was up 15% from the year prior. While sports manufacturing made up the lion's share of the market at RMB 1.3 trillion, the sports-related service sector maintained healthy growth momentum. In 2017, sports contests and fitness activities markets rose 39.2 percent and 47.5 percent, respectively (Xinhua, 2019c).

All of the foregrounding information on the economic growth of Chinese sport leads me to the crux of this dissertation project. China is infusing its sports industry with new patterns of growth in both mass and elite sport. The growth that it seeks is slated to reach across and cover multiple sectors of Chinese society; politics, the environment, health, media, technology, and more. One sector that I have failed to mention but will focus on for the entirety of this dissertation is the intersection of sport and education in Chinese society. As China infuses its sports sector with commercial growth and searches for ways to enrich the content of the sport industry, the ways sport interfaces with education have undoubtedly been affected. The purpose of this critical autoethnography is to explore the transnational changes taking place in China's sport industry and the effect an open market system has on the formal educational experiences of elite and aspiring athletes. This dissertation will track the shifts in governmental policies, changes to sporting institutions, additions in developmental programming, type of capital

obtained, and the overall attitude toward the integration of sport and education in China. The study will focus specifically on how the movement toward a market-driven sport system has altered the experience of combining formal education and sport for elite athletes in Chinese society.

The Intersection of Sport and Education in Chinese Society

In Chinese society, since 1949 under the Communist Party there has been an emphasis on integrating physical fitness and health into its overall understanding of a citizen's complete moral education foundation. Physical culture has been a long-standing concept in China's model of the role of education, in which the guiding principles of *de-zhi-ti* (moral, intellectual, physical) become the formation of the socialist person (Brownell, 1995, p. 46-47).

> During Mao Zedong's rule in China from 1949 to 1976, sports were seen as a militarized and socialist movement in which all citizens were required to take part. Policy dictated that mass participation in physical activity was an essential part of the culture, and necessary for a strong and healthy working class. Training one's body was part of the daily regimen and served as both a political and cultural objective. Mao felt it was imperative to build people's health in order to maintain and defend the nation. Sports inspired a collective work effort that united the country in the spirit of socialism. A disciplined physical education program was implemented to preserve the Chinese collective and fulfill this political ideology. Mao's physical education program included callisthenic exercises that were practiced by virtually everyone, including soldiers and party officials, every morning and afternoon in workplaces and educational institutions. In Mao's estimation, physical training was as important as moral education and intellectual development, with the latter processes significantly influenced by physical training (Haugen, 2016, p. 49)[4].

Mao believed that without physical development, there was no basis for moral and intellectual education (Xie, 1990) and asserted that physical education was to serve the political purpose of building a class of citizens who were well-disciplined in both mind and body.

[4] Small sections of this dissertation also appear in, *Education About Asia, Issue 21 Volume 2, 2016; "The Changing National and Political Role of Chinese Sports, 1949-2016, by Matthew Haugen, and is reprinted with permission of the Association for Asian Studies, Inc., www.asian-studies.org/EAA*

However, coming out of the Cultural Revolution, the political ideology and use for sport quickly shifted. Much of the resources for mass sport and physical education were reallocated toward the focused buildup of elite sportspersons in China who would serve as change agents for China's slouching international reputation. "China's elite-sport-first strategy was introduced by the Sport Ministry in the 1980's and was further developed in the 1990s and 2000s" (Fan & Lu, 2013, p. 113). The Chinese state consolidated funding for sport under the State General Administration of Sport (SGAS) and developed a centralized system of provincial sports bureaus and training centers across the nation, known as *juguo tizhi or* "state-supported sport system". Its primary concern was to produce elite athletes for the national and Olympic teams. Behind every training center was the ultimate goal of Olympic gold medals, glory for the nation, and the projection of soft power to the international community (Brownell, 2008; Cha, 2009; Hong, 2008; Hong, Wu & Xiong, 2005).

What ensued was the political build-up of elite athletes in a highly centralized system of sport, who were asked to focus all their time and energy on rebuilding China's image through success in international competitions. China felt that by winning international sporting competitions, they would be able to showcase the strength of its country, and the power of the socialist movement, as well as give its citizens nationalistic pride in the direction their country was headed. However, with this ideology for sport in mind, athletes were asked to train countless hours, and little attention was placed on integrating formal education into their daily training regimen. Instead, elite athletes were asked to train for gold and glory, regardless of the cost, which had long-lasting ramifications on an elite athlete's ability to obtain a quality formal education. The problem was only exacerbated in 2001 as China bid on and won the right to host the 2008 Olympic games. From that point forward, it remained all systems go for the centralized

institution of elite sport. Though China was incredibly successful in the development of elite athletes who competed for and won international competitions, the 2008 Olympic games also thrust its elite athletes into the spotlight for another reason.

In the formative years leading up to the 2008 Olympics, China had built its sports system around strength in numbers. In 2002, *Project 119* was initiated, which sunk large sums of money and unprecedented efforts into producing gold medalists. The more elite athletes that it developed, the better the odds to win gold, no matter the cost. With the international spotlight shining so brightly on Beijing in 2008, the global media hounded China over the plight of its athletes. Specifically, the media took note of the harsh methods of athletic development and training systems that China's athletes would endure to create champions. While the result was 51 gold medals in 2008, some argue that it came at the expense of fundamental human rights for elite athletes, including restricting access to formal education. Upon the transition out of sport, athletes, especially those who did not make it to the top of the podium, fell far from grace; and most of those athletes left the Chinese sports system with no formal education with which to reintegrate themselves back into mainstream society. "China's path to Olympic glory is littered with human sacrifice—that of athletes who failed to make it to the top ranks of sports. The country now has tens of thousands of retired athletes whose single-minded dedication to their sport never equipped them for life beyond it" (Lim, 2008, n.p.).

Take, for example, the case of Ai Dongmei, a former Beijing Marathon champion who sold popcorn and clothing on the street. Alternatively, Zou Chunlan, a former national champion weightlifter who had to scrub backs in a bathhouse to earn a living upon retirement, and is quoted as saying, "We are left uneducated and destroyed by a system that told us it would take care of us forever" (Macur, 2008). Yang Wenjun, an Olympic gold medalist in canoeing, tried to

retire early, but was forced to continue competing, and is cited saying that he would have rather gone to college or started a business but because he did not learn anything but sport he does not have the educational foundation and is ill-equipped to do either one (Macur, 2008). Zhang Shangwu is another highly publicized case. Once a world champion gymnast, Zhang was forced to retire after an injury forced him out of sport and was sentenced to four years in prison in 2007 on charges of stealing laptops and cellphones from a sports school in Beijing. Upon his release, he found on the streets of Beijing, begging by performing his acrobatic craft (Ward, 2011). These incidents are not the isolated few. Thousands of athletes have left the government-sponsored sport system ill-prepared to reintegrate back into society because they lack a formal education and the necessary skills to enter a highly competitive workforce — stories like the ones of Ai, Zou, Yang, and Zhang showcase the gravity of the situation.

These well documented cases of a few high-profile athletes have received international attention, but the majority of Chinese athletes who are left behind do not reach the pentacle of achievement. In my time as a tennis coach for Hebei Province team in China, I saw firsthand, and participated in the maleducation of athletes in the state-supported sport system. For three years I trained my players six days a week, six hours each day. I watched my players grow older and advance to the later stages in their athletic careers, knowing that almost all of them had very little chance to make it as a professional athlete. I often wonder then and now, should I have done more, could I have done more to bring attention to the struggle my players would face reintegrating back into society once they transition out of sport. With little to no educational foundation, or secondary plan upon retirement, many of my former athletes are stuck in a vicious cycle and do not have the knowledge resources or support to transition into a sustainable job upon retiring from sport.

Research Questions Driving the Study of Sport and Formal Education in China and the Theoretical Significance of the Project.

Though there have been calls for reform, and government policies have been initiated to combat the educational gap of its elite athletes, the situation in the government-sponsored system of sport remains mostly unchanged. However, as neoliberal economies are encouraging change and growth across sectors, it is slowly moving China's sports industry toward decentralization and allowing for the privatization of the industry to account for its citizens individual wants and needs. Since there is a need to improve the formal education of China's athletes my research question is: How are transnational neoliberal economies fundamentally altering China's sporting landscape to address the educational gap of its athletes, what do those experiences now look like, and is China embracing the concept of a student-athlete? Three areas will be addressed to formulate a baseline to analyze the question; 1) What fundamental shifts are taking place in regard to the political agenda, governmental policies, and economies regarding China's sport industry? 2) How are these shifts altering China's sport and educational infrastructures and what reforms are being made to development systems to address the educational gap of athletes? 3) Based upon reforms to development programs, what type of skills, resources, and knowledge are athletes obtaining to aid their future career ambitions? In answering these questions, I will posit whether the concept of a student-athlete is being formed in China, and how it relates to the country's unique sociocultural context.

From my baseline research question more specific questions will be posed to key stakeholders in the Chinese sports industry. For example, as market-oriented shifts occur, what will become of the integration between sport and education for China's aspiring and elite athletes? Will the formal education gap for elite athletes shrink? How are values changing as

transnational ideologies becoming increasingly present in Chinese citizens? Will China's growing middle class and wealthier citizens become wary of allowing their children to participate in China's government sports system if it comes at the cost of formal education? What types of policies and programs that combine sport and education are being implemented to account for the transnational changes to China's sports industry? These types of research questions lay the foundation for this dissertation project and a full list can be found in Appendix A.

The Socio-cultural Significance for Sport Development and the Field of Sport Management.

Over the past forty years, there is a noticeable gap in the ability of elite Chinese athletes to receive and ascertain a quality formal education; but currently transnational economies are infusing the Chinese sport sector with new development programs, which is affecting the integration and development of sports with educational based programming. This dissertation aims to bring more understanding to how a neoliberal infused sport industry is altering the formal educational experiences of elite athletes. As outlined in the Prelude, the crux of this dissertation is an interdisciplinary project that will take the reader on a historical and political understanding of the agenda of sport in China, and its effect on the formal education of elite athletes. Insights and analysis from key stakeholders within the Chinese sports industry (who discuss transnational challenges, integrating formal education inside the sports industry, how its systems are reforming, where it is being done, and ultimately whether it is a sustainable model for the future) are key to this dissertation. The dissertation draws from the social sciences, including the fields of sport management and cultural studies. In drawing from these fields, this interdisciplinary project will provide a view into the unique cultural context of China's sport

industry, how its sport development is being effected by transnational ideas, and will showcase the connectivity of our global sport industries.

From the field of sport management relevant issues will be examined using China as a cultural backdrop. The dissertation will incorporate literature from the areas of sport governance, policy making, organizational infrastructure, program design, development, transitions, and capital into the overall analysis. No singular theory will be attached to the project, but rather it is intended to read much like our daily life; as a complex and often messy intersection of the historical, political, social, cultural, with the individual at the center of it all. The meanings and interpretation of this dissertation will vary depending on the reader, but a major contribution of the study is to show how the fields of sport management and sociology can be intertwined to create a narrative from which to explore a multitude of topics. More specifically, the dissertation will show the varied ways in which sport management theories are practically applied and present when trying to solve for the educational gap of China's elite and aspiring athletes. From this study the area of sport development will be advanced through a discussion of how sports programming is formulated, designed, and implemented to have a targeted impact on Chinese citizens. While there are multitude of studies in the field of sport management about the political, policy, economic and developmental impacts occurring in the Chinese sport industries; there are few studies done by Western scholars that incorporate the component of formal education with sport. The topic has been given more attention by Chinese scholars, but most often are published in Mandarin Chinese. My study on the other hand is a critical autoethnography that incorporates my individual experience and unique circumstance of being a stakeholder in both the China and US systems of sport.

In doing so I hope to bridge the cultural gap of misconception between China and the West and engage in a critical commentary of the global sports industry as a whole. Critique is not necessarily negative; I maintain an optimistic view that the educational gap for China's elite athletes can be solved. It is my hope that in the future, China's elite athletes will be able to maintain a quality formal education so that upon transitioning out of sport they can continue to be productive members of society who have high hopes and prospects for long lives after sport. Finally, I want this project to serve as a foundational guide to generate a cross-cultural exchange between the US and China of best practices in the academic schooling of aspiring athletes and to identify developmental models that can assist Chinese athletes in studying academic, technical, or professional subjects at the same time as they are engaged in sports training.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF CHINESE ATHLETES AND EDUCATION

There are many pieces of theoretical literature driving my dissertation research project on the notion of the "Chinese Student-Athlete." Some pieces are foundational, while others are less known in academic circles. In this chapter I introduce four concepts that provide a conceptual, thematic and theoretical framework for data analysis in this project. As highlighted in the Prelude and Chapter 1, an interdisciplinary approach is useful. Using the concepts of neoliberalism, sport development, human capital, and the student-athlete, I inspect and analyze the extent to which market changes in the Chinese sport industry are affecting the ability of aspiring athletes to combine formal education with their training regimen. There is not a single intersection point to examine this topic, but rather multiple dynamics at play, including theoretical perspectives that interweave into the narrative throughout the whole dissertation. Keeping in line with the precedent set by previous doctoral graduates of our Kinesiology department's cultural-interpretive studies cohort, it is acknowledged that methods are not necessarily separated from the theory, but rather are used to think deeply about the interconnectivity of daily life.

In describing the following concepts, this chapter will form an outline that provides a foundational platform from which to conduct further analysis. From this base, an additional layer will be added to the theory to showcase specific examples and applications of the concepts in a targeted Chinese cultural context mixed with sport. Finally, later in the dissertation, this framework will be used to unpack and reveal critical insights in regard to the educational experiences of athletes in China.

Neoliberalism and Market Reforms to Sport in China

China is currently in the midst of an ideological shift regarding the role of sports in its society (Haugen, 2016). Sport, like other Chinese industries before it, is now incorporating transnational forces and neoliberal rationalities into "socialism with Chinese characteristics," or as others call it, "privatization with Chinese characteristics" (Harvey, 2005). However, before delving into how neoliberalism is altering the Chinese sport industry, it is crucial to understand what neoliberalism is, and how it singularly intersects with China, as well as sport. By understanding the foundation for China's particular version of neoliberalism, it is possible to triangulate how the country reimagined the development of sport in the 21st century with those attitudes in mind.

In short, as introduced earlier, neoliberalism is, "a theory of political, economic practices that proposes human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices" (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). Furthermore, "neoliberalism is the spread of the web of ideas and beliefs that identifies a combination of free markets, political deregulation and privatization, individual self-interest, and inequality as the foundation for progress and all forms of development" (Coakley, 2011, p. 69). "The ways in which neoliberalism occurs varies from one nation to another depending on their histories, current economic conditions, and form of government, and therefore neo-liberalization occurs as a process of adaptation rather than the imposition of a fixed set of policies and practices" (Coakley, 2011, p. 70, Hicks, 2009; Peck & Ticknell, 2002; Westra, 2010). Neoliberalism has become dominant worldwide during the first decade of the 21st century and can be seen across

four different dimensions—as an economic doctrine, a political project, a cultural perspective, and a framework for organizing social relationships (Coakley, 2011). These effects can be seen in the modernization of China and in the ways neoliberal ideology has seeped into the daily function of economic, political, and cultural practices altering how its citizens engage within a changing social order.

Neoliberalism in China, with State-Organized Characteristics

China's unique version of neoliberalism has emerged and evolved slowly with a firm reliance on the state to dictate and direct how and where market reforms have taken shape. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping took the first steps towards liberalizing a communist run economy in the world's most populous country. Deng embarked down a path to transform China from an isolated and closed country to an open epicenter of global capitalism predicated on with unparalleled economic growth (Harvey, 2005). To accomplish this goal, China established institutional frameworks which promoted free trade and open markets to entice international corporations to engage with and invigorate the Chinese economy. In its early stages of reform China implemented capitalistic neoliberal ideals through early policy making. First, China de-collectivized the countryside by giving citizens plots of land to cultivate and individuals would then be responsible for their own profit margins. By moving away from a commune system China proletarianized the peasants, taking away its former means of subsistence, and turned citizens from agricultural laborers into industrial workers. Next China implemented marketization policies which eliminated state job security, and instead encouraged workers to improve their productivity to maintain gainful employment. Slowly China moved toward partial fiscal decentralization by giving more control of revenue to local municipalities, and only required a smaller portion of those funds to be reallocated to the central state. Finally, China

opened four special economic zones to test its open-door policy toward foreign investment. Ultimately these policies shaped China's move toward a neoliberal model by expanding the privative economic sector and integrating it with global capitalist markets (So & Chu, 2011).

However, where China differs from the classical version of neoliberalism is even though the party-state made concessions to downsize, its authoritarian regime still has a principal amount of control and ability to direct how neoliberal reforms took place, thus creating an interconnection between neoauthoritarianism and neoliberalism. Perhaps it is more useful to think about China's association to neoliberalism by using a different term, *state neoliberalism*.

> The emerging state-capitalist relationship is characterized by the fusion of the political capital of the cadres, the economic capital of the capitalists, and the social/network capital embedded in the local society. Many collective enterprises are owned and run by capitalists, while many private enterprises are spun-off state properties owned and run by state managers or their kin. This fusion makes it very hard to distinguish what is owned by the state, by the collective, or by the capitalist in the private sector because the boundaries of their property relations are often blurred (So & Chu, 2011, p. 13-14).

China's brand of neoliberalism is distinctive. State neoliberalism still allows the central government to have a high degree of power and autonomy to carry out its political goals. China can and will intervene in the economy as needed and has done so through processes of developmental planning, deficit investment, export promotion, and strategic industrialization. If necessary, the state will show it authority by suppressing labor protests and limiting popular struggles to maintain its nationalistic agenda (So & Chu, 2011).

For the purposes of this dissertation it is important to comprehend that sport in China is being redeveloped to meet not only the political needs and aims of the state, and also into an industry that can be a sustained economic driver, which will meet the needs and wants of its citizens. Sport, combined with state-neoliberal attitudes in China, has created a directed open market with the goal of creating sustained economic growth for the country. The reforms to the

sport system create new growth opportunities, but also muddle how and by whom development should be initiated. Currently both the state and private interests are driving new programming, and their political agendas do not always align. Before diving deeper into the intersection between sport, neoliberalism, and China, it is necessary to understand how neoliberal ideals are reproduced and embedded through sport and into the cultural and social sphere of life.

Neoliberal Sport

Sports are a highly valued and visible cultural practice in nearly every country in the world and are sites at which neoliberal ideas and beliefs are replicated. At this moment in time, "proponents of neoliberal interests have used their resources to sponsor and utilize elite, organized, competitive, commercial sports (EOCCS) as a conduit to extend their power" (Coakley, 2011, p. 74). Thus, the highly commercialized domain of elite and professional sport has become a site where neoliberalism effects the values, strategies, outcomes and experiences of everyday life. (Andrews, 2006). Sport is an integral part of contemporary popular culture which produces strong emotional attachment and enthusiastic feelings by fans. As such, sport helps to normalize neoliberal structures by creating community of sport consuming masses. Elite sport has manifest itself to become a capitalist mass entertainment product, driven to generate profits across multiple revenue streams, which has become paramount in defining the current ideological nature of sport and its organizational management (Andrews & Silk, 2018).

> Today, virtually all aspects of the global sports institutions (governing bodies, leagues, teams, events and individual athletes) are now unselfconsciously driven and defined by the inter-related processes of: corporatization (the management and marketing of sporting entities according to profit motives); spectacularization (the primacy of producing of entertainment-driven {mediated} experiences); and commodification (the generation of multiple sport-related revenue streams) (Andrews & Ritzer, 2007, p. 140).

Thus, for the purposes of this dissertation, it is important to understand that China, in its transition to a neoliberal-state economy, has targeted sport with implicit politicized motives to

become a prime economic driver. In doing so, sport is shifting from an entirely state-run and operated system of elite sport toward a state directed privatized system based on commercialization, marketization, and professionalization of sport that meets its citizens' changing values wants and needs. This shift is causing sport to take on new political and ideological significance in China, and fundamentally changing the way Chinese citizens consume sport. As the neoliberal process of sport becomes normalized in China, it is creating new avenues of consumption across multiple sectors of the economy and is fast becoming the blueprint for market-oriented growth of the sports industries in the country.

State-Neoliberal Sport in China

Although the government remains firmly entrenched in the development of elite athletes, it also recognizes the potential growth opportunities in marketing sport to its massive population of more than 1.3 billion people. Indeed, in 2011, State Councilor Liu Yandong repeated the words of Hu Jintao, the General Secretary of the China Communist Party (CCP), "Coordinated development of both elite and mass sports should be achieved to further transform China from a major sport country to a world sport power" (Tan, 2015). China wants sport to be a dedicated industry that drives economic progress for its country in the 21st century. China has witnessed the economic progress and growth of sport in other developed nations such as the US and believes that its domestic market is prime for increased consumption of sport by bolstering participation, spectatorship, and fandom. Chinese scholar of sports Jie Zhang (2015a) perhaps best assesses the contemporary importance of sports in China for the government, the private sector, and consumers: "As the world economy continues to develop and material living standards continue to increase, the consumption of sport has become an important element of expenditure in the pursuit of cultural needs. The sports industry has gained more and more

attention from the state, society, and the public and has increasingly seen as a sunrise industry of the twenty-first century" (p.1089).

Though the ideological shift has primarily targeted China's growing middle class as new consumers of sport, the commercialization of sport has real implications for the country's elite athletes who have aspirations of becoming a professional. As the government-led sports industry collides with transnational neoliberalism, it creates a very particular hybrid type of governance, which in turn produces new subjectivities, new forms of citizenship, and changes in social behaviors (Brown, 2005). China's neoliberal political and economic policies are creating broad-scale changes in societal institutions, organizations, and regulations that require its citizens to modify their behavior and change their cultural orientation to develop and keep up with new notions of prosperity and stability within its shifting social structure.

However, some sinologists argue that due to China's strong government oversight and control of its economic policies, it is less likely to engage in the same type of neoliberalism that is taking over other developing countries, which are characterized as having a weak state (Nonini, 2008).

> Consequently, the state-driven entities that run the sports systems are less likely to give up control of their elite sports training system and instead will try to incorporate market characteristics into existing structures. Thus, elite athletes in China who aim to make a living by competing in domestic and international competitions must now alter how they engage in an emerging free-market sports industry that is still controlled by the state (Haugen, n.d.).

Wide-scale changes to the Chinese sports industry are focused on reforms that embrace commodification with significant consequences for the state-run system. China's elite athletes must now contend with the effect of neoliberalism on the sports industry, which is creating new institutions, altering management structures and changing developmental pathways by incorporating Western techniques; all while relying on less government oversight. Neoliberalism

is changing notions of human capital, which in turn directly affects how athletes use their physical attributes to perform labor and produce economic value. Neoliberal sport in China offers athletes substantial potential payouts generated by the marketization of sport, and the ability to profit from their commercial value. An emerging state-neoliberal approach to and shift from state-run to privatized sport is challenging the traditional notions of mobility, and how athletes use their sport-specific skills and resources to improve their status in society. Thus, the reforms spurred by the rapid commercialization and internationalization of the Chinese sports industry are opening new opportunities while simultaneously muddling preexisting domestic routes to social mobility.

Human Capital Acquisition, the Athlete, and State vs. Private Sport in China

Due to the neoliberal changes taking place in China, its sports industry is now a mixture of state-owned and operated government sports programs and privatized independently run academies. Both options provide access and opportunity for China's aspiring athletes to gain the necessary skills and resources to develop their sporting ability and potential to improve their status in society.

Human Capital

For the purposes of this dissertation, Becker's (1964/1993) study on human capital is one way to conceptualize how Chinese athletes utilize their human capabilities to gain the skills and resources necessary to improve their future livelihood in contemporary society. Becker's idea of human capital is concerned with "the activities that influence future monetary income and one's ability to consume by increasing the resources in people; these activities are called investments in human capital" (p. 11).

> For example, "schooling, a computer training course, expenditures on medical care, and lectures on the virtues of punctuality and honesty are considered capital because they raise

> earnings, improve health and add to a person's good habits over much of a lifetime. Therefore, economists regard expenditures on education, training, medical care, and so on as investments in human capital. They are called human capital because people cannot be separated from their knowledge, skills, health or values in the way they can be separated from their financial or physical assets" (Becker, n.d., p.1).

While Becker believes that investment in formal education and schooling are the most import form of human capital needed to obtain the necessary skills and resources to succeed in modern society, other activities such as health, migration, on the job training, other non-schoolings activities and even sport can be considered an investment in human capital. The combination of these many forms of human capital differ in effect on earnings, in the amounts invested, in the size of the return, and the extent to which the connection between investment and return is perceived, but all these investments to improve skills, knowledge, and health, can thus advance one's ability to profit monetarily as well as consume during one's lifetime (Becker, 1964/1993).

Human Capital in China

Differences in cultural contexts, as well as family dynamics, can make an impression on how one chooses and where one chooses to invest in human capital. However, Becker asserts that the most impressive piece of evidence when considering what types of human capital to accumulate is that, "more highly educated and skilled persons almost always tend to earn more than others" (Becker, 1964/1993, p. 12). "Human capital analysis assumes that schooling (formal education) raises earnings and productivity mainly by providing knowledge, skills, and a way of analyzing problems" (Becker, 1964/1993, p. 19). Moreover, it is true of developed countries as well as underdeveloped counties. This point is of particular importance when examining China and the lives of its citizens. For most Chinese citizens, emphasis on traditional education and acquisition of knowledge remains of utmost importance in obtaining the skills and resources

necessary to build a sufficient amount of human capital to succeed in modern society (Chen & Chen, 2016). Becker writes that the growth of many Asian economies can be attributed to the importance of human capital in their societies which, "rely on a well-trained, educated, hardworking and conscientious labor forces that makes excellent use of modern technologies," and that, "China, in particular, is progressing rapidly by relying on its abundant, hardworking and ambitious population" (Becker, n.d., p. 3). Due to a host of factors and in part to China's 1.38 billion-person population size, the intensity and the competitiveness of the formal education system make carving a pathway to the upper echelons of society an ambitious proposition. Thus, many people in China opt for other types of training or modes of human capital.

Human Capital and Sport

For example, if a citizen decides to pursue athletics, they are often opting for a different type of schooling, one that focuses on the body, and the acquisition of physical skills that will help them obtain enough knowledge and resources within their chosen sport to compete in and win national and international contests. By acquiring athletic skills through training, improving their physical prowess, and obtaining analytical strategies that can be imparted in competitions, athletes are gaining knowledge that provides them with increased human capital. "Sports athletes are individuals endowed with some particular physical, cognitive, and psychomotor abilities to the extent that the development of their skills generates earnings benefits" (Antonietti, 2006, p. 2). This acquisition of skills can help support an athlete during their career, "as individual player performance generates a direct and indirect effect on their salary" (Antonietti, 2006, p. 8). Also, once retired, they have a host of sport-specific skills to use in the pursuit of other forms of employment, for example, coaching, developing training programs, or the management of athletes. While it is not the traditional form of education that Becker argues the most substantial

impact on potential future earnings; athletic skills can be classified into other distinct areas that along with formal education make up aspects of human capital, "for example, on the job training, schooling, information, and health" (Becker, 1964/1993, p. 30). Qiu and Wang (2011) write that athletes in China form a unique pool of labor in the country and are practitioners who specialize in sports training and competitions. The formation of athletes' human capital is a combination of endogenous and exogenous factors that results in the athlete's ability to create a high-level workforce from their special athletic abilities and forms the foundation for potential upward mobility in Chinese society.

Human Capital and Sport in China

Especially as neoliberal economies provide opportunities to promote the change and growth of the sports industry in China, it is fast becoming an industry of increased importance to the Chinese government and its people. Sport is no longer seen as merely a sector for undereducated citizens to engage in to have a profession. Chen and Han (2003) write that Chinese people no longer reject the concept of marketization and commercialization of athletes. It is gradually being recognized that by obtaining specific physical characteristics and skills, these sporting attributes can generate labor and services, and is a marketable commodity. Citizens now firmly believe that sports training and competitions are a form of labor that creates economic value that one can profit from and that athletes possess distinctive sporting specific traits of intelligence, psychology, and physical strength. The authors outline six significant components of Chinese athletes when acquiring human capital, 1) *labor power*, the trainee, coach, and other logistical support team members, 2) *financial resources*, the direct investment needed to support training and competitions, expenses and salaries 3) *material resources*, including venues, facilities, and equipment, 4) *technology*, the means, and methods of scientific

training, medical supervision, and nutrition, 5) *physical and mental qualities*, refers to having healthy physical body and psychological mentality, and finally 6) *time*, is the development process and years of training that go into acquiring the above traits (Chen & Han, 2003). In going through this developmental process, athletes can acquire the skills and resources necessary to create a capable professional athlete who can succeed in creating economic value from their physical capabilities.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, China's sports industry is a mixture of the old guard, the state-run athletic developmental system of sports schools, and teams, as well as a modern privatized approach to sports development that seeks to commercialize, marketize and professionalize sport. Depending on which development system a Chinese athlete and their family chooses to engage in, they have different modes and opportunities to acquire human capital through sports that will support their present and future ability to earn and become lifelong consumers. While the end goal for both state-run and privatized sport systems is similar (to create champions through the acquisition of physical skills and knowledge), there are distinct idiosyncrasies, risks, and rewards in the type of human capital that can be obtained depending on which system the athlete chooses to be affiliated.

State Athletes and Human Capital in China

In the state-run system, the largest investor in the athlete and their human capital is the government. China's state system uses a pyramid type system ushering athletes from the city to state and onto national teams and whose goal is to take young athletes from the lowest developmental stage in their career toward the ultimate goal of becoming an Olympic champion. This process takes time, money, and resources from the government and is a well-planned allocation of sport-specific knowledge and skills. In the process, the state provides food,

clothing, shelter, a scaled-down formal education, healthcare, coaching, training, travel to competitions, monthly salary, bonuses for winning results, a retirement bonus, and sometimes job re-employment (Qiu & Wang, 2011). Depending on the level of the athlete, the level of investment and compensation increases which creates a clear hierarchy within the government system for the athletes to climb toward a better and more stable future. This climb toward a higher social status and increased human capital is dependent mostly upon winning and success in competitions, those who do well tend to have a higher social status and those who do not perform well and are left with less capital to work with upon retirement (Qiu & Wang, 2011). One of the most important factors to consider in the accumulation of human capital in the Chinese government sport system is the overwhelming investment by the state in the athlete, so much so that it can potentially limit the athletes' ability to commoditize their physical attributes. Since the athletes are funded by local government at all levels, the city, province, and nation, athletes are moved laterally, and the autonomous movement of the athlete is limited. Since the athletes' movement is prohibited, then their ability to capitalize on expected income is restricted and controlled by the state. The athlete is still able to bring a steady source of income but can be thought of in terms of a period planned economy (He, 2004). This restriction of movement and limitations of athletes encourage some athletes to look outside of the government system of development in order to capitalize more fully on their human capital.

Privatized Sport and Human Capital in China

In a privatized system, the athlete assumes more responsibility in curating their human capital by utilizing a development system that has much less government control and instead is directed by a free market economy. In this development system, the athlete relies on independent academies, professional sports clubs, and various private sports schools to gain the prerequisite

knowledge and skills to become a successful athlete (Qiu & Wang, 2011). Under market conditions, the economics of sport has the potential to create wealth and meet the needs of the athlete. However, the athlete must assume much more individual responsibility for success in this system. The process of obtaining human capital is similar to that of the state-run system, but instead of relying on the state for future stability, the athlete must navigate the free market and think of the potential output from their body and physical capabilities as potential business transactions. The athlete must be able to self-realize the form and function of the sports industry and illicit investments similar to that of corporations. The potential risk in this development system is negotiating fair market values and final return on the investment. Only when the expected benefit from results and competitions exceeds that of capital cost does the athlete have attractive value (Chen & Han, 2003). Through the privatized sport system, the opportunity cost and potential payout from an athlete's human capital are higher, but the risk is also inherent. Excellent athletes under market conditions are considered to be extremely valuable because their performance creates economic value. China's market for sports is growing as spectators, fans, and participation increases. If an athlete can connect to this growing market and mass audience through traditional forms of media and social media, they can gain sponsorships and economic rewards from their intangible assets in the forms of licensing agreements and branding. In a free-market system, the athlete must develop a strategy and understand how to properly value their bodies, performance, and overall sporting human capital.

The Risks of Sport Specific Human Capital of Athletes in China

Despite the potential opportunities for Chinese athletes to profit from their physical attributes, knowledge, and skills in both the state-run and private sports industry, there are also potential pitfalls and risks involved when building this sport-specific human capital in Chinese

society. Chen and Han (2003), He (2004), and Qiu and Wang (2011) share similar concerns when thinking about acquiring such a specific form of human capital in Chinese society. First, they discuss the length of schooling and training necessary to become a high-level athlete and estimate that at least ten years is needed to acquire the skills necessary to succeed in this sports industry. Skills acquisition often occurs during the formative years of human development and takes away from formal education, which is often the precursor for success and upward mobility in Chinese society. Because so much time is needed to become a high-level athlete and due to the competitiveness of Chinese society, most state-run and private training centers forgo substantial time for traditional education. The primary education of Chinese athletes is not robust enough, low quality, and not comprehensive, thus reducing the professional efficacy and employment expectations of the entire athlete group upon retirement. To have such a specific skill set places limitations on the types of re-employment opportunities athlete has and restricts their potential movement in society, reducing the value of an athlete's human capital. To compound the problem, the amount of time an athlete has to capitalize on their athletic skills is relatively short compared to an average worker. An athlete can only maintain their peak physical capabilities for so long, and their performance levels will inevitably decline with age, injury, and other health-related issues; this too, restricts the overall value of sport-specific human capital.

Finally, often the ability to capitalize upon sport-specific human capital is mainly dependent upon the results of the athlete and whether or not they produce winning results in competitions. In both the government-run system and marketized sport, subpar athletes hold less value and are not able to profit to the same standard of a highly successful athlete, which can lead to forced early retirement. As neoliberal changes to China's sports industry take place, it is up to the athlete to decide how to navigate their developmental path and where to allocate their

acquisition of knowledge and skills. Due to the above factors without proper management, proper strategic decision making, and effective allocation and utilization of specialized sport human capital, the target of the investor is subject to impedance from the closure of human capital. Often the ability of the athlete to create human capital comes down to how the sport is managed, operated, and organized, as athletes search for the best development pathways that will hone their athletic talents and provide them with the skills needed to succeed one their career is over.

Sport Development (SD/SFD), Transitions Into, Through and Out of Sport, and the Post-retirement problem of China's elite athletes

To properly understand how athletes navigate the neoliberal changes to China's sports industry and the ways athletes utilize developmental pathways to form human capital, it is necessary to draw from theories in sport management that deal with the way sport is developed or otherwise formed, organized and managed in China. Of particular importance are how Chinese athletes and their families deal with the process of transitioning into, though, and out of the sport. The development of sport will lead to a discussion on the specific issues that have risen for athletes participating in the Chinese sports industry as they move away from sports and look for modes of reemployment.

Sport Development: Development of Sport and Sport for Development

At the core, sport development a field centered on providing opportunities for individuals to engage with and grow in different types of physical activities (Shilbury, Sotiriadou, & Green, 2008). Sport Development is categorized into two branches, development of sport (SD), and sport for development (SFD). These offshoots, SD, and SFD are highly integrated and have many parallels when designing and implementing development programs for individuals.

However, the two branches foster two distinct outcomes in purpose and focus. “SD aims to create pathways for professional participation and talent identification, while SFD focuses on the role that sport can play in contributing to specific social outcomes and overall community well-being” (Shulenkorf, Sherry & Phillips, 2016, p. 6). Primarily SD programs are targeted to improve individual's performance and skills in sport to help them transition upward toward the pentacle of becoming an elite athlete. Meanwhile, SFD programs target the individual to help improve a range of skills beyond tangible outcomes, and thus sport becomes the vehicle to improve social, political, cultural, psychological, educational, and/or economic goals. (Shulenkorf, et al. 2016).

As stated above, SD and SFD have two distinct outcomes in purpose and focus. However, regardless of which type of program is utilized, effective development depends upon the management, organization, leadership design, and implementation of that program, which are all tenants of proper sport management. The design and implementation of effective programming are where SD and SFD are shown to have the most parallels. Both SD and SFD draw upon similar strategies to achieve its stated mission, purpose, or goal. Whether one is trying to affect social outcomes through sport or trying to help and athlete obtain specific performance skills, both programs draw upon similar principles in systems processes to strategically design a program that achieves a particular outcome. How one arrives at those stated goals or outcomes is reliant upon a similar system of development for both SD and SFD programs.

