Article

Journal of Consumer Culture
2018, Vol. 18(2) 261–278

DOI: 10.1177/1469540517744693
journals.sagepub.com/home/joc
SAGE

The ubiquitous baseball cap: Identity, style, and comfort in late modern times

William W. Kelly
Yale University, USA

Abstract
The baseball cap completes the T-shirt, blue jeans, and sneakers as the common kit of late modern life, the recent decades when consumption, as acquisition, display, and deployment, has become preeminent in asserting self-identity and negotiating social placement. This essay traces the codification and commercialization of the baseball cap within that sport and its adoption by other sports and spectators. It argues that for fans the cap within the stadium is more than passive allegiance but rather a material performative. The essay then follows the cap into everyday life, where it has become the dominant headwear because its material qualities can enable affiliation, fashion, and comfort. Although the baseball cap is ubiquitous at the present moment, its frequency is variable, as evidenced by timed counts in public spaces in the three baseball nations of United States, Japan, and Cuba. The article concludes by suggesting some factors that may explain the cap's transgressive motility across sport, work and everyday life, across fashion codes, and across gender and class divides.

Keywords
Sport, uniforms, fashion, baseball cap, late modernity

There's this notion, often expressed in my country, that America has no culture, that it's all garbage. But the fact that everyone in the world, no matter where you go, wears a baseball cap, has to be reckoned with. Whether it's garbage or not is a matter of taste. But you have to recognize it as an extremely potent form of garbage.

(Dame Glenda Jackson, quoted while attending her first baseball game in San Francisco, CA, in 2003; Winn, 2003)

Corresponding author:
William W. Kelly, Department of Anthropology, PO Box 8277, New Haven, CT 06520-8277, USA.
Email: william.kelly@yale.edu

In short, how on earth did the baseball cap become the world's hat, worn for work, play, fashion or just knocking around the global village? Baseball may not be an international pastime, but its main fashion accessory—the cap—is as much at home on the streets of Beijing as the basepaths of Chicago's U.S. Cellular Field... Solid, reliable and utilitarian, baseball caps are pieces of Americana gone global. Baseball caps unite Filipino police officers, UN weapons inspectors and Australian teenagers. Worn backward, forward or in their latest hip incarnation, angled to the side, baseball caps are part of the uniform of everyday life.

(Glauber, 2003)

I don't know if Derrida was right—that at the beginning of human culture was the Logos. But I do know that at the beginning of the material culture of modern sports were the logos. Sports are logo-centric. Athletes go into mock battle with uniforms and equipment emblazoned with individual names, team names, and corporate sponsors. Spectators and fans flaunt hats, shirts, shoes, scarves, and other clothing that proclaim allegiance to a favorite team or athlete. Indeed, branding athletes and marketing brands drive a multi-billion dollar global sports industry. Athletes are not walking billboards. They are running, jumping, driving, diving, swinging, skating, fighting, falling bodies adorned with the labile tattoos of clubs and companies and commodities.

Since their modern formation in the mid-19th century, sports have always been dependent upon capital and labor, deployed as vehicles of commercialization. The popularization of the uniforms of sports into more generalized sportswear (tagged, confusingly as either "active wear" or "leisure wear"!) has spawned hugely profitable national and now global sports apparel industries. Of all this sports clothing, the most ubiquitous and iconic is the baseball cap. Its standard form is a round-crowned cap with front visor brim; six triangular fabric panels, each with a metal grommet or stitched eyelet serving as a ventilation hole, are held together at the top by a fabric-covered, galvanized steel button. The stiffened brim is made of fabric stitched over heavy cardboard, buckram, or latex rubber. Both the color of the cap and a logo identify a particular baseball team (Figure 1).

The baseball cap, however, has escaped the narrow confines of the sports stadium to become the global headwear of late modernity. It perches on heads of all ages and nationalities in all corners of the world. Hollywood directors, hip-hop rappers, and fashionistas have popularized them as style statements. Schools, law enforcement agencies, military forces, fast-food chains, parcel delivery services, and many more have adopted them into their official uniforms. Since 9/11, "NYPD" and "NYFD" caps have flooded the walls and tables of souvenir shops from metropolitan malls to remote village shops. Pope Francis and the Dalai Lama have been photographed in baseball caps; political figures from the Palestine Hamas leadership to US presidents have worn them for party affiliation and political statement. Donald Trump made a flaming red baseball cap into a presidential election podium billboard with his notorious slogan to "Make America Great

