

Editorial: Sport, nationalism, and the importance of theory

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Introduction

This Special Issue, entitled 'Sport and Nationalism: Theoretical Perspectives', aims to advance the academic study of the interconnections between sport and nationalism by, firstly, reviewing the current 'state of play' in this field of study and, secondly, highlighting the importance of theoretically-informed analysis of the relationship between sport, nationalism and national identity. This collection of articles thus facilitates a critical appraisal of the utility of various theoretical concepts used to explore the nature of contemporary nationalism when applied to the specific topic of sport.

This Special Issue seeks to build upon the existing literature in the field of sport and nationalism in a number of ways. Firstly, by bringing together a range of contemporary academics in this field of study, it will offer an opportunity to showcase contrasting theoretical positions on this topic within the same issue. Finally, the central focus of the Special Issue on the application of theories of nationalism to the field of sport provides an opportunity for novel and critical contributions to this field of study.

Each article is dedicated to contrasting theorists, theoretical approaches and/or concepts, and then applied to a specific case study or topic within the field of sport. This structure demonstrates a diverse range of potential approaches for the study of sport and nationalism, thus acting as an innovative resource for academics interested in identifying and utilising influential theoretical concepts in these specific fields. To this end, the central goal of this Special Issue is to showcase contrasting and competing theoretical approaches to the study of sport and nationalism, with the opportunity to foster critical debate regarding the utility of the contrasting theories presented in the text.

This editorial will commence with a necessarily brief overview of the prevalent theoretical approaches which have influenced the academic study of sport and nationalism,

signposting influential texts and academics within this domain of study. This introductory discussion will thus provide a foundation against which the original theoretical contributions offered with this Special Issue can be juxtaposed. The remainder of the editorial is then dedication to introducing the various papers which contribute towards the Special Issue, signposting the contrasting theoretical approaches and key findings from each article.

Sport, nationalism, and the importance of theory

The relationship between sport, nationalism and national identity has remained an important issue in sociological and political studies of sport, and this has resulted in a vast number of contrasting theoretical approaches and concepts applied in case studies from various geographic locations. Although it is outwith the scope and constraints of this brief editorial to provide a thorough examination of such literature, it is important to acknowledge that the various theoretical contributions offered in this Special Issue is situated in this wider field of literature. Nonetheless, it is important to signpost the contrasting theoretical explanations which have been offered in eminent studies on nationalism and national identity in sport in order to appreciate why this issue retains significant academic interest.

In the academic study of sport, Anderson's (1991) concept of the 'imagined community' has acted as one of the most frequently deployed theoretical tools, with Bairner (2009: 225) arguing that "Anderson is regularly invoked in discussions on the relationship between sport and national identity formation". Indeed, in his comprehensive study of sport and national identity in various locations in Europe and North America (Bairner, 2001), he argues that the centrality of sport in contemporary expressions of nationalism results from its ability to bring the 'imagined community' of the nation to life:

Benign or aggressive, the relationship between sport and nationalism is, nevertheless, inescapable... Except in times of war, seldom is the communion between members of the nation, who might otherwise be classed as total strangers, as strongly felt as during major international [sport] events. There is nothing great or glorious about writing one's nationality in a hotel register. (ibid: 17)

However, in his more recent work which has drawn upon primordialist theory to examine the role of landscape in relation to 'national sports' (Bairner, 2009), he equally cautions against the over-dependence on the notion of the 'imagined community' in the study of sport and nationalism, arguing that its use can result in an over-simplification of the nuanced relationship between sport and national identity which results in arguments that "represent nothing other than the claim that national identity is all in the mind with no material basis" (ibid: 225).

Although Maguire's (1999) adoption of an Eliasian, figurational sociological perspective contrasts with the position of Bairner, his arguments regarding the relationship between sport and nationalism share certain elements of common ground. Maguire similarly argues for the importance of the 'imagined community' for sporting national identities, but instead claims that that the community of the nation is brought to life through the medium of national 'habitus codes' which shape and reinforce nationalist behaviours. Maguire's theorisation of the relationship between sport and national identity therefore initially appears to sit within the modernist paradigm, having been significantly influenced by the work of these theorists from the 'constructionist' approach to nationalism. However, Maguire also draws upon the 'personal pronoun model' espoused in the process / figurational sociological approach advocated by Norbert Elias, arguing that discourse relating to sport and the nation has a tendency to semantically frame its content through the use of phrases such as 'I' and 'we' as a means of delineating between the 'established' self-group of the nation and othering of the 'outsiders' of competitor nations.

