

## **‘Mediating’ national anxieties via stereotyping the French ‘threatening Other’: Analysis of the 2011 Rugby World Cup in New Zealand media coverage.**

Fabrice Desmarais and Toni Bruce

**Keywords:** Media, representations, sport, country image

### **Abstract**

The aim of the study discussed in this chapter was to understand how the print media, which acts as the link between global sport mega-events and national publics, creates meaning, generates interest, and mobilises a patriotic national public via various representations of a threatening opponent. The chapter explores the significance of such representations during a mediated global sport mega-event during which the sporting reputation of the country host is at stake, arguing that they should be understood as being part of a centre-periphery discourse in which the nation uses negative representations of the Other to galvanise itself. Based on an analysis of New Zealand media representations of the French rugby team – a potential threat to the host country’s success – during the 2011 Rugby World Cup hosted by New Zealand, the chapter illustrates the intersections of Buhmann and Ingenhoff’s (2014) concepts of country reputation, country brand and country identity, and the associated functional, aesthetic, normative and sympathetic dimensions of country image.

### **Introduction**

In a globally interconnected world, countries are observed, rated, and put into competition with each other (Werron, 2014). One way countries can stand out in this global competition for attention and esteem is by hosting sport mega-events, because the organising country becomes the centre of attention of a worldwide audience during these highly mediated occasions. In this chapter, we analyse the 2011 men’s Rugby World Cup (RWC) hosted by New Zealand, which represented one such opportunity to showcase this small and remote country to the world, instil national pride, and bolster country identity. On world maps, New Zealand is traditionally placed at the bottom right at the edge of the world, sometimes cut in half, sometimes not even there. Therefore, many scholars have noted that geography—especially notions of centre and periphery (Laponce, 1980)—combined with New Zealand’s small population, generate anxieties about New Zealand’s country identity and place in the world, and underlie its perpetual quest for self-definition (Bell, 1996; King, 1991; Williams, 1997)<sup>i</sup>, including the ‘fear that the centre is somewhere else’ (Perry, 1994, p. 77). Manifestations of this quest and its accompanying fear are evident in the recurrence of media messages that promote national pride, including New Zealand’s success on the world stage, through frequent evocations of the global uniqueness and magnificence of New Zealand’s nature and the country’s pure character, and the intense focus on international sporting success. These representations sit in Buhmann and Ingenhoff’s (2014, p. 14) “aesthetic dimension” of country image which “covers beliefs regarding the [a]esthetic qualities and the attractiveness of a country as a cultural and scenic place”, including “public culture, traditions, and territory” and the “functional dimension” which “covers beliefs regarding the competences and competitiveness of a country”, in this case, in relation to its performance on the international sporting stage. Thus, staging the RWC on home soil was a significant opportunity for New Zealand’s world-renowned men’s rugby team, the All Blacks, to demonstrate their supremacy on the world stage by winning the sport’s pinnacle event and enhance New Zealand’s country brand and reputation. Despite their overall dominance of world rugby and consistent #1 ranking<sup>ii</sup>, since hosting and winning the inaugural RWC in 1987 the team had failed to perform well at Rugby World Cups: its best outcome was reaching the final in 1995. Furthermore, by 2011, following two unexpected, and thus shocking, defeats against France in 1999 (semi-final) and 2007 (quarter final), the French team had emerged as the All Blacks *bête noire*, a major threat to New Zealand’s success.

In line with the book’s aim to bridge disciplinary perspectives on the formation and effects of country image, country reputation, country brand, and country identity (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2014), we integrate concepts from social psychology and the media-focused theoretical approach of cultural studies, as we investigate how the New Zealand media contributed to constructing the country reputation of France and country brand of New Zealand in the minds of a New Zealand audience (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2014) as a way of mediating national anxieties about New Zealand’s place in the world. As Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2014, p. 15) note, country reputation and country brand are specifically “constructs of representation” circulated primarily via mass media but they are also

unavoidably entwined with individual subjective perceptions of country image and identity. Our analysis investigates how New Zealand's highest-circulation and most-read daily newspaper<sup>iii</sup>, the New Zealand Herald (including the Herald on Sunday) constructed the French rugby team as threatening Others or out-group members during the 2011 RWC. The aim was to understand how news media, which acts as the link between the sport event and the national public, creates meaning, generates interest, and mobilises the patriotism of a national public via representations of a threatening opponent.

Although not the main focus, the chapter also acknowledges the significance of media representations through the lenses of business studies and political communication. Indeed, the representations studied in this case occurred during a mediated global sport mega-event whose aims included, from a marketing perspective, promoting the host country's brand internationally and, from a political perspective, acting as a nation-building public relations tool communicating positive self-representations that, in Buhmann and Ingenhoff's (2014, p. 10) terms, might in turn influence "the domestic self-perception existing among a country's domestic public" or "in-group". Therefore, the chapter argues that the national media's representations of Others should indeed, as this book argues, be understood as part of a bigger picture of country image, reputation, brand, and identity. In particular, these representations can be considered as being part of a centre-periphery discourse in which the nation uses negative representations of the Other to galvanise itself. Throughout, the All Blacks and the French team should be understood as standing in for the nation, as is clear in the frequent use of a country label—the French—to describe or identify the French team.

### **Contextualizing Rugby in New Zealand and the 2011 Rugby World Cup**

Sport, and men's rugby union in particular, is one of the most important tools used to 'centre' the country or 'put it on the map' (a phrase commonly used in New Zealand media); it is widely accepted as the country's national sport and has been described as part of a cultural discourse constructing an imagined shared national identity (Fougere, 1989; Hope, 2002; Phillips, 1996; Ryan, 2005; Scherer & Jackson, 2007). As Bruce (2013) noted, "the truth as told by many journalists, commentators and researchers is that rugby and national identity are inextricably linked" (p. 900)<sup>iv</sup>. This construction of rugby as central to New Zealand identity has been supported, since at least 1905<sup>v</sup>, as part of a nationalistic political discourse amalgamating notions of productive and determined masculinity, sport and national success (Daley 2005; Fougere 1989; Hope 2002; Phillips 1996).

Undoubtedly, the construction of rugby as central to New Zealand's country image and brand is due to the international dominance of the game by the All Blacks, who have an unrivalled winning record (<http://stats.allblacks.com/>). The team has been compared to the Brazilian football team in terms of its dominance and skills. They have the best winning record of all men's national rugby union teams, having held the top ranking in the world longer than all other countries combined, even though at the time of the 2011 RWC they had won the Cup only once. Because of this success, the All Blacks have not only been used as a central element for identity building inside the nation but have also become an important tool for globally positioning the nation as successful – thus functioning as a key element in New Zealand's country reputation. Therefore, sporting success, as well as New Zealand's geographic location, and natural environment noted earlier, form part of a discourse that promotes selective forms of national consciousness and contributes to imaginings of the nation as globally unique. A sport mega-event such as the RWC was the perfect tool to promote New Zealand's brand of global uniqueness to itself and to the world.