The following is a brief description of the four processes of development that can be used in both SD and SFD program and provide examples of each. 1) Recruitment is the initial decision to try out a program, after which participants are continually recruited to keep attending or retained in the program (Gillard & Witt, 2008). Without participants, a program does not have

an active agent to develop. There are grounded theories that draw upon motivation and behavior to implement strategies of recruitment, prepared in order to entice participants to join programs, and is applied to both SD & SFD settings. 2) Retention is related to the "excitement experienced through participation in various sports, and deliberate play is essential for the development of motivation for sport, which is necessary for continued commitment to sports participation" (Wall & Cote, 2008). In both SD and SFD development programs, there is a need to cultivate motivation to continue the activity. There must be perceived benefits or value-added from these programs to keep participants engaged in the activity. 3) Transitions are points at which participants are subject to either move vertically to a different level of sport, horizontally between programs, or drop out entirely (Adams, Coffee, & Lavalle, 2015). These transitions are sometimes normative and can be prepared for, or can be a sudden transition, due to injury, or other unforeseen consequences. Both SD and SFD programs encounter transition of this kind and must be accounted for to not only maintain a robust program but also to ensure its participants have outlets for long-term success, especially if they are transitioning out of sports programs. 4) Support Systems and Services are a range of items that keep SD and SFD programs operating efficiently. Maybe the most important of these being change agents who are facilitators or moderators both on and off the field that support the desired outcomes of the development program (Phillips & Shulenkorf, 2016). For example, both SD programs and SFD program rely on key stakeholders to carry the mission of the organization. These four examples point to the strategic use of support systems, which helps to build the foundation and meet the objectives of either an SD or SFD program. For this study, the dissertation will primarily focus on SD, how sport is developed in China, and how formal education is incorporated into that system. SFD will be touched on toward the end of this dissertation project as a critical component in discussing

alternative programming that can be used to incorporate education benefits to those who participate in sport.

Development of Sport

Development of sport (SD) is fundamentally about participation and promoting the opportunities and benefits of physical activity. Participation in sport and physical activity can span a broad range of contexts and encounter varied motivations for engaging in sport (Shilbury et al., 2008). The primary objectives of SD are to increase the number of participants in sport and to enhance the quality of performance in sport (Green, 2005). SD entails the recruitment, retention, and transition into, through and out of sport. However, SD often gets packaged as a pyramid type model of development that focuses on the ultimate goal of creating an elite athlete out of a pool of masses. What often becomes lost in this pyramid structure of elite sport development, are the numerous reasons and motivations for participation in sport. SD can propagate into a system focused on a select few and along the way loses athletes who cannot make it to the top, those who do not have access, those that lose motivation, and those who can no longer find opportunities to remain involved.

When the participant framework of SD gets packaged into a pyramid-like model of sport-for-all, competitive, elite, and professional, it does not take into account the various barriers that exist in, through, and out of sport. For example, when looking at recruitment into a sport-for-all network, the first problematic assumption is that people want to participate in sport and that people have equal access to sports. Recruitment involves building relationships with people and trying to understand the values they associate with specific psycho-social-cultural forces such as SES, work, environment, and much more (Green, 2005). Not everyone is going to be interested in participating in sport, nor will everyone have equal access or opportunity to programming.

Just because sport exists does not mean it can be delivered to everyone. The next problematic occurs in the retention of athletes. Here we see some different issues arise. To move up, the pyramid assumes that an athlete is continuing to enjoy and find value in the participation of sport (Green, 2005). Often the hypercompetitive ways in which sports are designed causes players to burnout. Even more pronounced are the many motivations people have for participating in sport, perhaps it is for physical activity, fun, making friends, enjoying the outdoors. It is challenging to build a one size fits all model to capitalize on the many reasons for participating in sport.

Furthermore, the pyramid analogy assumes that the reason for participating in sport is to become an elite athlete. Plainly stated, becoming an elite athlete is not a reality for most people. The final problematic of the pyramid is in the transitions of the athlete. The pyramid assumes that the only method of development is up. It fails to take into consideration those that may have reached the limits of their athletic potential and cannot find an appropriate league for their level of play. The pyramid fails to recognize or offer alternatives to those that want to transition to a different level, to less competitive leagues, or out of sport entirely. The pyramid model of SD fails to recognize the complexities of the system and the people involved. A properly designed system must take into account the many variants in sport and utilization of sport.

Development of Sport, Transitions, and Problematics in the Chinese Sport Industry

As already established SD in China due to neoliberal processes entails both a government-run system and privatized systems that its athletes must navigate to create human capital for sustained success and social mobility. Both systems' end goal is to create participation and development of sport-specific skills. Either a centralized sports system or a free market system can be effective at the packaging and delivering sport to Chinese society, and it is essential to understand that nations prioritize sporting success in different ways (De Bosscher,

De Knop, Van Bottenburg, Shibli, & Bingham, 2009). In this regard, China's sport system in both the government and private systems allocate a maximum amount of time to the acquisition of sports skills. In part, the reason elite athletes allocate the majority of their time to sport-specific training is due to cultural values in China that emphasize when seeking knowledge, one must be determined to set one's mind to learn with a singleness of purpose (Li, 2001). Singlemindedness causes many aspiring elite athletes and their families to spend the majority of their time acquiring athletic skills and often contributes to a lack of formal education and accumulation of knowledge outside of sport. The lack of formal education becomes of particular importance and consequence when Chinese athletes want, need or are forced to transition out of sport.

Many types of transitions can occur in sport. A person can transition into sport through recruitment. An athlete then experiences within career transitions, which is directly related to retention. Within career, transitions encompass vertical transitions (moving to a higher or lower level team, club or training group), and horizontal transitions (moving to a different team, club or group at the same level). Finally, an athlete at the end of their career will transition out of sport. Generally speaking, transitions are, "said to occur if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990, p. 7) and can be normative or non-normative. Normative transitions are the expected moves between or out of sport and are voluntary, predictable, and anticipated. Non-normative transitions are unpredictable, and usually involve a de-selection from a team, loss of a coach, injury, or unexpected success (Adams et al., 2015). Any of these types of transitions that occur in sport can result in a change in culture due to

new organizational structures and can often be accompanied by a period of adjustment or shock to the new environment.

It is important to note that in the case of many Chinese athletes, the shock comes from not having the required skills or knowledge to succeed once their sporting career is finished, and the realization that they must adjust to a new role or job in a Chinese society that values academic success over athletic prowess. If the transition and culture shock out of sport is too challenging to overcome, athletes may not be able to cope and find themselves questioning their athletic identity, often to the detriment of leaving sport entirely. Hong's (2004) article can help conceptualize the government-sponsored sports system and the hardships that many athletes face who enter into elite sport. Despite having provisions in place for the athletes, Hong argues that it is not enough, and most athletes leave the state-sponsored system with inadequate education, funding, or career development to support life cycles in a highly competitive Chinese job market. "Chinese culture highly values single-mindedness. It believes that success in almost any endeavor calls for total concentration and focusing all energies on the task at hand. It is taken for granted that anyone who has achieved greatness in any activity has done so because of their complete devotion" (p. 348). Since singular devotion is practiced, "only those who endure the most hardship can make it to the top" (p. 343) of their profession, thus allowing them a socially advantageous position once their careers have ended. Hong says the focus is placed on training long hard hours and does not leave any time for academic endeavors. Even if they do receive an academic education, it is insufficient for them to succeed in a typical university setting. Once an athlete retires, they have few options to succeed outside of the sports arena. "Child athletes are being exploited or over-worked or deprived of their rights to health and education" (p. 343); they

have little opportunity to succeed outside sports. Furthermore, upon retirement, the re-employment and re-engagement back into society can be troublesome.

Ling and Hong's (2014) article nicely articulates the experiences of many elite athletes. They highlight that jobs typically held by retired athletes are occupations such as government sports administrators, professional coaches, physical education teachers, students at sports universities, general industry workers, and sometimes even unemployed. Typically, the jobs and benefits players receive are entirely contingent upon their athletic results and the honor they bestow to their country, province, and superiors by winning. Ling and Hong go on to chronicle the imbalance between sports training and traditional education training, saying most state-sponsored athletes spend the majority of their time training athletically. Ling and Hong also discuss human capital theory and allude to traditional education being a significant component in determining one's value to society, especially in a Chinese cultural context. From the time athletes enter spare time sports schools, typically at the age of eight years old, athlete's educational training is severely restricted. As they move up the ladder of social hierarchy in sport, their situation is exacerbated. Ling and Hong provide statistical evidence that 82% of athletes on the Guangxi Provincial team received less than1 hour a day of educational training. Also, although the Chinese government issued the Compulsory Education Law, many athletes do not receive substantial compulsory education or knowledge-related learning, thus diminishing their human capital and influencing employment prospects and economic return in the future (p. 647). The lack of concern for life after sport is worrisome because, in order to reduce or avoid adjustment problems after their sports career, athletes must start preparing during their career for life after sports (Stambulova, Stephan & Japhag, 2007; Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004)

National governing bodies and SD systems have an obligation not only to assist players transitioning through to the elite levels but also out of sport, by designing a system that enables athletes to reintegrate back into society with the prerequisite skills to succeed in a venue other than sports. Having cultivated a system that inhibits the education and alternative skill development, China's SD systems both state-run and private must recognize the issues being caused by introducing policies that do not provide current professionals with the opportunity to engage in education or vocational skill training, which would thus ease the often-precarious transition athletes endure when retiring (Stambulova et al., 2007; Wylleman et al., 2004). The journey to becoming an elite athlete in China and their experiences suggests it is a risk few outside of the sports world would justify. One must determine whether the rewards match the risk of seeking a professional career, and if not, how can SD systems be designed to incorporate the additional skills one needs to succeed upon transitioning out of sport. One way to think about solving this problem is to look outside the cultural context of China's athletic norms to examine the idea of a student-athlete and interscholastic sport in the US.

Interscholastic/Intercollegiate Sports in the US and the Origin of a Student-Athlete, Commercialized Problematic, and a Contested Definition in China

Since evidence suggests that the development of sports in China has created a system that leaves a gap in the amount of formal education and other skills necessary to succeed once an athlete transitions out of sport, it is essential to examine other ways in which cultures and societies solve for this issue. In particular, one can look at the concept of a student-athlete in the United States, and how it (the concept of the student-athlete) incorporates a holistic model of learning into the daily regimen of aspiring athletes through the development of interscholastic and intercollegiate sports. As China embraces neoliberal attitudes that integrate particular value

sets from the West, and especially when neoliberal attitudes are changing how sport is developed in the country, it is recognized that there is an opportunity to draw from outside influences. For example, if it commiserates with the needs and wants of its citizens, China can look to the United States sport development system to create a more holistic approach to elite athlete skill and knowledge acquisition, to solve for a gap in formal education for its athletes.

Interscholastic and Intercollegiate Sport in the United States

When placed into a cross-cultural context, the rise of sport at American educational instructions is unlike any in the world. “In no other country is there similarly proximity between athletics and the formal structure of educational institutions” (Chu, 1982, p. 53). The result of interscholastic and intercollegiate sport in America has resulted in a culturally unique construction of the term student-athlete and has evolved from the historical and contemporary values, attitudes, goals, and dreams of the society. The word “student-athlete” does not have a precise definition, but usually entails a participant in an organized sport, often sponsored by an educational institution. The concept of a student-athlete can thus be contested. Individuals, cultures, and countries may all differ in their understanding of what is a student-athlete. There is not a precise balance of formal education and sport, and some may see the concept on the continuum of athlete-student, rather than student-athlete. For the purpose of this dissertation, the concept of student-athlete between the US and China varies due to the complexity of socio-cultural contexts, such as policy, development systems, socio-economic status, and more.

In American high schools, organized sport evolved from physical education programs and curriculum, and its first organized team dates back to 1859 when Worcester, Massachusetts high school students founded a baseball team (Pruter, 2013). American educators saw high

school athletic competition as something that helped make their charges better students, better people, and better Americans.

> In the nineteenth century, in which private boarding schools largely prevailed, the headmasters saw sports as of value not only in building strong bodies but also in building strong minds and a solid Christian-imbued morality. The educators of the next century in their secular public high schools saw sports in a similar manner, but without religious underpinnings and more broadly one of character building, useful for redirecting high school youth away from the common social vices of drinking, smoking, gambling, and sexual exploration (Pruter, 2013, p. xi-xii).

High school sports are seen as building a holistic person, a student-athlete, someone who is capable of obtaining knowledge, is physically fit and healthy and imbued with a host of values learned on through sport, including sportsmanship, teamwork, the following of rules, courage, leadership, democratic ethos, and a sense of right and wrong (Pruter, 2013). The conception of a student-athlete exists not only in American high schools but also its colleges and universities.

The incorporation of sport into the extracurricular offerings at US colleges and universities also dates back to the late 19th century. Before this, post-secondary education in the US emphasized classical studies, had religious connections, and maintained paternalistic policies that mandated rigid class structures and control of its white upper-class male extracurricular activities. It was out of this classical educational system that college sport developed and became a critical part of students' lives, and sport becomes a sustained release from the rigors of studying as administrators believed it was a positive force in maintaining discipline (Knapp, 2014). Moreover, through the emergence of the field of physical education in higher education circles, the American university was able to normalize intercollegiate sport as socially acceptable. Coaches who were faculty could teach college sport. Sport became an extension of the classroom, and through sport, the all-around student could be developed both mentally and physically. Colleges and universities could claim to develop students in the humanities,

professionally, and also in personal character as well as physical health (Chu, 1982). Organized sport in both high-school and universities have been a part of American social fabric and have played an essential role in developing a holistic learning environment that developed the student-athlete, mentally, physically, and morally.

The idea that the combination of sports and education will inevitably lead to the development of a student who is moral and ethically astute can be debated. Coakley (2015) challenges such thought by calling attention to the "Great Sport Myth," and critiques those who believe that the inherent purity and goodness of sport is transmitted to all those who play or consume sport. Though the critique is relevant, this is not the purpose of my current work. My goal is to provide an overall understanding of the situation unfolding in China in regard to the combination of sport and education, and throughout the dissertation I offer critical analysis.

Commercialized Problematic of the Student-Athlete

While the attributes associated with a student-athlete generally have positive connotations, with the pronounced commercialization of sport in the late 1970s and 80s interscholastic/intercollegiate sport and the ideals of the student-athlete have evolved to incorporate neoliberal attitudes. Some argue that due to commercialization, the original aims of interscholastic/intercollegiate sport have been diminished, devalued, and the marketization of sport has worked to separate the athletic programs from its original academic mission. This commercialization of sport in schools can be generalized as, an increased emphasis on winning pushes programs to ramp up their recruiting efforts, which in turn increases athletic costs due to traveling, equipment, and facilities, and thus places a higher emphasis on creating economic return on the investment through ticket sales, media broadcasting rights, solicitation from boosters, and corporate sponsorships (Knapp, 2014). Sport, as a form of cultural entertainment in

the US, has driven the monetary value of the interscholastic/intercollegiate sports into a multi-billion dollar industry, and as a result, has changed the concept and role of the student-athlete. "Under pressure of producing winning teams, the players, coaches, fans, and community supporters saw elevation of the few talented, athletic stars to excessive glorification, the skirting of rules to keep players eligible, the erosion of scholarship standards, and paradoxically the lack of sportsmanship, fair play, and acceptance of the rules, values that sports were presumably supposed to instill" (Pruter, 2013, p. xii). Athletes have to dedicate more time to practice in an attempt to maintain successful teams measured by wins and losses.

Furthermore, as athletes contribute more time and specialize in a sport at an earlier age, the ideas of amateurism come into conflict, as the lines of professionalism for the most elite athletes in continually being blurred. "The commercialization, recruitment, subsiding of athletes, the professionalization of coaches, abandonment of principles of amateurism, lack of student rights, soaring costs have contributed to a disconnect from the academic mission" (Knapp, 2014, p. 20). The education that athletes receive has been scrutinized, as coaches at both the high school and collegiate level seek to maintain their student's eligibility and right to play by ushering them to take a lighter course load, more accessible classes, and increase their academic support. Thus, there is cause for concern in maintaining the academic integrity of student-athlete in the US and its original intended purpose of creating a holistic person skilled in knowledge, physical attributes, and moral character.

While the idea, integrity, and purpose of a student-athlete can be debated, the levels of participation in youth sport at schools and universities cannot. "In 2008 there were slightly more than 27,500 secondary schools in the country enrolling more than 16 million boys and girls, probably more than a third of the participants on their high school sports teams, making

interscholastic sports the largest organized sports program in the nation" (Pruter, 2013, p. xi). The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) governs interscholastic sport in the US. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,500 high schools and more than 7.9 million in high school sports (NFHS n.d.). The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) governs intercollegiate sport. The NCAA is comprised of nearly half a million college athletes at over 1,000 universities, which make up the 19,750 teams that send more than 52,500 participants to compete each year in the NCAA's 90 championships in 24 sports across three divisions (NCAA, n.d.). Despite the over-commercialization of sport, the majority of student-athletes are participating purely for the pleasure and benefits that come from creating a holistic person skilled in knowledge, physical attributes, and moral character, which can have long-lasting effects in building human capital a be a valued member of society.

Contested Definition of the Student-Athlete in China

The notion of a student-athlete from the US can serve as a potential model for other countries looking to incorporate modifications that adhere to societies' changing social norms. Possible evidence of a shift in neoliberal Chinese attitudes toward education is the impressive increase in the number of Chinese students coming to US colleges and universities. According to a report, the number of Chinese students studying in the US increased by 10.8 percent in 2014-15, the eleventh straight year of increases. Chinese students now account for nearly one-third of the US international student population (Institute of International Education, 2016). If this trend continues, having programs in China that support joint academic and athletic education might be beneficial for aspiring athletes' overall development.

Furthermore, the examination of a student-athlete and correlated system in a Chinese cultural setting is vital because of the transitions an athlete makes in and out of sport. If athletes have a proper education it allows them the ability to transfer out of sport more seamlessly, transition to life after sport with the practical skills necessary to succeed in society and reduce the stress and pressure on athletes to win at all cost. The post-retirement problem for Chinese athletes transitioning out of sport has been well documented above in the section on sports development. Further evidence, according to Tian (1993), is that only approximately 50% of athletes nationwide finish their education at high school or secondary sports technical schools, while 46% of elite athletes finish at the compulsory education stage (no higher than middle school education)[5]. Despite the 1986 *Compulsory Education Law*, which advocates for universal secondary education and made primary education (six years) and junior-middle school education (three years) mandatory, many athletes still do not receive substantial compulsory education. For the above-stated reasons, an examination into the educational experiences of Chinese athletes is necessary, and whether or not the notion of a student-athlete exists in China.

Summary and Significance

In summary, China is experiencing a neoliberal-paradigm shift in which market reforms are generating new initiatives in the sports industry. Market reforms are leading to innovative educational and training programs that correspond to citizens' changing needs. Since there is often an education gap for China's athletes and deficient amount of human capital, this project aims to uncover what cultural values and attitudes Chinese citizens associate with combining athletic and academic education. The above concepts of neoliberalism, sport development, and

[5] More accurate data and up to date numerical figures are more difficult to find since the numbers listed in the annual statistics have been decreasing due to more schools operating as financially independent from the central government has increased. Additionally, since 2009 grade 3 athletes and below have not been included in official statistics due to the decreased funding from the central government for lower level athletic schools and teams.

human capital will guide the data analysis, and will help to answer the fundamental research question of the project as to, whether China is embracing the concept of a student-athlete.

The research will examine whether a shift in social norms encourages a fusion of athletic and academic education. If so, the generation of cross-cultural exchanges between the US and China of best practices in the academic schooling of elite athletes can take place to identify practices that can assist Chinese athletes in studying academic, technical, or professional subjects at the same time as they are engaged in elite-level sports training. This project will have a lasting impact by delivering new information on Chinese cultural attitudes regarding the integration of education and athletics. In doing so, it will provide practitioners a platform to design and implement effective programs that meet the needs of China's developing sports industry.

CHAPTER 3: POLICY ANALYSIS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SPORTS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS IN CHINA

China has a longstanding historical precedent of embracing the concept of physical culture *tiyu*. Chairman Mao Zedong's first-ever published essay in 1917, *A Study of Physical Education* was about the relationship between a country and its bodies, A strong nation, he wrote, needs strong people. China has long used sport to unite the masses and bolster its global position. Physical culture has been a long-standing concept in China's model of the role of education, in which the guiding principles of *de-zhi-ti* (moral, intellectual, physical) become the formation of the socialist person (Brownell, 1995, p. 46-47). This theory came from American Dr. John Dewy, who gave a series of lectures at universities in China from 1919 to 1921 (Hwang & Jarvie, 2001), and can be thought of as laying a foundation for China to incorporate sport and physical activity into schools, as well as implement formal educational into sports development and training centers.

Dewey proclaimed the virtues of physical activity over military exercise in schools and was successful in influencing a number of Chinese intellectuals that Chinese students needed more physical exercise. "Dewey considered mind and body to be integral parts of the human whole and believed that the body or physical aspect of humans served as the conductor of experience" (Hwang & Jarvie, 2001, p. 7). According to Dewey, physical education is an act that integrates mind and body, which would strengthen the overall educational process by creating a student who is well rounded as a democratic citizen, with social efficiency and social experience. Dewey's philosophy was used to promote team sports in education because it improved democratic activity and social interaction, which would benefit society overall (Hwang

& Jarvie, 2001). Thus, during the Nationalist Era in China from 1927-49, sport, physical activity and education were firmly linked within the Chinese educational system through the imitation of the US system, and through the spread of muscular Christianity and mass education by Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) missionaries. This early integration of sport into China's formal education system showcases that in the analysis a generational differentiation might be present. Great-grandparents and grandparents of today's youth would be more familiar with balancing sport with formal education. It was not until 1949 and the opening of the communist era that China shift toward a more militarist ideal for sport, which was adapted from the Soviet model.

While there is evidence of linkage between these two fields (formal education and sport) throughout history, there is also evidence of a more recent disconnect in the assumed value and roles of combining formal education and sport in Chinese culture. In the neo-Confucian era, which emphasizes testing and the *gaokao,* overwhelming, overwhelming evidence suggests that in China, formal education takes precedence over sport in its ability to create social mobility. Thus, the integration of the two fields is only seen on the surface, garners minimal support, and is of small consequence in modern Chinese society (Wei, Hong & Zhouxiang, 2010; Ling and Hong, 2014; Li, 2001; Li, 2014; Liu & Lu, 2016; Chan & Lo, 1992). Formal education and sport are seen as two separate and divergent fields of development, with minimal crossover (Li, 2001; Yu & Suen, 2005; Ha, MacDonald & Pang, 2010; Yates & Lee, 1996; Zhang, 2015b). Once again, a generational shift can be seen in the combination of formal education with sport. Elder parents in China, those with children currently in their 20s and 30s are accustom to sport as a construct for elite Olympic caliber athletes, rather than it being combined with traditional schooling.

However, as Chinese citizens embrace neoliberal attitudes into their daily value sets, it is possible for physical culture to be a space to examine sociocultural change. Specifically, this project inspects whether a shift is occurring in China that will allow for the integration of formal education and sport, and thus the emergence of a student-athlete in China. To further aid in the understanding of the educational experiences of Chinese athletes and whether the notion of a student-athlete exists in today's China, it is crucial to think critically about how governmental policy is implemented in the arena of sport and education, and how it intersects with the changing political, historical, economic, social and cultural context in China. "Policy analysis is concerned with global phenomena that have a widespread, general or universal impact and is often associated with understanding the nature and impact of incremental change in a specific context and within a limited cultural social, political, or economic horizon" (Henry & Ko, 2014, p. 3). Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, the formation of sport policy has been implemented to meet specific objectives at various stages in its history to account for peoples changing physical needs and for the sustained growth of its sport industry (Cao, 2009). Thus, China has altered the use of sport to meet specific political and ideological goals (Haugen, 2016).

This chapter will outline the stated political agenda and policy of the Chinese State Council, the SGAS, and the Ministry of Education (MOE) regarding how sport and formal education should function in society and pays particular attention to policies that explore the idea and formation of an interconnected system of sport and formal education in China. While these types of policies pale in comparison to the number of education-specific and sport-specific policies, they form a guideline for understanding how sport and education have changed over time to incorporate the changing political agenda and cultural ideologies found in modern China.

The policies, as evidenced by history and stories, provide a contextual background from which to examine my research question of whether a shift is occurring to allow for a holistic development process that combines values from formal education and sport to flourish in China. This chapter will also address my first research question of what fundamental shifts are taking place in regard to the political agenda, governmental policies, and economies regarding China's sport industry?

I will spend a small portion of the time outlining policy agenda from the inception of the PRC in 1949 to its re-opening in 1978. Some attention will be placed on policy objectives and historical evidence from the period of 1978 to 1995, but much has already been published in this area by scholars (Wei et al., 2010; Zhang, 2015a; Haugen, 2016; Hong & Zhouxiang, 2012; Brownell, 1996) who point to a Chinese sport policy agenda that focuses heavily on the government-run and state-supported buildup of sport bureaus and management centers for the development of an elite sport system to win Olympic gold medals for the glory of the nation, projection of international prestige, soft power, and nationalistic ideology. The majority of this chapter will focus on 1995 to the present, as we see the formation of four seminal policies that signal a shift from government-lead, run and operated sport, to an industry that embraces the ideals of a neoliberal-state market economy and is eager to commercialize, marketize, and professionalize sport. In this era, we see the formulation of sport policy based upon globalization and the transfer of sport policy from other nations, particularly the West, in order to guide Chinese sport into the twenty-first century and become an economic and athletic world sports power.

The chapter will outline three eras of sport policymaking, and how the major policies objectives endorsed by the Chinese State Council (considered the top authority and central party rhetoric, which then asks for individual government bodies to implement its directives), SGAS

(which handles matters about elite athletic development and physical activity), and the MOE (which handles matters about the educational development of its citizens) effect the integration of formal education and sport in China. Through the examination of policy and political agendas throughout three historical eras, inferences can be made about shifts occurring in China, as new policy is formulated and implemented to adhere to the changing ideological needs and wants of the people.

The Inception of the PRC, Mass Physical Culture and Elite Sport Policy, and its Relationship to the Founding Morals of China

On October 1, 1949, the PRC was officially established. In those formative years, the government placed a significant priority on physical culture, however in contrast to the Nationalist Era, the emphasis of physical activity shifted to a more militaristic attitude toward the strength of its people, nationalistic pride, and support of socialism. During this time, the formulation of physical culture and sport policies was centered on two arenas, mass sport-for-all campaigns, and elite sport. Mass sport-for-all policies were often tied to physical education campaigns while elite sport had more specific ties to the development of sport through highly structured government-run sports institutions. However, the overarching goal for both programs was the same; the health and strength of its people and athletes were viewed as a direct correlation to the defense of the nation, the superiority of communism and its socialist values (Brownell, 1995; Chen & Chen, 2016; Zheng, Chen, Tan & Lau, 2018). Policy dictated that mass participation in physical activity was an essential part of the culture, and necessary for a healthy and robust working class. “Mao linked the training of the body with the strength of the nation in a new way—through the notion of continuous revolution, which was to be carried out by an active body on behalf of a nation that was forever in motion” (Brownell, 1995, p. 57). The

overall progress of a nation was equated to the health of the nation, and in 1952 Mao penned a landmark slogan, 'Develop physical culture and sports, strengthen the people's physique (*fazhan tiyu yundong zengqiang renmin tizhi*)' (Brownell, 1995; Zheng et al., 2018). To fulfill this political ideology, disciplined sports, and militaristic physical education programs were implemented to preserve the collective Chinese body. Mao's program was practiced by virtually everyone, including soldiers and party officials, every morning and afternoon in workplaces and educational institutions.

Mass Sport and Physical Education Campaigns

Early formations of mass sport and physical culture were intended to link the bodies of the people with the welfare of the nation. They were a logical outgrowth of the values of the communist party, which included egalitarian, militaristic, and proletarian doctrines. The overarching goal was to promote public health, increase productivity, and prepare the people for national defense (Brownell, 1995, p. 58). These doctrines found a home in China's model for the role of education, which promotes the guiding principles of *de-zhi-ti* (moral, intellectual, physical) as the formation of the socialist person (Brownell, 1995). In Mao's estimation, physical training was as necessary as moral education and intellectual development, with the latter processes significantly influenced by physical training. Without physical development, there was no basis for moral and intellectual education (Xie, 1990). Mao asserted that physical education was to serve the political purpose of building a class of citizens who were well-disciplined in both mind and body. Thus, physical education campaigns were carried out in schools and became a compulsory subject in both elementary and middle schools during this time in China. Chen and Chen (2016) write that young people's participation in schools-based sport most usually occurs in several contexts, including PE sessions, after-school sports activities,

representing sports teams, sports day events, and morning and between class physical exercise. Historically, sport participation in these domains has been justified as vital because it plays a crucial role in 'cultivating students interests, attitude, skills, habit, knowledge, and ability in sport, to assist students physical and psychological development, to strengthen students' health and fitness condition, in order to make a contribution to building socialism and defend the country" (China Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 2). This politicized physical education program allowed for nationalism and socialist values to be developed in Chinese youth and was an essential tool in the early establishment of the PRC to build socialist sentiment (Fan & Lu, 2013). The early formation of sport policy in the form of mass physical cultural and physical education programs was implemented to fulfill a political ideology of preserving the collective Chinese body and unite the country in a spirit of socialism. There is a sense of dualism produced in the early Chinese agenda that promoted the ideals of both mind and body. Furthermore, schools and its early physical education programs were used as a vehicle to guide the moral compass of Chinese youth, thus forming the basis for the integration of formal education and sport.

Elite Sport Formation

In the early years of the PRC, Mao used physical activity and sport for specific political agendas and ideology building. Physical activity was to build the strength and welfare of the nation, and elite sport would be used for a related purpose.

> While this was a time when most of the population participated in physical education for moral and intellectual improvement, the Mao era also introduced an elite sports system that has dominated the cultural and political identity of sports in the nation for the past forty years. At the same time, Mao was incorporating socialist ideology into China's daily routines, the 1952 Olympics were being held in Helsinki, Finland, and it was the first time in which the Soviet Union competed in the games. The Soviet delegation was hugely successful. These games served as an eye-opener to China's political leaders and provided the Communist Party an example of how a socialist country could defeat Western democratic countries on the international stage. Shortly after, it was proposed the Chinese learn from the Soviet model to develop a centralized system of sports predicated upon

> projecting its political strength, ideologies, and diplomatic requirements onto the international stage" (Haugen, 2016, p. 49).

In 1956, the SGAS, which directs almost all sport policies, changed its objective from promoting people's exercise to producing elite sports stars. A policy, *The Elite Sport System of the PRC* (Zheng et al., 2018), was introduced as a powerful centralized and hierarchical state organization of elite sports learned from the Soviets that would recruit and train professional athletes. This policy established a pyramid system of sports-based schools that transitions athletes from grassroots programs to city, provincial, and national teams, and is still in use today. In its early years, the elite sport system managed 43 competitive sports, structured professional sports teams, and organized national championships and national games.

Also, in the same year, *The Regulations for Youth Extra-Curricular Sports Schools* (Zheng et al., 2018), was issued forming the base of the pyramid China that recruits young children with noticeable athletic talents into a training center called "spare time sports school" (*yeyu tixiao*). These sports schools are places where sports training takes place before or after regular school hours. Another form of "sports school" (*jingji tixiao*) is often attached to municipal or provincial training centers. *Jingji tixiao* is a place where students live and train and is intended to cultivate and guide aspiring athletes to develop their sports talents while at the same time be enrolled in school. However, the formal education classes for athletes are less strenuous than typical Chinese institutions, and many athletes eventually stop taking classes (Brownell, 1995). While the foremost goal of these training centers was to promote elite athlete development, nonetheless, the majority of the athletes were given access to primary compulsory education, in line with the founding morals of China, to promote both body and mind at the early developmental stage of an athletes training.

Due in part to the economic difficulties and famine during the Great Leap Forward, as well as political upheaval from the Cultural Revolution, mass sport and the hours allocated to school PE was significantly reduced (Chen & Chen, 2016). The elite sport system would come out the beneficiary as policies favored 'popularizing and improve' elite sport (Zheng et al., 2018). As China emerged from relative political and economic isolation from the global community and into an era of opening up and reform, it signaled a shift toward a concentration on policies for elite sport buildup to repair its international image.

Opening Up Reforms, Reshaping China's Image Through Elite International Sport, and the Education/Exit Problem

China's economic climate began to change after Mao's death in 1976, and Deng Xiaoping, who was more open to the world piloted policies of foreign engagement and open access to the country. The opening up of China coincided with the beginning of neoliberal market reforms in the West, and "Deng argued that individual and local initiatives had to be unleashed in order to increase productivity and spark economic growth" (Harvey, 2005, p. 120). China was now competing in a global economic market, and China's leadership realized that sports could be an important political tool used to reshape the countries negative international image. Through success in international competitions, China could emerge into the global spotlight and defeat Western democratic powers on the international stage, signaling strength in an ever-changing globalized economy. I highlighted this shift in the use of sport in an earlier publication: "In a short period, the primary objective of sport in China shifted away from a collective program to maintain its citizens, moral and intellectual health, to an individualistic pursuit where only the most advanced elite athletes were encouraged by the government to extensively participate" (Haugen, 2016, p. 50).

As Deng ushered in economic reforms that would use a substantial private sector to modernize the nation and increase economic trade, the government tightened its control over sports and began to use athletics to project national vibrancy on the international stage. Under the economic reforms, a competition was believed to promote activism by eliminating the apathy produced by a system that equally rewarded freeloaders and hard workers. Competition was to be the source of vitality in the reforms (Brownell, 1995). Deng believed that success in international competition would lead to global recognition, and his sports policy emphasized building a positive image abroad (Haugen, 2016).

> The central government hoped success in sports would stimulate the international community to recognize China's newfound strength, give ordinary Chinese a nationalistic rallying cry, and cultivate domestic support for the political leadership. The Chinese government consolidated funding for sports under SGAS, which is responsible for policymaking and administrating the All-China Sports Federation and the Chinese Olympic Committee. SGAS created a centralized system of provincial sports bureaus and management centers across the nation. Beijing's primary concern was to produce elite athletes for selection into the national and Olympic teams (Haugen, 2016, p. 50).

Every training center had the ultimate goal of Olympic gold medals, glory for the nation, and the projection of power to the international community (Brownell, 2008; Cha, 2009; Hong, 1998; Hong, Wu & Xiong, 2005). This adage became the central goal of China's sports policy during this era and has been given much attention by scholars.

Elite sport during this time flourished as seen by China's success in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics as that year, the 353-person delegate brought home fifteen gold medals, eight silver, and nine bronze medals, finishing fourth in the overall tally. Of particular importance that year was China's first-ever gold medal winner, Xu Haifeng, in the men's free pistol; Li Ning, a gymnast, took home six total medals that year including three gold; and the Chinese women's volleyball team took home gold by beating the USA in the title match. China proved its global relevance through its success in international competitions, helped to shed the 'Sick Man of

Asia', and set the stage for the economic development of sport. Moving forward, the development of sport in China was geared toward the Olympics, as the best and most talented athletes in China were identified early, recruited, and put through a rigorous method of training in the hope of creating athletes prepared to succeed at the highest level of international competitions. However, with the emergence of policies such as the 1985 *Olympic Strategy* (Wei et al., 2010), that propagated Olympic success and demanding training sessions, specific opportunity cost arose for elite athletes regarding two areas of importance to this dissertation project; the first being the education problem for athletes, and the second the exit problem.

The Education and Exit Problems of Elite Athletes in China

The rigorous training methods in the government-run sports system was predicated on the extreme focus of acquiring sport-specific skills, and an entirely determined single-minded effort was necessary for China's athletes to have success in international competitions. The targeted focus on sports skills led to two significant gaps for athletes, 1) a lack of traditional education and 2) how to re-enter society once their athletic career was finished. These deficiencies signaled a potential gap in the moral-intellectual-physical triptych that was the foundation for China's educational principles and overall formation of a socialist person.

At the heart of education, the problem was the fact that many athletes who entered the government-run training centers spent very little time enrolled in traditional education classes. Most of their time was spent training, and the access athletes in municipal, provincial, and national training centers were often of low quality, not rigorous, and for the most part, ignored by coaches and officials. "Many athletes stopped schooling altogether, some going no further than six grades" (Brownell, 1995, p. 198). Even though the Chinese government enacted a nine-year *Compulsory Education Law* in 1980, which established deadlines and requirements to attain

a universal education for all school-aged children, very few high-level athletes would reach that level. Instead they were expected to focus their time and energy on preparing for success in international competitions and was considered their formal job for the State. This problem was exacerbated when China reintroduced the *gaokao*, a formalized national entrance exam that all student has to take in order to gain admission into University. Since education was seen as the ultimate path to upward mobility in China, the competition to get results on this exam is fierce throughout the nation. Diverting one's time and energy away from formal education and into sport, would put a normal student at risk of getting a good score and thus gaining admission into one of China's top tier universities. Likewise, an athlete, whose job it was to perform in sport, had no time to study, little chance of success on this exam, and seemingly sacrificed their education for sport to win glory for a nation. "The low education level of athletes is often mentioned as a major obstacle to China's progress in sports and is one reason for the stereotype of athletes as stupid and lacking culture" (Brownell, 1995, p. 200).

The exit problem or retirement problem for athletes needing to transition out of sport is also highly correlated to their lack of education. However, additional problems exist due to the risk of injury and shortened longevity of careers of most athletes. Chinese athletes are recruited into the government-sport system at a young age and in the formative stages of their development. These athletes often go without formal education beyond their middle school years and are not prepared for life after sport. Many athletes competing in high level, elite and international sport are forced to retire in the prime of their life, usually around late 20s early 30s. Exiting sport at this age leaves a significant amount of time left for retired athletes who need to find a new job and be productive members of society. However, in China, without prerequisite education, it is increasingly difficult for athletes to succeed in a role outside of the sports

industry. During this era of Olympic buildup, most athletes depending on their results for their provincial and national teams, were allocated/assigned jobs within the government sports bureaus. In 1980 the Chinese government issued its *Joint Notice on Athlete Selection and Re-Employment*, in which athletes were classified into two groups and given jobs accordingly. Medal winners at international and national games would be allocated a job as government officials, while non-medal winners would be employed as civil servants (Liu & Lu, 2016). Jobs for athletes during the initial Olympic buildup were plentiful, and the majority of athletes were retained in the sports system as assistant coaches, cadres, or office workers (Brownell, 1995). The results-driven system encouraged athletes to make every effort to achieve remarkable results often by sacrificing a formal education. For elite athletes in China, this means the majority of their time and attention is placed on training for domestic and international competitions. As Hong (2004) argued, most athletes leave the state-sponsored system with inadequate education, funding, or career development to support lifecycles in a highly competitive Chinese market. Since the government adopted a sports development system that was professionalized and enclosed, it left most athletes without access to academic education, and thus made it difficult to adapt to life in broader society upon retirement.