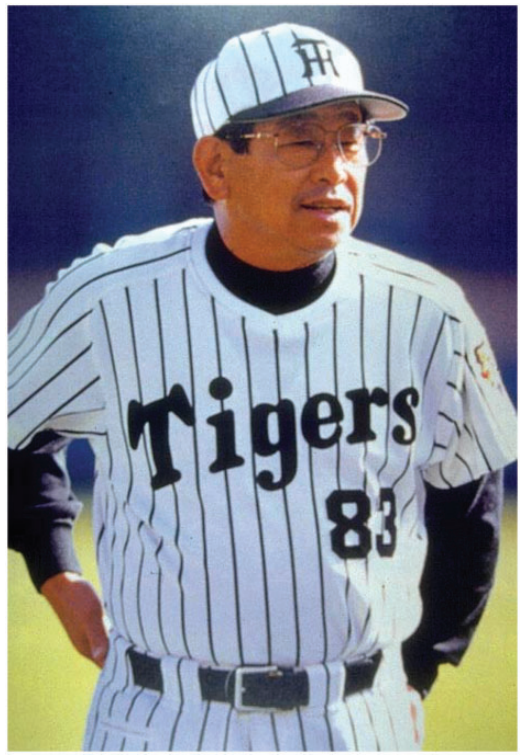

Figure 1. Yoshio Yoshida, manager of the Hanshin Tigers, 1997.

Again'' (Figure 2). Whether for standing out or fitting in, it is, as Glauber puts it, ''the uniform of everyday life.''

In this essay, I inquire into this apparently ubiquitous headwear—who has come to wear it, on what occasions, and with what intentions. My argument is that, indeed, the baseball cap does sit atop the field of contemporary headwear, and its trajectory from a sport that has only limited international popularity across the global sportsworld and deep into the everyday lives of people in all walks of life is remarkable. Its popularity is a confluence of that sport's own history, the political economy of branding and licensing, and qualities of the object itself. At the same time, claims of ubiquity occlude both the limits of its dispersion and the multiplicity of its uses. In the first section of this essay, I trace the standardization of the baseball cap style over 100 years of the sport.

This is necessarily an exploratory essay. Popular impressions and commentary abound but reliable data and scholarly literature on the baseball cap as material object and as clothing item are scarce. In arguing for the analytical significance of the baseball cap, I have drawn on my own continuous but unsystematic observations and interviews over two decades of sport research. I have supplemented this

Figure 2. Donald Trump campaigning in Arizona on 19 March 2016. Photography by Gage Skidmore.

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with roughly 150 timed observations that I conducted in public spaces in six major cities of three of the most baseball-centric nations, the United States, Japan, and Cuba.[1] I believe that my evidence is strongly suggestive and my reasoning is plausible, but this is a topic that demands further ethnographic and quantitative research to substantiate further my claims.

A short history of the baseball cap

Sports are not only intensely physical displays, but they are also distinctive material arrays. Uniforming the body, equipping the player, outfitting teams, building stadiums, fueling memories—these sports practices and others produce the elaborated material cultures of sports-worlds. Jackets, gloves, bats, balls, tickets, popcorn, soft drinks, beer, megaphones, scorebooks, trading cards, and many other objects form the usables, consumables, displayables, wearables, and collectables that enable and sustain the sport of baseball, especially in those societies of North America, East Asia, and the Caribbean where it has long been the national pastime. Of all these

artifacts of the sport, it is the cap that is most iconic and that has reached furthest beyond the sport into mainstream society.

Its prominence should be a fertile subject for scholars of material culture but surprisingly it has yet to draw much serious scholarship (exceptions include Benzecry (2008) and Hardy et al. (2009)). I have based this section on several journalistic accounts, as well as baseball guides, advertisements, photographs, and trading cards over baseball's long history.

The baseball cap, to many, is now a mark of informality and casualization of dress, but ironically, it appeared in the mid-19th century in recognition of formal etiquette of the time. It was considered poor manners for men of most social classes to appear hatless in public, so when professionals and workers began playing baseball as a recreational activity in their social clubs in New York and other cities, they of course donned headwear as well as jackets and ties). Members of one of the earliest teams, the New York Knickerbockers, were photographed in 1849 wearing full-brimmed straw hats. By the late 1850s, another New York team, the Brooklyn Excelsiors, had developed a game cap that was apparently inspired by horse jockey caps of the time and was better suited to outdoor daytime activity. As seen in a photo of the 1860 Excelsior team, the cap had a short front brim and a rounded crown; six triangular cloth panels were sewed together and bound by a top button. In retrospect, they had invented the progenitor of the modern baseball cap.