### **Sport mega-events and the 2011 Rugby World Cup**

Sport mega-events are hosted by nations for a number of reasons. One important reason is to demonstrate the host country's 'soft power' (Nye, 2004) as part of a public diplomacy and promotional strategy to project a positive image to the outside world (Grix, Brannagan, Houlihan, 2015; Wenner & Billing, 2017). Politicians, in particular, are keen to organise mega-events because they know that a successful event will raise not only their country's reputation but also their own national and international profile (Nye, 2004; Wang 2006). Other reasons include helping with nation branding and boosting tourism, attracting foreign investment, initiating national development

strategies (building stadiums and updating facilities), and, last but not least, providing a feel-good factor among the host population (Chalip, 2006; Getz, 1998; Grix, Brannagan, Houlihan, 2015; Kim & Morrison 2005). Therefore, as part of these efforts, the organisation of a sport mega-event involves numerous actors within the organising nation (political, commercial, sporting, and media), all attempting to contribute to making the event a national success and enhancing the host country's reputation by positioning it on the international stage. Thus, sport mega-events are in effect national 'feel-good' tools aimed at bolstering country identity, and reputation tools aimed at 'centering' a country.

The Rugby World Cup is amongst the top five major international sport mega-events. Since the tournament was held in New Zealand it presented the opportunity to instil pride and a feel-good factor among the host population (building both country image and brand) and showcase the country to the world (building country reputation). In order to generate interest in New Zealand and the event, a worldwide communication campaign featuring a giant inflatable rugby ball was launched in 2007, spreading New Zealand's passion for rugby and also showcasing New Zealand's tourist attractions, using the country's "100% pure" national branding slogan in places such as Paris, London and Tokyo<sup>vi</sup>. In addition, a slogan 'A Stadium of Four Million' was coined for RWC 2011 in order to portray New Zealand as a fanatic rugby country and "to communicate the unique, enduring and mythical place of rugby within the hearts and minds of New Zealand's four million citizens" (Jackson, 2013, p. 848), thereby encouraging a form of national sporting imagined community.

As an international event with a worldwide audience reportedly close to 4 billion, the RWC was a dream forum to showcase and confirm the All Blacks historical success on a global stage and therefore centre New Zealand even more firmly 'on the map'. One concern widely relayed in the media was that the All Blacks might again fail to win the tournament judging from their inability to perform at the RWC since 1987. The All Blacks draw in the same pool as France—the team that eliminated them in 1999 and 2007, preventing any chance of earning the sport's most prestigious crown—also added an extra challenge to an already tense situation. As the media put it on the eve of their pool game:

When the All Blacks run out onto Eden Park tomorrow night to play France in their Rugby World Cup pool match, they will be looking to redeem themselves after seriously underestimating the quality and ability of their opponents in 2007.

Therefore, the 2011 World Cup had broad nationalist implications for New Zealand because of the importance of sport and particularly rugby to New Zealand's sense of itself and others (Evans & Kelley, 2002). As an important event, it provided the media with a potential narrative mix of revenge, pride, national identity, and 'centering' to which the national audience would be receptive.

### **Media representations of national identity during sport mega-events**

During sport mega-events, when sport is highly visible, the public's national self-concept is particularly heightened (Bale, 1986; Gibbons, 2014; Whannel, 2008; Wenner & Billing, 2017). As Whannel (2008) noted, major international sport events allow spectators "to experience a fierce and tribal patriotism not generally manifest in many other contexts" (p. 171). During the 2011 RWC, Bruce (2017) showed how the event bolstered many New Zealanders' "feelings of pride, patriotism and national belonging" but also alienated and frustrated other members of the public. Overall Bruce's research shows that rather than leaving New Zealanders indifferent, the event generated passionate reactions in relation to the country's national identity.

Instrumental in fuelling the fire of nationalism during global sport events is the media. Its importance in promoting and reproducing national identity and a shared sense of national community has been theorised and researched empirically (Anderson, 1991; Billig, 1995; Law, 2001; Rosie et al., 2004). As Rosie et al. argue in relation to the national press:

Newspapers which have more than a local or regional remit are essentially national institutions which encourage their readers to see the world in general in specifically national terms, 're-mind' them of their own nation in particular and help them to think in patriotic terms about it. (p. 437)

Much research has identified how sport mega-events provide sport journalists with “opportunities to wave national flags in patriotic support for the country’s team” (Vincent, Kian, Pedersen, Kuntz & Hill, 2010, p. 201), producing intensely partisan and nationalistic coverage (Garland 2004; Garland & Rowe, 1999; Maguire & Poulton, 1999; Poulton 2004). Thus, through the media’s intense interpellation of sport audiences as patriots, sport mega-events “become sites of hyperbolic ideological and nationalistic rhetorics” (Delgado, 2003, p. 293), otherwise known as the “sport-nationalism-media troika” (Rowe, McKay & Miller, 1998, p. 133). On the one hand, the media is crucial as an arena allowing nations to imagine and actively construct *themselves* (Maguire & Poulton, 1999; Tuck 2003) in more or less narcissistic ways, while, on the other hand, it is also instrumental in allowing nations to imagine and actively construct Others using xenophobia and chauvinism (Maguire & Poulton, 1999; Poulton, 2004; Vincent et al., 2010).

Of crucial importance in the media’s representation of national sport teams is the practice of stereotyping (Desmarais & Bruce, 2008; Rowe, 1999). National sporting stereotypes function to present a consistent and easily interpretable set of messages that effectively engage viewers and provide the resources for enhancing the “drama and tension” that is such a desired aspect of the audience experience (Desmarais & Bruce, 2008; 2010; Wenner & Gantz, 1998, p. 236). Differences between teams can be understood as a semiotic system in which oppositional aspects (little versus big, nice versus mean, etc.) are dramatised (Pociello, 1999; Bryant, Comisky & Zillman, 1977) and in which difference is distilled into stock plots, stock characters, and binary oppositions that simplify and exaggerate physical, moral and stylistic traits (Duncan & Brummett, 1987; Wanta & Leggett, 1988).

### **Otherness, social identity theory, and stereotypes**

As key elements of national sport narratives, stereotypes fulfill the function of group differentiation—as outlined by social identity theory—by highlighting positive elements of in-groups and negative elements of out-groups (Tajfel, 1978, 1981). In addition, although the emotional impact of, and criteria for, inclusion or exclusion may vary by situation, the classification implies a *relational* and *competitive* relation between the different groups (Tajfel, 1970, 1982); something that is both conceptually and literally true in our case. Social identity theory intersects with the concept of Otherness which is central to cultural studies analyses of how majority and minority identities are constructed (Hall, 1997; Jenkins, 1996). Theories from social psychology and cultural studies share an understanding that “conceptions of outgroups are generated in their social and historical contexts” and shared through “channels of social influence” that include the media (Tajfel, 1982, p. 22). Thus, these theories are helpful in understanding the media’s key role in the exploitation of national sporting stereotypes that emphasize difference between the home nation and the opposition and establish the home nation’s dominance (Desmarais & Bruce, 2008; O’Donnell, 1994).