However, as China continued to modernize, which pushed its sport industry closer to a system based upon free-market principles and commercialization, and as more athletes were recruited as a requirement of making the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games an international success, the number of available jobs for athletes declined. Attitudes and policies also changed how athletes should use their sports skills to succeed in the market-driven sports industry.

China's Market-Oriented Sports Industry and Build Up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

1984 was a landmark year for China's Olympic program with its international success in the Los Angeles Games and had a much more significant and lasting effect on Chinese society than just creating a forum for nationalistic pride and patriotism. "The Los Angeles games were the first time the Olympics had truly been commercialized. Sponsorships from large multinational corporations deluged the games with advertisements and brought real economic profits to the Olympics for the first time in its history" (Haugen, 2016, p. 50). A Chinese delegation was sent to Los Angeles to study the organizing work, and upon their return, set out to implement sports marketing and corporate sponsorship. Internationally known expert on Chinese sports, Susan Brownell, wrote, "The commercialism at the Los Angeles Olympics was an eye-opener for China after three decades of a strict state-planned economy, and in comparison, with its government-supported sports" (Brownell, 2015, p. 135). In the same year, the Communist Party Central Committee issued *Document No. 20*, which called on sports to 'pay attention to economic benefits, actively create the conditions to implement multiple types of management, gradually transition toward work units of a business or semi-business nature' (Brownell, 2015). The commercialization of the 1984 Olympics incentivized China's political leaders to note the possible financial gains sports might create. It was a propitious time for China to infuse its state sports system with capitalism and stimulated the movement to host the Olympics on home soil.

Commercialized and Market-Driven Sport

In 1993, SGAS held a conference entitled *"The Urgent Promotion and Development of Sports Business."* The conference declared that as China's economy reformed, creating more openness and interconnectedness with the rest of the world, the Chinese sports market should

also be opened up. This was the first time the SGAS publicly advocated the commercialization of sport and hoped this strategy would result in integrating sport into the daily life of Chinese citizens as well as promote trade that would benefit the economy (Wei et al., 2010). The Minister of Sport, Wu Shaozu, acknowledged that "Sport was expected to stand on its own feet and not rely on State support. As living standards rise, as leisure time increases, as the profit motive is encouraged, and as the economy becomes global, China is becoming a major outlet for commercial sports opportunities of every kind" (Wei et al., 2010, p. 2389).

In 1995, four landmark policies signaled the beginning of a movement toward a market-oriented sports industry, and a new framework for the development of sport was established. The four policies, 1) *Development of the Sport Industry and Commerce Project*, 2) *National Fitness Program* 3) *The Outline of the Strategic Olympic Glory Plan: 1994 -2000*, and 4) *The Sports Law of the People's Republic of China* set the stage for both elite sport and mass sport-for-all to incorporate significant components of a market economy. The policies put forth an integrated plan that would create a sports industry that would develop according to market rules and would establish the importance of elite sport and mass sport-for-all campaigns to aid in its commercialization goals. According to the outline of *Development of Sports Industry and Commerce Project*, commercialization is an essential policy for the future development of the sports industry and sport should develop according to market rules and not depend on the State (Hong & Zhouxiang, 2012). While the main objective of these policies was to promote a system that could be an economic driver for China, the documents also outlined ways in which sport and physical education could improve the overall development of its citizens.

As established earlier, the overall development of a robust socialist citizen in China includes the moral, intellectual, and physical. Included in each of these policies were provisions

that aimed to combine these attributes and brought the first modern era of sport policymaking in China with directives on emphasizing the role sport, PE health, and formal education play a role in China's future and nourishment of a planned economy. For example, in the realm of mass sport, the 1995 policy *National Fitness Program* aimed to promote people's sports participation and strengthen people's physical health through the countries traditional school system. Specifically, the policy decrees that all levels of schools must fully implement the party's education policy and strive to do a good job in school sports. It is necessary to educate students on lifelong physical education and cultivate students' awareness, skills, and habits of physical exercise. When looking at elite sport, the *Strategic Olympic Glory Plan: 1994 -2000* beyond the obvious push toward goad medals as its ultimate goal, basic welfare provisions were established to provide athletes with an excellent post-retirement employment system, a pathway to higher education, and an insurance system. Furthermore, sport-training centers should improve the comprehensive management and formal education of the sports team and do an excellent job in the political and ideological construction of the athletes.

The 1995 version of *The Sports Law of the People's Republic of China* confirmed state control over sport through its central policymaking but formalized the establishment of market-orientated objectives. Concerning sport and education provisions the *Sports Law* set out specific guidelines for integrating sport into schools by making physical education a part of schooling, by offering physical education courses as a required subject to allocate time for physical activity, organizing various extracurricular sports activities, and carry out extracurricular training and athletic contests. Regarding competitive elite sport, the *Sports Law* declared that the State should provide top athletes with preferential treatment in employment and enrollment in schools.

While these policies seem to set the stage for the overall development of its citizens, Nafziger and Wei (1998) argue in their analysis of China's newly formed sport policies, that from a Western perspective, what is missing is a lack of identification for the rights of athletes. For elite athletes, especially those competing for nationalist aspirations, the policies fail to articulate basic rights. This point is of particular importance due to the political agenda of sport at this time, which was to use competitive sport to portray strength to the global community through international competitions. In theory, 1995 was the stated time to commercialize and professionalize sport, and early forms of this were seen in the founding of the Chinese Jia-A Soccer League (CSL) and the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA), but these leagues took a back seat to the Olympic Strategy. In practice, China's competitive sport system and its stated purpose of "state-supported sport system" (*juguo tizhi*) continued to persist until China finally proved itself in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

The Olympic Buildup, its Controversies, and Preemptive Policy to Support Elite Athletes

The buildup of the Olympic sports model that emphasized gold medals continued and arguably intensified. In 2001 Beijing was awarded the right to host the 2008 games, which sent the country into a frenzy of excitement and anticipation for the grand opening of China to the international community.

> The games were to be an event like no other, a historical and cultural display of the country. Chinese leaders were well-aware that during the Olympics the nation's social and political environment would be subject to an intense level of international inspection. Failure was not an option for the Chinese government or its athletes. Much to the delight of the Chinese government and its citizens, the Olympic games, despite some humanitarian tension over Sudan and Tibet, went off without a flaw. The international community saw China's political, economic, and social growth both on the playing field and throughout the county. Some of China's most recognizable athletes, who trained in the government system, were showcased to the world and with them brought pride, glory, and gold medals to the host nation. The most notable of the government-supported athletes to compete in the 2008 Olympics was basketball superstar Yao Ming. In all China's athletes took home fifty-one gold medals, more than any other country, as well as 100 total medals and far surpassed

> international expectations in regard to what the host country could athletically. In this respect, China triumphed (Haugen, 2016, p. 51).

However, the visibility of the Games also rehashed old wounds concerning the plight of its athletes. Controversies surrounding the 2008 Olympic Games and increased social awareness brought attention to China's retired athletes and an inadequate standard of living. Specifically, the world took notice of the education and exit problem of the Chinese athletes, which was associated with its highly disciplined system of sport development.

Controversies

Under this system, thousands of young athletes dedicate their time and energy to sport in order to achieve glory for the nation. In 2004 Hong estimated there were 80,617 professional athletes in China and over 400,000 trained in 3,000 sports schools throughout the country. Over 14,000 elite athletes were registered in various national and provincial teams, and the total number of athletes in all levels of sport has reached over 200,000 (Ling & Hong, 2014). "These athletes have been selected to enter sports teams from a very young age and accept professional training and competition as major objectives of their sporting careers. However, the number of these athletes who achieve remarkable success is minimal overall. According to statistics, nearly 3000 athletes will retire every year, but most of them have not received outstanding sports results during their careers" (p. 636). Most often than not, only those athletes with the best results will be given an opportunity for re-employment within China's SGAS. The following statistics from Ling and Hong's analysis shown in Table 1 that in 2002, when looking at athletes from 8 provinces, the overall number of athletes waiting for re-employment was 24.2 %. In Table 2, the overall percentage of re-employed athletes dropped in 1998 from 50.44% to 17.01% in 2002.

Table 1. The re-employment waiting list of retired athletes from eight provinces in 2002

Province	No. of athletes	Active Athletes	Active and waiting for re-employment	Percentage of active athletes waiting	Percentage of total no. of athletes
Ningxia	350	237	185	78	52.9
Jilin	708	220	87	40	12.3
Liaoning	1546	1418	489	34.5	31.6
Sichuan	1124	1092	329	30.1	29.3
Hunan	1140	880	260	30	22.8
Guangxi	1152	740	190	25.7	16.5
Guangdong	1443	1646	384	23.3	26.6
Neimenggu	700	590	51	8.7	7.3
Total	8163	6823	1975	28.9	24.2

(Source: Ling & Hong, 2014, p. 639)

Table 2. The re-employment situation of Chinese elite retired athletes from 1998 to 2002

Year	Retired athletees	Waiting for re-employment	Mandatory arrangement	Education	Self-employed	Others	Percentage of re-employed
1998	2600	3843	984	304	428	218	50.44
1999	1803	3461	961	305	475	326	58.04
2000	1504	3363	642	204	303	259	41.87
2001	1549	3226	378	209	301	128	31.39
2002	1709	4274	326	90	257	54	17.01

(Source: Ling & Hong, 2014, p. 640)

In preparation for the Beijing Olympics, more than 30,000 athletes were training full time (Ling & Hong, 2014), and only 639 competed in the games. Most athletes want a job directly offered by the government, but there are not enough jobs to satisfy that demand (Liu & Yu, 2016). Members of the Chinese athletic system are classified as government employees and have made direct contributions to the development of the elite sport, "but are unable to find jobs because they only have athletic skills and lack sufficient academic education" (p. 631).

Ling and Hong (2014) outline various ways in which athletes give up formal education and become a significant determinant in their inability to become re-employed in Chinese society upon retirement. "China's sports schools are part of the machinery of the state, designed to

produce gold medalist no matter the human cost," (Lim, 2008). In spare time sports schools where the youngest athletes are trained and go to school part-time, Ling and Hong (2014) allude to low quality education and teachers, a reduced class offering (math and mandarin), and a diminished amount of time for classes that often gets disrupted or canceled in favor of training or competitions. Despite the government issuing a compulsory education law, many athletes do not receive the full nine years of knowledge related learning. Instead, the overwhelming amount of time is dedicated to the success of the athletes' competitive results. Zhao Yonghua, a national skiing champion, said, "My life then was just training. We trained at dawn, in the morning, in the afternoon, even in the evening. We did not really do schoolwork" (Lim, 2008). According to Xu (2007) China's national news agency Xinhua reported in 2006 that of the nearly 6,000 athletes who retire from competition every year, approximately half end up jobless or without further schooling plans. *China Sport Daily*, a newspaper run by China's Physical Education and Sport Committee, estimates that of the countries 300,000 retired athletes, 80% are jobless, injured, or impoverished" (Lim, 2008). As showcased, there is a longstanding imbalance between the time allocated to athletes training, their formal education training, which can affect an athlete's ability to gain employment once their careers are finished.

Early Policy to Support an Athlete's Welfare

In a preemptive attempt to get ahead of the potential political backlash leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the Chinese government took strides to enact policy to alleviate some of the problems for its elite athletes who trained in their development system. By endorsing policies that provide fundamental social welfare rights and education for its elite athletes, it showcases a continued effort to support the moral, intellectual and physical foundation of socialistic education in order to offset the adverse reaction to China's highly regimented training system. In

2002, the SGAS along with the Central Organizing Office, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Personnel, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security issued a primary joint policy, *Opinions on Further Improving the Employment and Resettlement of Retired Athletes*, a policy that required the government at all levels to support retired athletes and to offer them jobs and educational opportunities (Wei et al., 2010). The policy states that relevant departments should formulate preferential policies and measures for the employment and resettlement of retired athletes and establish a smooth mechanism for entry and exit. Some of the significant provisions in this policy include, a) injury and disability insurance, b) employment, vocational, and technical training system according to their sports skills, c) social security and welfare benefits, d) allocate subsidies to athletes based upon the number of years in participation for the team and subsequent results/achievements, e) encourage athletes to go to higher education institutions (if an athlete places in the top three national games, top six Asian games, and top eight world competition they are exempt from taking college placement test, and can enroll in specialized classes), f) actively create jobs for athletes in the fields of physical education teachers, and grassroots sports school coaches (if an athlete places in the top three national games, top six Asian games, and top eight world competition they can go onto jobs in the government sports bureaus, and into higher education as instructors), g) provide loans to athletes if they decide to create and individual or sport business, h) the MOE and SGAS should actively cooperate to improve the formal education of athletes, and build a curriculum that is consistent with athletes schedules and time demands, and i) develop sports vocational education, so that athletes can obtain the qualifications of sports majors and sports technology projects for them to work in the sports industry after retirement.

Additional policies followed and echoed the sentiments outlined in the 2002 policy, but despite these provisions and leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Chinese athletes were pushed to great lengths in order to succeed. More athletes than ever before were pushed into service. However, only 1 in 900 training in China's sport system make it to the Olympics, and approximately 4,356 athletes were needed to create a single champion (Ling & Hong, 2014). The underlying factor in the early athlete re-employment and support policies was that they are designed to allow the more successful athletes to receive more benefits, which encouraged athletes to strive to achieve better results. The mindset fortified the necessity to put the majority of time energy toward training and discouraged athletes and coaches from focusing on formal education. Thus, despite the enactment of policies to support the elite athlete, the majority of them who did not achieve success were still unable to find jobs due to their lack of sufficient education. As the 2008 Beijing Games came to an end, China proved it had finally arrived on the world stage, shed its sick man of Asia label and entered the era of globalization as a force to be respected and reckoned. Nevertheless, as the country moved into the present era of sport development built upon commercialization and marketization, and decentralization, the previous policies and sport agenda left a legacy of athletes who in future years would gain less support from the state, and have fewer skills and resources from which to re-enter society.

2009 - Present Day: The Effect of Neoliberal Sport Policies, and Changing Attitudes Toward Sport Development

The hosting of the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games dramatically impacted the development of the sports industry in China. It cemented its sports system as a commercialized entity and an economically driven enterprise. Investment in the sporting infrastructure leading up to the Beijing Olympics created an environment suitable for an emerging sports market. While some

might minimize the connection between Olympic gold and participation in sports, it appears that Chinese interest in sports has increased, and citizens are consuming sports at a rapidly growing pace. Even though elite-level sports seem to be firmly under the control of the Chinese government, increased general participation rates indicate China is on the cusp of generating just as many exceptional athletes as the state-selected. Chinese scholar of sports Zhang (2015a, p. 1089) perhaps best assesses the contemporary importance of sports in China for consumers, the government, and the private sector providers, "As the world economy continues to develop and material living standards continue to increase, the consumption of sport has become an important element of expenditure in the pursuit of cultural needs. The sports industry has gained more and more attention from the state, society, and the public, and had increasingly been seen as the 'sunrise industry' of the twenty-first century."

The overwhelming response to this shift toward commercialism is two-fold. First that China's sports development would once again allocate resources to mass sport for a population that was growing in wealth, middle class, leisure time, and focusing on health and physical fitness. Second that China's elite sport development system would be incorporating elements of a neoliberal economic to aid in the professionalization, commercialization, and marketization into its state-run system. As President Hu Jintao would say shortly after the Beijing Olympics, "Sport should serve the people's all-round development and facilitate the development of the economy. Elite and Mass Sport should advance together to improve living standards and achieve sustainable development" (Hong & Zhouxiang, 2012, p. 184). In 2011 State Councilor Liu Yandong repeated the words of Hu, "Coordinated development of both elite sport and mass sport should be achieved to further transform China from a major sports country to a world sports

power" (Tan, 2015). The strategies that followed reiterated party rhetoric and have set the stage for a fundamental shift in the way policies are directed to initiate economic growth.

Neoliberal Elements of Sport Policy in China

The time and opportunity have arrived in China to create new development systems of sport that once again reach the mass population. Increased economic freedom has affected a significant segment of the Chinese population who are looking for ways to add sports into their daily routines. This is leading to the boom of the sports industry and a collaborative effort by entrepreneurs and consumers alike to find ways that sports speak to the individualist needs of the Chinese citizen. Although the government remains firmly entrenched in the development of elite athletes, it also recognizes the potential growth opportunities in marketing sport to its massive population of more than 1.38 billion people.

In 2014 the State Council issued *Document No. 46, Opinions of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of Sports Industry and Promoting Sports Consumption*. This document outlined that the development of the sports industry is an inevitable requirement for improving the physical fitness and health of the Chinese nation. It is conducive to meeting the needs of the diverse sportspeople, guaranteeing and improving people's livelihood, and is conducive to expanding domestic demand, increasing employment, and nurturing new economic growth points. A 2016 policy enacted by SGAS *13th Five-year Plan for Sports Development in China* expanded on these opinions, and in the document stated its plan to promote the economic transformation and improvement of sport by promoting comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable development. Through these efforts, the country should strive to achieve the goal of building a sports power, and give full play to the unique role of sports in building a healthy China by strengthening national cohesion and competitiveness. Additionally, the *National*

Fitness Program (2016–2020) issued by the State Council declared that by 2020 it wants national fitness to be a source of economic growth and should integrate into societal functions as a source of mutual promotion with various social undertakings.

In summary, the twenty-first century should mean the expansion of sporting opportunities for the average Chinese citizen. Economic reforms have brought about a burgeoning middle class in China and a multitude of citizens who have become consumers of sport centric attitudes. Enthusiasm for sport is beginning to invigorate Chinese society in the fields of sport, health, recreation, tourism, and leisure activities. Chinese citizens now have more autonomy, choice, and free will in their decision making, so too is the sports industry becoming increasingly individualized. Now, as the next wave of sports development occurs in China, it is sure to focus on both the elite sports system and opportunities for its citizens in general, invigorated by the success of its international superstars but just as much by private entrepreneurs and consumer demand for more sports. For as diverse as the Chinese population interests, the development of the sports industry must broaden to appeal to all. Sports are no longer for just the elite athletes.

As China actively promotes the development of sports through an open market economy, it is continuously enhancing the systematic and synergistic nature of various sports work. The goal is to promote the coordinated development of the sports industry through the comprehensive development of mass and competitive sports, promote the balanced development of urban and rural sports, and increase the development of regional sports linkages. In this vein, new sports programing has the opportunity to be collaborative and innovative in its offerings and connected to a range of social undertakings. The time and opportunity to connect with the education sector is suitable, and the State Council, MOE, and SGAS is aware of the possibility for integration and have begun to outline policies that consider this.

Sport + Education Policies, Education + Sports Policies of the Twenty-first Century, and Flaws for Implementation

With the development of neoliberal social structures, everyday citizens expect a diversified trend for the future development of their children, and they are reluctant to send their children to specialized sports schools (Gao, 2015), especially given its history of educational and re-employment issues. Conversely, many ordinary citizens now clamor for increased opportunity for sport to be integrated into their everyday institutions, including schools. The appeal of more structured events and programming into the daily educational curriculum, beyond standard PE classes and calisthenics, is gaining traction. The official policy stance of the SGAS and the MOE continues to shift as it reshapes existing provisions in place to appeal to the sensibilities of its citizens to create a more holistic system of development in the era of the twenty-first-century neoliberal globalized sport.

In a targeted attempt to disseminate sport + education directives from these three entities (State Council, MOE, SGAS), policies and amendments within those documents were cross-referenced for language that included sports, schools, and cultural education. For example, national directives from the State Council searched for amendments with all three words, while SGAS policies were referenced for educational wording, and MOE policies were referenced for athletic wording. In total, ten policies were examined from 2009-2018, and specific amendments and provisions were identified within each policy to determine what directives were being taken about sports and athletics within schools, and cultural education within sport development centers. In the next section, I will break down the crucial objectives that were outlined in the policies, and sorted it based upon thematic coding to calculate the nature of coordination and the direction sport and education integration is headed. The following policies were analyzed. From

the State Council: *2009 National Fitness Regulations*; *2010 Guiding Opinions on Further Strengthening Athletes' Cultural Education and Athletes' Support Work*; *2014 Opinions of the State Council on accelerating the development of sports industry and promoting sports consumption No. 46*; *2015 Chinese Soccer Notice of the overall plan for reform and development No. 11*; *2016 National fitness program (2016–2020)*; *2016 Guidance on speeding up the development process of the leisure and fitness industry*. From the MOE: *2014 Standards for students' health and fitness*; *2015 Do a good job in school physical education, improve students' physical health ——Speech at the National School Sports Work Symposium Minister of Education Yuan Guiren*. From SGAS: *2012 Speech from China Sports Administration Director Liu Peng at the All Country Athlete Cultural Education and Insurance Guarantee Meeting*; *2016 The 13th Five- Year plan for sports development in China*

Table 3: Policy agenda and analysis of the integration of sport and formal education in China: Objectives, management, design, programs, assessment and evaluation.

	State Council	**State General Administration of Sport (SGAS)**	**Ministry of Education (MOE)**
Overall Objective	Improve and promote the all-round development of youth.	Improve all around development of youth and improve education of its athletes.	Improve all around development of youth and improve physical activity of its students.
Joint System of Management and Organization	A) SGAS and MOE at all levels establish a joint conference and supervision system for combining formal education and sport. B) Improve cooperation between SGAS and MOE management systems and operational mechanisms. C) SGAS should act as the mainstay for sport development and MOE should be responsible for educational administration.	A) Task MOE to take control of education of elite athletes. Build a curriculum and evaluation system B) Make education a prerequisite for continued involvement in athletics and to become a government affiliated training center. C) Incentivize and reward best athletes with a clear path to higher education, without need for test through direct admittance	A) Task SGAS to help improve the quality of physical education teachers, and to support the curriculum of physical education standards and basic requirements B) Make sport a prerequisite for graduating secondary and higher education C) Incentivize sports and add additional points to national exams for students who participate in sports
Scientific Methods and Program Design	Design a scientific method and development concept to effectively solve the practical difficulties faced by athletes regarding their formal education, and by students regarding their health and physical fitness.	A) Create scientific methods, and internet-based education opportunities, and improve the educational curriculum standards of athletes. B) Understand the practical difficulties surrounding competition schedules and purpose of elite sport in China.	A) Develop basic curriculum for the assessment of physical activity, standards of fitness, and testing system. B) At least one-hour physical activity every day, 2,3,4 times a week depending on setting (primary/secondary/ higher education).

Table 3 (Cont.)			
Implement Development Plans and Funding	Local governments at all levels should implement the construction of public sports schools and merge them into local education development plans. Incorporate formal education funds into the budget at the same level, increase funding, and continuously improve school conditions	A) Protect time, opportunity and access for formal education, while restructuring competition schedules and locations. B) Improve and increase funding for school programs C) Recruit athletes into higher education and into sports teams D) Promote retired athletes to become physical education teachers	A) Protect time and opportunity and access for physical education. B) Improve and increase funding for physical activity and sports programs C) Recruit athletes into institutions of higher education. D) Promote qualified teachers into sports schools
Standards Assessments	SGAS and MOE shall formulate standards and assessment methods to ensure quality of formal education and sports in schools and sports schools. All regions should establish and improve relevant rules and regulations in light of actual conditions and provide institutional guarantee for the mutual promotion and coordinated development of formal education, training and competition.	A) Establish physical standards and monitor physical education tests at traditional schools. B) Improve the quality and qualifications of traditional educational teachers by implanting a rigorous standards assessment.	A) Establish a testing system to ensure a high standard of education and monitor all educational tests at sports schools B) Improve the quality and qualifications of physical educational teachers by implementing a rigorous standards assessment.
Inspection and Evaluation	SGAS and MOE shall regularly supervise and inspect the educational situation of sports schools, and sport in traditional schools. The administrative departments shall resolutely evaluate and correct the relevant developmental systems and management methods.	Inspect, assess, evaluate and improve access to formal education at sport schools.	Inspect, assess, evaluate and improve access to physical education and sport in traditional schools.

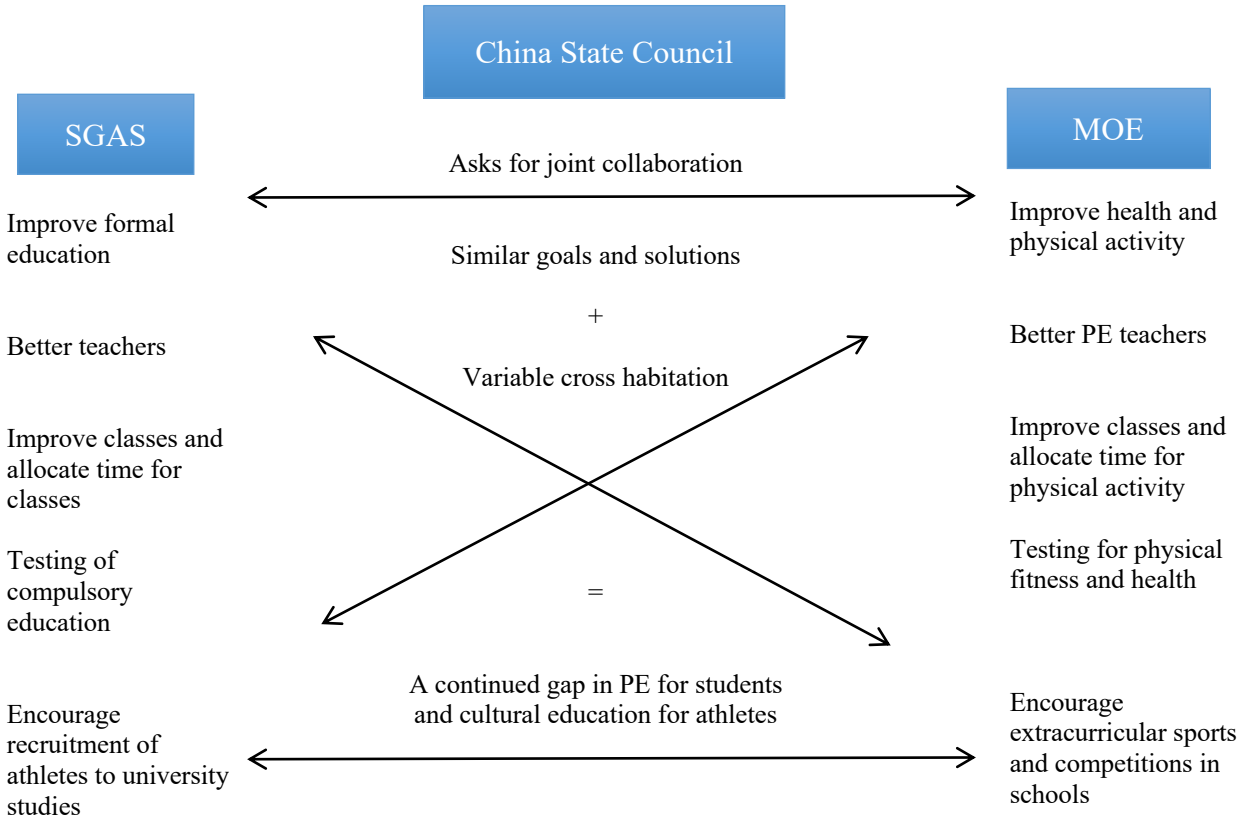
The table above provides a breakdown of the policy analysis, which examines the documents by grouping them into four categories (State Council, MOE, SGAS, and joint written), and into six themes by intentions (Overall Objectives, Management/Organizational System, Scientific Development/Curriculum, Standards Assessment, Inspection Evaluations). On paper, the plan is situated nicely. In theory, the MOE and SGAG will work together to help one another as they have similar goals and similar solutions that can be implemented through collaborations. The policies are outlined strategically, and its major objectives include; promoting intergraded development and holistic all-round development of its youth by formulating a curriculum, standard, and assessment measures for sports in schools and schools for athletes. The relevant systems and management structures to ensure sports in schools and cultural education for athletes will be supervised, evaluated, and improved. Finally, internal departments will be built, and leadership developed that will strengthen the organization and management needed to support sport in schools and cultural education for athletes.

Flaws in Implementation

However, in practice, a developed theory does not necessarily equate into continuity or the ability to implement the policy framework that provides a solution to integrating sports and education. Through critical analysis, I see the following potential pitfalls in the organization, management, and implementation. There are two different rhetoric and directives at play, each unique to the institutional bodies (MOE and SGAS) overarching goal, and there is little collaboration between the two entities (see figure below). In joint policies and the State Council's directives, it merely states that the MOE help and fix the educational problem within the sports department, and that the SGAS fix and solve for the problem of lack of sports within the traditional school setting. However, in actuality, we see the policies are written vaguely, and

the directed from the top-down, with the expectation the correct government departments will implement the policies.

Figure 1: Objectives and outcomes for combining sport and formal education.



Other problems include the holistic development ideal draws upon numerous government departments and asks them to cooperate and collaborate, which is hard to gain alignment. Oftentimes, leadership is unwillingness to change, or interfere with integrating solutions into other departments already established system, because the perception is that it will be too difficult to accomplish. There is a general disconnect between which department is implementing policies and how to implement the policy, creating a general lack of coordination of ideas and resources. To properly integrate some of the proposed solutions, many departments

asked to contribute beyond just the MOE and SGAS; for example, the State Commission Office for Public Sector Reform, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Human Resources, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. Departments look toward one another to bridge gaps of deficiencies, but many departments look at these problems in a vacuum or as single isolated cases.

Furthermore, decisions on how to implement and interpret policies are left open to the top officials who may have conflicting interests, disparities in resources, or different ideas on how to accomplish policy suggestions. Finally, there is a general lack of accountability. If a policy is not implemented or if the way that polices are implemented has different effects based upon a leadership's interpretations. There are no penalties for failing to comply with government policies as each district, region, province, institutions, city interprets, and implements them differently. As Gao (2015) suggests, the patterns of policymaking for education + sports lack standard ability and continuity in many areas, mostly in communication between the sports and education administrative sector. As is the case with a sport + education, the policies outlined above, they are relatively broad and vague.

The potential problems with policy implementation are not isolated to sport + education provisions, and in fact, are apparent in the implementing of policy broadly speaking. Ball (1990) describes that policy-making failure lies in a lack of coherent definition or detailed guidance on funding, resource allocation as well as in a lack of systematic monitoring and enforcement. This is especially important as China enters an era of market-oriented sport and directed decentralization of sport where the government is figuring out how to systematically direct and manage sport in an ever-changing and dynamic market. Zhang (2015a) describes imperfect policies and regulations in Chinese sport as a broadly integrated management approach that

cannot provide the necessary guidance for certain aspects of the industry and some particular sports items. Zhang argues there has been no national management standard of the sports industry and remains in a less than a fully integrated state with the economic market.

Furthermore, sports policies and regulations in China pay more attention to formulation rather than implementation, and that the policies lack institutionalization and legalization. Administrative departments need to devise a system of supervision and evaluation. Chen and Chen (2017) echo these findings and discuss the problems in implementing sports policy in China's open market era. They describe issues such as leaders having different priorities, politics, and ways of distributing financial and human resources. Commitment and compliance are demonstrated at varying degrees and have been shown to collide with pre-existing practices and agendas, which leads to different outcomes depending on the conditions and context. As China pushes for shifts in sport policymaking that incorporates an era of market-oriented sport, Zhang (2015a) contends that China's sports industry is in an awkward situation of being controlled by a mix of governance and operation and the chaotic area of public administration and public/private enterprise. However, as China searches for policy solutions to better integrate sport +education directives in a sports industry directed by ever-changing economic market and neoliberal shifts, it can incorporate lessons of policy transfer and look to the way that interscholastic/intercollegiate sport policy has been designed and implemented in the United States.

Policy Transfer, Interscholastic/Intercollegiate Sport and the Globalized Student-Athlete

Ling and Hong (2014) describe the conflict between sport and education has become a severe problem. There continue to be flaws in the amendment of outdated policies regarding the combination of education and sport in Chinese society. However, this imbalance between sports

training and education is not the same in all countries, and the exact situation depends on each country's sport system and government policy. China is already looking to the West in how to better formulate and manage a free-market sport industry, and "from 1993 onward, the Chinese government adopted western approaches, western sports, and western commercialization, not only to achieve Olympic success, but also to promote its philosophy of patriotism, collectivism, and socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Wu, 1999).

The sport + education problem could be aided by changing tides of the global sports industry and policy transfer. Despite its plethora of problems and controversies, many would argue that the United States has an efficient and well-organized management system for the integration of sport into educational institutions. It is one of the few, if not only places in the world that has such an extensive network of interscholastic sports that operates in both middle and high schools across the country, and which acts as a feeder to college sports programs. The US intercollegiate system is also highly organized and operates across two different organizing bodies, the NCAA, National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), and at varying levels of athletic performance, making it a system that provides access and opportunity for domestic athletes in the US and to athletes from around the world. The intercollegiate and interscholastic system in the US, coordinates competitions, leagues, conferences and local state regional and national championships across 40+ different sports, and at over 3000+ collegiate institutions, and 10000+ middle and high schools. This level of ingenuity and integration takes finely turned policy and coordination of management systems, which at the middle and high school level is coordinated by various local, state, regional and national organizations, and the NCAA is the world-recognized leader in organizing collegiate sport.

Utilizing techniques from the United States to infuse China with an effective policy and management structure for sport + education has a grounding in the concept of policy transfer (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000), which is defined as the transfer of policy solutions or ideas from one place to another. In this particular case, a lesson drawing activity specifies drawing upon knowledge of a program in other countries dealing with the same problem (Rose, 1991). In order to help provide solutions to the sport + education problem in China, policy and organizational management lessons can be transferred from the US, which has a long and storied tradition of integrating the two fields. China is already incorporating some of these lessons from the US and NCAA into the formation of its market-oriented sports industry, "The collegiate athletic system in the US has been world-famous in not only developing elite athletes but also cultivating leaders in other fields. We are learning and borrowing their experiences to adjust our own program to enhance sport's role in education as a whole," said Yang Liguo, vice-president and secretary-general of the Federation of University Sports China, the Chinese counterpart of the NCAA (Sun, 2016). While China looks to the NCAA to help with building a new frontier in collegiate sport in the country, the broader implications and development of grassroots programs cannot be ignored if the country wants to incorporate a more conducive transitional development system into its societal functions. This would take a more coordinated effort and approach to implement because, as evidenced above, the current policies and implementation of those policies have fundamental flaws.

Furthermore, incorporating an integrated system of sport and education in China would be a massive undertaking and would challenge the fundamental value set that has been inculcated into Chinese society for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Thus, we need first to explore whether Chinese values are changing to encourage the promotion and integration between the

fields of sport and education. The final chapters of this dissertation will explore whether neoliberal changes are occurring in Chinese society concerning combining sports and education, and to what extent cultural barriers may still exist in the formulation of a new policy and management systems that would embrace the notion of a student-athlete in China.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY, DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH PROJECT SET UP

The purpose of this study is to understand how transnational shifts in the Chinese sport industry are affecting the formal educational experiences of elite and aspiring athletes. In this chapter, I describe my statement of positionality, the methods of data collection, and systematic analysis employed to investigate my research questions. The chapter will include an overview of the participants involved. It will discuss the semi-structured interview process. Then it will outline the data collection procedures. Finally, it will establish a guideline for interpreting the interviews. The methodology will establish the overall procedures taken into account in the setup of the study. It will also establish a foundation for the overall discussion, analysis, and findings that will be presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

Statement of Positionality

The idea for this study was not initiated from previous studies or research articles that I read, but rather from my on-the-ground experiences in China. Since 2008 I have spent nearly six years on the ground in China, engaging, working, and conducting research in the sports industry. In 2008 I was a tennis coach for a private academy in Zhongshan, Guangdong. In Zhongshan, I worked with elite athletes who were trying to remain independent of the government system or had been dismissed from their former government teams. From 2011-2014 I worked as the Head Tennis Coach for Hebei Province in Shijiazhuang city. I was recruited, hired, and employed for three years by the provincial sports bureau, where I trained elite state-sponsored athletes. My team competed in many professional international and domestic events, including the most important 2013 National Games held in Dalian, Liaoning Province. Finally, from 2017-18 I was

stationed in Nanjing, Jiangsu, China, on a Fulbright grant conducting my dissertation research and fieldwork. My time in China did more than inform my research. It was a lived experience. What I saw, the work that I conducted, and the people that I engaged with during my first four years in China provided me with a rich experience to draw from.

Most importantly, my time with the athletes, specifically the ones from the state-sponsored programs, drove my curiosity about the Chinese system. It was their daily routine, their transitions through the system, and their plight when exiting the system that inspired me to come up with my research questions. The interactions and the relationships that I formed during those years provided me with a lot of knowledge about their situation, which prompted me to move forward in theoretical studies, but also in searching for practical solutions to the problem of the educational gap for elite athletes in China.