These arguments find similar support in Billig's (1995) work on 'banal nationalism' which makes specific reference to the role of sports media coverage in terms of personal pronoun usage as a means of nationalist flagging, as well as highlighting the emphasis given to British teams and individuals in newspaper coverage of sport in the mainstream British press. Billig argues that the nature of media discourses relating to sport and the nation therefore provides the opportunity to foster a sense of a shared expressing within the nation through sports media consumption.

In contrast, the position outlined by Silk, Andrews and Cole (2005) is somewhat less circumspect regarding an adherence to a modernist approach to nationalism in their

explication of their concept of 'corporate nationalisms' in sport. Their stance draws upon modernist principles in their discussion of the nation in sport, arguing that:

Despite appearances of antiquity, the genesis of the modern nation-state can in fact be traced to the relatively recent past in history [sic] of human civilization... the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 brought the Thirty Years War to an end... [m]ore importantly, this covenant instantiated the very idea of the sovereign state – and indeed that of an international community of states – through a mutual agreement as to the common independence of state formations. (ibid: 5)

Silk, Andrews and Cole expand on this stance by outlining the frequent use of sport by Western nations as a means of nation-building in the twentieth century, arguing that the appeal of sport acts as a tool for encouraging popular identification with the nation-state and developing sporting traditions, invoking the modernist arguments of Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983; Hobsbawm, 1983). With their emphasis on the development of a 'corporate-cultural nation', the position of Silk, Andrews and Cole arguable aligns with the 'socioeconomic' strand of modernist thought identified by Smith (2010).

Cronin's (1999) extensive analysis of the interrelationship between sport and nationalism in Ireland also aligns with a modernist theorisation of the origins of nationalism. Although he acknowledges the merits of arguments of perennialists such as Hastings who identify pre-modern examples of nationalism in various contexts, Cronin explicitly outlines his agreement with the "majority verdict" (ibid: 25) of a modernist stance in his definition of nationalism. Although this articulation of the origins of nationalism clearly echoes the arguments of 'modernist' theorists, it is equally important to note that Cronin's caveat regarding the pre-modern existence of nationalist movements avoids a rigid alignment with a modernist perspective for all national contexts. Indeed, Cronin's thesis provides a detailed acknowledgement of the contrasting perspectives within the wider study of nationalism, categorising theorists into 'primordialists', 'modernists', 'statists' and 'political mythologists'. These categories demonstrate some obvious similarities to those of Anthony Smith's (2010) oft-cited typology of nationalism theories, although Cronin's categorisation appears to exclude 'perennialist' and 'ethnosymbolist' perspectives.

Whilst the positions outlined above have placed emphasis on the potential analytical utility of 'modernist' theoretical concepts in the study of nationalism in sport, other

academics have highlighted the necessity to consider the importance of pre-modern ethnic and cultural factors as suggested within 'perennialist', 'primordialist' and 'ethnosymbolist' approaches to the study of nationalism. Bairner's (2009) analysis of the relationship between national landscapes and 'national sports' is a prime example of such an argument, highlighting that a "claim that a discussion of modern sports can generate support for a qualified primordial perspective is far less absurd or irrational than initial reactions might suppose" (ibid: 224). He contends that the debate between 'primordialist' and 'modernist' approaches in contemporary reflections on nationalism has often led to 'primordialist' and 'ethno-symbolist' approaches to nationalism being "mocked by those who prefer the modernist interpretation" (ibid: 224). Disputing such a stance, Bairner's explication of the links between the national sports and the national anthems involved in international sports events to notions of landscape demonstrates that a purely 'modernist' understanding of nationalism in sport is limiting, and that the imagery and symbolism associated with 'primordialist' approaches is equally evident in contemporary examples of nationalism in sport.