This ''Brooklyn'' style cap spread to clubs in other major baseball cities within a decade, but it was not until well into the 20th century that it was standardized across the professional game. An advertisement for ''Base Ball Hats and Caps'' in the 1889 edition of Spalding's Base Ball Guide illustrated and offered 10 different styles (Spalding, 1889: 177). By the time of the 1922 edition, the Spalding Guide was offering five styles, although primarily two types; four of the styles were variants of the original rounded Brooklyn cap and a fifth, the ''Chicago'' style was pillbox-shaped with horizontal stripes around a ventilated crown with perspiration proof sweatband (Foster, 1922: 289; see Chico, 2013: 39–41). Team logos began to appear on the caps in the first years of the 20th century but were only universal in the 1940s (the 1945 St. Louis Browns were the last team to eschew a cap logo).

Commentators like Lilliefors (2009) and curators at the National Baseball Hall of Fame have found little fundamental change in the Brooklyn cap over time. The crown has become slightly higher, the front visor is a bit longer, polyester materials cover the crown, and latex rubber is now used in lieu of cotton buckram to line the visor. But changes have been minimal, in part because of marketing conditions that favored standardization and in part because of a distinctive MLB policy of collective licensing.

A key agent in the evolution of the baseball cap was Ehrhardt Koch, the son of a European refugee, who left his job with a hat-making firm to found the New Era Company in Buffalo, New York in 1920 (Lilliefors, 2009 is the best account). Initially, New Era specialized in producing newsboy caps and making hats for local clothing shops to match their customers' suit purchases (the style of the time was to buy a hat that matched the purchased suit). By the 1930s, demand

for these matching hats declined. The surge in baseball's popularity in the 1920s led Koch to contract with Spalding and Wilson, the two major sporting goods companies, to manufacture baseball caps for their competing brands. A decade later, New Era began to offer its own brand and to market directly to professional baseball teams; there were almost 500 registered major and minor-league teams in some 61 leagues by 1950 so this was a sizeable market. The real breakthrough came in 1954 when New Era introduced a woolen model of the Brooklyn-style cap that it called the 59Fifty. It was considered stylish by the players and the stiffened front panels could display graphic team logos as well as team letters; the cotton inner sweatband was more comfortable than the previous leather band. By 1965, New Era was supplying 10 of the MLB teams; the company got a major public relations (PR) boost by providing 59Fifty style caps to the Apollo 11 space mission team in 1969. The popularity of the cap among players appealed to the Major League Baseball organization as a way of finally and fully standardizing the cap across all the teams. In 1986, New Era won a league-wide contract to supply the 59Fifty to all teams, which could determine only hat color and logo design but not the style itself. In recent years, the company supplies about 2000 caps to each team each year.[2]

This is marketing history, but behind that are several analytical points. Making the baseball cap uniform across players and teams was part of the much larger process of standardization that characterized professional spectator sports over the modern century (Leifer, 1995). Each of the major sports in the United States—baseball first and foremost—organized itself as a tight monopoly of team owners and developed a spectatorship and team value by creating leagues of regular competitive schedules, regulating player contracts and movements, systematizing rules and equipment, and presenting a unified front against rival sports, municipal authorities, and commercial sponsors. Indeed, one of the distinguishing features of professional sports in the United States is their early willingness to create collective frameworks for broadcast rights contracts, product licensing, and even revenue sharing among clubs. "Major League Baseball^{TM}" is the collective trademark for all manner of MLB items, and the league's licensing division contracts for their manufacture and sale and distributes the profits among the clubs. As a result, MLB ranks eighth in the 2016 rankings of all global corporate licensees, with annual licensing revenues of $5.5 billion. It is highest-grossing sports entity in the world. Three other American sports leagues are in the top 20 (collegiate football, the NFL, and the NBA). No other sports leagues in the world falls within the top 150 licensees (Lisanti, 2016).[3]

Baseball also indexed a broader transition in sartorial markers of social class distinctions. By the late 19th century in Britain and the United States, hats and caps tended to visualize a rigid divide between middle and upper classes and the working classes (Crane, 2000). Even through the early decades of the 20th century, team photographs showed the players in capped uniforms, flanked by the manager in suit and a hat such as a fedora or Homburg. By the 1940s, however, most

managers and coaches gave up the suit and hat for the player uniforms, including the official caps, a leveling move that is still unusual among professional sports.

American exceptionalism?

Thus, it was not really until the 1960s that the baseball cap moved beyond the realm of baseball players and fellow professionals and was available to and taken up by fans of the sport and others. This followed upon the MLB acceptance of the 59Fifty New Era design, but there were at least two additional facilitating factors. One influence plausibly cited by a number of commentators (e.g., Lilliefors, 2009; Patterson, 2015) for American embrace of the baseball cap at that time was that millions of American boys and some girls were being drawn into Little League baseball programs. Little League baseball gained national popularity and prominence from the 1950s, and several generations of American youth grew up wearing the caps of their teams, out of season as well as during the summer. This may well have conditioned them to adopt this hat among others. They were cheap, comfortable, conspicuous—and customizable, tweaking to the lid, jaunting the angle, distressing the panels, and so on.