It is important to recognize my bias as a Western scholar who was socialized in a Western system of sport. Some scholars may argue that I am not qualified to examine and propose solutions to solve a Chinese cultural problem. Thus, in the following chapters, I acknowledge my deep-seated value and affinity to sport and how it relates not only to the formulation of this research question and project but also how it is in stark contrast to the traditional values affiliated with sport and education in China. However, that being said, I contend that the Chinese state has not been forced into or succumb to the pressure of neoliberalism, but rather active participants in opening its sporting market to the processes of globalization. That includes inviting me as an outside participant to take a position within the Chinese government system as a tennis coach in Hebei and asking me to impart philosophical changes to their system of sport development. As Tan (2013) states, there is considerable empirical evidence that supports the Chinese government in "demonstrating its capability to

make choices over the relationship with sport globalization and making up its own mind to reach out and incorporate or embrace global influences rather than having global influences force their way into the Chinese sports system" (p.152). Thus, I contend that because of the extensive amount of time I have spent working in the Chinese system, and due to the friendships and the relationships I have formed, that I am in fact qualified to examine the educational gap of elite athletes in China.

As I frame the study in the following sections of this chapter, the most crucial point is that my time spent in China working as been invaluable to my research. The co-habitation and co-creation of knowledge could not have been accomplished without my formative experiences living in China and through the maintenance and building of relationships with those I spent time with. I remember clearly a professor of mine Dr. Roberto Baruth from Boise State where I did my masters, who offered me some sage advice before I took the job coaching the Hebei Team. He said to let the culture wash over you, meet the people, soak up everything you can about China and its people while you are there. Most importantly he said, to engage socially and make meaning of your time, you must learn the language. It is through the native tongue that they will invite you in, learn it, speak it, make mistakes along the way, and be willing to live the daily uncertainties. Being willing to engage with your students in their native language, and you will earn their respect and an invitation to know each other more clearly. This message has and will stay with me my entire life.

Using Prof. Baruth's lesson, my interaction in the Chinese sports industry over the past ten years has informed and provided me with a unique point of view and granted me unparalleled access to stakeholders and actors who engage daily within the Chinese sports industry. Through my co-habitation with my Chinese counterparts, I was able to conduct my research, and the

following is a description of how I outlined my research on the educational experiences of elite athletes in China.

Participants

In conducting this study, I wanted to provide a well-rounded approach in depth, breadth, and scope of the Chinese sports industry. Thus, the participants I recruited for the study were key stakeholders in the implementation of, contributors to, and partakers of sport in China. I wanted the participants in the study to be able to represent not only current points of view, but also be able to explain and showcase the shifts in elite athlete education over time. I also wanted the group of participants to be from geographically diverse regions in China. Furthermore, the key stakeholders participated in different sports and is not a singular representation of one sport in particular. By incorporating these dynamics, I hope to present a sample that is as nationally representative as possible.

Table 4: Interview Participants

Participant	Gender	City/Province	Sport	Occupation, Training Institute of Child, or Classification of Athlete
Government Official 1	F	Nanjing, Jiangsu	Fencing	Assistant Director of Education, Jiangsu Sports Bureau
Government Official 2	F	Nanjing, Jiangsu	Volleyball	Director of Education, Jiangsu Sports Bureau
Government Official 3	M	Harbin, Heilongjiang	Ice Hockey	Director of Sport Science, Heilongjiang Sports Bureau
Government Official 4	M	Nanjing, Jiangsu	Tennis Badminton, Ping-pong	Director of Small Ball Sport Association
Government Official 5	M	Beijing	Tennis	Director of Competition and Training
Practitioner 1	M	Beijing	Soccer	Events and Operations for Professional Soccer Team
Practitioner 2	M	Beijing	Multiple	Founder/Principal of Sport Academy
Practitioner 3	M	Wuhan, Hubei	Multiple	Director of Sport Academy
Practitioner 4	M	Shanghai	Rugby	Founder of Sport Media and Production Company
Practitioner 5	F	Shanghai	Multiple	Recruitment and Talent Identification
Practitioner 6	M	Shanghai	Basketball/Tennis	Co-Founder Sport Agency
Practitioner 7	M	Shanghai	Basketball/Tennis	Co-Founder Sport Agency

Table 4 (Cont.)				
Practitioner 8	M	Guangzhou, Guangdong	Tennis	Consultant
Practitioner 9	F	Hangzhou, Zhejiang	Swimming	Performance and Sport Science
Coach 1	M	Shenyang, Liaoning	Tennis	Private Tennis Coach
Coach 2	M	Shenzhen, Guangdong	Basketball	Private Academy Basketball Coach
Coach 3	M	Beijing	Boxing	National Team Coach
Coach 4	F	Guangzhou, Guangdong	Golf	Private Academy Golf Coach
Coach 5	M	Nanjing, Jiangsu	Tennis	National Team Coach
Coach 6	M	Changsha, Hunan	Swimming	Government city swimming coach
Coach 7	M	Xiamen, Fujian	Soccer	Primary School Soccer Coach
Coach 8	M	Wuhan, Hebei	Tennis	Provincial Tennis Coach
Coach 9	F	Nanjing, Jiangsu	Tennis	Provincial Tennis Coach
Parent 1	F	Qionghai, Hainan	Tennis	School Affiliated Private Academy
Parent 2	M	Guiyang, Guizhou	Tennis	Private Tennis Academy
Parent 3	F	Shanghai	Tennis	Experimental School Team
Parent 4	F	Hefei, Anhui	Tennis	Private Tennis Academy
Parent 5	F	Beijing	Tennis	Private Tennis Academy
Parent 6	F	Guangzhou, Guangdong	Swimming	Private Swimming Academy
Parent 7	M	Shanghai	Tennis	Private Tennis Academy
Parent 8	F	Beijing	Soccer	Experimental School Team
Parent 9	F	Tianjin	Tennis	Private Tennis Academy
Parent 10	M	Nanjing, Jiangsu	Tennis	Private Tennis Academy
Parent 11	F	Chengdu, Sichuan	Golf	Private Golf Academy
Parent 12	F	Guangzhou, Guangdong	Fencing	Private Fencing School
Parent 13	F	Guangzhou, Guangdong	Basketball	Private Basketball Academy
Parent 14	M	Shijiazhuang, Hebei	Tennis	Provincial Tennis Team
Parent 15	M	Nanjing, Jiangsu	Soccer	Secondary School Team
Parent 16	F	Shanghai	Golf	Private Golf Academy
Athlete 1	F	Shanghai	Tennis	National Elite
Athlete 2	F	Chongqing	Tennis	Class 1
Athlete 3	F	Harbin, Heilongjiang	Speed Skating	International Elite
Athlete 4	M	Nanjing, Jiangsu	Tennis	National Elite
Athlete 5	F	Nanjing, Jiangsu	Fencing	Class 1
Athlete 6	M	Qingdao, Shandong	Tennis	Class 2
Athlete 7	F	Guangzhou, Guangdong	Tennis	Class 1
Athlete 8	M	Nanjing, Jiangsu	Swimming	National Elite
Athlete 9	M	Taiyuan, Shanxi	Tennis	Class 1
Athlete 10	F	Shenzhen, Guangdong	Tennis	National Elite
Athlete 11	M	Beijing	Basketball	Class 1
Athlete 12	F	Beijing	Handball	International Elite
Athlete 13	F	Shijiazhuang, Hebei	Soccer	Class 1
Athlete 14	M	Shijiazhuang, Hebei	Tennis	National Elite

In total, fifty-three participants were recruited for the study, who at the time of writing were living in China and are participants within the Chinese sports industry. Among the participants interviewed were government officials (n = 5). The government officials held various roles for provincial sports bureaus, which included one director of the competitions and

training department, leaders who held positions in the department of science and education, and provincial directors of the small ball sports association. Practitioners, such as sports agents and entrepreneurs (n = 9), also held various roles. For example, two practitioners were owners of their own independent academies. Another was a principal at a Chinese run private school. One person I spoke with owned a sports digital media and production company. Coaches were also interviewed (n = 9) and came from both the state-run sports system as well as the privatized system and taught sports such as tennis, boxing, soccer, swimming, basketball, and golf. Parents (n = 16) had children who were participating in the government systems, and others had children training in the privatized system and played sports such as tennis, soccer, fencing, basketball, golf and swimming. Some parents had also been former government-sponsored athletes. Retired athletes and current athletes (n = 14) also came from both the government and private system, and again multiple sports were represented, including speed-skating, fencing, swimming, tennis, basketball, and others. The interviewees came from all regions of China, tier-one cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and also tier two and three cities such as Wuhan, Tianjin, Nanjing, Hefei, Xiamen, Liaoning, Chengdu, Harbin, Qingdao, Shijiazhuang, Taiyuan, Guiyang, and more. Purposeful sampling was adapted to select participants who were engaged in both governments supported sports programs, as well as programs that were run independently through the open market economy. This allowed for an all-encompassing (or as close as possible) approach to Chinese sporting society to be examined, which permitted differences in regional values, institutions, developmental pathways, and mindsets to be incorporated into the analysis.

Interviews

The next two chapters will be a guided analysis of fifty-three, one-on-one semi-structured, in-depth interviews (Wragg, 2002). Interview participants were people I knew from my previous work in China, people whom I met at sport competitions, and also participants I met through referrals. Interviews lasted from 45 – 60 minutes, with open-ended questions, developed to elicit pertinent data on the formal educational experiences of elite thletes. The interview protocol was developed from my previous experience in China, and through the literature on dual development pathways of elite athletes, which was molded to fit the Chinese cultural context. Questions were tailored to draw responses about whether or not it is possible to integrate sports and education in contemporary Chinese society, and indirectly if the notion of a student-athlete exists in China.

First, demographic questions were asked, such as… age, city-born, city living in currently, current job, yearly income, party member, child/children's age. I also collected contact information for follow up interviews or to re-establish communications should the need for any checks or clarifications arise. After I gathered this information, I started the primary conversation by asking them to provide information about their sports background, their job, and their typical day. More detailed questions used to probe for information about the combination of sport and educations included:

- How does your involvement in sports affect your traditional education?
- What do you think of this methodology?
- Do you believe that athletes receive enough cultural literacy classes? Why?
- What do you think the most beneficial aspect of combining sport and education?
- What are the least beneficial aspects?

- Do you think Chinese citizens value the combination of sport and education? Why or why not? (See Appendix A for a full list of questions).

To elicit more significant descriptions, probing questions included: "Could you please explain that further?" or "How, in your experience, does that process work?" The interviews almost always ended with suggestions for improvements to the system.

While I had an interview protocol to work from, often, the interview turned into a flow of conversation and involved sharing stories of our experiences. I wanted to engage with my participants in a natural way, and thus the process was structured but open-ended to allow for deviations in their stories. Through the semi-structured process, I was able to obtain vital information pertinent to my primary research focus. The interviews allowed me to get to the heart of how the educational experiences of elite athletes in China have shifted from the past to the present, and the possible changes for the future, as China, incorporates a more market-based approach to the sports industry.

Data Collection

This research and time spent in the field collecting data was partially funded through the Fulbright Student Scholar Research Grant. The grant provided me with a fourteen-month fieldwork opportunity. The first four months included a grant for language acquisition and prep. The final ten I was based at the Nanjing Institute of Sport, my formal affiliation for my fieldwork duration. The research is a cross-cultural sports diplomacy project, accepted and approved in the US by the Fulbright Commission and also by government entities in China.

Prior to going into the field, the design of this study, it questions, potential participants, purpose, procedures, and how to ensure confidentiality was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). In the IRB process, a committee ensured that U.S. governmental and university

regulations were followed to safeguard the protection of participants, and the facilitation of an ethical study would be conducted. The process involved creating two copies of the design, one in the researcher's native language, and the other in Mandarin Chinese. Written and verbal consent forms were provided to all study participants, before the interviews, which was written in Mandarin. Participation was stickily voluntary. Confidentiality of information was affirmed, and pseudonyms are used to protect participants' identities further. Approval from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) institutional review board was obtained before beginning this research project.

Once on the ground in China, I went through an intensive language program that was sponsored through the Fulbright Commission. The supplemental grant called the Critical Language Enhancement Award (CLEA), provided a semester worth of intensive mandarin training in Harbin, Heilongjiang province. The grant added an additional layer of verbiage and vocabulary to add to my already conversational Mandarin language abilities. I was able to hone in on the language that would help to have more descriptive conversations about politics, economics, education, and sports. It also allowed me to practice my interview skills and put my interview protocol through an extensive review before officially starting the study. While in Harbin I also conducted in depth policy analysis of state documents in original Mandarin Chinese.

After the semester of studying, I transferred to my research base at the Nanjing Sport Institute (NSI), the top sports university in Jiangsu Province. In the Fulbright grant application process, I had to suggest an educational institution to be affiliated with and go through a formal application and vetting process to establish a relationship and be accepted by the Chinese institution. With the help of committee member Dr. Weimo Zhu, he was able to put me in touch

with Professor Wang Zunlung at NSI. We established communication, and through the official Fulbright process, which involved the permission of both the US and the Chinese government, I was approved to conduct the study with NSI as my on-ground Chinese affiliate. Professor Wang provided me with all the resources necessary to complete my project and was a pivotal part of my tutelage while in Nanjing. The NSI is also the home for the Jiangsu Provincial sports programs, where its elite athletes in various Olympic sports train, including tennis. Many of the tennis players, coaches, and officials I had known from my previous time spent working with the Hebei team. Another primary contact was the Director of Tennis Prof. Jiang Hongwei, who, in addition to managing the tennis program, was the former China Women's National Tennis Coach, working with internationally recognized players like Li Na and Peng Shuai.

Ultimately the NSI was a perfect place to be based out of for my research. It provided me not only a base but also instant connections and credibility to the Chinese sports community. More than that, it offered me a family on the ground, people genuinely willing to help and aid in my research. What also makes the NSI institute so unique are the hybrid programs that were being implemented at their tennis facility. They have a government-sponsored team, and also managed the Tennis Academy of China (TAC), which operated as a private for-profit tennis academy. They also maintained cooperation with a famous tennis school founded in Spain, called the Sanchez-Casal Academy. Being based at the NSI allowed me to have the old and new guard at my fingertips and under one roof. It was a unique place to examine and observe firsthand the amalgamation of state-sponsored sport and the commercialization of sport in China. It supplied opportunities to be engaged with people seeking new ways and methods of training, but also has the state-sponsored system as another option for athlete development. Thus, I was

exposed to a meshing of two worlds and people who were seeking development opportunities for their children and was a great place to conduct interviews.

I conducted interviews in both English and Mandarin, and I let the interview participant choose which language they preferred. There were times when the conversation flowed between the two languages, as though the process we worked to find the best mode of communication. Even though I was tested after the CLEA program with advanced Mandarin skills and scored 9 out of 12 on a scale of fluency, I think there are times when we all struggle to get out point across, even if speaking the same language. All interviews were audio-recorded and kept secure. Interviews that were conducted in Mandarin, transcribed into Chinese, and then translated back into English through a joint process which included help from graduate students at the NSI, who certified all translations were correct and valid.

The fifty-three interviews that I conducted spanned fourteen months from late August 2017 until the end of October 2018, as I immersed myself in the daily lives and routines being studied. The time spent in the field (Walcott, 2005) was pivotal to the success of the study and provided me even more time to be acquainted with the shifts occurring in the Chinese sports industry toward a more commercialized system. It also allowed me the opportunity to reacquaint myself with past friends, make new friends, and maintain my presence as a practitioner in the Chinese sports industry. In addition to my official interviews, I conducted informal participant observations and took fieldwork notes about my interactions with people involved in the sports industry (government and commercial), as well as individuals in the academic community, for example, physical education teachers and schoolteachers in both traditional and international school settings. I encountered many new friends as I participated in spontaneous activities of play such as tennis matches, pickup basketball games, and exercise at local recreation facilities.

Through these encounters, I was able to understand better how and why people are engaging with sport and for what purpose.

Through the use of ethnographic methodologies of interviews, observant research, and fieldwork notes, and by embedding myself in the Chinese sport and academic culture, I gained valuable insights into whether the concept of the student-athlete can exist in Chinese society. Though my interviews and fieldwork this study brings into focus potential solutions to the problem of post-retirement, highlights the difficulties associated with reintegration into society for Chinese athletes, and showcases the changing process that athletes who stay in the privatized system can expect as they try to integrate formal education into their athletic training routines. In the process of collecting data, I become an advocate for social justice and building a foundational conversation about how elite athletes in China can construct more substantial human capital to pursue opportunities both inside and outside of sport once their careers are finished.

Data Analysis

With the fieldwork and interviews complete, as well as translated and transcribed into word documents, the original recordings of the interviews were destroyed. The final edited versions of the interviews represented the data collected, and the research analysis commenced. I read the transcriptions of the interviews many times over to obtain an understanding of the participants meaning. My initial task in analyzing the data was to identify units of meaning (Cote Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993) that were specifically related to the educational and sport experiences of my participants. Four major conceptual themes emerged, which were outlined in Chapter 2, 1) traditional vs. neoliberal 2) development systems 3) human capital, and 4) whether the combination of sport and education was occurring. After establishing the significant themes through reading the entirety of all the interviews, pertinent statements were identified and labeled

in each of the interview transcripts. The meaningful comments were first divided according to theme one, and whether it described a) a more traditional state-sponsored approach, or b) an approach taking place in a changing neoliberal commercial sports market. After dividing the statements into these two groups, they were subsequently reorganized and recoded as 1) value statements, 2) development systems, 3) human capital, and 4) the combination of education and sport. Finally, for each thematic grouping, the statements were once again organized using inductive and deductive reasoning/coding. An inductive approach was adopted utilizing open coding (Thomas, 2006), then deductive reasoning utilizing a priori, thematic coding (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) was conducted to build a conceptual framework to identify athlete advancement issues and experiences. In this final deductive process, the significant comments were organized into subthemes that allowed for a narrative to emerge. They were later used in Chapters 5 and 6 to organize the data and tell the story of the educational experience of elite athletes.

The end result is not a linear path from A to B, but rather a messy decomposition of living stories and shared experiences tethered to theoretical foundations that shift with the path of the research. The data is used as a way to conceptualize the many intersections that take place during an athlete's career development, and the forces, influences, and determinants that shape the developmental environment of the athlete, which ultimately affects the educational trajectory of the athlete as they transition into, through and out of sport. It was not possible to label or place a single participant into one camp or the other, as someone who thought the student-athlete existed or didn't exist. Often throughout the interviews, the participants moved between spaces, the traditional and modern systems, and had much to say about the past, present, and future. The

analysis merely provides a framework for commentary and an organization of viewpoints that showcase rich contextual elements of the data and allows for a narrative to arise.

A Critical Ethnography of Sport

Using the approach often applied by my departmental cohort, which was extensively outlined in the prelude of this dissertation, the following chapters are a critical autoethnography of sport. The project can be surmised as a "living body of thought," and allows the story to be interwoven with theoretical frameworks, where the theory is not static, but rather a dynamic symbiotic relationship that explains the nuances of experience and the happenings of a culture, (Jones, 2016). This project compounds time, politics, and history as I live between worlds, the US and China, and aim to disseminate knowledge about the socio-cultural experiences of one another's sporting experiences. My research would not be possible without the support of my participants and without being invited into space where I chose to immerse myself.

Through my line of questioning and the extensive time I spent in China, in Chapters 5 and 6 I present our stories about the educational and athletic backgrounds of elite athletes through critical stakeholders in China, and what they believe to be the past, present, and future situation in China regarding combing sports with formal education. Their responses provided insights, which covered how sports and education have tangled throughout history. They described government policymaking that shapes party rhetoric and directs the organizational structure of its education and sports institutions. The policy thus affects the actions of conduits within those institutions such as coaches and teachers. Coaches and teachers help to inform parents as they make pivotal decisions regarding their children's athletic and educational developmental pathways. Through our stories, the research details the barriers to integrating

sport and education in China, as well as how the sports industry has changed to allow for the education and athletic field to intertwine.

Chapter 5 will describe the educational experience of elite athletes through traditional characteristics, values, and elements of the Chinese society and through the purview of the state-sponsored development sport system. Chapter 6 will describe the shifting commercial characteristics, values, and aspects of Chinese sport that intersect with the formal education of elite athletes. As I describe the findings, I will also add to the analysis by featuring the central concepts that I outlined in Chapter 2 regarding how elements of neoliberalism, human capital, the development of sports pathways, and interscholastic/intercollegiate sports intersect with the idea of a student-athlete in China.

Similar to Brownell's (2006) chronicle of her sport ethnography, the following chapters are part of Mystory (Ulmer, 1989; Denzin, 2017), and how I engage with ethnographic methodologies within a Chinese cultural context. The impetus of this project begins with my personal lived experience working and living in China. At its core, this project is Mystory, and my emphatic moment that is intersected by historical, social, political, cultural, and structural ideologies (Denzin, 2013). Concurrent with the interviews, I will present my own history as a participant, educator, coach, and researcher within the Chinese sports industry that spans from my first visit to China in 2008 through the present day. My participation in, observations of, and interaction with the Chinese sports industry over the past ten years have informed and provided me with a unique point of view. The question of the Chinese student-athlete is encompassed in my string of memory as I continually re-examine and re-contextualize events in my life to answer the question...Since there is often an education gap for Chinese athletes, are those

involved in the sports industry, adopting the notion of the student-athlete? If so, what are the causes and consequences of this shift?

Through my co-habitation with my Chinese counterparts, I have imparted lessons learned from my studies in the United States to aid in the reforms currently taking place in the sport industry, and in return have been humbled by the thoughtfulness and direction I have received from Chinese colleagues who have taught me about how and where it is possible to implement change in their sports system. It is because of our joint actions, co-creation of knowledge, and our stories that I can present you with findings and analysis of the educational experiences of elite athletes in China.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL VALUE SETS THROUGH STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS IN THE CHINESE SPORT INDUSTRY AND THE SINGLEMINDED MENTALITY

My first time in China was in January of 2008. Unbeknownst to me at the time, I had picked quite the year to get involved in China's sports industry. The Beijing Olympic games were on the horizon, set to open 8.8.2008, a fortuitous date filled with luck and fortune picked by the Chinese government with utmost care. Chinese citizens were galvanized by propaganda filled slogans on how sport would open the eyes of the international community and would finally see China's full potential. With its Olympians' bodies on full display, their 51 gold medals would alter global perception and showcase China's societal and economic strength now and for the foreseeable future.

That year, Howard, a family friend, who previously worked with my father for the University of Texas Women's Tennis Team asked me to come to Guangdong China to help him build a tennis academy at a local facility with the help of the Zhongshan City Sports Bureau. The eight-court tennis facility on land operated by the sports bureau was a sports playground. Every day as I went to practice, a nearby stadium, soccer pitch, ping-pong facility, outdoor basketball courts, and gymnasium surrounded me. It was a small sporting oasis that I called home for a year and provided me with an introduction to the way sport was managed and operated in China. In many ways, Zhongshan felt like home, the hot and humid weather mirrored what I was accustomed to in Texas. The sporting grounds felt familiar too, but there was one stark difference that I would soon come to realize which would send me down the academic rabbit hole that I am currently on.

The Americanized Conception of the Student-Athlete, and My Experience in a Unique System

Since my father was a coach at the University of Texas-Austin, I was socialized into sport through the eyes of being a Longhorn fan. From an early age, I roamed the campus, frequented the various sporting venues, made my way through the corridors of Belmont Hall at Daryl K. Royal (DRK) Texas Memorial Stadium, where my father's office was located. I took in the atmosphere of intercollegiate sporting events by attending American football, basketball, baseball, tennis, track and field events. At the time I didn't realize how unique of a system it was to have athletes (some with professional aspirations) attend a university where they could continue their studies while at the same time as pursuing their athletic passions. In the US, there is a natural pathway of sports development that starts with participation as a youth, and if talented enough, can carry an athlete through to becoming a professional athlete. Smack in the middle of this beginning and ending point of athlete development is interscholastic and intercollegiate sports.

In my youth, I attended public schools, and my introduction to interscholastic sport started in middle school, at Kealing Junior High. While I was in junior high 7-8th grade, I played football, tennis, basketball, and track and field. Middle schools in Austin would hire coaches, organize and form teams, and participate in sanctioned competitions with other schools in district culminating with city championships. Later at Stephen F. Austin High School, the organizational component of sport intensified. There I began to specialize is tennis and completed for the school team. Fourteen sports (football, volleyball, coed cross country, co-ed tennis, coed golf, coed cheer, coed basketball, coed soccer, coed swimming, wrestling, baseball, softball, lacrosse, and

coed track and field) were offered, and all sports competed in district, regional and state competitions against other schools in Texas (Austin High School, n.d.).

Across the US, in conjunction with the education department, associations like the University Interscholastic League (UIL) manage, organize, and run competition platforms for both middle and high schools. In the state of Texas, the UIL dates back to 1910 and has grown into the largest inter-school organization of its kind in the world, and exists to provide educational, extracurricular academic, athletic, and music contests. The UIL establishes administrative guidelines and rules for all activities and sets standards of eligibility that must be met by students to earn the privilege of representing their schools in interscholastic contests. The eligibility standards most often require that a student maintain a baseline grade point average to be able to participate. Other states and many Canadian provinces have similar organizations, but to its credit, the UIL system in Texas is recognized as one of the best. Furthermore, many states have patterned their leagues after the UIL (UIL, n.d.).

Later, upon graduating from high school I continued on my athletic developmental pathway as I transitioned into collegiate sports. I played Division III tennis at Kenyon College in Ohio. Kenyon College offered multiple sports, competed in a conference against schools of similar size and academic cohesion, which fed into regional and national competitions managed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association, as known as the NCAA. In brief, the NCAA is an organizational and competition structure for collegiate sport in the US. The NCAA is comprised of 1,117 colleges and universities, 100 athletic conferences, and 40 affiliated sports organizations. College presidents, athletic directors, coaches, faculty athletic representatives, compliance officers, conference staff, academic support staff, sports information directors, and health and safety personal are all a part of ensuring the rules and regulations set forth by the

NCAA are followed to provide levels of equity in its competition structures and eligibility process (primarily based upon maintaining amateur status, as well as, a baseline grade point average). Nearly half a million college student-athletes from all over the world are in the NCAA across three divisions. (NCAA, n.d.). The NCAA often acts as a direct pathway into professional sports organizations such as Major League Baseball (MLB), National Football League NFL, National Hockey League (NHL), and the NBA, which drafts players into its leagues, many of the athletes come directly from NCAA affiliated universities and colleges.

For me, interscholastic sport was normalized, I didn't know any better, and I thought that everyone grew up participating in sports at schools' settings. Interscholastic and intercollegiate sports are built into the US culture, and it is a large part of identity formation, centered on community, traditions, belief systems, and rituals (Satterfield & Godfrey, 2011). For athletes born in the US, there is a development pathway for aspiring athletes that is integrated into the education system, starting with middle schools, through to high school, into college sport, and for the select few continue on to a professional career. It wasn't until I arrived in China that I truly began to understand the intricacies of the US system and recognize how distinctive a system that I had been indoctrinated. Only then did I start to question the differences between global systems of sport, and in particular, the case of China.

My Introduction to China Sport, and Diverging Values Systems of East-West

While in Zhongshan, I worked as a tennis coach for 12 athletes, the majority of whom were between the ages of 14-22. Many of the athletes I worked with were previous members of China's elite government sport system and had been recruited to join city and provincial teams. For one reason or another, those athletes left their government training centers or had been let go due to their lack of positive results in competitions. The players had to find alternative outlets to

continue training. My friend Howard, who at the time was traveling to domestic and international tennis competitions, invited players to make Zhongshan their new training base. They paid a small fee to Howard for coaching, as well as for room and board that he arranged at a nearby apartment. The players were keeping their hopes and dreams of becoming professional athletes alive.

Our training schedule consisted of six days of practice. Monday-Friday, we had two sessions a day, morning and afternoon, and on Saturday, we had a session in the morning. Each training session generally lasted three hours and included a warm-up routine, technical drills, structured play, and fitness. In total, the players spent nearly six hours a day on the court playing tennis. It was a far cry from the usual two hours of training, four to five times a week that I had been accustomed to growing up. I didn't understand why the Chinese players trained so long, leaving little time for other pursuits, mainly education. If they were training this much when did they have time to go to school, did the athletes I coached even go to school? Why weren't the players trying to balance both sport and school like I had done growing up? Most importantly, if their professional tennis aspirations didn't come to fruition, did they have a plan B? What would they do if they didn't make it?

This daily training routine that I was a part of in Zhongshan, which I found both laborious and somewhat monotonous sparked my curiosity into what the significant differences were between the US and Chinese sports system, and has been driving my interest into why elite Chinese athletes seemed to have very little time for anything other than sport. As Jones, (1999, p. 17) noted, "To understand the contextual position of sport in China—its Chineseness, demands a much fuller awareness of Chinese culture conditions and values." Chen and Chen (2016) argue that, "to adequately understand youth sport in China, it is important to have some appreciation of

the social construction of the Chinese family, especially the traditional values and ideology that underpin social life in China." (p. 133). Little did I know that there was a strict divide between China's educational and athletic system and that traditional notions of success in Chinese society had roots grounded in the idea of complete devotion to one activity.

The Pressure of China's Formal Education System, and the Scholar > Athlete

In China, there are currently 1.38 billion people inhabiting the country. This staggering number of people creates multiple issues when planning policy, building systems and institutional infrastructures, and delivering programs and projects that support the development, growth, and stability of its citizens. It creates a very competitive culture in which Chinese citizens are thinking about individual growth opportunities to raise their overall standard of living and the ability to climb the social hierarchy.

Since 1977 the most direct pathway to upward mobility in China has come from success in the formal education system, which is rooted in a test-based examination system called the National College Entrance exam or the *gaokao*. "As a merit-based test, the *gaokao* builds on the centuries-long tradition of the *Keju*, a civil service exam used to vet the eligibility of academicians to serve as officials in imperial China. In 1952, shortly after the PRC came into existence, its successor, the *gaokao*, was introduced as a meritocratic route to academic and social advancement" (Gu & Magaziner, 2016). Suspended during the Cultural Revolution and reinstated in 1977, the *gaokao* has become the key indicator of one's ability to improve their social mobility in society and create a path toward a more stable and lucrative future. A high score on the *gaokao* is seen as the key to success in Chinese society and has long been the deciding factor for admission into China's stratified higher-education system. Admission into a top-tier institution such as Peking University or Tsinghua University is critical to students' long-

term prospects and can lead to valued jobs such as an elite civil servant or with a high-powered corporation. Those with a lesser score will be tracked into one of China's lower-tier universities that often come with the consequences of lower quality education and being ill-prepared for the labor force and difficulty finding good jobs (Gu & Magaziner, 2016).

The immense pressure placed on children to succeed on the *gaokao* has manifested itself into highly regimented daily schedules filled with academic pursuits and countless hours spent studying. Athlete 1 from Shanghai recalls her friends' struggles, "I heard that my former classmates were all very stressed in high school, they would go to bed at 2 a.m. wake up at 6 a.m., some students worked so hard, but still failed to get into a good university. If you lose one point in the college entrance exam, your ranking will fall back 1000 times. The pressure is so great." Government Official 4, who works in Nanjing, echoes that sentiment and states that "In all off China everyone is working hard. There are so many people and so much competition, and you cannot miss one opportunity. Citizens in China cannot accept the idea of letting a single opportunity slip by, one point on the *gaokao* will change your entire life."

The emphasis on the National Testing System has forced many parents into valuing academics over all other activities, including sport, and has led many to the belief that scholarly pursuits are of the utmost importance. A famous Chinese idiom summarizes this point nicely saying, "All pursuits are of low values, only studying books is high" (*wanban jie xiapin weiyou dushu gao*). China's traditional cultural values and ideology for academics and sport are at polar ends of the spectrum. Traditional educational doctrine adopted by Chinese families supports that, "the main objective for children is to get good academic results as a means of achieving social status" (Chen & Chen, 2016, p. 133). Statements and values such as this have led to a broadly held cultural believe that academics are more important than sport. Chan and Lo (1992) describe

that many parents typically regard participation in physical education and sport more broadly as a component of play and leisure and not an intrinsic part of the educational process. As Parent 13 from Guangzhou described, “My friends and colleagues, very few support children to participate in sports too much because they think it will affect their learning, there is an old Chinese saying, which says to be a scholar is to be the top of society.” This type of thinking has led to a targeted and single-minded approach to educational development in China.

Single-Minded Devotion to Academics

The highly competitive nature of the *gaokao* has led many Chinese citizens to take a narrow approach to youth development, which has manifested itself into a society that values specialization, single-minded devotion to one activity, and to indulging large amounts of time and resources in becoming the best at that activity. In the case of many Chinese citizens, the best use of their children’s time is to focus solely on academics. With the sights of the majority of Chinese citizens set on *gaokao* success, full attention becomes placed on formal education as academics have become the gold standard for creating a better standard of living.

“Due to the time and devotion required to succeed, the current competitive examination-oriented education system in China precludes students from pursuing other time-intensive activities, such as training for professional competitive sports” (Zhang, Chin & Reekie, 2018, p. 3). Many parents that I spoke to voice their concerns about allowing their children to pursue an activity other than academics. Parent 5 from Beijing said, “I have a lot of friends that because of the *gaokao* don't think they have enough time for their kids to play sports. For example, before the final exam of the semester, they have to do hundreds of tests. They think if you go out to play soccer for two hours and their classmates do not, their score will suffer compared to other students.” Parent 9 from Tianjin mentioned, “Our major concern in China is that the majority of

the kids need to go to college or university through the Chinese system, which is very, very competitive. Many parents don't want their children to spend a lot of time in sport. In the three years of high school leading up to exams, the kids need to work extremely hard if the kids are going to pass the local *gaokao* test. Many people fear that if they spend too much time on sports training, they will not be able to score well to enter the ideal university. So that is the main conflict." When investigating potential factors for the imbalance, cultural biases regarding the value of sport were identified (Chen & Chen, 2017). This cultural bias has caused a strict divide between the education and athletic fields and led to developmental methods for scholars and elite athletes to be seen as separate and divergent pathways. Unlike the US, the number of children in China who purse elite athletics while engaged in formal academic learning is few and far between.

The Division Between Formal Education and Sport, and the Athletic Stereotype in China

While there are physical education classes in China's traditional school system, and even though physical fitness is viewed as an essential part of a child's moral foundation, some would argue that the amount of time allocated for physical activity has become marginalized. The ever-increasing point of emphasis is on the academic curriculum and success in the classroom. Multiple parents that I interviewed addressed these concerns, stating that teachers discouraged their children from participating in sport. Often, time that was supposed to be allocated for physical education classes was usurped in favor of ensuring that students did not fall behind in their academic subjects. Parent 4 from Anhui Province says, "When my daughter was enrolled in traditional schools, some of her teachers did not allow her to play outside or play sport, they discourage my daughter from playing sport. She thinks my daughter should only spend her time

focusing on the homework. You have to do everything the teacher tells you to do and not what you want to do."

In some extreme cases, children who are perceived not to study well are cast aside and slowly pushed out of the formal education system by school administrators and teachers, forcing them toward an alternative learning environment, and sometimes toward sports. Athlete 9 from Shanxi Province recalls, "In school, I don't study well. I had bad habits, and my teachers didn't try to improve them. They didn't support me. They just wanted to push me out and kept ridiculing me, 'when are you going to leave' they would ask. Some kids would be scared of not doing the homework, but I just rebelled. So, my parents supported me to leave school and pursue sports instead."

Stories like this complicate matters, and there is a general perception that children who are tracked toward athletic pursuits are less gifted academically. During my time in China, I encountered multiple athletes who self-identified as such. Athlete 10 from Shenzhen said, "in primary school, my teacher was always discouraging me from becoming an athlete, I think people look down on athletes." Athlete 2 from Chongqing said, "They make us feel this way, they look down at us, and tell us that we cannot study well." Athlete 5 from Nanjing said, "Chinese people think that children who focus on sport are not very smart, only have strong muscles, but no brainpower. They think our only ability is in sports, and that we can't study well. It's prejudicial." Stereotypical notions such as this skew the narrative and push talented athletes toward a life dedicated to sport instead of the classroom.

Furthermore, without a dedicated place for organized sport or formalized teams inside many of China's traditional schools, children who show aptitude and talent in sport-related activities must find an alternative environment to pursue their athletic interests. Chinese parents

grapple with the ever-prevalent cultural belief that education and sport are mutually exclusive activities, and academics and athletics cannot be engaged in at high levels during the same time. Families must decide at a young age which field, sport, or education, they want their children to practice. Coach 8 from Wuhan, Athlete 6 from Qingdao, and Government Official 4 from Nanjing summarizes the situation nicely, “That's the Chinese method and mindset. People in China think, if you go to school you are a student…if you play sports, you are an athlete, it is that black and white, there is no neutral.”…“It is different in China. You can only choose one because of the formal education system.”...“There are only two ways in China, one way you can study and normal, the other way is to be an athlete. We want to combine, but it is not easy.”