Edensor's (2002) theorisation of 'everyday nationalism' draws upon postmodern conceptualisations on the nature of national identity, as underlined in its inclusion within this category of Smith's (2010) typology of nationalism theories. For Edensor, sport allows the opportunity to "explore occasions where bodily expression and emotional participation manifest highly charged expressions of national identity" (ibid: 78). In particular, he highlights the existence of 'national sporting styles' in various team sports which act as a medium for explicit performances of national identity, thus invoking specific stereotypes regarding the nature of a given nation on a global stage. Although Edensor is careful not to valorise such 'styles' and their associated stereotypes in a simplistic and uncritical manner, he argues that the lack of questioning of such sporting stereotypes by fans and the media demonstrates that these styles can be viewed as part of a 'habitus' for a given nation.

In summary, whilst the above account by no stretch of the imagination does justice to the abundance of contrasting theoretical approaches adopted within the study of sport, nationalism and national identity, it does at least begin to illustrate the diversity evident within past influential analyses of this phenomena. Furthermore, the centrality of nationalism theory within these accounts further underlines the importance of academics

endeavouring to explicitly identify their theoretical stances. It is in this light the forthcoming Special Issue aims to contribute to this effort to promote theoretically-informed analyses of sport and nationalism, thus placing nationalism theory front and centre within such analyses.

The *'Sport and Nationalism: Theoretical Perspectives'* Special Issue: an overview

Without doubt, the toughest task in writing this editorial introduction to the Special Issue is attempting to do justice to the outstanding scholarship and theoretical breadth evident within the various articles incorporated within this issue. Nonetheless, below follows a brief introduction to each article which signposts the contrasting theoretical approaches adopted by the authors of each article, as well as an explanation of their order of presentation within the issue.

The opening articles of the Special Issue focus their attention upon theoretical perspectives which have been frequently used within the study of nationalism and sport, and thus provide an opportunity to reflect upon the analytical merits of such theoretical approaches for the study of sport and nationalism in the contemporary.

To this end, the Special Issue commences with an excellent reflection from Alan Bairner and Anthony May (2021) on the merits of 'primordialism' for understanding the complex relationship between sport, nationalism, and nationhood. Bairner and May open their piece with a concise explanation of the fundamental principles of the primordialist approach to the study of nationalism, drawing upon the seminal work of Clifford Geertz and Walker Connor which has critically examined the nature of the primordial roots of nationalist public sentiment. As Bairner and May argue, primordialism "is widely regarded with suspicion, evoking as it does the Nazi ideal of blood and soil" (p.1) but "it nevertheless represents a valuable analytical tool for understanding the emotional attachment which many nationalists have to their natural landscape, whether real and imagined" (pp.1-2). The authors illustrate these sentiments with an engaging comparative case study of the relationship between sport and regional identities in the Scottish and English context, specifically focusing upon the Scottish Borders region and the 'Black Country' region of England. Drawing upon an analysis of contrasting narrative forms in both autobiographical

and fictional literature on these two contexts, Bairner and May illustrate the ways in which the nature of sporting identities formed in each locale are intrinsically linked to their respective surrounding landscapes. To this end, the authors insightfully illustrate the ways in which “landscapes work in terms of forging both regional and national identities” (p. 12), thus concluding that the “contrasting stories... tell us something but not everything about how different landscapes in the united Kingdom reflect and contribute to different ideas about being and belonging” (p. 12).

In the second and third articles from Alec Hurley (2021) and Andy Chiu (2021), respectively, attention turns towards two contrasting applications of Benedict Anderson’s oft-cited notion of the ‘imagined community’ in relation to the importance football in two different national contexts. In Hurley’s article, discussion centres on the unique case of Saarland, now a regional state within Germany, but during the inter-war and post-war era, a nation which fluctuated between French and German control for a number of decades, prior to its reunification with West Germany in 1957. Hurley’s work therefore examines Saarland’s brief existence within international football through the application of Anderson’s notion of the imagined community, offering an exploration of the intersection of imagined communities and the unique nationalising role of football. As Hurley argues, Saarland represents an interesting illustration of the allure of the imagined community of the nation, contending that “Saarland employed football in the post-war period to reject both French occupation and independent governance to reunite with West Germany, the imagined community from which it had been torn” (p. 5). Hurley therefore concludes that Saarland’s eventual reunification with West Germany was in many ways symbolised in the actions of the Saarland football team, endeavouring to reject any attempts to align the nation with the influence of the French government in the post-war era and instead perpetuating an affinity with a German cultural and sporting identity.