Also accelerating the massive diffusion of baseball caps (and its deployment by companies and other institutions) was the one-size-fits-all adjustable cap, which appeared commercially in the late 1970s, using pliable plastic straps that clipped together in the back. This was of obvious appeal to manufacturers and vendors as well as spectators and the general public because they could be cheaply mass produced with multiple colors and logos. Without the need for professional sizing and multiple inventories, in era of disappearing hatters, they could be mass-marketed through any outlet (and with leather or metal straps and finer material, upscale caps could also be economically produced). Several national chains of cap stores competed in malls and shopping streets across the country. Caps quickly spread to other sports as "sideline caps," they were taken up by new service industries like fast-food chains and parcel delivery companies, and they became popular promotional giveaways for companies (known colloquially in the United States as trucker caps, although the earliest companies to distribute corporate logo caps were apparently farm seed and equipment companies like John Deere).

There is a danger, however, in generalizing too rashly from American conditions and experience on the basis of anecdotal news and impressionistic reporting ("The Pope is not so cool for caps" headlined the Times of London's photo of the pontiff Benedict XVI wearing a white logo-less baseball cap in its 28 July 2010 issue). We can appreciate some of the particularities of the United States by the contrasting cases of Japan and Cuba, where there has been a standardization of the cap within the respective baseball worlds but much less diffusion of the cap into everyday life. This is not for lack of historical depth. Baseball moved quickly to Japan and Cuba in the 1860s and 1870s, shortly after its modern form emerged in the United States as regularized professional inter-city competition. Both countries

followed US templates for uniforms and equipment as well as rules and strategies. This included player caps that developed in parallel toward the Brooklyn style.

Still, I discovered there was variation in the degree to which the cap had been adopted beyond sports occasions and into everyday life when I conducted a series of timed counts of headwear in public places in the three societies over the last 3 years, 2015–2017. Except for winter counts in New York, Chicago, and Tokyo, this preliminary data confirms that the baseball cap is the dominant headwear, across rough age cohorts and even men and women for American and Japanese cities. (In winter, the baseball cap does not disappear, but it is outnumbered by woolen or synthetic "ski"-style caps by men and women alike.) For the United States, "hatted" men outnumbered "hatted" women (except in mid-winter) roughly 3-to-1. In Japan, the ratios were reversed, with women preferring bonnet-style hats (although there were one or two per 100 female pedestrians with baseball caps). For Havana (where I have only been able to conduct a few counts in December of 2016), baseball cats are outnumbered by brimmed hats (fedora and straw styles for men). The mean of four Havana counts was five baseball caps and seven other hats per 100 men.

Why is this? The differences between baseball commercialization and licensing in the United States and Cuba are rather obvious and straightforward. Cuban baseball is resolutely amateur, not professional, and the government's Institute for Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER) and the Cuban Baseball Federation tightly controls players, teams, and leagues. There are presently 16 teams in two leagues that compete in the National Series to qualify for the Super Series, but the official objective of all this regional play is to select the Cuban national team for international competition (Baird, 2005; Carter, 2008). Baseball is explicitly anti-commercial. Although the stadiums fill with passionate fans and intense displays of support and although people gather in Havana's famous "Hot Corner" (Esquina Caliente) in the main Parque Centrale to argue and gossip baseball from morning to night, it is almost impossible to find baseball caps and other gear even in Havana and even for its main team, the Industriales. During the economic crisis of the 1990s, even manufacturing of sporting goods for athletes was frozen, and although the Batos brand of the Cuban Sports Industry (CSI) has been authorized to begin limited production of sporting goods and sportswear, baseball caps are unobtainable in the general population (Pettavino, 2004: 29–30). The only production of volume are baseball-style caps with Che Guevara likenesses, a red star, or a Cuba logo for sale in souvenir shops for tourists in Cuban dollar currency.

Turning images of Che Guevara and the Soviet red star into souvenir hats suggests another reason for the more limited adoption of baseball caps in public work and leisure life, and that is the residue of the Castro decades. Fidel Castro himself generally appeared in public wearing a green military field uniform that included a cap that was structured differently than a six-panel baseball cap; rather it was shaped by a single cylindrical panel and a flat top, often without rank insignia and sometimes with a gold 5-pointed star. Public life in the Castro decades

was shaped by state decorum, and baseball caps, with or without team affiliations, did not fit into this political register.[4]

The case of Japan, where I have been doing research on baseball since the mid-1990s, is more surprising. Given the enormous size and marketing power of Japanese sporting goods corporations like Mizuno, Asics, and Zett (Manzenreiter, 2014), given the wide acceptance of uniforms throughout Japan, for school, work, and leisure (McVeigh, 2000), and given the notorious zest for brand-display by Japanese consumers (McCreery, 2000), I initially expected to find an enthusiastic embrace of wearing high-quality baseball caps, adorned with brands or affiliations. It also seemed to me counter-intuitive, given the greater emphasis on relational and contextual bases of selfhood and personal identity in modern Japan. Far more than the American self, should not the Japanese self, as it is drawn into the highly commodified economy of spectator sports, be predisposed to fashion itself through identification with sports hero "others" and to express that through the logos of such fandom? Why did I seem to encounter so many fewer "Tokyo Giants" caps while walking the streets of Tokyo than, say, Cubs or White Sox caps when walking the streets of Chicago?