Stereotyping, as Hall (1997) argued, also serves to identify and ‘understand’ the Other through processes of over-analysis and fascination. This process of fascination for another nation (or in the case of our study, national Others) has also been noted by Buhmann and Ingehoff (2014) and classified under the affective component of the country image construct, which they call the sympathetic country dimension. According to Hall (1997), difference is mysterious, powerful and “strangely attractive, precisely because it is forbidden, taboo, threatening to cultural order” (p. 237). Therefore, every time an Other is represented, its difference tends to be over-analyzed and over-explained by in-groups. When an Other is over-analysed by a national media, this inevitably leads the national audience to consider the Other as somewhat fascinating but also dangerous (because of its ‘abnormal’ differences). Stereotyping in effect sends Others who are in some way different to the in-group into “symbolic exile” (Hall, 1997, p 258).

On the other hand, stereotyping the Other also facilitates binding or bonding together of the in-group—of all of us who are ‘normal’—into one imagined community. In particular, using negative stereotypes of the Other can serve in the “symbolic binding of the people of a country” (Rowe, McKay & Miller, 1998, p. 120), helping the in-group feel distinct from the out-group. Stereotyping is thus part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order; it sets up a “symbolic frontier

between...the ‘acceptable’ and the ‘unacceptable’...‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’”, between normal and abnormal and between (Hall, 1997, p. 258); what is abnormal and unacceptable does not belong to the national in-group and thus becomes the Other. These processes of fascination, over-analysis, and demeaning treatment of Others through stereotyping are therefore clearly related to notions of power. The stereotype of the Other is therefore a way to represent and to reproduce power hierarchies, to elevate the in-group in relation to the Other. The powerful group—here the national media—has the power to represent the Other in specific ways within a “regime of representation” (Hall, 1997, p. 232).

National stereotypes are therefore considered in this analysis as vital components of a binary narrative structure of print media. Via their representations, journalists – cultural intermediaries (Negus, 2002) who create symbolic meanings for members of their national culture – are the main actors in the dissemination of the regime of representation of national stereotypical identities to the public. In the context of international sport competitions, they use national stereotyping as an ‘othering’ tool, attempting to capitalise on the idea that the national public, much like sports fans, BIRG (bask in reflected glory of their team) and Blast (derogate disliked opponents) (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001).

### Method

Although the potential national affective intensity of France versus New Zealand matches (see Desmarais & Bruce, 2008, 2010) was our main focus, we employed a temporal approach to analysis, identifying the media discourses in 179 online news stories between September 1 and October 27, linked to each of the French team’s seven games in the tournament, which were conceptualised as turning points (Table 1). This classification allowed us to more easily and clearly apprehend the evolution and narrative arc of the media representations at various stages and to assess whether stereotypes varied in relation to opponents or sporting results. The analytic approach was a cultural studies textual analysis, underpinned by the understanding that individual texts are part of a flow of “similar representation practices...being repeated, with variations, from one text or site of representation to another”; in each historical moment, the meanings across a “whole repertoire” of individual texts coalesce into a “regime of representation” (Hall, 1997, p. 232).

Drawn in the same pool, New Zealand won the pool game against France 37-17, and finished first, followed by France. As a result, both teams went through to the quarter-finals on different paths. They ultimately met again in the RWC final, which the All Blacks narrowly won, 8-7. The competition therefore comprised two pivotal moments at which the French team was considered an imminent threat to New Zealand’s brand and reputation: the pool match, which was represented as a good occasion to seek revenge for previous RWC losses to France, and the final which provided a unique opportunity for New Zealand to finally shine on the RWC stage and enhance the country’s brand and reputation. The remainder of the chapter describes the regime of representation of the French and highlights the importance of both pivotal moments (stages 3/4 and 7/8 in Table 1) in their representation. In order to illustrate the repeated nature of the media’s representational practices, the chapter incorporates direct media quotes as often as possible. Throughout, all references to the media are to articles from the New Zealand Herald.

Table 1: Timeline and Number of Articles Analysed from New Zealand Herald

Stage	# of Articles	Timeline
1	10	French arrival in New Zealand to before first pool game v Japan
2	13	After Japan to before second pool game v Canada
<b>3</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>After Canada to before third pool game v New Zealand</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>After New Zealand to before fourth pool game v Tonga</b>
5	15	After Tonga to before quarter-final v England
6	25	After England to before semi-final v Wales
<b>7</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>After semi-final to before final v New Zealand</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>After final</b>
TOTAL	179	

### **Regime of representation of the French**

The next section describes the media's regime of representation (Hall, 1997) of the French and identifies the repertoire through which difference was represented. This regime of representation constitutes the media's attempt to grapple with perceived French rugby difference, historically represented as unpredictability (Desmarais & Bruce, 2008), which simultaneously worked to raise consciousness about the threatening French Other and facilitate mobilisation of the New Zealand national public in order to attract readers.

Unsurprisingly, stereotypical representations of the French in the Herald were closely aligned with what Desmarais and Bruce (2008, 2010) found in their studies of live sporting commentary of France-New Zealand games; however, the 2011 RWC news coverage extended the existing stereotypes of the French as unpredictable, emotional, passionate, full of flair, and brutal, by identifying additional elements of dishonesty and framing the French team as undeserving of victory. The temporal analysis showed that each of these portrayals had a role to play in the dominant representation of the French at critical points of the tournament, highlighting tensions at crucial threatening moments. Overall, these representations of the French built through the "subjective stakeholder attitude" of the media participated in building all four of the country dimensions of France: the aesthetic ("beliefs regarding the aesthetic qualities and the beauty/attractiveness of a country"), functional ("beliefs regarding the competences and competitiveness of a country"), normative ("beliefs regarding the integrity of a country, its norms and values") and sympathetic ("feelings of sympathy and fascination for a country") (Buhmann & Inghoff, 2014, p. 14). The following sections discuss the various stereotypes used to describe the French and highlight their evolution as the tournament progressed.

#### *Early days: Positive representations and positioning the threatening Other sportively.*

At the beginning of the tournament, especially in the first week, the focus of media coverage was mainly about positioning the French as a dangerous or threatening Other in relation to the home team, the All Blacks. The focus was mainly on the functional country image dimension of the competitiveness and competencies of the French (Buhmann & Inghoff, 2014). At this early stage, the media attempted to capture the attention of the New Zealand public by reminding them about the defeats of 1999 and 2007 via articles using headlines such as "All Blacks: Wary eye on the French". New Zealanders were constantly reminded about "that 20-18 defeat [which] is writ large in every New Zealand rugby recollection". Other descriptions of the French as "foes", "the bane of New Zealand", "New Zealand's World Cup nemesis" and All Blacks coach Graham Henry's "bête noire" recurrently positioned them as a threat to the All Blacks' chances of winning the event. At the same time, however, some coverage in the first two weeks can be described as neutral or even positive. Non-threatening descriptions focused on how the team was enjoying the beginning of the tournament. They were represented as "respectful" of their Japanese opponent, "focused", and even as having shown "enough composure", and "looking competent" after their first game. At this stage, the French were spared by the media, only once portrayed as being "on the receiving end of some friendly ribbing from locals". French otherness was illustrated through 'friendly' normative and sympathetic clichés of "enjoying life" and, in satirical fashion as people revelling in "eating some snails and some frog's legs", a form of food consumption seen as abnormal in New Zealand culture.