Chiu’s contribution to the Special Issue offers an equally insightful analysis of the relevance of Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ thesis, again focusing on a contested nation and national identity in his focus on football in contemporary Hong Kong. Specifically, Chiu’s article focuses on “the case of Hong Kong’s naturalized football representatives to recontextualize Anderson’s work considering the naturalization of athletes in international sports and its impact to the understanding of ‘Hong Kongness’ and ‘Chineseness’” (p. 2). Chiu

outlines the benefits of Anderson's 'modernist' and 'constructionist' theoretical position in relation to the study of nationalism for understanding both the mediated representation and lived experience of national identity through sport, providing a concise overview of an array of studies which have explored this theoretical argument. His attention then turns to an analysis of an array of original empirical data on the role of football in contemporary Hong Kong, including such representations by fans and sporting organisation in posters, chants, slogans and promotional material, combined with interviews with professional footballers and fans in Hong Kong. Chiu skilfully illustrates the contested nature of national identity in Hong Kong given the intersection between 'Hong Kongness' and 'Chineseness', concluding that the context of football demonstrates that "the consumption and repetition of chants, slogans, tifos and posters act as constant reminders of the 'Hong Kongness' of the naturalized players that differentiate a civic and cultural 'Hong Kongness' from a racial and political 'Chineseness'" (p. 12).

Changing theoretical tack, the fourth article in the Issues from Regina Weber (2021) draws upon Michael Billig's work on 'banal nationalism' as the theoretical underpinning of her analysis of identity in European football. In her contribution, Weber argues that the 'Europeanisation' of football structures and competitions in the late 20th and early 21st century has in turn led to the growth of 'banal Europeanism' for football fans, contending that "football can provide its fans with an everyday, banal practice of Europe... and contribute to subconscious identification through symbols of the European leagues and due to the increased presence of actors from across Europe" (p. 2). Weber charts the impact of various factors in the perpetuation of banal Europeanism over recent decades, such as the growth of pan-European league competitions such as the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League, the establishment of Europe-wide freedom of movement in the football transfer market, the centralisation of football broadcasting rights, and growing transnational club coordination between football clubs. For Weber, these developments resonate with the arguments of Billig in relation to the mundane, everyday practices which slowly shape the nature of contemporary national identities in relation to Europeanism, whilst equally reiterating the ongoing primacy and power of pre-existing regional and national identities for fans of European football clubs.

The next two articles in the Special Issue mark an end to the opening section of the Issue which has focused on common and well-established theoretical approaches within the sociology of sport, with Gibbons (2021) and van Campenhout and van Houtum (2021) both drawing upon Eliasian, 'figurational' sociology to underpin their analyses. Tom Gibbons' contribution provides an extensive account of past literature which have deployed Elias' theoretical concepts to study the relationship between sport and nationalism, illustrating the relatively frequent deployment of Eliasian approaches in sport, in contrast to the 'mainstream' study of nationalism where figurational sociology has been comparatively marginalised. Gibbons then plays particular attention to Elias' concept of the 'drag-effect', arguing that "the drag-effect can be applied to understanding the complexities of the relationship between sport and contemporary English national identity, using examples from the popular sport of football" (p. 3). He illustrates this argument through a case study of the complexities of national identity in British context, emphasising the nuanced nature of contemporary English national identity in relation to competing notions of Britishness, Scottishness, Welshness, and Northern Irishness within the UK's constitutional arrangements. To this end, Gibbons argues that Elias' work offers unique insights which overcome the potential limitations of other theoretical approaches to nationalism in this regard.

van Campenhout and van Houtum focus their attention on Elias' work (alongside John Scotson) on the 'established-outsider model' as their central theoretical concept, applying this model in their analysis of the case of Mesut Özil, a German-born international footballer of Turkish descent. Their analysis of Özil's experiences and treatment by the German media and fans therefore aims to "understand who, under what conditions, are accepted as representatives of the football nation and are recognised as (conditionally and temporally) belonging to the nation" (p. 2) in the German context. The article deconstructs the resignation statements released by Özil in 2018 when he declared that he no longer wished to be selected by the German national team, drawing upon analysis of the statements themselves as well as the reactions to this event. To this end, van Campenhout and van Houtum argue that Özil's treatment emphasises his position as an 'outsider' in relation to German identity due to his migrant descent, whilst illustrating the resonance of the 'established-outsider' model to other footballers of similar descents in both the German context and beyond. They thus regretfully conclude that what "should be kept in mind is that

Özil, like many other, especially non-Western, immigrants, will never be able to fully meet the current, prevailing conditions of Germany's national belonging, which seem to be biased towards Western, Christian and White characteristics" (p. 13).