I would propose that there are at least two primary factors for the difference. First, there is a pervasive attention to uniforms in Japanese life—both institutional and everyday. Almost all state school and private school children wear uniforms in primary and secondary schools (often for the boys, this includes a front-brimmed cap whose origins go back to Prussian military hats of the late nineteenth-century!), military and law enforcement officers have hats close but distinct from baseball cap styling, and there are a wide range of sun-deflecting hats and caps, but no dominant preference for baseball cap styles. Rather, there is a strong societal sense of occasion and of dressing appropriately for occasion, so in fact an embrace of uniforms as a fixed ensemble of items, including the appropriate headwear, actually works against the casual wearing of baseball caps across situations and clothing choices that give American cap-wearing such a broad reach.

A second factor is the small but significant fact that Japanese professional baseball lacks what every major professional team sport in the United States has created—the collective structure for marketing goods and negotiating national broadcast contracts that I discussed above. "Major League Baseball™," for instance, collectively controls trademarks and use rights for all manner of MLB items, contracts for their manufacture and sale, and distributes the profits among the clubs.

One might expect—I certainly did—that Japan, the Land of the Rising Cartel, would be especially amenable to such monopsonistic frameworks, but in fact, when it comes to Japanese professional baseball, it has always been every club for itself (Kelly, 2017). The reason for this is one particular club—the Yomiuri Giants—and its original owner, newspaper entrepreneur Shōriki Matsutarō, the Rupert Murdoch of Taishō and early Shōwa Japan. It was Shōriki who sponsored the first professional team in 1935 and pushed to organize the first professional league a year later. Since the 1950s, which brought a two-league system, the spread of

daily sports papers, and television broadcasting, Yomiuri has totally dominated professional baseball. It has manipulated the sport for its own corporate aggrandizement in rather heavy-handed and narrow-minded fashion for much of the last sixty years—in matters of radio and television broadcast rights, game scheduling and revenue-sharing formulas, player contract conditions, formats for drafting players, and even, some allege, umpire selection and intimidation.

Giants' attendance at the Yomiuri-controlled Tokyo Dome, Giants' games broadcast on Yomiuri television, Giants' news conveyed by the Yomiuri shimbun and the Yomiuri-owned Hōchi shimbun sports paper, Giants' caps and uniform shirts purchased at Yomiuri concession stands all feed the corporate profits of the Yomiuri conglomerate, while attendance, sales, concessions, and media income languish at the other 11 clubs. While the National Football League mainstreamed itself with the first all-league television contract in the 1960s, the National Basketball Association became a global force through an empowered commissioner's office in the 1980s, and even MLB has embraced a leveling player draft and a luxury tax on high-payroll clubs, Shōriki and subsequent Yomiuri CEOs have remained imperiously opposed any collective action by the leagues or Commissioner's Office beyond the minimally necessary. There are not many baseball caps sold and worn in Japan in part because Japanese professional baseball has been unable to collectively commercialize itself.

Now, greedy owners and short-sighted marketing are not points of much intellectual wattage, but they do enlighten us about a principal contradiction of professional league sports that is of more general significance. As Eric Leifer (1995) demonstrated in Making the Majors, all major team sports in 20th-century America adopted a league format, although that is neither a predestined nor easy framework for organizing sports. To build and maintain an audience and a media-space, leagues require scheduling regularity and competitive balance, and these demands frequently conflict with the profit ambitions of individual teams. All teams and their owners and supporters want to win all of the time, but a team that does that too often seriously weakens a league of teams. The perpetual winner may thrive, but all the other teams often suffer drop-offs in income, exposure, and supporters. Baseball, the only professional team sport of any consequence for much of Japan's last seven decades, has labored under the distortions of Yomiuri dominance for much of that time.

In the stadium: Why wear the cap?