At this early stage of the RWC, positive aspects of the enduring "French flair" stereotype were also regularly woven throughout the coverage. These portrayals, in effect, participated in spreading a positive "aesthetic dimension" (Buhmann & Inghoff, 2014, p.14) of France in relation to their sporting style. New Zealand journalists repeatedly mentioned the French backline's "sparkle", "plenty of panache", "delightful touches", "invention", and "dangerous natural skills", hyperbolically highlighting that "they have backs who can light up the night sky"<sup>vii</sup>. The coverage thus participated in a form of romanticisation of the French who were portrayed as "thriv[ing] on the joy of living in the moment and freedom of expression that comes from playing 'naturally'". This clichéd but somewhat respectful and positive aspect of the French stereotype was used heavily in the first two weeks of the tournament when France was playing teams other than New Zealand and therefore not posing a direct immediate threat to the hosts.

*Evolution towards more negative media depictions: French as fascinating but threatening Others*

The week leading to the pool game against the All Blacks was a clear turning point in the way the French were represented. As France was now the team on the All Blacks path, and therefore an imminent threat to New Zealand, the media’s tone suddenly became critical and derisive, starting to weave a range of increasingly negative stereotypes in order to appeal to and mobilise the New Zealand public’s patriotism. From then on, the media’s message shifted to more clearly alerting the New Zealand public about the French threat and of France’s intention to spoil New Zealand’s party, as in this headline pitting French captain Thierry Dussautoir against All Blacks captain Ritchie McCaw: “Dussautoir out to 'ruin' McCaw's milestone test”.

In the rest of the chapter, we apply the temporal analysis to two complementary but divergent patterns of representation which are linked to the functional, normative, and sympathetic dimensions of the French: the first pattern constructed the French as inconsistent, unpredictable, unstructured, emotional, passionate objects of fascination and the second pattern represented them as dishonest, violent, bizarre and abnormal threatening Others with potential to damage or undermine New Zealand’s brand and reputation. We highlight pivotal moments of intensity in their application. In addition, because difference and otherness are always relational (Hall, 1997; Tajfel, 1970, 1982), we also identified the ways in which the Herald juxtaposed French stereotypes against representations of the All Blacks to actively the construct the French as the out-group and the All Blacks as the in-group.

*“Vive la difference”: Fascination for the Other*

Our analysis shows that the French were consistently represented within the normative and sympathetic dimensions of Buhmann and Ingenhoff’s (2014) model, as intriguing and difficult to understand within the cultural norms and values of New Zealand society. As we discuss below, this recurrent assessment of the French became even clearer when compared to the media’s portrayal of the All Blacks (see Table 2). Indeed, contrasting both teams’ regimes of representation revealed the New Zealand media’s cultural expectations about normality and abnormality. Our analysis found that the regimes of representation were almost complete opposites, creating obvious boundaries between self- and other-stereotypes especially in terms of style and behaviour. Thus, the various elements of the French stereotype were represented as a total contrast to consistent portrayals of the composed, predictable, structured, rational, consistent, reliable, and honest All Blacks.

Table 2. Differences in Regimes of Representation for France and New Zealand

<b>French</b>	<b>New Zealand All Blacks</b>
Inconsistency	Consistency
Unpredictability	Predictability
Unstructured	Structured
Emotionality/Passion	Rationality/Composure
Unreliability	Reliability
Dishonest	Honest
Violent	Fair Play
Bizarre	Familiar
Abnormal	Normal

Leading up to the first pivotal moment, the pool clash between France and the All Blacks, the media’s stereotyping focus switched to particularly portraying the French from a functional dimension perspective (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2014) as inconsistent and unpredictable. This inconsistency and unpredictability was recurrently correlated to various elements such as their sporting results, their way of coaching and managing, and was also linked to an antecedent mental state, their emotionality. Thus, building up to the first pool game, coverage highlighted, often ironically, the French team’s tradition of inconsistent results, emphasising the fact that they performed “in fits and starts”, and describing how “erratic” and “patchy” they had been, resulting in “scrappy wins”, “lopsided wins” and “patchwork rugby”. The French team was portrayed as being on a constant search for regularity and confidence but unable to achieve either. Their inability to achieve consistency was a constant

source of derisive stereotypical representations, as when the French were metaphorically portrayed as a team that “stuttered and stumbled like one of those old Citroens”. This focus on French inconsistency, although constant throughout the coverage, particularly intensified in the lead up to the two France–New Zealand games and also after the French team’s shock loss to Tonga, triggering discussions about “the age-old question that surrounds France approaching big game time: which Tricolors team will run on to Eden Park on Saturday night?”

Time and again French inconsistency on the field and in results were recurrently linked to their emotionality. On the field, the French were portrayed as “happy to play off emotion for 80 minutes” but also as emotionally unstable and as a team that “cracks under pressure”. In play, they were labelled as “impulsive”, “impatient”, “volatile”, “changeable”, and as a fragile team composed of “inscrutable free spirits” who can “get into a zone”, allowing them to unpredictably lift their energy and dynamism. Media descriptions highlighted the French’s “uncanny ability to strike blind”, their willingness to take uncalculated risks and “gambles”, and “getting too carried away by their enthusiasm”. This stereotype of emotionality was often expressed by journalists through their observations about French “passion” on the field. The French team was labelled as “scary”, “full on”, and able to “play like an unstoppable force” or a “fury” but also easily able to get “into a panic mode”. This unpredictability linked to French flair, emotionality and passion, was woven throughout the coverage, working to highlight the threat the French could pose to New Zealand. It was particularly intensely emphasised in the week leading to the pool game but also in the lead-up to the final, with the coverage spreading “the idea that possibly, just possibly, something quite extraordinary might happen” and that “a staggering eruption of spirit and flair” could deprive New Zealand of the RWC title and therefore prevent the country’s centering.

French emotionality was not only presented as the team’s on-the-field trademark. Emotionality was also recurrently presented as their principal off-the-field character trait and as the reason for their apparent inability to manage themselves. As the first pool game loomed, the media started portraying interpersonal tensions in the French camp, painting a picture of a team riddled with conflicts and cracking under pressure. This depiction of the French as socially dysfunctional, regularly experiencing fear and anger, with constant rifts and falls out between players and coach, continued and increased in intensity as the tournament progressed. The French were portrayed as attending “chaotic press conferences” in which they were “throwing hissy fits”. The coach was described as “into the habit of dishing out heavy criticism”, as “curt”, “brutal”, “snaps”, “shouts”, “vilifies” or “lambasts his players. The players were described as annoyed at each other, regularly “upset”, “in shock”, or “astonished”, and said to “sarcastically” “speak out in anger” against each other. Hyperbolic representations of the French as hot-tempered and quarrelsome sometimes took a sarcastic metaphorical turn as in this description that referred to historical political fields of contention between New Zealand and France<sup>viii</sup>: “Like a huge radioactive mushroom cloud enveloping a pristine Pacific atoll, anger courses through the veins of French Coach Marc Lievrement”.