Regardless of one's situation, whether it is a fear of losing your status in society due to the intense pressure of China’s examination system, or poor perceived study habits and academic ability, or for others a proclivity, interest, and talent in sport; within China’s traditional structures and institutions, there is seemingly little opportunity to pursue both academics and athletics. Children in China are either tracked to an academic pathway or an athletic career. In creating a strict divide and two separate divergent paths for athletic and education development, the traditional Chinese mentality has created preconceived notions of the role academics and sport have in their society, and what it means to be a student versus what it means to be an athlete. Quite succinctly, in its traditional form, the China educational system and the sports system are two independent systems. The lack of integration of sports and teams into the formal school system has created a divide and forced those who excel in athletics to be recruited into specialized sports schools called *tiyu xuexiao* ‘spare time sports schools’ which forms the foundation for China’s *juguo tizhi* system, otherwise known as state-supported sport system.

The Government Sports Development System: Recruitment, Training Conditions, Leadership Expectations, and Athletic Achievements.

Since 1956, China's government-run elite sport system has systematically produced thousands of elite athletes, many of whom have gone onto successful careers as professional athletes competing domestically, internationally, and in the Olympics. Overseen by the SGAS, China's centralized management system for sports development uses provincial and local bureaus to channel adequate financial and human resources to support elite sport to win glory for the nation. The administrative and management systems function to improve the level of elite sport through a unique selection and training system (Hong, Wu & Xiong, 2005). The selection and training system employed by SGAS is a pyramid of development that creates a linear pathway into and through toward the highest level of success, the National and Olympic teams. At the base of the pyramid are China's spare time sports schools, which lead to city teams, province teams, national teams, and at the pinnacle, the Olympic team. While the centralized sport systems' primary objective is to ensure the development of elite athletic performance, the state also assumes an obligation to care for the basic and fundamental needs of its athletes, including their formal education. However, as athletes move through the system on a trajectory toward the national teams, the time, attention, and care placed on formal education slowly subsides.

As a former Head Men's and Women's Tennis Coach for Hebei Province from 2011-2014, I was an active participant in the government-sponsored sport system. I was tasked to train Hebei's athletes and produce winning results for the province sports bureau. During my time on the job, I was able to observe firsthand the development system, its training process, and the overall effect on the formal education of my athletes. In the following sections, I will outline the

transitions that elite athletes make on their developmental journey, and with corresponding interviews and evidence describe what life looks like for the athletes who make it their mission to produce winning results for the glory of the nation.

Life in China's Spare Time Sports Schools and Recruitment into the Tiyu Xuexiao

In 2013 SGAS determined that there were 51,000 total athletes on national (557) and provincial (50,532) teams (General Administration of Sport, 2013). If you include the base of the pyramid, China's spare time sports schools, where the majority of the young athletes get their start; in 2009 SGAS estimated that there are over 450,000 registered athletes training at one of the over 3,000 sports schools in the entire government administered system (General Administration of Sport, 2009). This includes all classifications of athlete from the lowest grade 5 to international elite athletes. The majority of the lower classified athletes (grade 3-5) are children who come to the athletic focused schools before the age of nine. Some children are tracked toward sport due to a previous family sporting lineage, some children show early interest and talent, and others may be having difficulties in their academic pursuits and decide there is a more stable future in sport. Children, who show a proclivity for sports talent, are identified and recruited by local coaches and physical education (PE) teachers from area competitions. At this time, parents are faced with a decision to embark down a path of athletic development.

Government Official 2 from Nanjing, also a former athlete herself, outlined the possible entry points of athletes into the spare time sports schools, "Sometimes parents force their children to do sport. In my time, I had no choice, I was selected because of my height and was taller than others in the countryside. Now it's a little different, there are two ways of being an athlete in China, 1st, against the parent's wishes, because they like sport more than school. 2nd, the parents find that their child has some gift in sport and support their children." Another

method identified by Coach 6 from Hunan Province was he, and other coaches would go to local competitions to scout for talent, and then try to convince the families to register for the sports school. Eight of the athletes I interviewed were selected in this manner, and the majority had entered the spare-time sports school before or around the age of nine.

Since China has a nine-year *Compulsory Education Law* that requires and provides all citizens with a fundamental education, all athletes who attend spare time sports schools must also take formal education classes as part of their daily regimen. The spare-time sports school system consists of both resident and non-resident options. Non-resident athletes train in the afternoons after their academic courses and are considered the most entry-level of the state-sponsored system. Intermediate athletes who progress into the residential program are provided advanced training, free room and board, and formal education classes.

At the sports schools Athlete 3 from Heilongjiang Province and Athletes 4 and 5 from Nanjing, recalled using the mornings for formal education classes and then training in sports in the afternoons. Generally, their course work would consist of basic courses such as Chinese, Math, Politics/History, and English. Government Official 1 from Jiangsu says, "Every teacher has national teacher certifications, and is qualified according to state regulations. But the athletes' formal education standards are different from ordinary students, in terms of the content and difficulty of the material." And as Parent 6 from Guangzhou alluded, "the cultural education your son or daughter receives at spare time sports schools will not be comparable to the education most children receive at the normal schools." A typical day for the resident spare time sports athletes (ages 6-12) that I observed while in Hebei Province was early morning workouts from six to seven a.m., followed by breakfast, academic classes from eight a.m. to twelve p.m., lunch, and then afternoon training of three to four-hour blocks. In the heavy competition season,

I would sometimes see athletes training well into the evening, before finishing their day with a ten p.m. lights out and curfew check by their coach.

As mentioned earlier, many athletes enter the spare time sports system before the age of nine and generally stay in this program until they have completed their nine years of compulsory education. Despite receiving nine years of primary and secondary education, the athletes, parents, coaches, and officials that I spoke with all mentioned that the quality of their formal education is marginalized due to intense periods of athletic training. Upon completing their nine years of compulsory schooling, athletes approximately the age of thirteen years are re-evaluated, and are either selected to join provincial teams or asked to leave. "Of those young athletes who are not selected for the provincial sports team, some return to normal school to carry on with their studies, while others stay in the sports school until they enter the sports academy where they will get technical, secondary, or relevant certificates when they pass the exams" (Ling & Hong, 2014, p.645). According to Zhang et al. (2018), less than five percent of athletes who enter spare time sports schools will be evaluated as having sufficient potential for selection by a professional team. Ling and Hong (2014) estimate only 12 % of young athletes are selected for provincial programs. The fact remains that those who are not selected into the next level, leave at a significant disadvantage in academic progress compared to their non-athlete counterparts due to the emphasis placed on sport during these formative years.

Provincial and National Training Centers

For those athletes who are selected onto provincial and national teams, the state takes a more substantial role in the development of its athletes. Government Official 1 from Jiangsu Province says, "The State system plays an important role in producing athletes who can excel in domestic and international competitions. In China, athletes are nurtured by the state, which

provides food, clothing, housing, transportation, and living expenses for them, so they serve the country and win honor for the country." Due to the increased state support, athletes who remain in the system must allocate even more time toward training. They are now seen as professional athletes whose job is to compete for their respective province and work toward improving their skills in hopes of being selected for the national team. In addition to basic room and board, the province and national organizations provide the player with a salary, are given advanced coaching, and subsidizes the cost and expenses of traveling to competitions.

For athletes who transition from the city teams onto provincial and national teams, they spend a decidedly significant portion of their day practicing their respective sports. The typical training schedule for provincial and national level athletes consists of six days a week of training, often upwards of six to eight hours a day. The most agreed-upon weekly training schedule from interview respondents, was practice Monday through Friday, twice a day, and once on Saturday morning. Depending on the level of the athlete and province they were registered, time was set aside three mornings a week to go to formal education classes, which are held on-site at the provincial and national training centers. Athlete 8 from Jiangsu Province said, "I take cultural class half a day, three classes a week," while Athlete 7 from Guangzhou says, "In China, you have provincial and national teams, we sometimes train up to 8 hours a day, which leaves little time for studies."

When I first arrived in Hebei, the tennis players I worked with did not attend any classes. Unaccustomed to the Chinese system, I questioned the leaders of our team as to why the athletes did not have an opportunity to attend class. The *lingdui* (leader of the sports group) explained that training was their job and because their results were not good enough, so they would need more time to practice. I told the leadership that I thought the amount of time spent practicing was

sufficient and that the athletes could use time in formal education classes to rest their bodies, would help make their minds more flexible so that they could impart new strategies, and most importantly be engaged in English classes to improve the communication process between myself and the players. The leader reluctantly agreed, but the arrangement only lasted a short time. I soon found out that many of the players were not going to class or not doing their schoolwork or they used the class time to sleep. Conversely, once our competition schedule ramped up, and proximity to the National Games drew closer, complete and total emphasis was placed on preparing their bodies for the impending competitions.

In China, individual coaches and the sport center leaders wield a lot of power in setting the daily schedules of the athletes. Depending on the priorities of the leaders or based upon the directives of the province/national sports center, the athletes' access to formal education will vary. I spoke with Official 3 from Heilongjiang, who mentioned, “Currently our training center doesn't require cultural education classes, as long as they have completed their nine-year compulsory education certificate.” Figures from Yu (2007) show that in the Guangxi Province team, 84.7% of athletes spend at least six hours of training, and 82% spend only one to two hours studying while 11.1% spent no time at all. Other province teams follow similar patterns as Jilin Province was shown as spending only 23.1% time studying compared to training, allocated only 10% of its budgetary funds on athlete education, and was without an individual department that cared for the athletes’ education (Yang, 2009).

It is important to note that provinces like Hebei, Jilin, Heilongjiang, and Guangxi are more remote, which might factor into budgetary considerations and the type of resources they can provide to their athletes. From my observations, provinces such as Jiangsu and other territories that house tier-one cities generally support the education of the athletes more fully and

provide approximately three half-days for educational classes. That being said, athletes who progress to the national teams are subject to even more training time and less education. Evidence from Xu and Xue (2011) found that 84% of national organizations athletes studied less than five hours a week, and 48 % had received no formal education or class instruction for more than a year. The general consensus within the state-sponsored sports system is that once an athlete reaches the provincial and national level, then the majority of their time will be apportioned to training athletically, and much less time will be spent pursuing a formal education. The power lies within the provincial training centers, the leaders, and its coaches to interpret and implement policies of the SGAS. Because the emphasis remains so clearly on producing winning teams, the education of the athletes is slowly siphoned as athletes progress up the developmental pyramid.

Coaches and Leadership Expectations, Conditions of Being an Athlete and Results Orientated Achievement

At the provincial and national levels, athletes are signed to formal contracts and, at that point in time, are considered employed by the state to improve their athletic skills and obtain favorable results for province and country. The leadership and management systems that surround the athletes are also stewards of the land. They too are tasked with the role of providing the necessary resources needed to be competitive in national and international sporting contests. The expectation to produce results has been rooted in the state-sponsored system from its inception. “The national ambition was to catch up with the Western capitalist world through modernization. Chinese sport played an important role in stimulating the nation's enthusiasm and motivating people towards modernity” (Wei et al., 2010, p. 2388). The international success of its athletes would bring a nationalistic and patriotic pride to its citizens and would be a symbol of

progress. The *juguo tizhi* system allocates the best of its limited resources to the intensive training to its elite athletes to support this mission. For the majority of elite athletes in this system, sport, not education, is the priority and remains so today.

As athletes move up the pyramid of athletic development towards professional status, single-minded devotion to sport becomes apparent. “All elite athletes have to focus on full-time sports training. They train for at least eight hours a day, six days a week” (Ling & Hong, 2014, p. 645). The majority of their time becomes placed on practice, training, and competitions, and virtually no formal education past the government required nine years of compulsory studies. Athletes, coaches, and leaders alike are focused on bringing home gold medals. Government Official 1 from Jiangsu says, “The Coach will pay attention to the education of the athletes, but it will not exceed the emphasis on training, because they must achieve a good performance.” While Official 3 from Heilongjiang describes it as a systematic issue, “The leadership requires athletes to get certain results, and they believe it to be unless to focus on cultural education, only on the performance of sport.”

At times athletes construe the institutional directives as not caring / not looking out for their overall interests as Athlete11 from Beijing says, “I must trust the sports bureaus and coaches to take care of me and do what is in my best interest, but they only care about the sport. My parents only see me once a year or twice, so I must take care of myself. The coaches only want success from gold medals. The coaches don’t encourage the students to go to school, they only worry about the sport.” Athlete 1 from Shanghai describes that, “Some of the high school players on the team had to go to classes, but the coaches didn’t want them to go, they thought it was a waste of time.” Athlete 5 from Nanjing says, “I think my coach before was very focused on the results. Because he has a lot of pressure to create champions, gold medals, etc. When I

was young my school need me to go to school to study, but the coaches see this as a conflict, and encourage me to train instead of going to class." While this was a common notion explained to me by athletes about their leaders and coaches, it is essential to understand that all parties involved are willing actors in the system and are aware of the expectations before signing contracts to be part of this model of athlete development. Even if coaches and leadership wanted to provide more education to their athletes, the conditions and amount of time needed to perform at an elite level would hinder the ability to spare hours in the day for studying.

During the calendar year, athletes are regularly involved in preparing for and traveling to domestic and international competitions. The single-minded purpose and dedication to one activity requires the athletes and surrounding leadership to place the majority of the time on athlete training. Coach 7 from Xiamen explains, "They play so many games every year and train every day. Coaches and athletes are under pressure. Coaches have competition tasks. Athletes have performance requirements, if they fail to get good performance, we all have to bear the cost." Government Official 2 from Jiangsu says, "We choose to devote ourselves to training. Even if the athlete wants to take cultural education classes, their time is limited since the training is tough, and the frequency of outside competitions disrupts the learning schedule. Especially some athletes must train for a long time to serve the nation. Their learning actually gets more fragmented." Another Official 1 details, "Athletes have many competitions and leads to courses not being finished, they fall behind and don't understand the course material." Official 4 from Jiangsu says, "Our athletes have flexible minds, but they don't have enough energy for learning. For the athletes studying after training or competitions is difficult for them, they are tired, and it is hard for them to get in the right frame of mind."

In the end, athletes in the government system recognize the conflict between training and education, and the need to perform at the highest level. Athlete 5 explains, “As an athlete I have to attend many competitions, and during the years the National Games are held, I have to go outside China for training, so I cannot be enrolled in the normal classes schedule.” Athlete 7 from Guangzhou says, “After practice, I don't have any more energy to study, athletes are tired, and their bodies need to recover. Even if you study, you can’t remember anything, you fall asleep when you study.” Athlete 10 from Shenzhen best summarizes the conflict between sport and education in the state-sponsored system, “We have the salary, it is our jobs to train. We must worry about our athletic results. The government doesn't incentivize us to study. We are provided with the tools to have athletic success. If we get good results, we have opportunities to improve our lives. So why take time to study when all my incentives come from athletic results, there is no reason to push, not a reason to work so hard in studies.” The skills and knowledge athletes spend years acquiring in the government-sponsored system can have a significant impact on future earnings, bonuses, and amenities provided by the state if an athlete produces positive athletic results. Simply said, wining has a direct correlation to the type and amount of human capital accrues and the quality of life an athlete has upon retiring. Ultimately those in the government sports system are driven to produce results in hopes of creating a better standard of living and upward social mobility.

Transitions Out of Sport, Government Subsistence, College Placement, and Performance-Based Human Capital.

Instead of education, government-supported athletes are most focused on utilizing their time for training as well as athletic achievements, and for a good reason. The accumulation of skills, knowledge, resources, and relationships can go a long way in providing the athlete a solid

foundation for success when it comes time to transition out of an athletic career. Becker's (1964/1993) study on human capital is one way to conceptualize how Chinese athletes utilize their capabilities to gain the skills and resources necessary to improve their future livelihood in contemporary society. Becker's idea of human capital is concerned with "the activities that influence future monetary income and one's ability to consume by increasing the resources in people; these activities are called investments in human capital" (p. 11). Human capital analysis assumes that schooling (formal education) raises earnings and productivity mainly by providing knowledge, skills, and a way of analyzing problems" (Becker, 1964/1993, p. 19).

However, in the case of state-sponsored elite athletes, in lieu of schooling, we can substitute the word training as they spend their majority of their careers accumulating athletic-based human capital. By pursuing sports, athletes are opting for a different type of schooling, one that focuses on the body. The acquisition of physical skills will help them obtain enough knowledge and resources within their chosen sport to compete in and win national and international contests, thus providing them increased human capital. The results and athletic achievements that athletes produce with their select set of athletic skills and knowledge has a direct effect on their future earnings potential and the opportunities they receive once their athletic career comes to an end. Liu and Lu (2016) state, "In order to promote competitive sport, the Chinese government developed policies to help retired athletes in obtaining re-employment. It was believed that such policies motivated athletes to achieve better performance because they could get better jobs after retirement" (p. 624).

During their development stage and based upon their results, Chinese athletes are divided into ranks. Athletes who make the province team will have a title no lower than a second-class athlete. Rank goes up from there based upon results, climbing to first-class, national elite

athletes, and international elite athletes. During their career, and depending on their rank, athletes can receive increases in salary, performance bonuses, better accommodations, increases in opportunity and support for travel to competitions and more. Upon completion of their career, an athlete's rank and length of time in the system has a direct effect on retirement compensation and opportunity for re-employment. Ling and Hong (2014) outline that the most common jobs for athletes to obtain (depending on results) are government sport administrators, professional coaches, physical education teachers, returning to universities, working in businesses, media or film, finding jobs abroad, a career in general industry such as manufacturing, and for some unlucky athletes unemployment awaits.

It is a known commodity that the longevity of an athletic career has its limitations and can be cut short by numerous factors, injury, burn out, poor performance (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). while the results-based system of re-employment seems fair on the surface, there are often unforeseen consequences for those athletes whose rank does not reach the upper echelons. Chinese athletes like so many around the world face hardships upon retirement. Some of the athletes I interviewed outlined the potential conflicts. Athlete 8 from Nanjing says, "Athletes who have won the championship or the top three of the National Games will be assigned jobs after retiring. Athletes who do not receive these positions can only choose to be club coaches or schoolteachers Athletes with mediocre performance will be sent off with a bonus after retirement." But as Athlete 3 from Heilongjiang points out, "There are two kinds of retirement compensations including decommissioning fee and settlement fee. Compensation is tied to performance. What's more, the prize money should be taxed. Half of the money turns over to the country. Some athletes can only get fifty or sixty thousand RMB" (approximately 7,000-8,000 USD). Furthermore, as Athlete 5 from Nanjing describes, "Yes, it is true an athlete's futures

depend on their results because if you are champion, the government will provide you a job. But there is only one champion, and most of us will not get high results….for example, me, this is me, I must learn because my sports results are not good enough to get a job from the government." In a result-driven system, Chinese athletes are incentivized to perform to create a better future for themselves, but results are not guaranteed, and neither is obtaining a job once retired.

To further complicate the situation, to build a robust pool of gold medal applicants before the 2008 Beijing Olympic games, China increased the number of athletes in the government system, as well as the amount of resources the state spent on cultivating their development. Unfortunately, local administrations of sport, have suffered, due to "Olympic drainage." Provincial sports bureaus have the responsibility to nurture and train elite athletes for the national teams and reward them when they win medals. Therefore, when Olympic and international champions return home, their provincial sports commissions have to reward the winners with vast amounts of money. Thus, provincial sports bureaus are constantly short of money for sport, for they have already spent most of their budget on training and have nothing left to pay the rewards, wages, pensions, and other costs. This has led to the harsh reality that the government-run sports system is, "able to produce gold medalists but unable to reward and feed them (*duo de qi jinpai, yang bu qi guanjun*)" (Hong et al., 2005, p 525-526).

Furthermore, as Liu and Lu (2016) allude to the quantity and quality of jobs offered by the government cannot satisfy the demands for re-employment. This point is highlighted by Practitioner 2 from Beijing, and Practitioner 3 from Wuhan, "Provincial teams don't have as many benefits or jobs to offer. There are fewer jobs for the government to provide, and the ones who come into the system and leave the system who are 25-30 years old, leaving the system are

wondering what path they should take. Before China had enough jobs to take care of their athletes, but now in the last ten years, not so much. Now that we don't have enough jobs to fill as an athlete, we need to pay attention to the other skills needed to continue having a productive life when you transition out of sport."

Most athletes in China hope at the very least for a job through the methods of re-employment, as it maintains their status inside the government sport system and provides them a stable career with built-in longevity. However, most athletes who come through the system will not be offered re-employment and are left without a backup plan and without the formal education background that can compete with their non-athlete counterparts. Many athletes have made a significant contribution to elite sport development in China, having spent a substantial amount of time accumulating athletic-based forms of human capital, but are unable to adapt to life in wider society because they only have athletic skills and lack sufficient academic education.

In 2002 the SGAS recognized the growing problems associated with athlete re-employment and took action by instituting, *Opinions on Further Improving the Employment and Resettlement of Retired Athletes*, a policy that required the government at all levels to support retired athletes, and to offer them jobs and educational opportunities (Wei et al., 2010). The policy states that relevant departments should formulate preferential strategies and measures for the employment and resettlement of retired athletes, and establish a smooth mechanism for an exit. While the policy outlines incentive-based monetary bonuses, job resettlements, basic welfare, and insurance provisions, it also describes the need for elite athletes to transfer into institutes of higher education. According to the policy, if an athlete places in the top three national games, top six Asian games, and top eight world competitions, they are exempt from

taking the college placement test, and can enroll in specialized classes. It also directs that the MOE and SGAS should actively cooperate to improve the formal education of athletes and build a curriculum that is consistent with athletes' schedules and time demands. In 2010, SGAS re-emphasized the need to enhance the cultural knowledge of athletes with the policy, *Guiding Opinions on Further Strengthening Athletes' Cultural Education and Athletes' Support Work*. It too called on the active cooperation between the MOE and SGAS to improve the cultural education of elite athletes by formulating Joint standards and assessments, alter the curriculum to meet the conditions of being an athlete, and once again reiterated the need for athletes to receive forms of higher education to improve their ability to function in the job market upon retirement.

Policies such as these signal a shift in government attitudes toward job placement and recognize the need for athletes to find employment of their own, through the avenues of the growing sports industry in China. The SGAS believes that by providing training and sports specific knowledge through their provincial and national sports centers that athletes should be equipped with the skills necessary to capitalize on a booming sports market where citizens placed an ever-growing emphasis on health, leisure and recreational sports. By funneling athletes into institutes of higher education, they would be able to gain the certificates and diplomas needed to obtain stable jobs such as PE teachers, club coaches, physical trainers, and relevant jobs within a commercial sports market. Under this system, not only will athletes gain human capital from their years of training, but they will also be able to supplement that with a formal university degree. However, problems remain as the methods for entry into higher education are once again based upon results, options for higher education outside of sports universities remain limited, and the quality and quantity of schooling the athletes receive is marginalized.

While the SGAS and provincial sports bureaus are on record as supporting the higher education of its elite athletes, there remain fundamental conflicts in ensuring academic opportunities. First, entry into institutes of higher education is based upon results. Those who have better international and domestic competition results are more highly valued by top universities, as elite athletes will compete for the school in an annual university competition. Those who place in the top three of international competition or China National games will receive direct entry into many universities and will not have to complete the usually required entrance examination. Those who do not meet the competition's results requirement will have to take a test and depending on their rank will receive a set amount of points to meet admissions standards. Nanjing 8 describes that "Like myself, I won the national games, so I was guaranteed admission, and was exempt from examination (*mianshi*) when entering college. If the sports score is not good enough, you can only take the exam. The contents of the exam include the cultural exam and the physical exam. You must pass two exams at the same time to enter the university. Athletes failing the exam can only be tested again or retired." The number of athletes who reach the results threshold are few in comparison to the number of athletes in the system. Thus, the majority of athletes must take an entrance examination and hope their formal education background is sufficient for entry in a university.

Which brings me to my second point. Since access to formal education is limited during an athlete's time with the provincial or national team, very few elite athletes have the prerequisite academic knowledge to test into one of China's normal universities. Instead, the majority of the elite athlete will be tracked to a provincial sports university. One might think of China's sports university as a large kinesiology department, supporting degrees in exercise science, coaching pedagogy, sport management, and marketing. However, the social cachet of sports universities

across the broader section of society, much like being an athlete, is looked down upon compared to China's normal universities. As Government Official 2 from Jiangsu told me, "It is estimated that in our province less than 5% of students have chances to go to a non-sports related university. If they do, it is challenging for them to finish school as the athletes don't have systematic cultural literacy classes. That is why most athletes go to sports universities." Only two athletes I interviewed identified as going to a normal university, and both were Olympic caliber athletes who had been admitted based upon their background. Instead, most athletes told me that once admitted into the university, they are relegated to a particular degree based upon their past experiences as an athlete. Athletes 1,2,3,4,6,7,9 10 all described their degree as (*yundong xunlian*) or athlete training, perhaps best equated to a degree in coaching pedagogy. The limited degree options available to athletes track them toward careers as coaches or PE teachers.

Finally, and perhaps most concerning, is the quality and quantity of education the athletes receive once admitted into a university. Athletes generally enroll in university while they are still registered and engaged in training for their respective province or national teams. As Zhang et al. (2018) state, "It is an open secret that a high percentage of elite athletes obtain diplomas without completing the official educational requirements" (p. 4). Most of the athletes and even the government officials I spoke with all acknowledged the fact that athletes enrolled in university virtually in name only. Some mentioned not needing to go to class, only show up for the exams, had a lighter workload or were given more straightforward exams than other students, and generally more engaged in continuing their athletic training for the state. Athlete 10 from Shenzhen summarizes these points saying, "I enrolled in Guangzhou Sport University where I studied sports training, which compared to other majors is easy. I should be in class four days a week, but I didn't go to class; I just got the textbook and studied by myself. Many universities

don’t require you to go to school as long as you play the University Games (competition held once a year amongst China’s higher education institutions) for them, they just pass you in the classes. And you can still get a degree. You might have to take a final test, but it is an easier version of the test. In my university, if you get in as an athlete, you must choose the sports training major.” While Athlete 10 described the normalized pathway for many elite Chinese athletes, I noticed that not all universities or athletes operate in this manner. Some universities adhere to more strict guidelines for admissions and require students to attend class, but in my observations of the system, this is an exception and not the rule. Each individual university can set their own guidelines for how to admit athletes.

However, when analyzing the formal pathways, systems, and human capital that elite athletes receive in the government-sponsored system, it is hard not to view the skills and knowledge they obtain as performance and athletically based human capital. The majority of the skills athletes acquire while in the system are directed toward an athletic-based knowledge, and they retire with careers directed toward continuing in China’s sports industry. Some transition out of sport with a more direct and lucrative path if they have obtained winning results, but those who don't’ leave with fewer options and have less formal education from which to fall back on as they enter back into mainstream society.

From the above findings and analysis, it is possible to make some general assumptions about whether the idea of a student-athlete exists within the government sports system, if there is a balance in acquiring athletic and educational based knowledge, and what the possibilities are for the future.

The Contested Definition of a Student-Athlete in the Government-Sponsored Sport System

Before concluding that the concept of a student-athlete doesn't exist in the government-sponsored sport system, I think it is necessary first to acknowledge that I am working from a culturally different perspective, having grown up and been socialized into the US sports system. From an analytical and comparative purpose, the US and China are working from two very distinct and separate models of sport, as well as two very distinct and different cultural contexts. Based on my research, I identify some fundamental differences and challenges that present themselves in creating a robust formal educational experience for elite athletes who go through China's state-sponsored sports system.

Lack of Cooperation Between SGAS and MOE

First, despite the State Council calling for and directing the SGAS and MOE to formally cooperate in providing a quality formal education program for elite athletes, the two departments have fundamentally different missions and objectives that don't quite align. The MOE directs millions of Chinese students through their highly competitive test centered education system every year. The time, resources, and energy and overall priority in supplying formal education for China's elite athletes are relatively low compared to the host of issues they encounter daily. Within the MOE, the Department of Physical, Health, and Arts Education directs is current priorities, which emphasizes improving the health and physical fitness of its students. Meanwhile, SGAS's foremost goal is to win glory for the country and hoist gold medals in the Olympic years. Once again, the time resources and energy spent on supplying elite athletes with formal education are relatively low in comparison to improving the performance of their province and national athletes. As Government Official 4 from Jiangsu says, "The sports and education departments don't cooperate enough, it is hard to achieve convergence between the

two sides." Coach 7 from Xiamen and Coach 2 from Shenzhen echo this point, "China also has cooperation, but communication is not enough. Their relationship is not very harmonious and close," and, "First and foremost, we need more time to create balance. In China, we have the education bureau, and we have the sport bureau…they are separated. It creates some conflict and one of our political barriers that makes this difficult to overcome." That is not to say there has not been progress or movement in creating better educational conditions for the elite athlete, because there has, and there are plenty of success cases. But the bottom line is there are limits to what each department can do, and without a more closely aligned mission, many elite athletes will leave the system with limited formal education.

Single-minded Dedication and Motivation

Within the traditional education and sport systems, there is underlining belief that one's time and energy must be solely focused on a single activity. As long as the *gaokao* remains the gold standard for improving one's standard of living, many parents will be suspect of allowing and affording their children the time it takes to become an elite athlete. Conversely, the same problem exist in the minds of leaders and coaches within the government sport system who believe that it is challenging to produce an athlete who can compete at the national and international level without making significant sacrifices to their formal educations due to the amount of time needed and constraints of traveling to multiple competitions during the year. As Parent 6 from Guangzhou says, "China does not attach enough importance to dual excellence in sports and school. Physical training and exam orientated education are fundamentally conflicting in terms of people's concepts of time and arrangement." Furthermore, athletes are not incentivized by the results they receive in the classroom, but rather are motivated by obtaining top results that for them will lead to a more substantial payoff both monetarily and also from the

perception of creating a pathway for social mobility. Athlete 8 from Nanjing makes this point nicely saying, “I think it should be possible to combine sport and education, but it will take some time. According to the development of China's national conditions, there is no way to achieve this, because China's national conditions are different from those of foreign countries. China is the country that pays for the training of athletes. Foreign athletes make their own money, and the system is different. China has no way to combine sports with education for the time being. Now many parents are too conservative in thinking and think that children should read books. They think that children who practice sports are people without cultural knowledge. Therefore, there is no way to realize the combination of education and sports.” However, despite the single-minded mentality and incentivized motivation to succeed in a result-oriented system, elite athletes are increasingly being allowed to use higher education to ease the burden of transitioning out of sport to find a way into the workforce.

Connecting Athletes to Higher Education and Jobs in the Commercial Sports Industry

There has become an increased effort to support athletes who are coming toward the end of the careers by linking them to China’s institutions of higher education. Elite athletes in the government sport system have an opportunity to utilize their unique talents and skillsets to gain access to some of China’s best sports universities. Here they are provided with a chance to refine their skills and find creative ways to mold their talents into a productive career in the sports industry once their playing careers are finished. With an increasing emphasis by the Chinese government to grow the mass sports market, especially within areas of health, leisure, recreation, and tourism; there are more opportunities than ever before to find a means of self-employment and prosperity through the commercial sports market. Sports universities can become a place for growth, where elite athletes can obtain certifications, diplomas, and build relationships. In doing

so, athletes will expand their human capital, elongate their ability to work, and improve their social conditions. However, it is of the utmost importance that China curtails access to obtaining a degree without putting in actionable time and effort. As Government Official 4 from Jiangsu says, “If you get good competition results, it is known that you can enter into a university without taking a test. But many athletes who are enrolled don't have to go to class, only cram for tests, or get materials from classmates. I think the best way is to only allow students to enroll who actually enroll full time in school, and put time into their studies to create real knowledge. We can’t let out universities give away diplomas for nothing.” Parent 3 from Shanghai says, “Yes, they will get a certificate diploma easily, but it doesn't make sense because it teaches the wrong values, it shows that you can have something for nothing.” Unless leaders at both the provincial sports bureaus and universities take steps to ensure that athletes complete the requirements for a degree, it will devalue the actions they have taken to make this a viable pathway for success. It is a question for the leadership in how they want to proceed.

A question for the state, its leadership, actionable results, and shifts in ideology

This leads us to the final point in this chapter. There has been movement, progress, and steps taken in the right direction to improve the cultural education of elite athletes in the government-sponsored sports system. Policies have been outlined. Leadership is aware that its athletes give a great deal of time to the state in pursuit of gold medals and glory. In return, they should provide an actionable pathway to success once their playing careers are finished. Elite athletes who come through the government system must feel that the time they spent, and the years they spent training equates to a long and stable career. Whether that career is in government sport through job allocation or outside through a commercial market, what matters most is that retired athletes have a continued sense of purpose and a way to make a living in the

broader avenues of society. There doesn't need to be a complete balance between sport and education, but athletes must know how to leverage their unique skill set and move into a new chapter of their lives with a positive mindset and optimism for their future prospects. Many interviews that I conducted left me with the unparalleled conclusion that athletes put their faith and trust in the state to continue to improve the educational conditions of its elite athletes. However, if conditions do not improve, future generations of families with aspiring elite athletes will look for alternative developmental pathways for their children. As one former athlete and Olympic gold medalist with whom I spoke said, "Despite all my success and glory, and gold, my life was still in shambles when I retired. I didn't know where to go, what to do, and how to continue my life after sport. My entire identity was as an athlete, and upon finishing, I was lost. I didn't have a plan, and my support ran dry. I needed a better education to reintegrate myself back into society. If the state does not reform the system, I will not let my daughter skate in the future."

Scholars such as Hong (2004) have been outspoken and highly critical of the state-sponsored sport system, calling for reforms and likening the system to one where only those who endure the most hardship can make it to the top, and along the way, children are subjected to a loss of fundamental rights, are exploited, overworked, and deprived of education. As Hong alluded, there are only a select few athletes from a system that houses hundreds of thousands who will make it to the top. The reality is most athletes will leave the system having not reached their hopes or dreams, and without the tools to succeed outside of sport. The apparent neglect of the athletes may lead to further changes and reforms, especially as China's sports industry incorporates and pushes toward an open market system of sport development. As Practitioner 2 from Beijing points out, "It is possible that because China has used so many athletes, has abused

their power, and so many lives are thrown away that this will spur on a new change, and encourage a new system to develop." Which is exactly what is happening. As transnational shifts take place in the Chinese sport industry, new system of athletic development and programming are taking shape, offering new methodologies. Meanwhile, a burgeoning middle class is taking shape in China, with shifting viewpoints and changing ideologies based upon global trends.

As the next generation of Chinese citizens incorporates sports into their lives, they may find new techniques of sport development programs that encourage holistic techniques to combine academic and athletic education. It is necessary to examine what that looks like and how neoliberal and transnational shifts in the sports industry are encouraging innovative programming to offer a viable alternative to the government-sponsored sport system, and whether it is helping to solve the educational gap for Chinese elite athletes.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF SHIFTING VALUE SETS THROUGH STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS IN THE CHINESE SPORT INDUSTRY AND THE NEOLIBERAL GLOBAL EFFECT

Over the past forty years, the development of the Chinese sports industries has reflected specific political, ideological, and policy objectives. The state-sponsored system was designed for a select group of elite athletes to make waves in international competitions. It was believed that success in international competitions would lead to greater international recognition of China's newfound strength and sports policy emphasized building a positive international image of the country (Luo, 1995). Chinese citizens would find in Chinese athletes' international achievements a nationalist rallying cry and a renewed sense of patriotism, which would strengthen their faith in their country's socialist policies (Brownell, 1995). During the same period, as the sports industry lay firmly entrenched as a centralized system, China announced reforms to secure its economic security and reopen to foreign investment and trade. These reforms modernized China's agriculture, industry, education, science, and defense sectors and led to the construction of a market economy. Sport, however, would have to wait several years for commercial and market reforms to be instituted into its political agenda.

The 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games are widely seen as the first games to be commercialized. Sponsorships from large multinational corporations such as Coca-Cola and McDonald's resulted in advertisements and economic profits for the Olympics. The commercial success of the Los Angeles Games encouraged China to infuse its own state sports system with Western capitalistic ideology and stimulated the movement to host the Olympics on home soil (Brownell, 2015). 1995 was a seminal year for China's sports policy as it reflected its motivation

to incorporate market reforms. Four documents were produced by SGAS laying the groundwork for the impending change. While the foundation was laid for future market changes, modifications would ultimately be put on hold until the state-sponsored elite system met its political objectives.

In 2008, China hosted the Beijing Olympic Games, which showcased the world its political, economic, and social growth. Chinese athletes won 51 gold medals, more than any other country. China had finally arrived on the world stage and had entered the era of globalization as a force to be respected. The Beijing 2008 Olympics did almost precisely for China what the Los Angeles 1984 Olympics had done for the United States: reinforce its sports system as an economically driven enterprise. Investment in the sporting infrastructure leading up to the Beijing Olympics, as well as the 1995 policies, created an environment ripe for an emerging sports market, and the shifting ideology was showcased with updated governmental sports policy (Brownell, 2015). Chinese citizens galvanized by the success in the Olympic games equated to an increase in the participation in and spectatorship of sport. China's sports industry was finally on the cusp of the neoliberal movement and was primed for modernization as global market forces slowly created ideological changes to the ways citizens engaged in sport.

Neoliberal Shifts in the Chinese Sports Industry: Policy Amendments and the Health, Physical Activity, Leisure Time, and Consumption of China's Burgeoning Middle Class

As previously seen with other Chinese industries, the sports industry has developed by incorporating transnational forces and neoliberal economies into "socialism with Chinese characteristics." China's sports system reflects how neoliberalism is affecting its society as a whole, as the party dictates how to engage in global markets. For the majority of its citizens, neoliberal changes to China's sports industry is reflected by an increased emphasis on mass

sport. The small select group of China's elite athletes would no longer take precedence, but rather share the stage with a growing group of sports consumers from a broader segment of China's population. The growth of China's sports industry in the twenty-first century is predicated upon developing innovative programming and offerings that align with the shifting values of Chinese citizens.