There is one location in Japan, however, where one swims in a sea of baseball caps and that is at the baseball stadiums themselves. This is especially so at Kōshien Stadium on the edge of Osaka, the home stadium of the Hanshin Tigers, Japan's "second city" team and long the arch-rival to the national capital Tokyo Giants (Kelly, 2017). The stadium is regularly filled to its 55,000 person capacity. To attend a game at Kōshien is to interlope in a Barthes-ian fashion system of hats, short coats (called "happi coats" in Japanese), shirts, and face-paint, and in a

Figure 3. Young fans cheering the Hanshin Tigers at Kōshien Stadium, 1998. Copyright held by the author.

garish audio-visual-scape of drums, trumpets, banners, flags, batons, and clackers (Figure 3 and Kelly, 2004). The Hanshin Tiger caps at Kōshien are not only iconic but totemic, and the color scheme and club emblem of the caps are unmistakable, material proclamations of allegiance.

Professional team sports are the most fully segmentary polities of the modern world. There are individual players within teams, teams within divisions, divisions within leagues, a sport within sports—and sports within life. Passions divide and coalesce situationally. In this sense, I suppose, the cap can profess love of baseball, preference for the Central League, as well as allegiance to the Hanshin team. In the confines of the stadium, however, it is a declaration of Tiger-love, Tiger-mania.

But what does that mean exactly? What is intended by adopting the garb of the team, putting on a Hanshin Tiger cap in a world like Kōshien? Is it a naïve or wishful gesture of merging with, becoming one with the Hanshin Tigers? There are at least two analytical orientations that give credence to such an interpretation. The first is the consumption turn that has overtaken anthropology of late, a shift in the balance of analytical power from production and exchange to consumption. The death of the (Ford) salesman has brought forth the birth of the (post-Fordist) consumer, the savvy commodity bricoleur who constructs and expresses social relationships and personal identity through the acquisition and assembly of products.[5] Not the good life, but the goods life. Not a life found, perhaps, but a lifestyle bought. This analytical turn has had a generally salutary effect, I think, in enhancing our appreciation not only of the distinctions marked by a world of goods but also of the capacities of commodities to effect distinctions. Fashions, it insists, are matters of self-fashioning.[6]

Added to this, we have the collective wisdom of many studies of Japanese personhood, which have advanced a rather nuanced appreciation of the socio-centrism of self-construction in Japan. It is the interpersonal analog to the corporate collusiveness I noted above. Selves are shaped in the company of others, and are completed by the "long engagements" with significant individuals and groups (Lebra, 2004; Shimizu, 2002). Selves and others are mutually affirming and not implacably opposed.

Thus, an anthropology of modernity that posits self-fashioning through material consumption and an anthropology of Japan that teaches personal growth through social engagement appear to recommend, in conjunction, a strong reading of the hat as an emblem of an "imagined community" of Hanshin Tigers.

I would propose, though, that there is both more and less going on. Consider a thought experiment, for instance, about the different "claims" made by wearing four items: one's school cap, a Hanshin Tiger cap, a prestige fashion brand logo like an Anna Sui jersey, and a fantasy character item like a Hello Kitty blouse. All are logo-wear, but the wearer's relation to the logo varies. A school uniform is a mark of membership in a social group. In contrast, Anna Sui is an emblem of distinction in a semiotic grid of fashion, while someone wears a Hello Kitty T-shirt as a would-be companion-in-play to a benign fantasy figure.

Wearing a baseball cap at Kōshien is like none of these. The affiliation claimed is to a real "other" not a fantasy character. At the same time, very few in the Kōshien stands that I have talked to suffer the delusion that they too are members of the Hanshin team in the manner in which they are fellow students.

Indeed, there is a further distinction within the Kōshien audience we must consider—put crudely, between the spectators and the fans: the spectators, who come to watch the games, often frequently, fervently, and passionately, and the fans whose sense of engagement and intention is even more active and more passionate. They wear the hats differently. To a spectator, a Hanshin Tigers cap is an expression of support and a declaration (or admission) of allegiance. But when a "fan" wears the cap, it is an instrument of social action, a part of a fan's actions as well as his/her identity. It is a material performative.

Sport-skeptical readers may think this to be a far-fetched claim, but it is not. Baseball is a game of talent and technique but also of mood and momentum. It is a game in real time with unpredictable and only partially controllable outcomes. Many who come to the ballpark do believe that cheering does not just follow and comment upon action (a fine play, a disputed call, a suspenseful moment), but it can also initiate, sustain, and reverse the flow and direction of action on the field. Cheering is consequential, and it is a disposition of body display as well as vocal declamation. In that sense, to those people, wearing the hat is not a statement, it is an illocutionary act.

The baseball cap becomes the millinery of late modernity

Thus far, I have discussed the emergence, standardization, and spread of the baseball cap through the international world of that sport, including the players and

spectators. It has also colonized other sports, even those with their own headgear like tennis visors, football helmets, ski caps, and F-1 racing driver helmets. It is now commonplace to see an NFL football quarterback come to the sidelines and take off his football helmet to replace it with a team-logo baseball cap—that often matches the baseball cap that his coach has been wearing all the time. Even upscale PGA and LPGA golfers are much more apt to wear a baseball-style cap than the brimmed hats and sun visors previously considered proper.