The French were depicted as a volatile team that can “go from *Les Mis* to *La Joie* within the space of a week”, from “angrily eyeball[ing] each other” to “showing affection” towards each other “in a sign of solidarity”. This French tendency to ride emotional highs and lows, especially the lows of conflict, was validated for New Zealand readers by portrayals of the French coach as being anxious, having “the jitters”, and “a stomach ache”. Thus, overall, the media maintained interest in the French Others by painting a picture of them as being out of control emotionally, with constant highs and lows, and highlighting their lack of discipline, which made them bizarre, fascinating, and also potentially dangerous Others: “So we have a divided squad, a disgruntled coach, positional uncertainty, bizarre selections and media sensing blood. Vive la difference. It's familiar French farce and maybe All Black fans should be worried”. The portrayal of this “shambolic” “crazy, mad, oh so French campaign”, of this “very French drama”, where the “gaffer” (the coach) is “in charge of a rabble” or “a ragtag bunch”, permeated the coverage, increasing in intensity around both pivotal moments and continuing right until the end of the tournament.

The fascinating abnormality of the French became even more visible when media contrasted French behaviour with that of the All Blacks. For example, while the French coach's selection of players was regularly labelled "stunning", "crazy", "bizarre" and "a source of constant consternation", New Zealand's predictability was stressed in comments such as: "I'm pretty sure which All Black team will turn up, but as for the French, who knows?" In similar fashion, while the French coach was described as having "no fear of pulling a few rabbits out of the hat", "chopping and changing", and "endlessly tinkering with the team", the All Blacks' coaches were portrayed as having "gone down the route of tried and true" selections, and having "pledged to keep the same core of 10-12 players", thus preferring stability and predictability. Further discussing the teams' approaches to the game, while the French were portrayed as bringing a "romantic element" to the competition and having a habit of playing by "experimenting with some exotic ideas", New Zealand readers were reassured that the All Blacks "do not do reckless", instead taking a scientific approach to the game, using "thorough analysis", which results in a "beautifully organised, dynamic machine that was slick and clever", "clinical, ruthless, efficient and effective". Additionally, in line with their emotionality, the French were portrayed as finding motivation by constantly "stoking fires", a practice presented as clashing with New Zealand's conservative expectations of stability. Therefore, while the All Blacks were consistently portrayed as being "focused", "confident", "quietly industrious", as having "composure", "calm authority" and "ability to handle pressure", and therefore as inspiring confidence, the French were presented as "very French. A bit *comme ci, comme ça*", up and down emotionally, easily stressed, irritable or nervous, and as going from being "listless", "blasé" or "seriously short on desire", to "passionate", "inspired", or "hard to hold". The French were also portrayed as being excessively expressive, demonstrative, communicative, and overenthusiastic after winning games, which made them lose focus and consistency, while the New Zealand's players' mindset was not easily altered because they were "too smart to get drawn into [a] debate".

As Table 2 shows, the French were portrayed as a complete antithesis of the All Blacks. Through differentiating media representations, the French were sent into symbolic exile (Hall, 1997) as 'not normal' for the culture in which they were represented. Throughout the competition, New Zealand media encouraged readers to ethnocentrically interpret the French with irony and puzzlement, or as one journalist put it, to contemplate them "with emotions ranging from disgust and horror to amazement and cheers". A recurrent comment in the media coverage was that the French's bizarre behaviour was "part of the entertainment" or constituted a "pantomime theatre"; in other words, they were presented as part of a captivating freak show of unruly and weird behaviours: "Well, ooh la, *zut alors* and *sacre bleu!* The French are revolting. Or maybe just enough of a Gallic spat has erupted to provide us with comic relief before the business end of this Rugby World Cup tournament".

Ultimately the media coverage's emphasis on difference, unpredictability and the bizarreness of the French Other served to constantly instil curiosity and uncertainty in the New Zealand audience, highlighting the potential danger of the French, a team that "spook the All Blacks like no other team in the World Cup", and should be "approached with care"<sup>ix</sup>. On the other hand, media coverage of the home team as powerful, composed, and normal, helped celebrate qualities that made the in-group superior, therefore constructing a narcissistic narrative about New Zealand's own powerful nationality (country brand) and flattering the ego of the national audience (bolstering country identity) in order to fulfil the commercial imperative of attracting readers.

In the end, the contrasting representations of on-field performance and off-field behaviours between the two teams worked to create a constant tension, working indeed like a semiotic system in which oppositional aspects are dramatised. This dramatic tension was also emphasised as the media constantly wavered between instilling confidence in the in-group by providing audiences with familiar and reassuring representations, and instilling apprehension of the out-group by representing them as potentially threatening. These differences between in-group and out-group representations, based on contrasting functional, normative, and sympathetic dimensions worked to create an identification and mobilising effect on the New Zealand national public at significant, pivotal sporting moments for the nation.

### *Creating the French as villains to arouse patriotic feelings*

In addition to the stereotypes of emotionality, inconsistency and unpredictability, the regime of representation of the French contained more destructive and disparaging elements that emerged principally in the build-up to both All Blacks-France games as a way to arouse patriotic sentiments against the threatening Other. In an increasingly tabloid-like manner, the French were represented as a team of cheats, dirty players, and undeserving of victory. The media was thus drawing mainly on the normative dimension of the country image by questioning the integrity, norms, and values of the French.

### *Cheating and manipulation*

The first clear appeal to the New Zealand nationalistic audience happened three days before the anticipated first clash between France and the All Blacks through an antagonistic portrayal of the French as disrespectful manipulators. The French were accused of devaluing the match by picking a weakened side in order to finish second in their pool, giving them a more favourable path through the knockout rounds. Warnings such as “Beware French skulduggery” and comments such as “France have made so many bizarre selections for this weekend that the conspiracy theory is the only logical explanation” represented the French as unpredictable but this time with manipulative intentions. This portrayal of the French as unreliable, deceitful, cunning cheats was emphasised through disparaging headlines such as “Rugby World Cup's \$460 French farce”, “Lievremont's selections thumb nose at IRB”, or “French 'B' pack ready to stamp their mark” and by portraying New Zealand fans’ widespread outrage at paying high prices to attend the game: “It's wrong ... but we'll beat them where it counts - in the final”, and “it is an insult to the 60,000 who have bought tickets expecting a contest between teams at full strength.”