In the 2014 *Regulations on National Fitness*, China's State Council declared that it was now time to "support, encourage, and promote consumption in the field of physical culture and sport that is commensurate with the living standards of the people, as well as the development of the sports industry" (Tan, 2015, p. 1075). Chinese scholar Jie Zhang perhaps best assesses the contemporary importance of sports in China: as the world economy continues to develop and material living standards continue to increase, the consumption of sport has become an essential element of expenditure in the pursuit of cultural needs. The sports industry has gained more and more attention from the state, society, and the public, and is increasingly seen as the "sunrise industry" of the twenty-first century (Zhang, 2015a, 1089). Also, in 2014 the State Council announced a guideline named *Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Sports Industry and Promoting Sports Consumption*. Among the provisions in the document were to grow the overall scale of the sports industry to $250 B by the year 2025, an increase of nearly 15 times in only ten years. The document also called for an increase in the construction and opening of sports facilities to the public, to ensure that sports activities become a part of daily routines for nearly 500 million people. Furthermore, companies engaging in offering sports activities would be given subsidies and tax breaks to encourage the growth of sport-related programming.

While the numbers and goals seem ambitious for such growth in a short amount of time, in actuality, it is based upon the growth of the Chinese economy and the ability of its citizens to

consume sport and entertainment. In 2008 the average GDP per capita was approximately USD 3,000, compared to USD 6,747 in 2014 (Sheng, 2015). With such a large segment of the population taking notice of the increased scale and scope of the sports market, it is prime to tap into the changing values of its citizens concerning sports. The development of China's sports industry would begin to allocate its resources towards a population that was growing in wealth, middle class, leisure time and that have an increased emphasis on improving their health and physical fitness.

Health and Physical Activity

Significant changes have taken place concerning Chinese citizens' attitudes toward health and physical activity. Economic modernization in China has, on the one hand, made life more productive and more convenient, but it also systematically eliminated a healthy way of life through the import of Western fast foods, automobiles, public transportation, and more sedentary lifestyles (Xiong, 2007). Government Official 2 from Nanjing mentions, "The sports industry is booming, health has more importance now. Businesses are being developed to incorporate this into our daily routines. Too many people have achieved success at the expense of their health." Practitioner 3 from Wuhan, who owns a business that promotes recreational sport, observes, "At the moment the government is trying to promote public health and fitness through building and opening of sports facilities for the general public. Even though my business is privatized, I am provided with certain subsidies from the government because my programs support these ideals." Some of the change in the sports industry has been specifically targeted at China's youth who recently have been susceptible to health risks and a growing obesity epidemic. Athlete 5 from Nanjing mentions, "The government and Xi Jinping, think we need to focus future on our young

children's health because too many children are overweight. So, parents pay more attention to sport and activity for their children."

An ancient Chinese saying goes, "A healthy body through exercise is the origin of a good life". Take *qigong* as an example, a traditional Chinese medicine which dates back 5,000 years, of health maintenance through body movement, heart alignment and centering of breath. *Qigong* and physical activity can thus be linked to longevity and harmony of life (Li, Ericsson & Quennerstedt, 2013). This line of thought is again becoming more pervasive among Chinese as they seek to reduce the pressures of modern life. Health-conscious citizens who are incorporating the elements of fitness, pleasure, and wellbeing to their daily lives have evolved into more opportunities for its citizens to participate in sport (Xiong, 2007). While much of the neoliberal change in the sports industry is directed toward health and increased physical activity, it is essential to recognize that the economic growth of a burgeoning middle class is providing additional time to support participation in sporting activities.

Leisure Time

As the following sections of the dissertation will document, as China's middle class grows, so does their disposable income as well as the amount of time they have to spend on leisure activities Comparatively speaking, since the Maoist era, when people's free time and space was tightly controlled and regulated by the state, Chinese citizens now have much more freedom in the amount of and ways in which they choose to spend their free time. Modernization and steady economic growth have created new conditions. Chinese citizens now have more leisure time due to shorter work schedules, increased public holidays, and labor-saving devices. Sport is linked closely to the mechanism of the market, is an integral part of the commercialization, and is now part of popular culture (Xiong, 2007). Sport and physical activity

are now a common use of one's free time. As Rolandsen (2011) describes the average time for Chinese people's participation in cities rose from 8 minutes a day in 1986 to more than 20 minutes a day in 1998. Sport, which contributes to health, fitness, socialization, and communication with friends, and a release from the daily rigors of modern life has become a more mainstream activity for Chinese citizens to engage in their spare time. For many, participation in sport and physical activity symbolizes an improvement in the quality of life. Changing values toward sport has contributed to the growth of the industry, and the reasons for growth is economic freedom, ability to, and interest in consuming sport.

Consumption of Sport

The open market and economic reforms have led to a remarkable change in disposable income for the Chinese middle class over the past forty years, which has sparked a consumer revolution. The per capita income of Chinese people doubled from 1978 to 1990, increased another 50 percent between 1990 and 1994, and rose again by 32 percent by 2000 (Xiong, 2007). Sporting consumption has proliferated as the younger, affluent, and professional groups demand more recognized brands and more sports entertainment. The yearly expenditure on sport of urban residents rose by more than 3% from 1991 to 2003 (Xiong, 2007, p. 456). With the increase in perceived health benefits from sport and physical activity as well as the increase in leisure time, Chinese citizens propensity to consume sports also increased. Seen as a form of social enrichment and a way to improve one's overall quality of life, sport is no longer a frivolous activity on which to spend money. The enhancement of material and cultural life is the main force driving the transformation of sport. The increasing demands of the Chinese citizens for health and fitness in recreation and consumption reflect their physical, psychological, economic, social, and cultural ambitions in contemporary Chinese society (Xiong, 2007). Transnational and

neoliberal economics, as well as the influence of popular culture from the West, have undoubtedly aided in the proclivity toward sport and spurred the growth of the mass sports industry in China. Chinese citizens interest and habits in sports are going through a period of cultivation and are continuing to be developed.

The twenty-first century should mean the expansion of sporting opportunities for the average Chinese citizen.

> Economic reforms have brought a growing middle class to China and a multitude of citizens who have become consumers of western values, including sport centric attitudes. Western enthusiasm for sport is beginning to invigorate Chinese society in the fields of health, recreation, tourism, and leisure activities. Each of these areas has a place for sports to insert itself into China's future economic development. Chinese citizens now have a place for more autonomy, choice, and free will in their decision-making; so too may their sports industry become increasingly individualized (Haugen, 2016, p. 53).

The indoctrination of neoliberal ideals into sport and the altering of Chinese sporting values extend beyond mass sport but also into elite sport development.

Neoliberal Shifts in Elite Sport Development, Western Ideologies, and Choice of Development Systems, and the Effect on the Integration of Formal Education

While the focus is currently on growing China's commercial sports industry for a mass populace, the neoliberal effect has also altered the way that elite athletes and those who aspire to be elite athletes engage with the industry as they manage their athletic development. Neoliberalism is creating new institutions, altering management structures, and changing developmental pathways by incorporating Western techniques while relying less on government oversight. The national elite sports system is now a mixture of government-run programs and independent academies, both of which provide access and opportunity while vying for China's best athletes.

Many aspiring athletes and their families now have a choice in how they structure their child's sporting development. Some continue to opt for China's state-run system, which I have shown provides stability on the front end and depending on their results can provide stability once athletes retire but can also leave those who don't succeed in a precarious position once their careers are over. However, due to the lack of clear direction, many athletes and their families are choosing to remain independent of the government system as they hope to capitalize on the free market effect of becoming a global sports superstar. Athletes who succeed are in line for substantial payouts and can generate profit from their commercial value. Sponsorships, endorsements, and career earnings can lead to a lucrative lifestyle and allow an athlete to control their destiny rather than be managed by the state-run system.

Take for example, the career of Li Na, once a government-sponsored athlete whose tournament, training schedule, coaches, and earnings we all managed by the state. She eventually successfully lobbied to break away from government jurisdiction. Once in control of her career, she was able to choose how she trained, which tournaments she played, and eventually rose to the number one ranked female tennis player in the world. More importantly, with her international success and two grand slam titles in the French and Austrian Open, she was able to reap the rewards of her market value. For those athletes who succeed, like Na, wealth awaits. Na's sponsorships at the height of her playing career reached upwards of 40 million dollars a year, and in fact in 2017 even after having been retired from tennis for two years she is expected to make 20 million USD in endorsements and sponsorship money from international brands such as Nike, Mercedes, and Rolex (Rossingh, 2017a).

Athletes like Li Na are becoming models for future Chinese elite athlete sport development as they reify the American dream, their "economic and cultural achievements in the

West are symbols of the nation's progress" (Wang, 2004, p. 264). The market-based reforms implemented in the Chinese sports industry now offer a point of contrast to the government-sponsored system.

> While there have been market-based reforms implemented in the Chinese sport system, it still aims to identify exceptional youths to specialize in a particular sport, and then essentially pushes them toward elite-level competition (Wei, et al., 2010). This contrasts with the perception of 'choice' offered by market-based Western economies where perhaps parents with economic means or outside sponsors – non-state actors – hold more sway in determining a child's progress in sport (Bien-Aimé, Jia & Yang, 2018, p.88).

The global influence of sport and its transnational effects are providing the Chinese system with more options and choices for how to structure the development of aspiring youth athletes. As neoliberal ideologies collide with the party-state, China's athletes are required to become new subjects and reorganize their social practices. China's elite athletes must decide which sports system, state-supported or free-market, provide them with the best opportunity to improve their status in society through avenues of social mobility. Increasingly, as traditional models of sport development harbor a gap in formal education, more families are choosing to remain independent of the government-run system, and instead are looking for alternative models of development.

I learned during my year of research in China that one such place that Chinese citizens are gaining information is through the developmental models of the US, where through the buildup of interscholastic and intercollegiate sports, there seems to be more balance and integration between the fields of academics and athletics. For example, Parent 7 from Shanghai mentions, "We need to improve learning efficiency for athletes in China. The US has a model for this type of system; however, China has not conducted this experiment. I hope my child can balance sports and learning. Now with the flow of ideas through sport becoming more open, and with information more widely disseminated, I think this can become a reality in China."

In China, whether it is the unwillingness to incorporate, or inability to find a system that integrates the two fields, Chinese families are navigating the free market changes to China's sports industry to find innovative solutions and new programming that better fits the cultural and contextual needs of their children's development. Thus, the reforms spurred by the rapid commercialization and internationalization of the Chinese sports industry is opening new opportunities while simultaneously muddling preexisting domestic routes to sports development as families struggle to maintain cultural relevance by providing their children with formal education. At the same time, they pursue a potential career in athletics.

The following is a description of how stakeholders in the Chinese sports industry are navigating such challenges, as they search for a path that provides them with an increased sense of human capital, as well as alternative options and opportunities to increase their productivity in Chinese society once they transition away from a career in sport.

The Independent Sports System, and the Development Pathways of Elite Athletes Who Incorporate Formal Education into their Training Regimen

In China, those who aspire to maintain a balance between sports training and formal education face two main obstacles, which were previously outlined in Chapter 5. First, within the traditional school system, there are few opportunities to incorporate highly organized training into the daily curriculum, nor are there many opportunities for structured team play or league competitions between schools. Athlete 6 from Qingdao mentions, "In some regular schools there are extracurricular sports and teams, and you can play for the school. They have clubs and stuff. But once you step into middle school or higher, you don't have time to spend on these kinds of pursuits. The teams in middle school or high school don't do much official practice. There are some opportunities to compete against schools, but it is not a big deal, it is not very organized."

The current changes occurring to sport in the traditional school system are primarily focused on increasing the amount of time in physical activity and improving the quality of physical education classes in schools; however, problems remain. Parent 3 from Shanghai says, “You know there is too much competition between the people in China. They will promote all their time to the cram schools and won't even let them go to the playground, if you have PE lessons they don’t actually let you go, they just make you go to the normal class during that time. The teachers are evaluated on the scores of the students, so they also don't want the students to spend their free time in ways that might affect their academic scores.” Families and students looking for high-level sports training are unable to find it within the traditional school system. Instead, they are often ushered to Chinese state-sponsored spare time sports schools. However, difficulties plague that system as well.

For those who do end up tracked into the government sports system, the second problem lies in that the quantity of formal education is diminished as athletes move up the ranks, and the quality of the education has been called into question. Athlete 10 from Shenzhen says, “Too many kids go into the province team at such a young age, and they move away from their parents, and once they are in that environment, nobody pushes them to study.” Government official 1 from Jiangsu agrees, “It’s tough to be a world champion, and training to become a champion delays formal study. It's a big risk. It's a painful process, and one that doesn’t always equate to future success.” Today many parents struggle with how to support their children’s athletic aspirations while at the same time recognize that entering a provincial or state-sponsored program can come with serious ramifications to their child’s formal education, which could lead to difficulties finding future success in China’s workforce.

Contrary to historical trends and cultural norms, now parents who have improved economic means are increasingly supportive of their child's interests and passion for sport. Despite it being a deviation from the normal mode of academic upward mobility, more parents now than ever recognize the positive benefits that their child can get from participation in sports and thus allow them to follow their desires. Parent 11 from Chengdu says, "I let my daughter decide what she wants to do. If sports interest her, then we will let her choose her pathway. I will guide her at the beginning. Later I will provide her with information, and then she will have to decide what to do and which way to go." Parent 10 from Nanjing echoes that sentiment, "First if she is interested in sports, I will support him. Playing sports is his choice, and I won't force her to make a decision between sports and academics. The most important thing is that she is really interested in it. Secondly, I don't have any expectations that she must be a champion. I should help her develop interests and hobbies."

The difficulty becomes when the child shows more aptitude for sport and has talent. Families must often choose to move beyond the extracurricular nature of the activity toward a more specialized and time-consuming pursuit of elite athletic development. Once again, families are confronted with joining a state-sponsored system that has been shown to disregard a child's formal education, and many of the parents I spoke with are unwilling to allow their child to join a state-sponsored program. Most of the families I spoke with make the determination of what path their child should follow by the age of only twelve. More than half of the parents interviewed showcased some hesitancy in joining the state-run system. Parent 8 from Beijing says, "No, I do not want my son to go to a province team, because they don't care for the child's development, it is lacking rules and discipline, and the parents cannot be there every day to look after their children. If you go to that place, you have to give up your school classes." Parent 2

from Guizhou Province describes, “We don't consider that he will be recruited by the provincial or national team. I want to train him by myself because of the whole national system. Perhaps the nation has a lot of resources, which are beneficial to his career. However, it is hard for my child to stand out. Furthermore, I cannot allow him to give up his education.” Parent 13 from Guangzhou mentions, “If I let my son participate in government-sponsored sport, I have to consider giving up education. I cannot allow this to happen, so we are looking for another way.” Even Government official 4 from Jiangsu recognizes the changing dynamics of Chinese athletic pursuits, “I think the parents have more choices than before. Before, if you want to pursue sport and do it at a high level, you have to go to the government system. But now you have more families that seek other options, like academies or going to the US, they are trying to keep their kids away from the rigors and stress and pressure of the Chinese education system. Especially if you have more money, it allows them to think humanitarian about the development process.”

The neoliberal changes to China’s sports industry are providing more families with choice. As the spread of information and western ideas come into China through neoliberal economies, we see a new formation of systems that are adapting to meet the changing needs of Chinese citizens. Emerging in China is a new system of sport development that provides alternative solutions and programming to allow for individualization. Families can come up with solutions that fit their needs and wants. An area of need for Chinese families is to bridge the education gap for aspiring elite athletes. Families are searching for more flexible options, which allow them to pursue high-level sport while at the same time paying attention to their children’s formal education. The following is a description of some of the alternative methods of sports programming and development systems that current athletes in China employ to allow them balance between their aspiration for sport and formal education.

Chinese Owned Private Schools, Sino- Foreign Cooperative Schools, and Expat Schools

As intense competition for top schools is creating stressful education environments in China's traditional school system, more parents are looking for substitutes. Currently, there are four alternative options available to Chinese families that operate using some form of international-based curriculum and pedagogy that are approved by the Ministry of Education. The first, often termed as "experimental" or "bilingual" schools, are, in essence, Chinese owned private schools. They are for-profit schools that cater to local parents who believe English proficiency is equally important and want a blended education for their children. Local Chinese children can enroll in these institutions, which offer bilingual learning, and tout internationally recognized qualifications, teachers, and curriculums (Relocate Global, 2018).

The second option is Sino- Foreign Cooperative Schools, which are joint ventures between a Chinese owner and a foreign education company or school. However, this is restricted to secondary and higher education. Schools like NYU- Shanghai, Duke- Kunshan University and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool university make up this pool. The foreign organization typically provides the teaching and learning, while the Chinese partner provides the land and financial investment. Both expatriate and Chinese students can attend these schools (Relocate Global, 2018). Since these schools mostly operate at the university level, they were not examined in-depth for this study.

The third option is schools for children of foreign workers, otherwise known as 'expat schools.' These schools provide an international education for the expatriate community and are also accessible to the children of Chinese families who have a foreign passport and ethnic Chinese students migrating from other Asian countries. They are not allowed to enroll Chinese

nationals unless they hold foreign passports (Relocate Global, 2018). For the purpose of this study, this option was not considered, as access is excluded to the majority of Chinese citizens.

Finally, some public schools in China offer an International track within the standard curriculum; however, rarely do curriculum changes take into account sport and physical activity. Since the only comprehensive option that includes both primary and secondary schools and does not restrict access to Chinese citizens, the emphasis of this section will be on the emerging presence of sport and physical activity in experimental/bilingual schools.

Marketing Sport and interscholastic athletics in experimental/bilingual Schools

The popularity of experimental and bilingual schools in China is expanding rapidly. Private bilingual schools showed the fastest growth in 2017 at 23.4%, and enrollments are expected to rise. Private bilingual schools have become the primary driver for a competitive market, with increasingly fierce competition in tier-one cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, and a growing number of international schools in tier-two and tier-three towns (Deloitte, 2018).

To attract families and students into the for-profit realm of the experimental and bilingual school system, schools must find creative ways to market their curriculum and present curricular offerings that stand out from China's traditional curriculum. In addition to focusing on foreign language and typical school subjects, the cultural arts, music, and sports programming are utilized to attract potential students. In fact, the holistic development of children through a more comprehensive educational process has been suggested as an area of improvement and emphasis for China's Ministry of Education. In June of 2019, the State Council published a new guideline for advancing education reform and improving the quality of compulsory education. According to the document, the directive aims to develop an education system that will foster citizens with

an all-round moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic grounding. To do this, the State Council called for strengthening physical education, enhancing aesthetic training with more art curriculums and activities, and encouraging students to participate in more physical work to boost their hard-working spirit (Xinhua, 2019a).

Of significance to this project is how bilingual and experimental private schools are accentuating their physical activity and sports programming. From my observations, by marketing a quality sports program that has qualified coaches, and allows for scheduling flexibility due to absences for sports competitions, many Chinese parents are seeing this as a viable addition to their child's educational environment. Parent 3 from Shanghai says, "My son was studying in a bilingual school in Shanghai; that's why his English is good and why he is more creative. The principle at our school tries to open up China to bring some influence and expertise, try to understand it, and then recreate the ideas with Chinese characteristics. One of the ways they are doing that is by incorporating sports teams into the school."

Another parent 13 from Guangzhou describes that she liked the flexibility that her principle showed in trying to balance sports training, "In China, children have to practice a lot to be good at sport and is in conflict with China's national exam-oriented education. But as parents, we should always maintain good communication with our schools. We let the school understand that we have different priorities, the teachers and schools will support student sports if they maintain good cultural performance."

A coach who is currently employed at an experimental school in Shenzhen speaks about the athletic programs they now have running at the school. "In a place like Shenzhen, we need innovative approaches to school, we are one of the few schools currently practicing this method. It is popular here because it is an immigrant city, and more diverse, and the government is

placing emphasis on sports, and we are trying to realize this idea of a student-athlete. Our school has a lot of coaches who graduated from the sports university, most of these coaches did not come from a professional background, but they are very open to new thinking, it is straightforward to start a new training program and system. I think it is the main reason why the program succeeds." As sport and physical activity become a significant cultural expenditure, more and more schools are readily willing to make changes to their academic-based curriculum and use sport as a driver of pedagogical progress. A leading example of one such school that is harnessing the marketability of sport and physical activity in the Chinese education system is the Haidian Foreign Language Academy (HFLA).

Example of Sports Programming in Bilingual/Experimental Schools: Programming, Pricing, Problematic, and Cultural Adaptations

The Haidian Foreign Language Academy currently has campuses in Beijing, Wuhan, and Hainan, and the stated mission is to, "cultivate leaders into becoming global leaders who have international perspectives and knowledge as well as a solid foundation of Chinese traditional culture." The school is leveraging the marketplace by offering multiple curricular options and doing so with the middle class Chinese consumer in mind.

Their sports program is one such way to bring in new consumers and was one of the most comprehensive and unique options that I saw in China. Practitioner 2 from Beijing and co-founder of the sports programs describes his vision for integrating sport and education in China. "I started this in 2004 because I spent a lot of time outside of China and around western culture/education…this idea that sport and education can be intertwined has a strong belief in me. The middle class is booming in China, and many of these parents have high expectations for their children. They have been exposed to foreign concepts of culture and education, and they

want their kids to have some sort of similar experience with their own education. When we first started, it was really hard, we only had three or four kids in the program, but in 2019 we expect to have more than 1000 kids enrolled in the program, so it shows us that this idea is being accepted more and more."

HFLA integrates and builds time directly into the curriculum for high-level sports training. This platform is not part of the standard tuition, and those who are interested in the program have to pay an additional fee. There are currently two options. The first is for students to join the "Elite Sports Program". This program focuses on professional sports training after the school day and touts a team of coaches from all over the world that will train students to blend talents with high academics and sports skills. The goal of the program is to cultivate student's academic, athletic, leadership and self-improvement. The elite sport program has multiple sports offerings for its students including basketball, swimming, soccer, taekwondo, volleyball and more. Students on this track are more interested in benefits to their health and lifestyle and not necessary to compete at an elite level.

The second option "International Hybrid Elite Sports Program", advocates the same philosophy and core competencies as above program. The mission of this program is to gain the mental and physical attributes necessary to compete at a high international level. Additionally, they want their players to gain a competitive advantage to enroll in higher education institutions. Their coaches have international certifications, and currently have four sports operating at the elite level; tennis, golf, fencing, equestrian. Practitioner 3 from the Wuhan campus describes the daily routine as one that incorporates at least ninety minutes of specialized, individualized sports training into the regular school day, they will have additional practice time after the school days finishes. They coordinate and build competition platforms internally within the school, with

other likeminded schools, and also use both the domestic and international competitions structure to supplement additional competition opportunities. “We created a program called the elite hybrid, where the mission of the program is built so sports can be a part of the daily curriculum, yet still maintain good academics. I can say that we are one of the first schools and one of the only schools in China that actually has a sports program embedded in the curriculum. It hasn’t been easy to convince Chinese consumers of the benefits. I remember in the first year, there were only 3 kids signed with the program, but now just in the tennis, we have 172 kids full time. And we expect the growth to continue.” Growth, however, has not come without problems.

In developing the sports curriculum within the HFLA, the founder of the program has to show the potential for profitability. This means the school would have to recruit new clients to join their sport plus program and convince them to pay the additional fees associated with the sports-based curriculum. Practitioner 2 from Beijing says, “We had to showcase our plan and give both the school and parents an understanding of how our systemic sport and education curriculum would work and provide their children with a more stable future. More importantly, we had to convince the school of its importance, show how it will improve their financial standing, and persuade parents to pay for the additional cost of the program. We also had to invest our own money into the facilities and the coaches, to prove to the school that we have a vested interest in making the project work and that we will provide the best resources for the program to succeed.”

Programs like HFLA must target not only a select group of athletes but also ones within a particular socio-economic class, the middle and upper class. Without the pre-requisite financial resources, programs such as HFLA are unobtainable for a large segment of China’s population. Practitioner 3 from Wuhan says, “Programs like ours end up in private or international schools

where they tend to charge more to provide a better service. Parents have international expectations, expect an international experience, and will pay a premium for this service, so we target our marketing to middle class families."

Additionally, programs like the one at HFLA, also have to push back against long-standing cultural belief systems and against the single-minded mentality that it is only possible to succeed in one area of specialization. Still, for some families combining quality schooling, and the time associated with high-level sporting aspirations do not match up. Families of children who show high levels of athletic success and talent often find sports programs at private schools too extracurricular in nature and with not enough top-level competition structures in place to allow for their children to progress to the next level of sports success. Families in this camp find the opportunities to compete limited and thus search for options that take a more sport centric approach to balancing the fields of education and sport. These types of families are finding opportunities in China's developing sector of specialized sports academies and club systems.

China's Growing Sports Academics, Opportunities and Finding Balance with Formal Education

Outside of the formal education system, parents with aspiring elite athletes are taking advantage of the creation of the open market, independently run and operated sports academies and club system that is sprouting in China. As China's sports market continues to grow, independently run sports programming is offering a viable alternative for elite athlete development to China's state-sponsored system. Though academies and clubs are relatively new offerings that have taken shape due to the neoliberal changes to China's sports industry, they are fast becoming popular among families who want to manage their own careers, as well as who are reluctant to give control of their child's development to the state. Furthermore, the independent system also offers families the opportunity to find an acceptable balance between maintaining

high-level athletic training while at the same time managing time for formal education. Academies and clubs operate within a less restrictive environment and are not beholden to academic requirements outlined by the MOE. This offers flexibility in how, when, and where families incorporate formal education into the athletes' training regimen.

Coach 6 from Hunan Province mentions, “China’s sports industry is getting more commercialized, soon it is going to be more like the European club system. Each province will have their own clubs founded by private owners, and the national team will be selected from the club systems. The system will be based upon private enterprise and sponsorship, and the bosses will be less willing to put money into younger players, families will need to pay first.” Coach 1 from Liaoning echoes those sentiments, “A league system or club system is beginning to take shape, and those clubs are trying to take over for the government-funded teams, and education may become an important component of those clubs (at least on the surface). Most athletes will pay their own way, sponsorships are possible for top players, but more of a pay it forwards first investment from the parents and families before the clubs allocate money and resources in providing for the development of an athlete. This is very much a shift from the government model to a market-driven model.” Parent 11 from Chengdu suggests that private academies will allow families a choice in their child’s development, “We choose to train at a private academy here in China because it gives us more flexibility to structure our time the way we need. Especially when you are trying to do both academics and athletics, we need to be in a system that supports our conditions.”

As families and elite athletes navigate the neoliberal changes to the institutional structures and programming of China’s sports industry, they are presented with opportunities to manage and maintain independent control of the training environment and daily conditions. By

doing so, they have the chance to incorporate education into daily routines. The following section is a description of how families are managing multiple facets of youth development, as well as an example of how some independent sports academies are overseeing both the sporting and educational needs and wants of families as both groups adapt and navigate the transnational reforms to sports development in China.

Time Management, Supplemental Education, and Structuring of Education and Sports Development in China's Academy and Club Systems

Since the academy and club structure is a relatively new phenomenon in China, the institutional structure, management, and organization are going through some growing pains. Currently, most academies are independently run and operated, and each individual business owner can set their own mission and priorities for their business. For some, this may mean complete and total dedication to sport, not unlike the state-sponsored systems. For other academies, independence allows them to branch out from cultural norms and provide offerings within their academy that is in line with Chinese citizens' wants and needs. With each individual family comes a unique set of desires for their child's development, and it poses a difficult problem for a start-up business to understand the full gravity of the market, and what types of programs to offer. From my observations of numerous independent sporting academies across China that cater to sports like basketball, tennis, golf, and soccer, there seem to be many attitudes toward what the daily schedule should look like. Should they be sport first, education second, or vice-versa?

Generally speaking, the majority of these academies are run with a sport centric education in mind as their main objective and provide a variety of formal educational offerings as a supplement. The reason many athletes join independent academies is to maintain autonomy.

Families want more control in how their children structure their daily routine. Within an academy and club environment parents believe there is more flexibility in the schedule. Many make detailed plans to ensure not all of their formal education is diminished due to time spent training sport. Parent 4 from Anhui province says, “You know there are different types of students, one that wants to train for fun, and others who want to train to become professional. At the moment, we want to see where the development plans take her. Currently, we spend half time training and half time studying. We don't want our kids to give up their study time, but we don't want them to give up their tennis completely, we are thinking about ways to manage her pathway.” Another Parent 2 from Guizhou agrees, “It is too early to determine the direction of his life. He is 12 years old now. Nevertheless, we don't need to take a professional way. We give him more free space. If he keeps high concentration and interest as well as steadily improves, we will be supportive of a professional career. But we also want to reserve the right to choose other directions for him. The main objective is not to let him be confined to a single activity.” Flexibility and choice seem to be paramount to the long-term success of an independent athlete. Athletes choose to be affiliated with an independent system that allows them to move between spaces, which is important since some may transition onward toward a professional career, but others will need an exit strategy. Much depends on properly evaluating their child’s potential and making decisions that match realistic expectations of both their sporting and long-term development.

To meet the multiple perspectives of families and a multitude of changes throughout an athlete’s development, academies in China have to move with market expectations, and that means having numerous offerings for their athletes. As parents pay for services, they have an increasing say in how the academy works for them and their unique set of circumstances. The

academies/clubs must be able to make concessions to their clients and be willing to evaluate and reevaluate their program offerings consistently.

Within the academies that I visited, there were varying levels of educational integration, from none at all to some taking a seemingly balanced approach to development by allocating half of the day toward classes and the other half to training. Parent 6 from Guangzhou says, “I think if an academy can put into effect a safe, trusted education system into the training program it's the best way, study half the day and play sport half the day. But it needs to be a rigorous education program.” Coach 4 from Guangzhou mentions, “While many clubs are starting to pay more attention to the athlete's education, and this is an important component for the parents before they sign up to join a club. The kids may or may not have access to a legitimate school.”

For academies that did incorporate education into the daily schedule, there were varying levels of academic partnerships within the academy/club system. Some academies had no academic affiliations, while others brought in their own teachers and incorporated a primary educational curriculum for their clients (usually in conjunction with an accredited international online educational curriculum). It all depends on the academy, and quality varies from place to place. Athlete 9 from Shanxi Province, who trained at a tennis academy in Shenzhen, says, “They have classes, but they can’t control the study. The teachers came from foreign countries, one from Spain, and one from the UK. But the students were all different ages, from different backgrounds, and with different educational levels. So, they couldn't teach us properly.”

The most comprehensive academies that I witnessed, partnered with top local/international private schools to ensure that academic standards remained high. Yet even with provisions in place, athletes still experienced difficulties. Parent 7 from Shanghai mentions, “I am not willing to give up my daughter’s formal education. That is why I choose this training

center because they just signed a partnership with a top private school. She will attend school in the morning and train in the afternoon. For now, it is okay, but the partnership is only for primary school. Once she gets into secondary school and beyond, we will need to figure out a new way. But we are hopeful the academy will have an option when that time comes."

With the options so varied and sometimes limited, many athletes who keep a demanding schedule, which includes both sport and school, often spoke about needing additional tutoring that was provided outside of the time spent in class and training. Parent 10 from Nanjing, Parent 12 from Guangzhou, and Parent 2 from Guizhou also spoke about giving additional time for their children who were in the independent sports academy/club system. "We usually tutor her by ourselves. If you want her to study well, play well, she must put in more hours than anyone else, and the parents also invest more time in her interests and education." "We need to get teachers for extra tutoring before the semester exam." "If he spends more time taking part in the competition, his school may be interrupted, but we will make up for it by hiring a tutor to catch up with the courses and let him keep up with the textbook."

With so many variants taking place within the commercial sports market regarding the type, quality, and quantity of education; it is up to the aspiring athletes and their families to do their due diligence and choose programming that best supports their children's needs and aspirations. Families must peruse and research the various academies and the educational offerings that are now available in the open market system. Families must decide what type of academies best work for their needs in terms of pricing, structure, offerings, and best fit. As parents navigate the many offerings, they are making choices about what type of skills and knowledge they want their children to receive in these environments. In doing so, they are making choices in what kind of human capital they are investing in, and ultimately how it will

support their child's future ambitions. The system and environment they choose for their child concerning both sport and educational training will have a direct impact on whether or not they will have to skills necessary to succeed in either a professional sporting career, as a member of contemporary society once they transition away from sport, or both.

Human Capital within the Independent Sports System, Sport + Educational Capital = International Aspirations

For Chinese athletes who focus solely on sport within the independent sports system, the human capital they build up and projected benefits are inherently linked to their marketability based upon their results. However, for aspiring and elite athletes who are focused upon both improving their human capital through both formal education and sport, the future benefits within Chinese society are less clear. I will briefly outline the capital acquired as a sportsperson in China through the independent sports system and follow up with a discussion on the type of capital acquired for an athlete who is trying to maintain a balance between sport and formal education.

Sport Based Human Capital in the Chinese Sports Market

With a population base of 1.38 billion citizens and with the projected growth of the Chinese sports industry to climb to more than 500 million participants, fans and spectators the opportunity to market themselves to a large group of consumers through sport has uncharted promise. For elite athletes who reach the upper echelons of domestic and international sports accomplishments, fame, riches, and prosperity await. For athletes who maintain their autonomy from the government system and who produce winning results, the capital they acquired through the knowledge of the sports industry and sport skills they learned can lead to an athlete being able to profit handsomely through sponsorships, endorsements and prize money. Parent 16 from

Shanghai says, “Of course I want my son to play professionally if he does well there is a lot of money and rewards, he can earn.”

Additionally, elite athletes who train outside of the government system can still find ways in which to earn rewards and accolades through domestic competitions. Many elite athletes now train outside in academies and clubs but will also structure “in the name” only contracts with government-sponsored teams. Meaning that the athlete and their family will support and invest in their own private coaches but can still be affiliated with the state-sponsored organization for major competitions such as the National Games. Coach 2 from Shenzhen mentions, “I know a player on the Chinese junior national basketball team, he doesn’t train with the team in China. He just goes to the international school in China, and when he has a break in school then he will travel to the US to get some better coaching…and his father is steadfast telling the coach, I will not train here, but if the junior national needs me to compete, I will help out.” This phenomenon is becoming more common as the athletes can still gain the same classification of a state-sponsored athlete such as, national elite, class one, or class two, which will provide them with the same types of mobility outlined in Chapter 5. These athletes can still earn bonuses for winning results, improve their status for higher education in China, and obtain jobs in the sports industry once they retire, albeit it is less likely they will secure employment in the government sports bureaus.

However, as the Chinese sports industry continues to grow, there will be increased opportunities within the commercial market to obtain employment. Independent athletes who follow this path and build this sport related capital are becoming more commonplace, especially as the middle class grows and families have more resources to allocate toward staying with a privatized system, which can still provide many of the same benefits as the government system

and arguably has the potential to be more profitable in China's open market. Athletes who participate in individual sports such as tennis, golf, and swimming or in sports that do not have firm grounding or expertise in China are readily looking toward the private market to improve their skills and knowledge and accumulate better human capital. Conversely, many athletes who choose to remain independent from the system do so for other reasons, such as maintaining a formal education background. Parent 10 from Nanjing says, "I have always told my daughter that if you can persevere in a sport that there is an opportunity to reap a great deal of money. We know it is not easy and requires a lot of work, but those before us have illuminated the future. Even so, I will still make sure she earns an education." Athletes who follow this path have a slightly muddled outlook when it comes to building human capital within China, as it pushes against the normal modes of upward mobility, and their projected future and route as an athlete or academic, or both within China is not yet clearly defined.

Sport + Educational Human Capital, A New Concept Outside of Cultural Norms, and the Building of International Capital

Many athletes from middle class families are taking a new approach to sports development, maintain their autonomy, and are choosing a path that is not yet clearly defined. Since a balanced pathway between sport and education is a relatively new concept in China, it is difficult to speculate on the ultimate benefits these athletes will receive from their accumulation of both sport and educational capital over time. It is perhaps best to start with the reason's parents are investing in sport and the skills they hope that it will provide their children.

Beyond the apparent health and motor development benefits, some families in China are looking at participation in sports as a way of building a unique skill set and knowledge base that will carry beyond the field and have positive effects on their current and future development. In

discussions with families and parents, there were many skills that they hoped would improve their child's adaptation in society. For example, they saw participation in sports as a way of building a strong moral and character foundation. Sports are worth investing in and have value beyond the playing field. Parent 12 from Guangzhou describes that, "Fencing helps to train the child's reflex and coordination. It is a classical sport that is gallant and gracious and builds character. Sports courses incorporate both individual and group activities and will help to develop the child's willpower, comprehension, social skills, mentality and emotional adjustment." While involved in sports, parents hoped their children would acquire skills such as teamwork, interpersonal communication, confidence, sportsmanship, understanding in how to handle success and failure, would be better as socializing, and would improve their emotional and psychological adjustment by relieving stress and anxiety through physical fitness. As Athlete 5 from Nanjing says, "Sports give me a lot of things that studying cannot, through sport I have the ability to confront defeat, and this makes me a stronger, more confident woman."

