

CALL FOR PAPERS

Sport History Review Special Issue

Decolonizing the History of Physical Education and Sports in the Global South

Guest editors:

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Physical education (PE) and sports became institutionalized in schools, colleges and universities in Europe and North America at the end of the 19th century. It soon spread to institutions in the Global South as part of colonization of indigenous peoples. Hence, decolonization in PE and sport is the process of removing colonial legacies and structures and replacing them with a more inclusive and equitable curricula and practices. This process involves challenging normative practices and understandings and centring the experiences of people from the Global South.

This Special Issue aims to gather scholarly contributions that reveal the historical complexities and challenges related to the introduction of sports and physical education in the Global South. This introduction was accompanied by land and cultural dispossession of established communities and lingers in the present. To undo this systemic injustice, one needs to start unpacking these histories at the very beginning. Although significant works have addressed sports and physical education in the Global South, the logic of decolonization remains with us.¹ Here, Global South refers to the nations of the world generally regarded by as having a relatively low level of economic and industrial development and which are typically located in the southern hemisphere in Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, Asia (excluding Japan, Israel, and South Korea) and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).²

¹ Lesley Le Grange, *Decolonising Sport: Some Thoughts*. In Francois Johannes Cleophas, *Exploring Decolonizing Themes in SA Sport History: Issues and Challenges* (Stellenbosch: Sub Media, 2018), p. 18.

² Pinheiro indicates that the expression “Global South” substituted “Third World”. This substitution did not occur due to the disappearance of economic inequalities, but due to the recognition that what happened in these areas resulted from long-term exploitations derived from Western (Global North) colonization. Thus, “Global South” understands that African, Asian, and Latin American countries still face a multidimensional dependency that encompasses diverse forms of inequality inherited from the colonial process. See: Claudio Pinheiro, “From the Third World to the Global South: Definitions of Moral Geographies of

We ask the following questions about historical sports and physical education programmes in the Global South: Who controlled the political economy? Who controlled the institutions? Whose culture was portrayed in the physical education and sport programmes? Who produced knowledge? How were identities formed or constructed through/in discourse on sports? What alternatives can be presented to Western physical education and sports?

According to Terret, sports and physical education were introduced in various countries through three models of diffusion.³ First, it was an element of colonial enterprise, especially in Africa and Asia. The second model resembles the first and relates to British immigrations to old colonies, like the United States, and to territories colonized by other White groups, like the Dutch. In this case, sports were a means for ‘pacifying’ relations between the newly arrived colonial settlers and the ruling elite who had colonized the region, while also serving to disseminate their colonizing values and beliefs. Finally, the third model refers to exchanges between British and local students and businessmen, to which one could add the influence of other immigrants who created numerous sports associations in these countries. Either way, in countries of the Global South, this introduction and initial diffusion of sports and physical education were marked by a ‘whitening process’ of the population that, in many cases, was desired and created by local colonial authorities. These authorities disregarded the indigenous practices from local populations who, in many instances, were assimilated into the new cultures of oppression. There has been, of late, increasing work that addresses this colonization through sports and physical education by creating decolonizing narratives.

Considering the above, we invite scholars, researchers, and academics to contribute their expertise to revealing the tensions, contradictions, resistance and problems generated by the colonial incorporation of sports and physical education in countries of the Global South, on a local and national level, from the 19th to the 21st century.

Particularly welcome are papers discussing the following topics:

- Relations between sports/physical education and eugenics.
- Relations between Muscular Christianity and sports/physical education.
- Relations between Social Darwinism and sports/physical education.
- Sports/physical education during industrialization and urbanization.
- Racial issues in sports/physical education.
- Sports/physical education in capitalist societies.
- Sports/physical education in non-British colonies.
- Sports/physical education statistics in colonized communities.
- Physical education and sports as a site of class struggle.
- Sports/physical education as part of the colonization process.
- Sports/physical education as part of the decolonization process.

Inequality in Anti-Colonial Intellectual Traditions”, *Sociology Compass* 18, no 8 (2024): e13262, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.13262>.

³ Thierry Terret, *Histoire Du Sport* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2019).

- Colonized sports/physical education achievers.
- Decolonizing sports/physical education accounts.
- Gender conflicts in sports/physical education.
- Tensions in the introduction of physical education curricula in school systems.
- Colonial relations in sports/physical education.
- Institutional sport/physical education histories.

Working Timeline for the Special Issue

Reception of abstracts (max 500 words) outlining the intended topic: June 1, 2025

Notification of acceptance of abstracts: July 1, 2025

Full papers must be submitted by February 1, 2026

Estimated date of publication: Spring 2027 issue

Submission instructions

We invite the submission of abstracts (maximum 500 words) in French or English, outlining the intended contribution, to all Guest Editors by **June 1, 2025**. Notification of the acceptance of abstracts will be made by July 1, 2025.

Full papers must then be submitted by **February 1, 2026**.

Please note that papers submitted to SHR should be limited to 7,000 and 8,000 words, including notes, and formatted according to [SHR author guidelines](#).

All submissions will undergo double-anonymous peer-review and must be revised according to feedback from the reviewers and, where necessary, the comments from Guest Editors.

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