As well as being accused of having “devalued the most eagerly awaited World Cup game for four years and blown an enormous raspberry at the IRB”, the French were also blamed for spoiling the All Blacks’ “chance for revenge”. They were therefore portrayed as not only cunning in the art of “tactical manoeuvring”, but also as lacking respect for their opponent’s national dignity. In effect, with their manoeuvres the French were denying the All Blacks the possibility of properly rebuilding self-esteem and ‘re-centering’ New Zealand by regaining the national pride dented in the previous RWC quarterfinal loss to France. This portrayal of the French as cunning continued after the pool game, with the media accusing the French of faking defeat “with an opportunism a political spin doctor would be proud of”. The same representations were used in the lead up to the RWC final when the French were accused of faking conflict in order to trick the All Blacks into thinking they should easily overcome a disorganised French team. The media represented “The apparent division between the French rugby team and their coach” as “part of a plan to ambush the All Blacks”, warning the national public that “It's familiar French farce and maybe All Black fans should be worried”.

### *Dirty play*

The second manner in which New Zealand media aroused patriotic sentiments against the French Others consisted in portraying them as violent, dirty players. As Desmarais and Bruce (2008) identified, this is a long-standing stereotype of the French. Although the positively framed “physicality they brought to the game” was briefly mentioned early in the tournament, there were three main instances when this stereotype was drawn upon by New Zealand media to arouse negative sentiments towards the French; after the first pool game between France and New Zealand, and in the build up to, and following, the RWC final. At these crucial times in the tournament for New Zealand, the media dished out negative stereotypes of the French as players who enjoyed “brawls”, “head butt each other until the steam came out their ears” and were prone to “fiddling with the family jewels”<sup>x</sup> of their opponents. The French team was labelled as a “dirty XV” regularly engaging in “foul play”, using “shock tactics”, “dirty tactics”, “sneaky tactics”, and regularly “trying the nasty stuff” “in the deep dark places”. To support this particular stereotype of the French as ‘illegally violent’, news coverage included several ex-All Blacks testifying about French violence. One example was an article by Wayne Shelford just before the final entitled “Beware the filth of the French”:

When you go into the jungle, you never know what is going to happen in dark places. I'm talking about stamping on hands and ankles, those sorts of things. Those sort of tactics are an old-school French way of doing things.

While these representations of “French filth” were used as an ‘othering’ tool in the build-up to both All Blacks–France games, the stereotype of French violence was also used as a parting shot after each game. In satirical articles highlighting the tradition of “demented French forwards” (“French: We’re too clean for Rugby World Cup”) at both pivotal moments in the tournament the media initiated controversies on eye gouging, head butting, and disrespectful or criminal off-field behaviour, therefore leading the New Zealand audience to internalise this negative aspect of the French as truth, helping cement a dislike of the Other, while simultaneously diminishing France’s country reputation from a New Zealand perspective. In the end, the French were portrayed as leaving New Zealand “with their reputation tarnished” in various articles highlighting their unacceptable behaviour (“The ugly French Twist: eye gouge on Ritchie”; “French refuse to comment on gouging allegations”; “French dirty play on field – and at restaurant”).

#### *Underserving: “France gives final insult”*

The third way New Zealand media aroused patriotic sentiments against the French Other was in portraying them as undeserving of victory, which undermined the functional dimension of their country image. In the lead-up to the final in particular, the media recurrently claimed that the French team’s behaviour and performance – inconsistency, irregularity, but also their excess of emotionality resulting in conflicts and lack of composure – disqualified them from being worthy finalists. France’s presence in the final was presented as an aberration, only made possible thanks to “the gods and fates being in alignment” and “plenty of fortune cookies”. The French team’s appearance in the Rugby World Cup final was even labelled various times as “an insult to the game”, as a result of a controversy started in the week prior to the final, in an article entitled “France give final insult”. However, while the French were portrayed as undeserving, the All Blacks were portrayed in the lead-up to the final through a theme of deservedness that presented them as deserving champions and the guardians of rugby’s reputation. This representation of the in-group was justified by their consistency in the tournament and overall worldwide dominance of the game. The media reiterated in various ways that “those dastardly past injustices” needed to be put right. Therefore, media headlines such as “The All Blacks must win – and win well for the sake of rugby” not only symbolically shamed the French Other, they also heightened a sense of entitlement in the New Zealand audience and justified a merited re-centering of New Zealand’s place in the world.

#### *Symbolically annihilating the Other*

Finally, another means of arousing patriotic sentiments against the Other was by using derogatory descriptions of the French and accentuating in-group achievement and superiority. New Zealand’s pool win against France provided journalists with just such a potential narrative of power, control, and dominance. Thus, in the days after the first All Blacks win, the New Zealand media, liberated from pre-game restraint, indulged in violent fight imagery and hyperbolic war language. The match was presented as “French flogging” in which “France were poked in the eye, jabbed with a stick then clubbed viciously with an array of weaponry they had no means to defend themselves against”. France was “punished” and “ripped apart”, as the All Blacks kept the volatile French pinned down”, “pressed the boot down on the throat and kept it there” and “turn[ed] the French roosters into feather dusters”. The confidence generated by the pool match win later re-emerged in the lead-up to the final with predictions that “les Bleus will be ground down to the consistency of foie gras by the time the final whistle has blown”. Eventually, the French Other was symbolically annihilated after the All Blacks’ success in the final, with the media confirming that “the beast had been slain”.

Overall, many derogatory descriptions of the French were clustered around moments of heightened patriotic tension; that is, before and after All Blacks-France games. On those occasions, New Zealand media generated a cast of caricatures, depicting the French fans as “cockereel-pestering fans” or exuberant “gesticulating cheese lovers”, and labelling members of the French media as “garlic-scented journalists”. ‘Frenchness’ in general was caricatured as a form of bizarre, exuberant arrogance to poke fun at: “The typical Frenchman walks around with his chest puffed out, like he owns the

world” or “It’s hard not to crack up when Frenchmen start taking offence, waving their hands around and puffing out their chests”. Interestingly, the French team was also simultaneously infantilised and geriatricised, portrayed condescendingly as being “like kids in the classroom knowing one false move would have them standing in the corner facing the wall”, but also referred to as playing “like busted golden oldies”. They were labelled in various ways, as the “Gallic bogeymen” or “rugby’s Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde”, “a bunch of “*sans culottes*”, in contrast to “the lords of the game, the All Blacks”.

## Conclusion

The chapter examined the regime of representation of one of the All Blacks’ significant sporting Others, the French rugby team, during the 2011 Rugby World Cup held in New Zealand. It illustrated how the New Zealand media constructed both a fascination for, and rejection of, the French throughout the tournament and especially at specific pivotal sporting moments. The chapter revealed the central concepts of country image, country reputation, country brand, and country identity (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2014) are useful in making sense of national media representations of other nations during a sport mega-event. Further, the applicability of their 4D model to the realm of sport suggests it is worth exploring further.

Our analysis revealed that media representations of the French drew on all four, often intersecting, dimensions of country image – functional, aesthetic, normative and sympathetic – as defined by Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2014). The few positive representations of the French were made from an aesthetic perspective, with journalists emphasising their allegedly flamboyant playing style (also labelled as flair). However, in the competitive context of a RWC in which the French were considered threatening opponents, the media mainly constructed them in unfavourable terms. From a functional perspective, related to competence and competitiveness, the French, with their alleged unpredictability and emotionality, were simultaneously and contradictorily defined as a sporting threat but also as being undeserving of victory. From a normative dimension, the French’s integrity, norms, and values were portrayed as dubious and abnormal in relation to their alleged penchant for violence and cheating. Many media representations were also based on the sympathetic dimension of the country image model, with coverage overwhelmingly conveying feelings of antipathy and a fascination for the bizarre French threatening Other.