The bottom line is parents believe that sports provide a mold from which to build character, moral, and psychological traits that will become a foundational component for future success. As parent 15 from Nanjing says, "We devote energy and money into nurturing children, and we support programming that we believe will provide our child with an opportunity to build the skills they will need to succeed in a competitive Chinese society. We believe that sports can add to that foundation." While that idea without a doubt holds substance, most of the parents know that sports alone will not lead to the most successful future, especially within an academic centric society like China. Instead, parents are starting to see the benefit of integrating sports and educational capital to build a unique set of skills and provide their children with holistic and well-rounded development.

As Athlete 6 from Qingdao says, “I really think my parents were ahead of their time, they saw the benefits sport could play in not only improving my character but also to improve my academics. They saw sport as a way to implement strategy and critical thinking skills. Even as a young boy, they would always encourage me to play ball sports like tennis and soccer.” Ideas like this are becoming more prevalent, and there is an understanding amongst most who participate in sport, that sports are inherently educational. The components of analysis, strategy, critical thinking, and decision-making are all skills that can be utilized in the classroom, on the court, or later on in business.” As Parent 16 from Shanghai mentions, “Many parents like myself and many of my friends, we all recognize the mutual benefits that sports and education have, it can help with focus, attention and maintain a clear mind for studying.” Meanwhile, practitioners like those from the HFLA school in Beijing are also marketing the acquisition of such skills when recruiting new students into their programs, “When pitching our program to parents we have to show the benefits that sport can have since they will be allocating 400-1000 hours a year to this activity. So, we promote the neuroscience of sport, we provide the parents with research that shows how sport and physical activity has a direct correlation to improvement in test and educational knowledge acquisition. Our marketing strategy is threefold, show the psychological, physiological, and educational benefits of our program.”

While sports and formal education foundation can be mutually beneficial, it is yet to be understood how this relates to future success in a competitive Chinese society that supports the single-minded approach to skills acquisition. The path to future success in China by utilizing a holistic technique is not yet clear. In actuality, many, if not most, of the parents and athletes who support combining sports and education are doing so to acquire a different type of capital, capital that does not necessarily translate to success in China, but preferably abroad. Many parents who

engage in holistic development and look to acquire capital in both sport and education are, in fact, doing so to shield their children from completive rigors and academic pressure of the Chinese educational system. Some parents that I spoke with that were combining sport and education saw it as a method of building a form of international capital that will help their children be successful abroad and have no intentions of their children staying in China to complete their education.

Parent 11 from Chengdu says, “Because now there is a problem with education in China. Children don't aim for knowledge only the result on the test is the goal. So, we are planning on going to the US for school in the future.” Parent 1 from Hainan Province mentions, “We don't want to follow the path of the *gaokao*. Playing sport and combining education is an alternative path that American’s like to follow. We want to get him ready for life in the US.” Parent 5 from Beijing agrees, “In China, it is tough to balance education and sports, not many parents do like our way. Just a few parents. If he cannot be a professional player, then I want him to go to college. I want him to take advantage of his sport. Hopefully, he can go to college in the US. No, we don't want him to go into a Chinese university.” Many parents are viewing the combination of sport and education not necessarily as a skill set that will help them obtain better upward mobility within China but see it as a way to improve the likelihood of success outside of China. They see it as a way to better fit into a country abroad and see sport as a way to improve their relationships, ability to communicate, and assimilate into a foreign culture, namely the US.

Regardless of the reason for engaging in the combination of sports and education-based human capital; whether for progress in the commercial sports system, improvement of educational opportunities within China, or for future engagement with a social environment abroad, more people in China are starting to see the value of balancing sport and education.

Families and elite athletes that maintain both sport and educational activities recognize that a career in sport can be short-lived and has its limitations, and it not always prosperous. By combining both sports and schooling, they see value in providing their children with a more holistic sense of development, but also acknowledge that having options and marketable skills in both sport and education is worth the investment. Elite athletes who can transfer their athletic skills into an educational setting, or who can use both their educational training and sports skills to obtain a job within China's booming sports market are expanding their options and marketability once they move away from a sports career. Rather than limit themselves to one specific segment of society, savvy athletes are primed for future success both domestically or abroad. However, when examining how and in what ways the concept of a student-athlete is evolving in China's free-market sports industry, it is especially important to scrutinize who has access to this path and whether the idea of combing sport and study is limited to a small portion of China's population.

The Contested Definition of a Student-Athlete in China's Commercialized Sports Industry

Without question, China's commercialized sports industry is modernizing at a rapid rate. The opportunities and new innovative programming that are taking shape within the free market system are aimed at individual interest and areas of perceived wants and needs of the Chinese sports consumer. Since there is an educational gap for China's elite athletes, the market-driven system is set up to provide a solution to this problem and is seen as an area that consumers of sport have shown an interest in fixing. Within the commercialized sports market in China, elite athletes are navigating the development system to find outlets and programs that allow them to train while at the same time, continue their formal education. While the buildup of these types of programs is relatively new and underdeveloped, progress has been made to integrate the fields of

sports and academics, and it is increasingly seen as not only viable but also a useful form of skills and knowledge acquisition that forms the basis of human capital. However, it is necessary to investigate who has access to this new type of capital and whether it is currently limited to a small segment of China's population.

Sports and Education are Mutually Beneficial in China

What is not contested among those that I spoke with was the overwhelming understanding that sport and academics are both inherently educational. Citizens in China know the value one can receive from participating in both sport and formal education at the same time. Government Official 1 from Nanjing says, "In my opinion, being a good athlete requires not only excellent athletic ability but also strong learning ability. Slowly the view that studying is more important than sports is fading, people are taking into consideration how both can improve their livelihoods." Parent 9 from Tianjin says, "Sport builds success in education. I believe it helps, he understands that if he fails during the game, then we talk about the problem, and he understands that he must practice more to improve that area, it's the same for his studies." Parent 2 from Guizhou says, "If you are an athlete you need a sharp mind. They have to implement strategies quickly. Sports help to learn, and education can contribute to sports." Physical activity has a deep-seated history in China as part of the whole of moral and comprehensive education. Although physical activity was somewhat lost during the neo-Confucian era, which emphasized testing; sport and physical education are making a comeback and is becoming more prevalent in the mind of the Chinese citizen. Furthermore, neoliberalism and its relationship to the global sports industry is infusing the Chinese sports industry with new ideas and information, particularly from the West, which is furthering the credibility that sports and education can co-exist.

The Transnational Flow of Ideas, Policy Transfer, and System Integration

The support of education and sport-related programming is aided by the flow of information from the West and the realization that there are communities that not only engage in this type of programming but have systems that openly support it and allows for it to thrive. Many of the people that I spoke with recognize that information from the West, especially about sport, is highly accessible in China. While some highly sensitive and political conversations are censored and restrict the flow of information to and from the West, sport seems to have the inverse effect, as an arena where information from the West and new schools of thought toward sport are highly valued. Practitioner 4 from Shanghai says, "I am starting to see more and more local Chinese parents observing articles from the West about sport and education, and more Chinese people are considering fitness as a positive contribution to academic and work performance. I think for young kids, more and more parents realize that it is not just about that *gaokao* score, it is about being a better more well-rounded job applicant, similar to what US universities or high schools are doing, they want someone who is not just a good test taker, but someone who excels in music, sports or art. There are just a lot more people in China who are foreign-educated or who are observing foreign cultures, and the transfer of information is greater than before, especially in tier one and tier two cities."

As more information is readily available about the policies, systems, and organizations that make interscholastic and intercollegiate sport a reality in the US, Chinese citizens and practitioners are beginning to not only take notice of how these systems operate. Also, aiding this practice is the influence, attention, and demand for Western-style education in China. Thus, need for sport-related educational programming amongst Chinese consumers is increasing. Slowly practitioners are beginning to incorporate these types of premises into their businesses, thus

broadening the offerings within China's privatized sports industry and creating hope for a new kind of educational system that will incorporate the value of sport into the daily curriculum.

Hope for an Education System with Organized Sport: Build It, and They Will Come Mentality

With the demand for sport and education-related programming on the rise, there is hope that a more fully integrated institution and management system to support the increase in interscholastic competition. Athlete 5 from Nanjing says, "I see a lot of new fencing clubs, and a lot of normal school children will go for some training after classes because they find it interesting, so it is already starting to change. I think a better way is to put sport into schools, and we can do regular training in traditional schools, and you can choose what you like, maybe like the American system. It would be great to have competitions against other schools, and teams at the high school and university levels." Parent 4 from Anhui mentions, "It is astonishing to see that in America there are some university teams that have professional players and students. I heard that of American Olympians, 75% have gone to college. We hope that one day that traditional schools will have more sports in school." In an ideal situation, the MOE and SGAS would collaborate to form a comprehensive system. However, with the missions of the two organizations seemingly far apart, and with the overwhelming scope of a project like this, it is not going to become a reality anytime soon. However, there is traction, and small steps are being taken to make projects like these more feasible. I outline the policies, projects, and programming that are pushing the boundaries in the final chapter. Until a more comprehensive system is built by the MOE and SGAS, then sports and education-related programs and curriculum will be captured by the open market system in China.

The Harsh Reality, Tier One Cities, and Middle Class Only

In its current iteration, sport and education conjoined programming, and those who seek it out are finding it most readily available in China's developing commercial sports industry. It can be posited that due to the highly specialized nature of sport + education programming, as well as its limited usefulness for a broad segment of society within China, and high cost associated with the programming, that the idea of a student-athlete is only accessible for the growing middle and upper-class. Parent 8 from Beijing says, "Right now sports with in the education system is trending, especially in Beijing, but only in the private sector." Practitioner 2 from Beijing mentions, "When we started we had 3 kids, the next year we were able to recruit a full class 30 kids, and then the next year we have some options to select 60 kids for 30 positions…now we have 270 kids applying for 60 spots on our Beijing campus. So from this trend, we can say that yes the general public is starting to catch on to this idea of sport and education, little by little, the numbers are showing that people are starting to accept and believe that it can be more than just one or the other, but mostly middle-class families." Practitioner 4 from Shanghai says, "The idea of sports plus school from an economic aspect has been privatized. China is putting the onus on entrepreneurs to launch their own initiatives and get people involved. So far, there is traction but only in the middle class."

It is vital that programming related to sport and education is not siphoned to only those who can afford it. While it is a new trend, one that is finding legs within the commercialized sport system, there needs to be a trickle-down effect that allows this idea to spread into grassroots programs, and eventually into mainstream society, so that all can enjoy the benefits of a sport-related curriculum within the school system. Once again, to make improvements, similar

to educational enhancements being made in the government sport system, the initiative and driving force must be China's central government.

The Need for Further Reform, Promotions of Policy, and Programs that Bridge the Access Gap

The good news is that steps have been made, and policies have been formed that are putting sports and educational programming on the docket. President Xi has given his blessing to start with innovative programming to jump-start China's soccer system. At the heart of this reform is to build specialized sports schools that take into consideration the formal education of its athletes. Government official 5 from Beijing says, "Soccer on campus" can become a model for the future. President Xi has strongly advocated the introduction of soccer into schools. As long as the school has a field, sports may be widespread. Gradually, the school will have its own special sports program in the future.

Until that time, and as we examine how the soccer school programs grow and develop, there is a need for additional programming, reforms, and policies to improve and make accessible sports and education-related programming for a broader segment of society. While the US can serve as a contextual example from which to learn, if a sport and education-based curriculum are genuinely going to succeed, then it must do so by incorporating Chinese characteristics into the model. The previous two chapters explored the formal education opportunities within China's two systems of sport development, the government sponsored system and the commercial sport system. The analysis provides insights to answer my research questions as to how neoliberal shifts in China's sport development infrastructures are reforming to address the educational gap of athletes, and based upon reforms to development programs, the types of skills, resources, and knowledge that athletes obtain to aid their future career ambitions. In the final chapter, I posit whether the concept of a student-athlete is being formed in China, and

how it relates to the country's unique sociocultural context. In doing so, I outline the policies, programs, and pioneers who are serving as models and examples for the future and are pushing the boundaries to bridge the educational gap for elite athletes and who aim to make sport and education accessible for all members of Chinese society.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION: THE CHINESE STUDENT-ATHLETE OF THE FUTURE; POLICIES, PROGRAMMING, PIONEERS, PROGRESS AND THE PROBLEMS WITH A U.S. BASED SYSTEM

The future is bright for China's sports industry, business is booming. The commercialized sports industry is creating new opportunities for Chinese consumers to incorporate physical fitness and sport into their daily lives as they see fit. Mass sport is on the rise, and the participation in sport-related activities is and will continue to grow well into the twenty-first century. At the same time, the elite government sport system continues to play an essential role in providing citizens a forum to engage in patriotism. It is continuing to advance the soft power political agenda of the central government, as its elite athletes continue to win and produce results in international competitions. In both of these areas, mass sport and elite sport, commercialization has infused each system with sparks of reform. One day soon, both mass and elite sport will be directed by the open market, and decentralization will become the model for the entirety of the Chinese sports industry. In both of these areas, government-sponsored and the privatized system, the combination of sport and formal education is becoming a matter of importance, and an area of cultural expenditure. Reforms have been made to make capturing the combination of sport, and formal education, a real possibility, and improvements to the system are happening in real-time. The MOE, SGAS and private entrepreneurs are taking the lead by incorporating new programming that is shaping the future of sport-based educational curriculum and bringing changes to the entirety of the system.

Within the government-sponsored elite sport system, the formal education of athletes has gone through monumental changes. The SGAS can no longer ignore the exit problems of its

athletes. In doing so, they, too have been tasked to improve the quality, access, and quantity of formal education for its athletes. There are more opportunities than ever before for Chinese athletes to move into institutes of higher education. Athletes can capture this opportunity, put their sport-based capital to work, and take the athletic-based skills they have acquired, add theoretical components to it, and then transfer their knowledge into China's commercial sports industry.

Meanwhile, within the formal education system, extracurricular sports teams are being formed internally within primary schools. The quality and standards of physical education classes, as well as those who teach it, are going through an evaluative period. Gradually, physical fitness and sport are becoming a part of the everyday school curriculum, and the health of China's youth is not being ignored. Through sport and physical activity pails in compression to the emphasis placed on tests and educational based curriculum, steps are being made to allow for more accessible sport-related programming in the traditional school system.

Finally, the commercial sports market in China is ripe for innovation and progress through programming that meets the individual needs of its citizens. Within the privatized market, there is a prime opportunity for entrepreneurs and practitioners to make improvements and fill in the gaps where the MOE and SGAS are falling short. China's commercial sports industry can bridge the gap for consumers and build innovative solutions to problems that plague the sports market. Those within this privatized system have identified an opportunity to improve sports and education-based programming and are taking cues from the West to fill a need and build businesses that bring sports and formal education together.

While there are positive reforms taking place and solutions on the horizon, that doesn't mean that China as completely solved the problem or filled the need of all its citizens who are

interested in education-based sports programming. Government sports teams and athletes have rarely moved beyond the higher education model of sports universities, and few athletes have the opportunities to study majors other than sports-related curriculum. Some still don't even need to go to school to earn a degree. Formal schools are again falling short in incorporating an institutional governing board (similar to UIL) to manage organized structured play, internal competitions, and leagues for interschool sport. And within the commercialized system, the programming available is highly segmented and marketed to families within the middle class who have the means and ability to not only protect their children from the rigors of the Chinese based education system, and the feared *gaokao*; but also see the end result for their children in opportunities to study abroad and build international-based capital rather than using their skills to improve their status within China.

Though problems still exist, the phenomenon and structure of combining sports and formal education in China is still a relatively new process. There are people and programs within each of these arenas that are pushing the boundaries and accelerating programming to keep up with the changing trends. The Chinese sports consumer is modern, global, and has taken in transnational ideas and information from all parts of the globe. Chinese citizens engaged in sport will continue to insist that programming meets international expectations with "Chinese characteristics" and this is ensuring that new ideas come to the table, and old beliefs that need replacing will be changed.

If there is one constant in modern China, it is change; fast, rapid, growth that is centered on innovation to boost a growing economy poised to overtake the US shortly. While improvements to sport-based educational programming may seem like a small changes to a highly diverse system, and may only have a little impact on the entirety of the market, one can

make the case that even small changes that can and will impact the more than 260,000 million students in China, will provide massive opportunities for growth and new developmental pathways for the future.

The following is a description of the programs and policies that are shaping the growth of sport-based educational programming, bridging the educational gap for elite athletes, and with it are creating the pioneering student-athletes of China who serve as change agents for the future.

Policies, Programs, and Pioneers: Creating Space for China's Next Wave of Student-Athletes

Government Initiated Policies for a Proposed Student-Athlete in Chinese Youth Soccer

Within the government-centered policies, there is much excitement and anticipation to see how the proposed reforms and changes to China's soccer system, unfold. Directives have come from the very top, as President Xi has mandated that China pump substantial aid and money to improve China's struggling soccer programs. In 2015 the State Council initiated a policy named, *Notification on the issue of the overall plan for the reform and development of soccer in China*, and in 2016 announced a guideline, *Becoming a world soccer power by 2025*. In these policies that I reviewed are guidelines which prominently featured provisions to both improve the development of China's aspiring soccer athletes, but also ensure that they maintain a firm grip on their formal education. By incorporating soccer training into a formalized educational school, athletes who don't succeed or show progress in soccer can seamlessly transition out of sport and back into the Chinese education system without delay and without falling behind due to athletic training. Furthermore, the reforms are taking place at the grassroots level, ensuring that progress is made at the formative stages of an athlete's development, and to make sure that longitudinal changes can be made as needed, which will support future

generations of students who come through the program. Specific language within the policy states that China should, promote the popularization of campus soccer in primary and secondary schools and put soccer into the content of physical education. Additionally, promote the establishment of soccer teams in primary and middle schools, and strive to improve the soccer competition system. Finally, explore the integration of university soccer competition system and support a university sports assessment and evaluation system.

With these directives in mind, primary and middle schools all across the country have started to form teams within the traditional school system and improve the organizational infrastructure for structure team and league play between schools. The policy asks that schools do a good job in the combination of sports and education, strengthen cultural education, temperament, and personality, and promote the all-round development of soccer players. This type of language and directives constitute a significant step in the direction of incorporating organized teams back into the traditional school system. This would provide access and opportunity to not only middle class families but also families that cannot afford expensive private schools or academies. Understanding that this could be a potential model for all traditional schools to follow; the development of interscholastic sports programming can blossom if these initial soccer reforms are shown to be effective.

However, the policies and guidelines do not stop at incorporating the soccer-based curriculum into traditional schools, but also calls for the foundation of a new type of sports school, that operates within the commercial and privatized market. The policy asks for China to adapt to the needs of soccer talent training, and actively explore the establishment of a new type of soccer school that closely integrates formal education with soccer. These new schools operate within the commercial sports market and have roots in the ideas of a Western-type sports

academy or European club team. Take for example, the Evergrade Soccer School located in Qingyuan, Guangdong, China. It is invested by the Evergrande Group and is a full-time boarding primary and secondary soccer school. The school boasts a USD 200 million facility with over 50 soccer pitches and is staffed by coaches from Spain. The school emphasizes not only the development of sports-related skills but also emphasizes academic development that adheres to the strict Chinese cultural traditions. In an interview done in for the Olympic Channel in 2017, Principal of the school Liu Jianguo was quoted saying, "Our goal is to cultivate two types of people. First, build intelligent soccer players. Second, build intellectuals who know how to play soccer. Students don't merely come here to play soccer but come here with soccer as a hobby in mind, but who can leave with good scores and can pass university exams and go back into society." The government policy has proposed that by 2020 China will have more than 20,000 soccer training centers and that by 2025 more than 50 million adults and children will be playing the game.

In line with public opinion, the government is developing a strategy that reaches both public citizens and private consumers. Under these new conditions, the government hopes that SGAS will be responsible for providing macro guidance on soccer reform and development, and the MOE should fulfill the responsibility of campus soccer. In doing so, an integrated system that strategizes for soccer and schools to co-exist is taking shape, and could become a model for the future, one that filters its development techniques into other sports, and allows for improvements to be made over time, thus capturing the idea of a Chinese student-athlete. If done correctly, especially since it has government support and backing, these types of programs can make the concept of a student-athlete a reality for a broad segment of China's population.

Improvements to Sport-Related Programming in China's Education System, and the Case of Policy Transfer in the Development of Basketball in China

As new policies such as the soccer-based education initiatives are rolled out, values are shifting about youth athlete development and are invigorating other sports to follow suit. In particular, under the supervision of former NBA superstar, Chinese global icon Yao Ming, who is the current chairman of the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA), is thinking more broadly about how to improve youth basketball in China. Yao Ming is the poster child for the ideas of policy transfer (Houlihan, Tan & Green, 2010) and how sport development systems that are rooted in one culture can be adapted for use within another entirely different cultural context. There can be no greater spokesperson for this idea than Yao, who was trained in the government-sponsored sport system but spent the prime years of his career in the NBA learning from and about basketball development in the US. Now, as Yao heads and leads the development of basketball in China, he is taking developmental ideas that originated in the West and reimaging those ideas with Chinese characteristics to improve and spur the development of new players poised to enhance the results of China's national basketball team.

Yao's reforms to the system are rooted in his longstanding relationship with the NBA, which has evolved into a partnership to help improve youth basketball in China. In a meeting in late 2017 with NBA league commissioner Adam Silver, and deputy commissioner Mark Tatum, Yao asked for all of their operations manuals. That included a basketball-training curriculum. In a 2019 interview with Sports Illustrated, Tatum is quoted as saying, "We've shared lots of information…everything he's asked for." And Silver is quoted as saying, "There's nothing wrong with cooperation" (Prewitt, 2019).

Yao is on the record as saying that reforms to the Chinese basketball system are necessary because it was previously not implementing a sustainable development pattern. Instead, it was concentrating all its resources on the national team while leaving the training system underdeveloped. He compared the distribution of resources in the system to an ill-balanced person with a big head and small body, with the national team being the big head and the training system a small body (Xu, 2014). To rectify the situation, Yao is initiating many of his changes to improve grassroots programming. The CBA has spared no effort in promoting mini basketball, which includes an appropriate size court, hoop, and ball to improve the technical and strategic skills of youth just starting the game (Xinhua, 2019b). More importantly, these reforms are taking place in China's primary schools where the program is being introduced, and where Yao believes the growth of basketball can enrich children's lives, "We will continue to discuss ways in which we can merge sports and education, as they both play important roles in helping people grow up," Yao said. "China's talents must be cultivated from schools in the future" (Xinhua, 2019b). It is a bold statement that is pushing the limits and encouraging the growth potential of sports through China's school system. Slowly the idea of a recognized Chinese student-athlete is becoming a reality.

While grassroots programs allow for the introduction of the sport, the hope in Yao's basketball model is that it will eventually provide a seamless transition for athletes into middle schools, high schools, colleges and beyond. The initial stages of high school basketball are taking shape in China, and in April of 2019, the Beijing city final of the Nike High School Basketball League saw Tsinghua University High School defeat neighboring Beijing No. 4 High School 62-56 in overtime in front of 10,000 fans (Sun, 2019a). Li Nan, China's national basketball team head coach, expects to see the pipeline of talent expand through China's

academic heavy school system, “I hope our own school league system can maintain this level of exposure and develop into a talent pool to feed the elite level of productively as the US collegiate system does,” said Li (Sun, 2019a). Creating a pathway to becoming a professional through the school system remains a work in progress due to the emphasis on academic success in the education sector and the lack of cohesion between the MOE and SGAS, developments like these give hope to China’s rising student-athletes.

Furthermore, the sustained growth of the Chinese University Basketball Association (CUBA) which was established in 1996 and launched in 1998, on the one hand, shows the fault in starting with a top-down process, but on the other is proving its resiliency and wiliness to make changes to improve its organization. CUBA is aiming to grow the same kind of player crop as US colleges that feeds the NBA and hopes its university system can nourish China’s professional league the CBA. CUBA has taken some significant steps to reform its league and organization in the past couple of years, including aligning itself with commercial sponsors, which have introduced a new competitive structure. In October of 2018, Alisports, a subsidiary of internet giant Alibaba, acquired the exclusive operations rights of the league for seven years for USD 144 million. Alisports then introduced a new competition platform, based on a home and away games played regionally in 32 cities, which fed into all country playoff and featured the winners of the regional preliminaries. Games were live-streamed on the Alibaba-owned media platform Youku Sports, which drew an impressive online viewership (Sun, 2019b). Alisports has vowed to continue upgrading CUBA with expertise and experience learned from the US collegiate system and has a partnership with the NCAA’s Pac-12 Conference. “We will further popularize CUBA following the example of the NCAA, said Wei Quanmin, vice-president of Alisports. “Our goal is to make it (CUBA) a basketball talent cradle while building a

healthy business circle for the league to stand on its own" (Sun, 2019b). Eventually, Yao hopes that CUBA will be a feeder for the CBA. "Can you imagine the NBA without NCAA?" Yao asks. "That's what I am doing now" (Prewitt, 2019).

Yao's leadership and reforms for China's youth development showcases how policy transfer from the West, both from the NBA and NCAA. Arguably, the recent development of basketball in China, more than any other sport, provides a unique opportunity to explore the interplay of globalization and contemporary Chinese identity—and a quintessentially American cultural export (Houlihan et al., 2010, p 5). In many ways, as basketball development goes in China, so with the rest of the country. The system that basketball has laid out provides a robust model and foundation from which other sports can duplicate. It encourages integration across multiple levels of Chinese policymaking and cooperation with numerous domestic agencies such as the MOE and SGAS. Furthermore, Yao and the CBA have incorporated the commercial system, which provides a self-sustaining platform from which to grow without the aid of the state government. If the CBA and basketball in China continue to make progress and prove that a pathway of sport development through school can be a model of sustainability, then the example it sets could eventually lead to a complete decentralization of China's sports system. While that may seem like a long way off, we have evidence that China reforms quickly. Meanwhile, the CBA's model has offered hope to other sports as grassroots programming, and independent offerings within the commercial sports industry are pushing the youth sports development to new heights.

Sport + Education, Tennis in Shanghai, and Development Through the School System

As basketball imparts new lifeblood and innovative ideas adapted from the West toward the development of youth sport, it is serving as a model for other commercial and independent

entities to infuse China with grassroots sports programs. One such program that I have worked with the past few years as a consultant is with a Shanghai-based grassroots tennis program called SportEd. At the core, SportEd is a tennis academy that is using a unique training philosophy aimed at the implementation of tennis into schools. Its philosophy is to combine sport with education, using "school-like" structured programs and lesson plans that promote the holistic development of its students.

SportEd uses a philosophy centered on a student-athlete pathway and uses a "just like school" idea to support the transition from entry-level programing's beginning at three years old with the goal to progress to become college-ready elite athletes. The program recognizes the many transition periods athletes take during their careers and is committed to helping its players find the right path through sport, and when the time comes out of sport. The curriculum is implemented with the help and through partnerships with local schools, where training takes place at the end of the school day. Its curriculum follows the school calendar and provides the players with the benchmarks and skills they need to acquire before moving up to the next level. To meet Chinese parents' expectations and to fall in line with academic and societal values; the benchmarks and skills acquisitions are outlined in a report card that shows how the student is progressing, where they need to improve and uses tests for clear alignment before the student can "move up a grade." The is no pass or fail, but rather the use of report cards is simply used to ensure students make progress and stay on track.

As mentioned before, the programs are run via satellite at local schools where strong relationships have been established with the school's administration. Once the players reach middle and high school, SportEd's coaches function as the school's head coach and teams are formed. Furthermore, SportEd has instituted a competitive platform through the formation of an

interschool league to promote an organized competition structure. The ultimate goal is to help the athletes acquire not only the athletic skills needed but also ensure that academic priorities are maintained, and they use a GPA (grade point average) monitoring system to make sure athletes are paying attention to their studies. SportEd also employs an academic tutor who follows their student's progress to ensure the athletes are on track to graduate and are equipped with the educational skills to meet their future purposes.

The ultimate goal is for the student-athletes to progress and upon graduation of high school help them utilize their tennis talents to transition into colleges and universities both in China and abroad. As previously shown, China's university system is showing interest in improving its athletic programs, and much like US universities are offering elite players a pathway into universities. The goal for students who want to pursue school in China it to keep their academic standards high enough so that they can earn a high score on the *gaokao,* which will allow them to transfer to one of the normal universities and not the sport universities, so that they can earn degrees in non-sport related fields. Additionally, many of the participants in the programs are hoping to go to American universities aboard, and a team of SportEd consultants help these athletes navigate the NCAA recruitment process.

In its most recent venture, in October 2019, SportEd partnered with Jus Sports (a subsidiary of a government group called *Jiushi*) who manages and operates the Shanghai Rolex Masters professional tennis tournament, as well as with the Shanghai Tennis Association, and Shanghai's MOE to run the first interschool tennis competition in the city. The competition was a co-ed format, for two different age-divisions and included participants from local schools, bilingual schools, and international schools from Shanghai. Plans are currently being formulated

to find a more comprehensive competition structure that will consist of the groups aforementioned above and will use SportEd to manage and run the league system.

With development systems like basketball paving the way, the future is bright as more programs are encouraged to promote youth sports development through the school system in China. While full-fledged cooperation and a fully integrated system that encompasses all of China is a long-term and far off goal, cities can take the lead in developing a local system that meets the conditions and needs of schools and students in its municipality. Keep in mind that cities like Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou all boast populations of nearly 30 million, and a city-run league is no small undertaking. However, as more programs realize the possibilities of interschool sports, the pioneering student-athletes that come through these systems can serve as models for the future and help other aspiring student-athletes reach both their education and sports-related goals.

Pioneers of Today, Examples for the Chinese Student-Athletes of the Future

In 2017-18, at US universities, nearly 360,000 students were studying in US universities from China, which accounts for approximately a third of all international students (Anderson & Svrluga, 2019). Compare that to student-athletes from China, wherein 2018, there were 90 men and women from China competing in various sports at Division 1 and 2 levels (NCAA, n.d.). While that is more than a 45% increase since 2015, it still represents a considerable gap between the numbers of students versus student-athletes coming from China. While it is difficult to track what development system these athletes are coming from in China, whether the government system, independent academies, or moving to the US in their final years of high school, the fact remains that athletes from China who join NCAA teams is steadily increasing every year. Thus,

it is essential to showcase a few athletes and their pathway to becoming an NCAA student-athlete.

China is taking steps to encourage youth sports development in schools and promoting the notion of a student-athlete. The definition of a Chinese student-athlete takes on many meanings, and comes in many different forms, from government-sponsored to commercially grown, or a hybrid of the two systems. Wherever these student-athletes first developed, I think it is essential to highlight some of the pioneers who are pushing this idea into the mainstream. These athletes have transcended conventional schools of thought, traditional values, and have gone on to move between spaces and cultures to become NCAA athletes. While this is not a comprehensive list, it serves to show the progress being made, and the different developmental pathways one can take to become an NCAA student-athlete. Since the NCAA does not release the names of the athletes, nor their schools, these are people that I know personally, have been introduced to, or are second-hand accounts of stories I have been told, all of which have been verified. I will also keep their names and universities anonymous but will provide background to showcase their different developmental pathways and accomplishments.

1) A male tennis player from Jiangsu province, who moved to IMG Academy in Florida when he was 14 years old, who came up through the Chinese government-sponsored system before moving. He graduated from a prestigious Midwestern university where he was an All-American. He maintained his status as a member of the Jiangsu Province team while attending school and competed in the summer for the province and at important national events. Now he is competing on the professional tennis tour and is still a member of the Jiangsu team.

2) A female tennis player is also from Jiangsu province, developed her skills in the government system. She enrolled in a Chinese university for a year before transferring to an

American university located in the West. She graduated with honors and majored in hospitality management. She also maintained a relationship with the government team while enrolled at her American university and competed in major domestic events in China during the offseason.

3) A male basketball player, who attended a private school in Beijing and was a player with the U-17 Chinese National team. In 2018 he was on the roster for a prestigious US university in the West but saw limited playing time. He was majoring in international business.

4) A male diver from Fujian province, who joined a government-sponsored diving school in Beijing. His parents advocated for his education while on the government team but was kicked out of the program. He eventually made his way to a US high school through a homestay family. Now he is an NCAA champion who graduated with honors from a Midwestern university. He currently procured a green card and in the process of trying to secure a spot on the USA 2020 Olympic team[6] if he can become a U.S. citizen.

5) A female golfer from Shanghai who went to an experimental school. Now a senior at an American university in the mid-Atlantic poised to graduate with a degree in finance, she was a member of an NCAA second-place team. She also trained with the Chinese national team.

The list could go on, and this is but a small screenshot of some of the athletes who are navigating the developmental changes in China's sports industry to not only succeed on the field but also in the classroom. Athlete's like this have a full story to tell about their movement through Chinese sport and can serve as examples for future generations of athletes who want to find success in both sports and academics. As the list continues to grow, athletes like the ones above will undoubtedly serve as a springboard for what is possible as the developmental sports models in China continue to evolve. While the penultimate goal for some families and students

[6] Due to COVID-19, the Tokyo Olympic Games will be postponed until 2021

might be a scholarship to play sport and study at an American university, not every aspiring elite athlete from China will be able to make this a reality. Thus, it is encouraging that China's sports industry is taking steps to incorporate and make a Chinese domestic student-athlete system an obtainable reality shortly. However, as China takes its cues from the West and uses parts of the US-based system as a model for its own development, it should be forewarned that the US system is fallible. US-based techniques to put sports into schools, especially in the collegiate system, could lead to commercial impropriety, academic fraud, and corruption that have caused recent backlash in the US based NCAA system. China must learn from the US system and be keenly aware of the challenges that await.

Progress Yet Problems: A Comparison of the Issues that Plague Both China and the US in the Development of Student-Athletes

It is possible that China, consumed by its goal of becoming a worlds sport power, driven by commercial enterprises, could shift the point of emphasis from creating champions in the classroom and on the court to becoming all about the potential financial rewards that can be gained from building a large scale interscholastic/intercollegiate sports system. Thus, we need to take a critical approach to the ideas and premise behind global policy transfer. If China persists in using the NCAA system as a model and if China is genuinely interested in incorporating that organizational structure with "Chinese characteristics," they also need to understand the controversial issues behind the development of US student-athletes. When integrating a US-based model China can be proactive in solving for problems that have arisen in the US so that it does not adversely affect the development of aspiring student-athletes in China. I am not advocating for a US system to be used which would supplant a Chinese based model, but since there is already movement in that direction, one should be aware of the critical issues and

controversies that might arise. We can already see some points of interest and stark correlations between the American and Chinese's sport systems, which should send some red flags to those who want to model China's student-athlete system based upon the system in the U.S. The following is a short comparison of the US and Chinese systems

They Are Not Here to Study; Comparison of Black Student-Athletes and Chinese Elite Athletes

One of the most harmful and contentious stereotypes in the US-based system of interscholastic and intercollegiate sport is the treatment of black male student-athletes in revenue-generating sports in the NCAA. "Basketball and increasingly football are dominated by talented black athletes, whose representation in these sports programs far exceeds their presence elsewhere in the university. The separation that exists between athletic programs and the rest of the university can only harm the educational experiences and opportunities available to minority student-athletes" (Duderstadt, 2000, p. 213). Furthermore, "Athletes who are recruited, and who end up on the carefully winnowed lists of desired candidates submitted by coaches to the admissions office, now enjoy a very substantial statistical advantage' in the admissions process." (Harrison, 2008, p. 41). What occurs is an unfair representation of African American men on predominantly white campuses who are only there "play sport" as compared to the general student-body (Sailes, 1993; Sellers, 2000), and with it comes the oversimplified perceptions of black student-athletes as "dumb jocks" who major in eligibility, and are not enrolled in universities to get a real education.

The elite athletes who are entering, and aim to enter China's normal universities could meet a similar fate as their black counterparts. China has already shown to be judgmental of athletes' academic abilities, and the dumb jock stereotypes are also perpetuated amongst China's mainstream society. As China's elite athletes, government- sponsored and independent move

into schools of higher education with the designated label of being an athlete, and as they are recruited into these universities with lower academic standards, the perception of why they are enrolled and what their purpose is at the university can become skewed. They too, might only be seen as a student's that without their exceptional athletic talent would have no intention of being in the school other than to play sport, and like their black counterparts are only there as a pawn for victories and to prop up a commercially driven system.

Pay for Play, Name Image Likeness, and Ideas of Amateurism

Another hot topic that is causing controversy in the NCAA system are the rules surrounding amateurism and whether athletes should be paid to play sports which allow athletic departments at American universities to profit to the tune of millions of dollars. "There is a long-standing agreement between the NCAA, affiliated universities, and student-athletes in which players exchange limited athletic services for scholarships in lieu of cash wages" (Borghesi, 2017, p. 4657). Meanwhile, those universities profit handsomely as the name image and likeness of athletes are used in advertisements that support major sporting events that pull in billions of dollars in media revenues, licensees and merchandise sales, ticket sales, boosters, and so forth. What needs to be showcased is many athletes, in particular, those who play revenue-generating sports, are asked to contribute substantial time to sport versus the amount of time they can focus on their life outside of sport, especially in the classroom. Furthermore, the argument is that they are not compensated fairly for that time based upon their open market values, and do not benefit monetarily based upon their actual worth.