However, pervasive the baseball cap has become in the worlds of sport, I would not be writing about it in a journal of consumption studies had the cap not leaked out into the world of everyday life, picking up uses, meanings, and wearers even as it has lost specificity. As noted at the outset of this essay, there are few places where it has not been seen—and worn.[7] Brim curled or straight, pulled menacingly low or tipped casually up, worn front-facing, cocked to the side, or turned-around, the baseball cap has proven a simple and inexpensive yet expressively malleable accessory for dressing the head—"the fashioned pate"! From the sportsworld, it been adopted across institutional sectors and into everyday life, crossing national boundaries, ethnic groups, and the gender divide. It has become the most ubiquitous global headwear at the present moment. That the cap has transgressed the gender divide is of particular significance, given the longstanding barriers to women in sports participation and spectatorship.

As I have suggested above, this was not an inevitable development, even to New Era and MLB when the 59Fifty became codified and commercialized through the sport in the 1960s and 1970s. We must consider too that these were the very decades when public norms of wearing hats (or caps or bonnets of similar headwear) collapsed in American, British, and at least some European countries (Amphlett, 2003; Chico, 2013; Crane, 2000). It was less that the baseball cap replaced other headwear but rather that it gained popularity at a time when more and more men and women were ignoring headwear altogether, except in inclement weather.

There were surely influences outside the world of sports, aesthetic as well as commercial. Perhaps most significant in pushing baseball caps into new taste circles and wider circulation was the hip-hop artistic movement. Hip-hop had very particular origins in the South Bronx in the early 1970s, but by the 1980s, it was an international movement, and the music and dance inspired waves of fashion. Hip-hop designers, drawing from the rappers but also a changing culture of the National Basketball Association (George, 1992), showcased stylized baseball caps that multiplied their popularity and drew manufacturers and retailers (e.g., Jenkins, 2015; Lewis and Gray, 2013; Salazar, 2008; cf. the Burberry-check baseball caps favored by "Chav" youth in the United Kingdom, Moor, 2006). In 1996, the film director Spike Lee approached New York Yankee team owner George Steinbrenner with a special request for a Yankees cap in red, rather than blue, to match his red Yankees jacket. Steinbrenner (and New Era) agreed to this exception to the licensing code, and when Lee was televised attending the 1996 World Series games with his new cap, he opened "a new chapter in sports licensing" (DiMeglio, 2006; Patterson, 2015).

Indeed, atop a T-shirt, denim jeans, and sneakers, the baseball cap has come to complete the everyday kit of modernity. Together and separately, this garb is either celebrated or castigated for casualizing public fashion and transgressing consumption distinctions of clothing, class, taste, and expense. No doubt, but it also must be recognized as a fitting assemblage of work and play, marking the contemporary blurring of this distinction. The T-shirt had its origins in 19th-century undergarments and became the work under-shirt of miners, sailors, and stevedores (Rivoli, 2015). The twill fabric known as jean had earlier origins, but the denim blue jeans that have spread through the modern world had their origins as work pants in 1871 in San Francisco with Jacob Davis and Levi Strauss (Miller and Woodward, 2012). These work-derived tops and bottoms are topped off by the baseball cap above and carried by the sneakers or athletic shoes below. Sneakers had their origins as plimsolls, which were rubber-soled and canvas-top shoes developed for seaside bathing in 1830s Great Britain; later in the century, they evolved into other types of soft-soled athletic shoes for the emerging recreational and competitive sports (Kawamura, 2016).

Interestingly, what the four items of the kit share beyond their casualization of everyday dress is the possibilities of overt branding. Not just the baseball caps, but also the sneakers, jeans, and T-shirts can all be readily (and commonly) tagged with brands, logos, and messages. They are badges of affiliation and identification—not just ways of expressing subcultural or class identity (a common function of fashion) but canvases for more specific athletic, political, social, and brand affiliations. Thus, like the other elements of this dress kit, the baseball cap is poised between trying to stand out and trying to fit in. It has become an item of fashion, whereby we seek to escape the ordinary and generic, but it is also worn as a constant, familiar, personal item that embeds us in the routine and the habitual.