Thus, our analysis showed the representation of the French in the media is indeed a “spectacle of the Other” (Hall 1997) – a representation that is sensationalised to mobilise and galvanise the national audience and to fulfil the commercial imperative of attracting readers. Throughout the coverage, New Zealand media charged images of out-group members, or Others (here the French) with hyperbolic national meanings, leading New Zealand viewers to read the French Other excessively through stereotypes and as often inaccurate and sometimes inappropriate caricatures.

Throughout the tournament, New Zealand media coverage generated a fascination for otherness, and indulged into a process of over-analysis of the French, constantly highlighting how different, bizarre, mysterious, entertaining, and abnormal they were. This abnormality was reinforced through the recurrent opposition between two stereotypes – the emotional French and the controlled New Zealanders – which created interest in the contest by letting the New Zealand public know that French difference could pose a threat at any moment. Therefore, while the emotionally controlled home team, the All Blacks, were consistent, predictable, structured, composed, rational, reliable, honest, and fair play, a package of behaviours that was presented as ‘normality’ and providing a form of stability for the New Zealand audience, the French were portrayed as the complete antithesis, as inconsistent, unpredictable, unstructured, composed, emotional, passionate, unreliable, dishonest, and violent, a package of behaviours presented as ‘abnormality’ and providing suspense, volatility, and uncertainty. Thus, overall, the media portrayed French difference as not only bizarre but also suspicious, dangerous, and threatening. As Hall (1997, p. 226) noted, difference “mobilises fears and anxieties”, it is “strangely attractive, precisely because it is [. . .] threatening to cultural order”. The French, with their bizarre and inscrutable on-field and off-field behaviour, provided the perfect threatening difference for the media to exploit; it allowed them to create public interest in their coverage and mobilise patriotic feelings. Therefore, in constructing French abnormality not only as a ‘fascinating’

spectacle of the Other but also as a threat, the media proposed an ethnocentric view of the Other. In the end, this analysis provides an interesting case study of cultural bias and ethnocentrism in the sport media.

From a temporal perspective, the analysis also shows a clear evolution in the representation of the French, which moved from initially positive and friendly portrayals to increasingly negative stereotypes, especially when the French were immediately threatening the home team. At these pivotal moments, the media attempted to capitalise on the idea that sport fans enjoy derogating disliked opponents and basking in their team's reflected glory, using denigrating stereotypes of the out-group and positive stereotypes of the in-group. The more the French were an imminent threat, the more negative the French stereotypes became. The media issued intense rally cries to the 'stadium of 4 million' at each significant sporting moment in order to generate interest and galvanise support in the imagined national community. Thus, we can consider the increasing use of negative stereotyping by the media as a symbolic patriotic response to danger and threat to national reputation and identity during a sport mega-event at which the home nation is under the spotlight and must 'shine'. Journalists particularly appeared to turn into vehement patriots aiming to awaken and galvanize national audiences at critical times when the nation's opportunity to shine on the world stage was most under threat.

Thus, this study contends that this negative stereotyping of the threatening Other can be understood as part of a centre-periphery discourse in which the French represented a significant threat to the 'centering' of New Zealand. As the RWC was organised on home soil, New Zealand was under great pressure to perform sportively in front of a national and global audience, especially against the French team who had twice robbed them of international fame. Taking revenge against the French and winning the RWC was akin to re-centering the nation, 'putting it on the map' and boosting country reputation, brand, and image, as well as producing the ultimate feel-good factor for the host population and boosting country identity.<sup>xi</sup> In a global world, in which countries are observed, rated, and put in competition with each other (Werron, 2014), success at the RWC – i.e. being on top of the world – was one way of addressing New Zealand's perpetual quest for self-definition (Bell, 1996; King, 1991; Williams, 1997) and appeasing the 'fear that the centre is somewhere else' (Perry, 1994, p. 77).

#### References:

- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Bale, J. (1986). Sport and national identity: A geographical view. *British Journal of Sports History*, 3(1): 18–41.
- Bell, C. (1996). *Inventing New Zealand: Everyday myths of pakeha identity*. Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books.
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. London: Sage.
- Bruce, T. (2013). (Not) a stadium of four million: Speaking back to dominant discourses of the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand. *Sport & Society*, 16(7), 899-911.
- Bruce, T. (2017). The Rugby World Cup Experience: Interrogating the oscillating poles of love and hate. In L. A. Wenner & A. C. Billings (Eds.), *Sport, Media and Mega-Events* (pp. 100-114). New York: Routledge.
- Bryant, J., Comisky, P. & Zillmann, D. (1977). Drama in sports commentary. *Journal of Communication*, 27(3), 140-149.
- Buhmann, A. & Ingenhoff, D. (2014). The 4D model of the country image: An integrative approach from the perspective of communication management. *The international Communication Gazette*, 0(0), 1-23.
- Chalip, L. (2006). Towards social leverage of sport events. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 11(2), 109–127
- Daley, C. (2005). The Invention of 1905. In G. Ryan (Ed.), *Tackling Rugby Myths: Rugby and New Zealand Society 1854–2004* (pp. 69–87). Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press.