As China's sports industry becomes increasingly commercialized and as there is increased movement to create an NCAA type system, many of China's elite athletes may face similar issues as their US counterparts. As outlined earlier in this chapter, CUBA has already

established commercial backing and sponsorship that is making this problem more reality than not. It is particularly concerning since many of China's elite athletes have come through the government-sponsored sport system, which already pays them salaries, and now these same athletes are transferring their athletic skills to China's institutes of higher education and competing for schools. China's athletes may also want a fair cut of their open market value, which could blur the lines of amateurism. While China's university system is still in its infancy, there is potential for enormous commercial revenues as university sports become more popular. Furthermore, since China does not have established rules about amateurism, it will be interesting to see how this potential issue takes shape in the future.

Academic Fraud in Interscholastic and Intercollegiate Sport, and the Value of Education

The last comparison that I will make is the rising potential for academic fraud for elite athletes who compete for their schools. One of the most publicized events of academic fraud at an NCAA school came in 2014, which alleged that athletes at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC), a school with a storied basketball tradition had been enrolled in "fake classes for is athletes as early as 1993. This ultimately calls into question UNC's academic accreditation agency, and the NCAA accused the university of a "lack of institutional control" over athletics. Ultimately the NCAA, which is supposed to regulate and enforce rules about issues such as this, let UNC off the hook and imposed zero sanctions (Tracy, 2017). Some have speculated that this due to the commercial influence UNC has over basketball and its annual march madness tournament, which, without UNC in the competition, might diminish overall revenues from the tournament. Furthermore, this is not an isolated incident in college sports, and countless accusations are made against numerous schools every year. It also is a systemic problem that often affects high school athletics, as players from all levels are helped in their academic

endeavors, to ensure they make good enough grades to allow them to compete for their schools. Seemingly throwing ethics and morals out the window for capitalistic ventures, money-making opportunities, and victories.

Elite athletes in China are already facing similar issues about academic integrity. Earlier in the dissertation, I outlined how many government-sponsored athletes who perform well enough are admitted into universities without needing to take tests, and many do not need to attend class once they are there. While this seems to be an accepted practice in China, it severely undervalues the idea of a student-athlete and tarnishes the value of education if degrees are being given away for good athletic performances. The trickle-down effect on the commercial system has already taken place, as I spoke to many Chinese athletes who are attaching their names to private high schools in China and conversely, do not attend classes but instead are only recruited to bring the school prestige in domestic athletic competitions. For the concept of a student-athlete to become an accepted notion, China must ward off academic fraud, and encourage its athletes to take their education seriously. However, with more money and prestige on the line, the corrupt and unethical practices will likely continue unless it is overseen and regulated by a third-party entity.

It is All About the Money

The issues, controversies, and comparisons that surround the development of student-athletes in both the US and China seem to center on the commercial nature of sport. The identity crisis for China in the development of the concept of a student-athlete will be, and already is, the highly commercialized sports industry that is developing around this idea. It is not hard to imagine a Chinese system where commercialism is the driving force behind integrating sports into school, rather than for its original proposed purpose of building a holistic, well-rounded

citizen with a complete moral and educational foundation. The issues that plague the US system should be a warning to those in China who tout the positive relationship between sports and education. To understand how educational institutions have removed academic integrity from the equation in the US, "it is helpful to look back over a century and a half of big-time intercollegiate athletics and the place of students, faculty, presidents, governing boards, alumni, general public, federal legislature, courts, commercial concerns, and the media in creating the highly commercialized and professionalized sports at all divisional levels" (Smith, 2010, p. 7). As policy transfer and transnational ideas surrounding sport continue to flow from the West to the East, it will be increasingly difficult to attempt to create athletic programs that are educationally sound and based on principles of amateurism when all signs point to China continuing to build the future of its sports industry on the principals of professionalization as a commercially financed industry.

Where Do We Go from Here? Linking Theory and Practicum: The Impact of SD on the Educational Experiences of Chinese Athletes and Recommendations for Improving China's SD Systems.

Even though SD is currently being pushed toward a privatized commercial market, as an authoritarian state China has the opportunity to direct policy and demand that certain initiatives take priority. While SD systems certainly can and are being used to make strides in improving opportunities to combine formal education and sport, the fact of the matter remains that this issue is not the primary objective for the development of China's sports programs. When it comes to packing and delivering sport to society, different nations prioritize success in different ways (DeBosscher et.al., 2009). Still, the majority of China's SD programming geared toward elite athletes is about performance rather than becoming a well-rounded individual. When cultivating

programs that encourage the formation of an elite athlete, China's single-minded approach and devotion to one activity is a difficult cultural barrier to overcome, and thus formal education is still too often ignored. The bulk of China's SD resources for elite athletes are now aimed squarely at driving profit within its domestic commercial sport industry, through what a group of scholars have termed the "nine pillars of successful elite sport development"; financial support, organization of policies, foundation and participation, talent identification, athletic and post career support, training facilities, coaching provisions, competition, and research (DeBosscher et.al., 2009).

However, SD does not need to be centered on the mission of only creating elite athletes. SD should fundamentally be about participation and promoting the opportunities and benefits of physical activity. Participation in sport and physical activity does in fact span a wide range of contexts and participants have varied motivations for engaging in sport (Shilbury et al., 2008). Far too often, SD's primary objectives are to enhance the quality of performance and cater to the aspiration of becoming a professional athlete. Elite SD in China is packaged as a pyramid type model of development that focuses on the ultimate goal of creating champions out of a pool of masses. What becomes lost in this pyramid structure of elite sport development, are the varied reasons and motivations for participation in sport. It propagates into a system focused on a select few and along the way loses athletes who cannot make it to the top, those who do not have success, those that lose motivation, and those can no longer find opportunities to remain involved.

When the participant framework of SD gets packaged into a pyramid like model that transitions athletes from sport-for-all, competitive, elite and pro, it sometimes does not take into account the various barriers that exist into, between and out of sport. Ultimately, and until

recently, the development of sport in China, especially within the government sponsored system has systematically failed in creating a system that allows for a seamless transition out of sport for the majority of athletes who will not make it to the upper echelons of professional sport. To move up the pyramid it assumes that an athlete is continuing to enjoy and find value in the participation of sport, (Green, 2005). The hypercompetitive ways in which sports have been designed causes athletes to have short careers, and experience normative transitions which can be prepared for, or unexpected transitions out of sport due to injury, burnout, or other unforeseen consequences. Most concerning in the case of China's elite athletes, has been the lack of services and systems for post career support to help top athletes reintegrate themselves into a highly competitive Chinese society where upward mobility has largely been predicated on formal education. Without a proper formal education, too many athletes are still finding themselves immersed in the identify of being an athlete, and experience culture shock when trying to reintegrate themselves back into society once their playing career is over. Despite the failures of China's SD system in preparing its athletes for life after sport, as discussed at length in this dissertation there is hope for the future, as a privatized and commercial market pushes transnational ideas and infuses SD in China with new programming that mitigates the shock of retiring from sport, and instead properly prepares athletes for life after sport.

Recommendations for Improving China's SD Systems

The global sports industry is a powerful force that has been swayed by commercial and market interest. Market forces often reduce the performative nature of sport to dollars and cents, thus mitigating the potentially positive aspects of the industry. The commercial sports industry is often thought of as a bureaucratic institution that no longer upholds the ideals of physical activity and movement and instead diminishes its ability to support transformative change. In some

respects, China's development of the student-athlete might be too far down the rabbit hole of no return as the commercial industry has already influenced the nature and nurturing of the combination sports and education-based programming.

Based on my research, I have presented and discussed the multivariable and multidimensional system that is taking shape in China regarding the development of sports and education-based programming. At the center of China's development of a student-athlete is a commercially driven market that aims to produce profits from sports-related ventures anyway that it sees fit. The idea of combining sport and education programs is rapidly becoming commercialized and shows no signs of slowing down. The integrated values of the two fields have been linked through an opportunity to profit from China's emerging middle class and their excitement and enthusiasm for sports-related ventures. Even more so, the development of such industry is occurring in tier one cities on China's Eastern seaboard, and for a segment of the population who have the financial opportunities to access such programs. The initial phase combining sport and education has proven somewhat successful and China is taking steps in the right direction. However, for China to be more successful in better integrating the fields of sport and formal education and to actualize the concept of the student athlete, there are four recommendations that I believe will improve the long-term prospect of this venture.

First, it is necessary to improve the aspects of policy making surrounding the concepts of merging sport and formal education. The Chinese State Council, SGAS and the MOE have all taken a stand in acknowledging that sport and formal education can and should be integrated to provide a more holistic development process for its youth. The MOE and SGAS have been tasked by the State Council to implement its directives and have been asked to maintain a cooperative relationship while overseeing the process. However, often the policy directives from

the State Council are vague and open to the interpretations from leadership within both SGAS and MOE. At the moment these two groups have different goals for what integrating these two fields looks like. SGAS is more proactive in improving education for athletes, while maintaining competitive results in international and domestic events. Meanwhile the MOE is more focused on improving physical activity for students while maintaining high levels studies to account for rigorous testing standards. Leadership from both of these groups need to cross branch lines, work more closely together, and propose fully integrated solutions that can be methodically implemented while preserving the overall arching mission of both SGAS and the MOE.

Second, the implementation of joint policies and programs needs to happen through grassroots initiatives that start from the bottom up in local districts, rather than filter from the top down. While there have been grassroots initiated programs to actualize the concept of the student athlete, much of the progress in this area has been initiated by the private market. Many government based, large-scale programs have been introduced at the highest levels, with the hope that corresponding programs below will also make changes to its institutional organization to allow for the transitional flow of athletes into a higher level. Take for example CUBA and the overall higher education system in China which have been some of the first groups to propose and make substantial changes to allow for sports teams to be integrated into its educational infrastructures. Furthermore, China is too large of a country and has too many people to think that one system or program will be able to be implemented across all geographic regions. Instead China should focus on developing curriculum that can have a broader reach by implementing programs through local municipalities. Once grassroots programs are established, and the concept of the student athlete is vetted in local communities, then programming can slowly be expanded by age (youngest to oldest), school level (primary to university), and then

geography (cities, provinces and nationally). Designing programs at the grassroots level should be about providing access to all, and about building programs that are inclusive regardless of one's status in society. If programs are accessible to a large segment of the population and at a young age, then it will allow the concept of a student-athlete to become more accepted in mainstream Chinese society.

Third, the design of the programs and curriculum must be done so with sustainability in mind. The formative process of combining sport and formal education should be focused on needs assessment, validity assessment, structured conceptualization, implementation evaluation and process evaluation, (Sherry, Schulenkorf & Phillips, 2016). The ultimate goal in this formative process is for the local governments to establish and build relationships between the MOE and SGAS, as well as with target communities. For student-athlete programming to be successful, the local community needs to be active, present, and visible in the planning process. By actively involving locals, programs can begin a conversation about mutual benefits and goals that each faction has for successfully bringing well aligned services to meets the needs of the community and goals for youth development. This allows for the MOE and SGAS to gather insights into unforeseen problems and involve the target groups early in the decision-making process. This protocol will forge relationships and build trust with a community and implement programs that will help with the educational gap of athletes. In the summative evaluation stage, the goal of the process is to gather as much information as possible about the delivery of the program; in this phase, evaluation should be focused on outcomes evaluation, impacts evaluation, cost effectiveness, secondary analysis, and meta-analysis, (Sherry et al., 2016). For example, the MOE and SGAS should find out whether participants saw benefits, what the immediate individual impacts were for the participants, do the impacts affect greater societal

outcomes and whether there were any unintended consequences of the program. According to Sherry et al. (2016) assessing the impacts is about whether or not the program, "provided a foundation for changing attitudes and behaviors and changing values and attitudes," (p. 166). In this case the MOE and SGAS could assess and evaluate whether outcomes in bridging the educational gap for athlete's has been successful in the mesolevels of society. Once proven successful, programming can be expanded upon.

Finally, for the concept of the student-athlete to reach boarder segments of Chinese society, there needs to be continued open and unmitigated flow of information that will help promote the most successful models/programs which can then be repackaged to meet China's cultural context. In many ways China is already doing this by incorporating transnational ideas, information and successful models from the West to help guide and improve upon the concept of the student-athlete. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, China is taking concepts and using the NCAA model to help develop its own organization system and competitions structure in institutes of higher education. They are also building from the models of existing academies and club systems to bring a better balance to daily training and holistic learning. However, where China can continue to make improvements is in recognizing their unique situation as an authoritative government that has the ability to make wide-spread and sweeping changes quickly. The US system of interscholastic athletics should not be the only model that China looks toward when developing the concept of the student-athlete. Obviously, China already has taken parts of the whole US system and redeveloped the ideas to fit Chinese characteristics, but other countries can serve as models for success, and need to be taken into consideration when developing this concept.

Take for example the country of Qatar, which also has aspirations of sustained sporting success. The Qatari government and its royal family have poured a large amount of money into Aspire Academy, a government backed sports academy in the city of Doha (Eder, Borden, Harress & Williams, 2014). While the ultimate goal of Aspire Academy is to field athletes and build teams that can have international success, the academy is also incorporating educational initiatives into the program in order to prepare its athletes for life beyond sport. Its stated mission is to develop well educated, well-rounded sports champions and to become a leading player in fitness, health and wellness education in Qatar. Furthermore, the academy's on campus secondary schooling is focused on developing educated youth athletes, leaders, and internationally minded citizens (Aspire academy, n.d.). While the program in Qatar may not be a perfect fit for the implementation of the student-athlete into the Chinese educational system, it may be another place where China can look for inspiration, especially when improving education of its elite athletes who are still involved in the government sponsored sports system. The main point is that with the spread of information, new and improved concepts can be reimagined to fit the needs of Chinese athletes when designing SD programing to bridge their educational gap. The above recommendations are intended to serve only as a guide for future improvement to the Chinese sport development system but is not a complete fix as there are many other excellent ideas that need exploring.

Suggestions for Bridging the Gap of Education for Chinese Athletes Using SFD Programs.

When looking at my previous recommendations, the successful development of the student-athlete concept is predicated on gaining coordinated support and direction from China's central government, the MOE, and SGAS to direct how SD is implemented to solve the educational gap of its athletes. Perhaps, it is also necessary to take a step back and see where

nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and sport for development (SFD) programs can take the lead to alleviate the necessity of replying upon government-initiated reform. Instead of using sport development programs that aim to profit off sport and education, it would be more apropos to leverage sport and education as mutually beneficial entities that can improve someone's life and instead build programs that are centered on using sport as a developmental tool.

The premise behind SFD is to bring social change through sport, and defined as, "the use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youths and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution" (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011, p. 311). This is especially necessary for China as commercial forces have made access to sport and educational based programming challenging to obtain for those without economic means, or who live in lower-tier cities and rural areas that may not yet have programs.

Sport and other forms of physical activity that have traditionally held an ambiguous place within Chinese schooling are often being pushed to the margins. "At the same time, there is a consensus that such activities are necessary for the healthy development of young people. Recent developments in neurology, psychology, and related sciences hint that sport and physical activity can make distinctive contributions to educational achievement, and a host of wider benefits" (Bailey, 2016, p. 1). As Bailey asserts (2016), the broader range of educational benefits from participation in sport includes cognitive functioning, psychosocial development, school engagement, and there is sufficient reason to believe that sports and physical activity can make useful contributions to educational achievement.

In the case of China, by using sport as a vehicle for social change, the nation has the potential to help move underperforming students toward a better academic future. Linking the

mutually constructive natures of sport and school can serve at-risk youth by assisting them to engage in an educational process that will allow them to gain academic success and aid them in gaining the skills necessary to achieve transnational futures, perhaps once viewed as beyond their reach. An SFD education-based program can assist in the development of youth by providing some young people with opportunities to recognize the value of education and provide opportunities for the development of aspects of human capital. Sport properly linked to developmental education can adequately prepare youth with the skills and knowledge needed to engage the global political economy in ways that schooling cannot (Kwavk, 2016). This is especially important as transnational forces continue to disrupt social norms in China, which tend to have the most devastating effects for those from lower social-economic classes, and those who come from the third tier and geographically rural areas.

As I promote the values of SFD, one must be careful of pushing the altruistic nature of sport without honestly examining its effects or considering the cultural context in which programs are being implemented. Some believe that SFD practices are framed by neocolonialist, neoliberal, and modernist ideologies that originate in the Global North; and that SFD practices align itself rather crudely to Global North notions of development that comprise a 'set of knowledges, interventions, and worldviews which are also powers to intervene, to transform and to rule" (Mwaanga, 2016, p. 87).

To combat these challenges, an SFD practitioner must first understand the space in which they work and involve locals in the projects to ensure they are not pursuing a neocolonial agenda. The community or locality should feel empowered by the project. "Empowerment as a collaborative process should, for example, enhance individual and collective capacities, improve efficacy, address inequities and, where poverty is implicated, promote economic and social

justice and well-being" (Shulenkorf, 2012, p. 3). While there is plenty of passion in the SFD field, there is not enough planning. As a practitioner, one needs to understand that SFD projects can have long-lasting implications and impact and sometimes produces unintended negative consequences, particularly when working in foreign places and unfamiliar cultures. To alleviate these problems, it is imperative to have a direct and intentional mission that is supported by locals and then meticulously planned together to produce expected outcomes. If you can adhere to these components, then it may be possible for an SFD program to yield positive and sustainable results. “Through this deconstruction, can we then begin to collectively (re)construct socially transformative programs and policies in which sport, education, and development are brought together to address local needs and aspirations” (Kwavk, 2016, p. 657). SFD programs and initiatives can allow for discussions that create a cross-cultural exchange and awareness of one another's ideas so that we can continue to make progress and learn from each other as we build multidimensional and multicultural relationships that bridge the East and the West, the US and China.

Theoretical Implications and Limitations

In this interdisciplinary dissertation I have drawn from multiple fields in the social sciences, woven into the narrative theoretical components, and incorporated seminal pieces of literature throughout the analysis. More specifically I have made an effort to apply concepts from the field of sport management and socio-cultural studies to showcase that they are not mutually exclusive constructs, but rather have a correlated impact on society. How sport development is implemented can have a direct impact on the issues and controversies that arise in society, and vice versa. What is most important to note when trying to drive productive and impactful SD/SFD is that context and culture matters.

Specifically, this dissertation has made a theoretical contribution to the field of sport management, by exploring the neoliberal transformation of China's sport development systems. The duality of China's development systems (government sponsored and commercial) is a unique cultural construct that allows its citizens to choose which system works best for their particular goals. While there are intersections between the two development systems, especially as a marketized approach to sport quickly converges into the institutional and operational management of the government run sport; currently the two development structures that are in place are distinct standalone entities, which can appeal to a broad segment of the population regardless of SES, geography or other factors.

When mapping back to DeBosscher et. al (2008), and the nine pillars of sport policy factors that lead to international sporting success, it is apparent that both systems can provide a foundation for aspiring athletes to cultivate international sporting achievement. This dissertation predominantly covers the first five pillars and showcases how the government-sponsored and commercial systems are evolving in China. In regard to pillar one, *financial support*, China's state sponsored system has shown its willingness to invest heavily in the development of elite athletes for Olympic glory. However, it also recognizes that this is not a sustainable model for its future and has cultivated the commercial sport industry to eventually alleviate the financial burden on the state to subsidize elite athletes. Pillar two, an *integrated approach to policy development*, is being formulated by the State Council and the SGAS. These two entities, especially SGAS have been instrumental in plotting a course for the institutional framework of both systems and the organization of resources to be integrated into daily operations, which are available for use by a broad range of its citizens. The third pillar is, *participation in sport*, in China both the government system and the commercial system provide a foundation for talented

athletes opportunities to train and compete across various levels. There is a grassroots entry point into sport, which can be expanded upon to cultivate Chinese sport talents. Furthermore, in China's two model system, while not yet completely seamless, there is an opportunity for aspiring athletes to start in one system and transfer into the other depending upon individual goals and skill development. Regarding the fourth pillar, *talent identification and development systems,* both the state sponsored, and the commercialized system allow for transitions into higher levels of skill obtainment. While the state system is more firmly established and well regarded in this arena, the commercial system through the cultivation of academies and clubs relies on individual coaches to push athletes through the ranks and find proper competitive outlets. Athletes who succeed in competitions have a pathway to a sustained career, albeit those in the commercial system assume more risk to maintain autonomy and future marketability than those who choose the subsidized government system. Finally concerning pillar five, *athletic and post career support*, the crux of this dissertation has shown how formal education is integrated into the daily regimen of both the state sponsored and commercialized system of sport development. The dissertation has shown how the state system provides for athletes early in their career, and now encourages athletes who don't become successful to transfer their skills into jobs that feed a commercialized sport for all market. Meanwhile, in the commercialized market athletes and their families assume the early financial responsibilities, as well as must scour the market for programs that fit their educational and athletic needs. Programs vary in offerings and the future post career benefits are still to be determined as this a new concept in China. However, there seems to be more opportunity for athletes to transition away from sport related capital as long as families are able to find the right programming and developmental balance of athletics and academics.

The final four pillars were not discussed in depth in this dissertation, but undoubtedly both the state sponsored system and commercial system of sport development have components in place that provide training facilities, provisions for and development of coaches, are integrated with international competitions and have opportunities for scientific research. Where China is unique in their cultivation of sport development is the duality that exists for aspiring athletes. The ability for an athlete and their family to choose which system to enter, and their ability to transfer between systems provides a broad structure for access into sport. Furthermore, the applied application of sport for athletes coming out of these systems is continuing to evolve in China. As the commercialization of the sports industry becomes more commonplace in China, the expansion of opportunities and practical implications for leveraging sport will also grow. Researchers and practitioners alike will be able to utilize sport to address social issues, and sport will continue to be a connective thread that links China's economy to the global sports industry. A China's sport industry grows, more international comparative pieces, like this dissertation, can help showcase the connectivity of our global sport development systems and will allow for a continued transfer of policies and ideas between China and other counties.

My hope for those that read this dissertation, and where I have made an additional theoretical contribution to the field is by showing the connectivity of our global sports industries. In an age where information is abundant, we as scholars have the ability to take the concepts and methods of sport development, then apply and analyze them in a variety of cultural contexts. Effective sport management practices are not exclusive to the West or in developed Global North counties. From this dissertation I have provided insight into how SD is occurring in China, and how sport management is a bourgeoning field for this region. I am not the first Western scholar to do this, and many Chinese scholars are writing and critiquing the effectiveness of sport

management practices in their country. However, chances are that due to differences in language, culture and systems, that having an intricate understanding the Chinses system and how they practice sport management may seem less accessible.

Through this dissertation I have explored my situation of growing up in the US while also spending an extensive about of time working in the Chinese sport industry. Thus, I am in a position to help share the innerworkings of the Chinese system. I can help to bridge the growth and understanding between the two regions by showcasing the ways in which sport management concepts are being applied in China's cultural context. This project has taken the concept of a student-athlete and provided a forum to understand the linkages between how an American might respond to that concept versus someone from the China. It is challenging to define the term student-athlete, and I believe it remains a contested definition. Depending on cultural contexts, every country, every person will have their own interpretation of what it means to combine the field of sport with formal education. Diverse socio-cultural contexts shape and determine what challenges arise when embracing the concept of the student athlete and how its structural institutions will be asked to respond to those challenges will also differ. Through this dissertation I have advanced the understanding of how the concept of the student athlete is understood and being developed in China, and I am extending the previous conversations of what has been written by Chinese scholars. However, I am also cognizant of the limitations of this project.

As I have already described at various points in this dissertation, it is important to recognize my own biases, and I acknowledge that growing up in the US predisposes me to particular notions of a student athlete. Also, my embeddedness within the context of Chinese society and its sporting infrastructure might also be seen as a limitation. I have lived with this

project and want the concept to become more accepted in China due to what I have seen and experienced while living in the country. This embeddedness could blind me to the overall viability for the idea of a student athlete to become a maintain in Chinese society. Perhaps in actuality it is not socially desirable nor feasible to incorporate the concept of a student athlete in China. Furthermore, I have sought out interview participants by drawing from my close network of friends and from a context that originated in my time as a tennis coach in China. While I also expanded on those networks to try and build a diverse participant pool, it is possible that since I was working from a close knit network that my participants could already have preconceived notions about what I want to hear, and may not have spoken freely or openly about the situation. This willingness to speak freely and openly, especially by party officials might be compromised depending on their place within the government sports system. Finally, my sample size while extensive by qualitative standards could be considered non-representative, and perhaps my study could have been aided by incorporating mixed methods by designing a survey that could be more widely distributed amongst members of society. Despite these limitations, I believe the work presented in this project meets rigorous standards and has made a contribution to the socio-cultural and sport management fields.

Further Suggestions for Future Research

Due in part to the limitations I have put forth, further studies are needed to support the growth of student-athlete and educational based programs in China. One such area of interest is to conduct longitudinal research of students in China who participate in organized sport and physical activity and the effect it has on their academic performance, specifically on a test such as the *gaokao*. This can give Chinese parents qualified and verifiable data about children within their home country. It would allow for China's cultural context to be taken into account when

answering the question as to whether sport and physical activity has a positive or negative effect on the academic performance given the constraints and cultural understandings of the Chinese education system.

Finally, I suggest that this problem is not mutually exclusive to China. As I have shown, some correlations and issues and controversies plague both the US and Chinese sports industries. While we may think our sports systems are miles apart, they are actually not that different, especially as transnational effects and global economies bring our worlds closer together with each passing day. In addition, research that includes interviewing stakeholders, analysis of changing government policies, and comparative studies of student-athlete development could also be conducted in other Asian and SE Asian countries such as Singapore, Korea, and Japan, as well as China's contemporaries such as Taiwan and Hong Kong. What more can be learned about the connections between values, educational achievement, and sports? Do educational models restrict the existence of the student-athlete concept?

There is much more work to be done, and more room for interpretation as we explore avenues of sport development within unique cultural contexts. I look forward to continuing my scholarly work in China and to examine the county's rapidly changing sports industry. I hope to engage in additional research with my Chinese colleagues as we look to improve China's sports development system, as we bridge the cross-cultural gap of misconception between the US and China. We need to continue to work together and learn from each other, as we are connected by transnational economic systems and the shared common purpose in the global sports industry.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic Questions (All Participants): Age, birthplace city living in currently, current job of parents, yearly income, political affiliation, child/children's age.
基本信息：年龄、出生城市、现居城市、父母亲各自当前职业、年收入、是否为党员、孩子年龄

Specific Questions to ask Chinese Parents: 请中国家长回答的问题

Are you from a sporting background? If so, what sports did you play and at what level? Do you participate in sports currently?
您是否有体育运动背景？如果有，请问您做什么运动？水平如何？您现在是否也参与体育运动呢？

How much time does your child/children spend participating in sport per week? How much money?
您的孩子每周打多少小时 体育呢？为了孩子参与体育，您投资了多少金钱呢？

How much time does your child/children spend participating in academics per week? How much money?
您的孩子每周学习多长时间呢？学习多少小时呢？在孩子的学习上花了多少钱呢？

Why do you feel it is necessary to give your child a physical education?
为何您认为让孩子接受体育教育是必要的呢？

How will participating in sport benefit your child's future?
您的孩子的未来会如何收益于他现在接受的体育训练呢？

What are the advantages of enrolling your child in a sport program?
让孩子上体育课程的益处、优点或优势有哪些呢？

What are the disadvantages of enrolling your child in a sport program?
让孩子上体育课程的缺点、不便或坏处有哪些呢？

Do your friends/colleagues send their children to athletic program outside of what is offered in a traditional education setting?
您的朋友和同事是否在让孩子参与课外的体育运动训练呢？

Why did you choose to enroll your child in sports? Did you try other sports?
为何您选择让孩子参与运动？您是否有让孩子参与其它体育运动呢？

Would you ever consider putting your child into a government sponsored sport program? Why or why not?
您是否会考虑让您的孩子参与一个政府赞助的体育项目呢？为什么？

How long do you plan on keeping your child enrolled in sports? Will you stop if they fall behind on schoolwork? Will you stop when your children have to take national education exams?
您打算让孩子学习多长时间体育呢？如果孩子的学习受到了负面影响，您是否会不让他继续打体育呢？如果您的孩子到了需要参加国家规定的入学考试（如中考、高考等）的时候，您是否会不让孩子继续打体育呢？

Do you plan on your child to attend the Chinese university system or American university system, or university in another country? Why?
您计划让孩子在中国还是美国上大学呢？为什么？

What do you think the most beneficial aspects of combining sport and education?
What are the least beneficial aspects?
你认为体育和教育相结合最有益的方面是什么？哪些方面不利?

Do you think Chinese's citizens value the combination of sport and education? Why or why not?
你认为中国人重视体育和教育的结合吗？为什么？

In your opinion, what is the most important reform the government should implement for elite athletes who are on provincial and national teams?
你认为政府对省和国家队的优秀运动员应该如何进行最重要的改革？

Specific Questions to ask Chinese Athletic Administrators/Coaches:
请中国体育教练和行政人员回答的问题：

Are you from a sporting background? If so, what sports did you play and at what level? Did you participate in the government sports system? Do you participate in sports currently?
您是否有体育背景呢？如果有，请问您做什么运动？水平如何？你是否曾参与在政府管理的体育系统中呢？您现在是否也参与体育运动呢？

How did you decide to start an independent sports program?
您是如何下决定运营独立体育项目课程呢？

What process did you have to through to start your business?
在您创业途中经历了些什么呢（比如运营过程等）？

To what extent is/was the Chinese government involved in the inception of your sports program?
中国政府在多大程度上参与了您的体育项目课程的创立呢？

How do you personally benefit from the sports program both financially and personally (ex. as a mentor/teacher)?
在经济和个人生活上，您作为导师或教练在多大程度上从这个体育项目课程中受益呢？

Why do you think it is necessary to develop your sports program? What are the most important reasons for children to participate in your program?
为何您认为有必要设立自己的体育项目课程呢？孩子们参加您项目的最主要的原因是什么呢？

Why do you feel it is necessary to give a child a physical education?
为何您认为孩子应当接受体育教育？

How will participating in sport benefit a child's future?
参与运动对孩子的未来会有怎样的帮助？

How will participating in an athletic program help/hinder a child's academic progress? How much time should a child dedicate to an athletic program per week, per year, and how long should they continue an athletic education?
参与体育运动项目将如何从正面和负面影响孩子的课业学习？一个孩子每周应当花多少时间在一个体育运动项目上？每年呢？孩子们应当接受多长时间的体育教育？

What are the advantages of enrolling a child in a sport program?
让孩子上休闲体育课程的益处、优点或优势有哪些呢？

What are the disadvantages of enrolling a child in a sport program?
让孩子上休闲体育课程的缺点、不便或坏处有哪些呢？

Why do you think parents are choosing to enroll their children in your sports program? Do you think it is an individual decision, or do you think there is a growing societal trend to pursue an athletic education?
您觉得家长为何选择让他们的孩子参与您的体育项目课程呢？您认为他们的决定是完全个人原因促成的吗？还是说，您觉得是现在在社会上渐渐浮现的对体育教育的重视这一趋势引导家长们前来报名的呢？

What are the long-term goals of your athletic program? What should a child obtain from being involved in your program? Do you see your program as a pathway to become involved in Chinese government sports?
您的体育项目课程的长期目标有哪些？一个孩子应当从您的项目中收获些什么？您认为您的体育项目是否可以作为一个参与政府管理下的体育体统的跳板呢？

What are the potential outcomes for children who are involved in your sports program?
对孩子来说，他们预计将通过参与您的体育运动项目获得什么？

Do you think your students could use sports as a way to enter American or Chinese universities, or other university system?
您觉得你的学生们可否利用他们的体育技能进入在美国或中国的大学呢？

What do you think the most beneficial aspects of combining sport and education? What are the least beneficial aspects?
你认为体育和教育相结合最有益的方面是什么？哪些方面不利?

Do you think Chinese's citizens value the combination of sport and education? Why or why not?
你认为中国人重视体育和教育的结合吗？为什么？

In your opinion, what is the most important reform the government should implement for elite athletes who are on provincial and national teams?
你认为政府对省和国家队的优秀运动员应该如何进行最重要的改革？

Question for Current/Retired Athlete 退役运动员问题

What is your athletic background? For example, what age did you start sports, who introduced you to sports, what was your path through sports?
你的运动背景是什么？例如，你多大开始运动，谁介绍你参加体育运动，你的运动方式是什么？

At what age did the government team recruit you? What was your progression, spare time sport school then city, then state team?
体育总局在哪一年招募你？你进步的路径是什么，业余体校，然后是市队，然后省队，然后是国家队？

How did your involvement in sports effect your traditional education? What do you think of this methodology?
体育运动 如何影响了你的传统教育？你觉得这个方法怎么样

At what age did you retire, or plan to retire from sports career? What was your educational level at this time?
你多大结束运动生涯？您目前的学历是多少？

At the time you retired, or currently what social security mechanisms did/does the government provide you?
在你退役的时候，政府提供了什么社会保障机制？

Do you feel like the social security mechanisms were sufficient?
你觉得社会保障机制足够吗？

When you finished your athletic career what job options were available to you, or do you hope will be available to you?
当你完成了你的体育生涯，你有什么工作选择？

How are you able to obtain the qualification needed for your current/future employment?
你是如何获得目前工作所需的资格的？

The government asks that athletes utilize commercial markets for self-employment in the sports industry…do you think current society conditions support this path? Is this a good option for athletes?
政府要求运动员利用商业市场自主择业，你认为现在的社会条件支持这条道路吗？这是运动员的好选择吗？

In a 2002 policy the sports administration outlines pathways for elite athletes to obtain work such as sport teacher/coach or go to college without a test. To accomplish this an athlete must finish in the top 3 of a national competition, or the top 6 of an Asian competition, etc. What do you think of this policy?
在2002 年政策中，体育行政部门概述了精英运动员获得体育教师或教练或免试上大学等工作的途径。要做到这一点，运动员必须是全国比赛的前3 名，或是亚洲比赛的前6 名等，你认为这项政策怎么样？

The government wants athletes to improve their level in cultural literacy classes and in foreign language. They ask the education department and sport departments to cooperate to provide classes for athletes. Do you believe that athletes receive enough cultural literacy classes? Why?
政府希望运动员提高文化课和外语水平。他们要求教育部和体育部门合作为运动员提供课程。你相信运动员有足够的文化课程吗？为什么？

Do you think provincial team athletes have sufficient training to work in careers outside of sport?
你认为省队运动员有足够的培训来从事体育以外的职业吗？

What do you think the most beneficial aspects of combining sport and education? What are the least beneficial aspects?
你认为体育和教育相结合最有益的方面是什么？哪些方面不利?

Do you think Chinese's citizens value the combination of sport and education? Why or why not?
你认为中国人重视体育和教育的结合吗？为什么？

In your opinion, what is the most important reform the government should implement for elite athletes who are on provincial and national teams?
你认为政府对省和国家队的优秀运动员应该如何进行最重要的改革？

Sports Administrator/Government Officials Questions 体育管理者的问题

At facility/provincial program how many sports teams do you have? Which ones?
您的局有几支运动队？哪一个？

Which teams are the best teams?
最好的运动队是什么队？

What are your goals for the sports teams?
你们的运动队的目标是什么？

What are the most important tournaments you participate in?
你们参加的最重要的比赛是什么？

The government asks that athletes utilize commercial markets for self-employment in the sports industry…do you think current society conditions support this path? Is this a good option for athletes?
政府要求运动员利用商业市场自主择业，你认为现在的社会条件支持这条道路吗？这是运动员的好选择吗？

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The government wants athletes to improve their level in cultural literacy classes and in foreign language. They ask the education department and sport departments to cooperate to provide classes for athletes. Do you believe that athletes receive enough cultural literacy classes? Why?
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Do you think provincial team athletes have sufficient training to work in careers outside of sport?
你认为省队运动员有足够的培训来从事体育以外的职业吗？

Do the players have a comprehensive study schedule? Or do the players have an easier school schedule?
你的运动员有全面的学习计划吗，还是运动员们有更轻松的学习计划？

Do they finish with the same quality of degree as other facility/provincial program students or are the players requirements less strict?
运动员是否和其他学生一样接受同样质量的教育，或者他们的要求不那么严格？

What do you think the most beneficial aspects of combining sport and education? What are the least beneficial aspects?
你认为体育和教育相结合最有益的方面是什么？哪些方面不利?

Do you think Chinese's citizens value the combination of sport and education? Why or why not?
你认为中国人重视体育和教育的结合吗？为什么？

In your opinion, what is the most important reform the government should implement for elite athletes who are on provincial and national teams?
你认为政府对省和国家队的优秀运动员应该如何进行最重要的改革？

APPENDIX B: INSTUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

IRB EXEMPT APPROVAL

RPI Name: Synthia Sydnor
Project Title: Chinese Student-Athlete? A Socio-Cultural Examination of Education for Chinese Athletes
IRB #: 18347
Approval Date: November 20, 2017

Thank you for submitting the completed IRB application form and related materials. Your application was reviewed by the UIUC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS). OPRS has determined that the research activities described in this application meet the criteria for exemption at 45CFR46.101(b)(2). This message serves to supply OPRS approval for your IRB application.

Please contact OPRS if you plan to modify your project (change procedures, populations, consent letters, etc.). Otherwise you may conduct the human subjects research as approved for a period of five years. Exempt protocols will be closed and archived at the time of expiration. Researchers will be required to contact our office if the study will continue beyond five years.

Copies of the approved consent form(s) (page(s) 26-28 in the attached, approved protocol) are to be used when obtaining informed consent.

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subjects research. If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me at OPRS, or visit our website at http://oprs.research.illinois.edu

Sincerely,

Michelle Lore
Human Subjects Research Specialist, Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Attachment(s): Approved IRB #18347

c: Matthew Haugen

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research | Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
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