Following on from the above analyses which draw upon more established theoretical approaches to the study of nationalism and sport, the second half of the Special Issue provides an eclectic range of theoretical approaches and concepts which have been deployed less frequently in past analyses of the sport-nationalism nexus.

For example, the contribution from Ryan Murtha, Conor Heffernan and Thomas Hunt (2020) focuses its attention on the notion of 'embodied nationalism', using this concept in their historical case study of American health entrepreneur Bernarr Macfadden. Their paper contends that "Macfadden attempted to create a form of American nationalism which began with the physique and came to represent patriotic traits such as fighting and dying for one's country", with "a distinctly embodied form of nationalism... promoted during these years" (p. 3). The authors illustrate the theoretical influences which shape the notion of 'embodied nationalism', again illustrating the relevance of constructionist and modernist theoretical perspectives such as the work of Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner in this regard. The article charts the role of Macfadden's *Physical Culture* magazine in perpetuating narratives in relation to embodied nationalism in the early 1900s, whilst highlighting controversies with regards to Macfadden's alignment with eugenicist thought and Mussolini's fascist regime in Italy. Murtha, Heffernan and Hunt conclude that the "kind of nationalism promoted by Macfadden was in many ways a palimpsest, one which built on prevailing trends linked to fitness, eugenics, nationalism, and American identity" (p. 13), whilst illustrating that such visions of American patriotism still linger to this day.

Jack Black's (2020) article adopts a starkly contrasting theoretical position, offering an engaging account of the potential analytical utility of the work of Slavoj Žižek for the study of nationalism in sport, given the lack of attention afforded to Žižek in this regard to date. Specifically, Black emphasises how Žižek's arguments on "fantasy, ideology and the Real.. can prove useful for examining the extent to which examples of nationalism are underscored by forms of enjoyment (jouissance)" (p. 1) within the context of sport. Black commences his contribution with a concise review of the commonly-deployed theoretical approaches within the study of sport and nationalism, before situating the work of Žižek in juxtaposition to these

analyses to articulate the unique contribution of Žižekian theory to shed new light on these issues. Black then further develops his arguments through the application of a number of Žižek's central concepts to the study of sport and nationalism, such as Žižek's arguments on the 'national Thing', his position on ideology and 'fantasy', the 'Other/other' dynamic, and his contentions on 'the Real'. Black interweaves discussion of the nature of the relationship between sport and nationalism, with specific reference to the English and British context to illustrate Žižek's theoretical position in this regard.

The article by Sine Agergaard and Verena Lenneis (2021) again offers a contrasting theoretical approach to the study of nationalism and sport through their use of postcolonial and transnational feminist theory, with specific reference to work of Nira Yuval-Davis. Agergaard and Lenneis thus draw upon the work of Yuval-Davis in their analysis of the "current political and public discourses about Muslim women's sports and leisure practices that demarcate this group from belonging to the nation" (p.1) in the Danish context. The article firstly maps the development of postcolonial and transnational feminist thought in relation to the study of the nation, with a concise overview of the findings of past literature which have adopted such theoretical approaches in the broader study of nationalism, as well as the specific context of sport. Attention then turns to the specific focus on Muslim women's experiences of sport and physical activity in the Danish context, drawing upon recent empirical work which focused on political discourses, mediated narratives, and personal experiences in relation to this issue. Concluding their analysis, Agergaard and Lenneis contend that "Yuval-Davis' conceptual framework contributes to analysing how groups and individuals that are marked as 'others' may be excluded from belonging to the nation in connection with their sports and leisure practices", thus illustrating the marginalisation of the other similarly found in other articles within this Special Issue.