It is this capacity to provide comfort by personalizing the generic that was demonstrated by one of the most interesting ethnographic projects on the clothing of everyday life. This was the project conducted by Daniel Miller, Sophie Woodward, and their team of researchers, who explored blue jeans wear by residents of a rather nondescript neighborhood of North London (Miller and Woodward, 2012). Of course, blue jeans, even more than baseball caps, are susceptible to fashion and worn to highlight expensive labels and claim particular social locations. However, they argue from extended interviews and observations that for most people most of the time, blue jeans are a way of being ordinary, of making a generic item of clothing into a personal comfort. Fashion theorists, they claim, go too far in implicating the daily life of garments like blue jeans into normative codes of mainstream fashion or subcultural style. Of course blue jeans—and baseball caps—have been drawn into and significantly influenced fashion complexes (Monden, 2015; Salazar, 2008). However, sometimes—more often than not, their data suggest—people wear blue jeans, over and over, just to be comfortable in not having to worry about the normative. Although no research as comprehensive as theirs has yet been done for the baseball cap, I would hypothesize that it is just as true for the cap. It is easily fits to one's head, it can be made to not

draw attention as much as to be conspicuous, it helps bad hair days (and its inner volume doesn't spoil good hair days), and it provides a modicum of cover at minimal monetary and social cost.

Here, I should distinguish my reasoning from the very insightful work of Fred Davis (1992), especially his final book on fashion. In it he makes a strong case, based on empirical work, for the importance of core actors and institutions—for example, designers, manufacturers, and trend-setters—in shaping fashion cycles and a "fashion system." This is very persuasive; styles as assemblages of clothing and decoration that have a material, corporeal, and aesthetic logic. One might be tempted to apply his framework to what I have labeled above as the everyday kit of late modernity—sneakers, jeans, t-shirt, and cap. The difference, however, is that each of these items of clothing—certainly the baseball cap—has shown a remarkable independence from one another and autonomous motility across what Davis might consider to be fashion systems.

For theorists as disparate as Pierre Bourdieu (1984), John Fiske (1989), Steven Miles (1998), and Mike Featherstone (2007), the late modern as an epoch beginning in the post-World War II decades is distinguished by the preeminence of consumption as "a space of enactment, fulfillment, and identity construction" (Miles, 2016: 273). Consumption since Veblen (1899) has been acknowledged as a process of acquisition and display; what is new to these theorists is how a tense dialectic now connects acquisition and display and how display has become deployment, an active, creative, and dialectical practice of asserting self-identity and negotiating social placement. For the reasons outlined in this essay, the baseball cap is an exemplar of late modern consumption as self-fashioning and social transgression. The baseball cap in the early 21st century has insinuated itself into the far corners of the world, worn on many occasions by people of all walks of life, even Pontiff strolls in Papal gardens. The global reach of the baseball cap and its rise from the headwear of a sport of circumscribed popularity to its place as the most common contemporary hat style has been a remarkable disruption of previous boundaries of leisure and work, public and private dress, and gender-specific fashion codes. Its design, its materials, and its economics of manufacturing, marketing, and licensing combine to enhance its value as a badge of affiliation, a statement of fashion, and a default covering for personal comfort. As Glauber (2003) notes, the baseball cap has become a ubiquitous part of "the uniform of everyday life" for the global late modern Fiske (1989).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. These were 5- and 10-minute counts of headwear taken on major streets, intersections, and downtown parks in New York, New Haven, and Minneapolis in the United States, in Tokyo and Osaka in Japan, and in Havana, Cuba. I have also conducted counts on university campuses in New Haven, CT, and Tokyo. The counts have enumerated passer-byes for the kinds of hats worn, and they have been conducted at different times of day, on weekdays and weekends, and at all four seasons (in the United States and Japan).
2. More precisely, New Era was co-licensed with another company, Sport Specialties, which has later absorbed by Nike. In 1994, New Era was awarded a sole license.
3. The promotion-relegation system in many leagues of our most global sport, soccer, is an obvious detriment to such collective compromise and discipline.
4. It is relevant here to note the widespread use of the so-called Mao hat in the same decades in the People's Republic of China. This was more precisely the People's Liberation Army hat, again cylindrical soft cloth rather than paneled in construction and conveying the political-military significance through a front emblem of a single red star, a symbol of Soviet Communism since the 1920s (Li, 2010). Castro never adopted nor promulgated the red star insignia.
5. The reference here is to Lévi-Strauss's (1966) influential discussion of the bricoleur as one who assembles something new from a toolkit of existing skills and readily available materials, as opposed to the engineer, who is committed to replication or application of wholescale frameworks.
6. In my own discipline, I find Daniel Miller the most persuasive on this point (e.g., Miller, 1995, 2001).
7. And enumerated! Glauber (2003) reported that "In Britain, where cricket is the main bat-and-ball game, a watershed was crossed in the spring of 2001 when the country's monthly retail price survey—a 650-item national shopping basket of goods and services—included baseball caps."

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Author Biography

William W. Kelly is a professor of anthropology at Yale University and author of the forthcoming book, *The Sportsworld of the Hanshin Tigers* (University of California Press, 2018).