- Delgado, F. (2003). The fusing of sports and politics: Media constructions of U.S. Versus Iran at France '98. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 27(3), 293-307.
- Desmarais, F., & Bruce, T. (2008). Blurring the boundaries of sports public relations: National stereotypes as sport announcers' public relations tool. *Public Relations Review*, 34, 183-191.
- Duncan, M. C., & Brummett, B. (1987). The mediation of spectator sport. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 58(2), 168-177.
- Fougere, G. (1989). Sport culture and identity: The case of rugby football. In D. Novitz, & B. Willmott (Eds.), *Culture and identity in New Zealand* (pp. 110-122). Christchurch, New Zealand: GP Books.
- Garland, J. (2004). The same old story? Englishness, the tabloid press and the 2002 football world cup. *Leisure studies* 23(1), 79-82.
- Garland, J., & Rowe, M. (1999). War minus the shooting? Jingoism, the English press, and Euro 96. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 23(1), 80-95.
- Getz, D. (1998). Trend strategies and issues in sport event tourism. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 7(2), 8-13
- Gibbons, T. (2014). *English national identity and football fan culture: who are ya?* Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Grix, J., Brannagan, P. M., & Houlihan, B. (2015). Interrogating states' soft power strategies: A case study of sports mega-events in Brazil and the UK. *Global Society*, 29(3), 463-479.
- Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. London: Sage & The Open University.
- Hoey, D. (2004). There will always be a Taupo: Some reflections on Pakeha culture. In C. Bell & S. Matthewman (Eds.), *Cultural studies in Aotearoa New Zealand: Identity, space and place* (pp. 188-202). South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Hope, W. (2002). Whose All Blacks? *Media, Culture & Society*, 24(2), 235-253.
- Jackson, S. (2013). Rugby World Cup 2011: Sport mega-events between the global and the local. *Sport in Society*, 16(7), 847-852.
- Jenkins, R. (1996). *Social Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Kim, S., & Morrison, A. M. (2005). Change of images of South Korea among foreign tourists after the 2002 FIFA World Cup. *Tourism Management*, 26, 233-247.
- King, M. (1991). Being pakeha. In M. King, (Ed.), *Pakeha: The quest for identity in New Zealand*, (pp. 9-22). Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books.
- Laponce, J. A. (1980). The city centre as conflictual space in the bilingual city: The case of Montreal. In J. Gottmann (Ed.), *Centre and periphery: Spatial variations in politics* (pp. 149-162). London: Sage publications.
- Law, A. (2001). Near and far: Banal national identity in the press in Scotland. *Media, Culture & Society*, 23, 299-317.
- Maguire, J. & Poulton, E. (1999). European identity politics in Euro 96: Invented traditions and national habitus codes. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 34(1), 17-29.
- Negus, K. (2002). The work of cultural intermediaries and the enduring distance between production and consumption. *Cultural Studies*, 16(4), 501-515.
- Nye, J.S. Jr (2004). *Soft Power: The means to success in world politics*. Cambridge, MA: Public Affairs.
- O'Donnell, H. (1994). Mapping the mythical: A geopolitics of national sporting stereotypes. *Discourse & Society*, 5(3), 345-380.
- Perry, N. (1994). *The dominion of signs: Television, advertising, and other New Zealand fictions*. Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press.
- Phillips, J. (1996). *A man's country?* Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books.
- Pociello, C. (1999). *Sport et sciences sociales : Histoire, Sociologie et prospective*. Paris: Editions Vigot.
- Poulton, E. (2004). Mediated patriot games: The construction and representation of national identities in the British television production of Euro '96. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 39(4), 437-455.

- Rosie, M., MacInnes, J., Petersoo, P., Condor, S., & Kennedy J. (2004). Nation speaking unto nation? Newspapers and national identity in the devolved UK. *The Sociological Review*, 52(4), 437-458.
- Rowe, D. (1999) *Sport, culture and the media: The unruly trinity*. Buckingham, PA: Open University Press.
- Rowe, D., McKay, J., & Miller, T. (1998). Come together: Sport, nationalism, and the media image. In: Wenner LA (ed.) *MediaSport*. London: Routledge, 119–33.
- Ryan, G. (2005). *Tackling rugby myths: Rugby and New Zealand society, 1854-2004*. Dunedin, New Zealand.: University of Otago Press.
- Scherer, J., & Jackson, S. J. (2007). Sports Advertising, Cultural Production and Corporate Nationalism at the Global-Local Nexus: Branding the New Zealand All Blacks. *Sport in Society*, 10(2), 268-284.
- Tajfel, H. (1970). Experiments in intergroup discrimination. *Scientific American*, 223(5), 96-102.
- Tajfel, H. (1978). Social categorization, social identity and social comparison. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 61-76). London: Academic Press.
- Tajfel, H. (1982). Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 33, 1-19.
- Tajfel, H. (1981). Social stereotypes and social groups. In J. C Turner & H. Giles (Eds.), *Intergroup behavior* (pp. 144-167). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tuck, J. (2003). The men in white: Reflections on rugby union, the media and Englishness. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38(2), 177-199.
- Vincent, J., Kian, E., Pedersen, P., Kuntz, A., & Hill, J. (2010). England expects: English newspapers' narratives about the English football team in the 2006 world cup. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 45(2), 199-213.
- Wang, J. (2006). Managing national reputation and international relations in the global era: Public diplomacy revisited. *Public Relations Review*, 32(2), 91–96.
- Wann, D. L., Melnick, M. J., Russell, G. W, & Pease, D. G. (2001). *Sportfans: The psychology and social impact of spectators*. New York: Routledge.
- Wanta, W., & Leggett, D. (1988). Hitting pay dirt: Capacity theory and sports announcers' use of clichés. *Journal of Communication*, 38, 82-89.
- Wenner, L. A. & Billings, A. C. (Eds.) (2017). *Sport, media and mega-events*. New York: Routledge.
- Wenner, L. A., & Gantz, W. (1998). Watching sports on television: Audience experience, gender, fandom, and marriage. In L. A. Wenner (Ed.), *MediaSport*. London: Routledge.
- Werron, T. (2014). On public forms of competition. *Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies*, 14, 62-76.
- Whannel G (2008) *Culture, Politics and Sport: Blowing the Whistle, Revisited*. London: Routledge.
- Williams, M. (1997). Crippled by geography? New Zealand nationalisms. In S. Murray (Ed.), *Not on any map: Essays on postcoloniality and cultural nationalism* (pp.19-42). Exeter, England: University of Exeter Press.

---

<sup>i</sup> We note that New Zealand identity is also connected to its specific history of colonisation but we cannot discuss this aspect in sufficient detail here (Bell, 1996; Hoey, 2004; King, 1991).

<sup>ii</sup> According to World Rugby Rankings, the All Blacks have been ranked #1 over 85% of the time since 2003 (Wikipedia, 2017). Accessed 14 December 2017: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_Rugby\\_Rankings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Rugby_Rankings)

<sup>iii</sup> The New Zealand Herald's editorial opinion is centre right, supporting socially conservative values, reducing government's spending and role in the New Zealand economy.

<sup>iv</sup> This is not to say, however, that rugby's cultural centrality is unquestioned; Bruce (2013, 2017) has shown how the game is not embraced by all New Zealanders.

<sup>v</sup> The All Blacks legend dates back to 1905 and results from several consecutive wins against British teams. This success was recuperated by New Zealand governments as a way to construct an image of national and international success linked to rugby and superior physical manhood of the colonists (see Phillips, 1996).

<sup>vi</sup> See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGHWQ65Xi\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGHWQ65Xi_0)

<sup>vii</sup> The French were also portrayed as playing with “sudden alchemy”, an “ad-lib style” and “artistry to their craft”.

---

<sup>viii</sup> Here this comment refers to the French testing Nuclear weapons in the pacific until the early 2000's.

<sup>ix</sup> A recurrent warning about the French, especially leading to the All Blacks-France clashes was "Do not underestimate the French" or "Discount France at your peril" (headlines). For instance, two days before the final one journalist asked: can the All Blacks win "if the French turn on the fireworks?"

<sup>x</sup> "Family jewels" is slang for genitals.

<sup>xi</sup> It must be added, that the centre-periphery discourse was not restricted to the French threatening 'other'. The negative portrayal of the French also fitted into a wider demeaning representation of Northern Hemisphere rugby teams as weak, therefore prompting the New Zealand public to take part in an ideology of global rivalry and geographic antagonism. Comments such as "Most of the rugby played in the Northern Hemisphere [as] best suited to staging on a garbage tip" or "Northern Hemisphere rugby's chickens came home to roost in the form of a battered rooster" participated in this centering discourse, placing New Zealand at the centre of world rugby excellence.