Ally Forbes' (2021) article on the nature of British Asian national affiliations in sport in the period following the London 2012 Olympic Games similarly sheds light on the complexity of national identity for ethnic minorities in the British context. In contrast to Agergaard and Lenneis' use of Yuval-Davis, Forbes instead draws upon notions of 'hybridity' to understand the identities for diasporic groups in relation to sport and nationhood. To this end, Forbes draws upon Homi Bhabha's work on 'hybrid identities' in relation to diasporic groups to explore the challenges for British Asians in relation to negotiation their Britishness and

diasporic identities in a hybridised manner. Forbes firstly outlines the contested nature of Britishness in contemporary sport, emphasising that expressing a coherent notion of Britishness in sport is nigh-impossible for all members of the British public, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender. She then develops upon this further by identifying the additional layers of complexity faced by British Asians in this regard, drawing upon discussions of such manifestations in sports such as cricket, football, before exploring the hybridised nature of identities for her British Asian interviewees. In conclusion Forbes argues that exploring “national identity formation through a diasporic lens enables us to appreciate the fragmented nature of British Asian identities, thus moving away from essentialist conceptualisations and associated accusations that differential supporter preferences must be evidence of ‘divided loyalties’” (p. 13).

Jung Woo Lee (2021) focuses upon constructions of national identity in relation to a more recent international sporting event, namely the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics. In his article, Lee outlines four different manifestations of Korean identity which fluctuated throughout the period of PyeongChang 2018: 1) unified Korean ethnic nationalism; 2) South Korean state patriotic nationalism; 3) postcolonial anti-imperialist nationalism; and 4) cosmopolitan Korean identity. Lee underlines the heightened politicisation of PyeongChang 2018 given the increasing diplomatic and military tensions between North Korea and South Korea, leading to contrasting political discourse from political actors with divergent ideological stances on the nature of Korean nationhood and identity. For Lee, these tensions are best conceptualised as an indicator of the importance of the concept of ‘hegemony’ in relation to discourses of the nation, drawing upon the work of Seiler and Anderson in this regard to argue that “the hierarchy of national identity politics is by no mean fixed but there is a constant struggle between different nationalist groups for the hegemonic position” (p. 3). To this end, Lee concludes that the four variants of nationalism “he identifies have been vying for a dominant position in the hierarchy of South Korean politics... and in the midst of intensifying national identity wars, the Winter Olympics presented a unique platform on which each nationalist group asserts the legitimacy of their sense of nationhood” (p. 12).

Turning attention to a contrasting Pacific geographic context, Damion Sturm, Tom Kavanagh and Robert Rinehart (2021) offer an exploration of ‘pseudo-nationalism’ within the promotional strategies of sporting franchises in New Zealand. The authors commence their

article by outlining their conceptualisation of 'pseudo-nationalism', describing this phenomenon where "sports, syndicates and franchises masquerade as a national team and rely upon tapestries of national identity, affiliation and symbolism" (p. 1), often for commercial ends through the harnessing of public support and interest. Sturm, Kavanagh and Rinehart juxtapose the notion of 'pseudo-nationalism' with the arguments of Anderson on 'imagined communities', Hobsbawm on 'invented traditions' and Silk, Andrews and Cole on 'corporate nationalism', articulating the ways in which these constructionist conceptualisations of nationalism and national identity resonate with the practices of sporting franchises in New Zealand. To this end, the authors interrogate evidence from the activities of 'Team New Zealand' in sailing's America's Cup and the 'New Zealand Warriors' in the Australia-based National Rugby League competition, illustrating the manufactured nature of the imagery and identities associated with each team to project forms of 'pseudo-nationalism'. The authors highlight their scepticism regarding the potential success of this strategy, concluding that the "claimed links between sport, nation and corporation are tenuous, dubious to non-existent, with expressions of pseudo-nationalistic sentiment predominantly having commercial, global and mediated interests at heart" (p. 12), thus leading to their likely failure.

The Special Issue is subsequently brought to a close by two complementary contributions from Mateusz Grodecki (2021) and Przemysław Nosal, Radosław Kossakowski and Wojciech Woźniak (2021) which both focus on the topic of football fandom in Poland, whilst adopting contrasting theoretical approaches which help to illuminate contrasting elements of the relationship between sport and nationalism in this context. Firstly, Grodecki's article uses a post-foundational discourse analysis approach to examine the nationalistic discourses of Polish football supporters. He commences his article with a concise introduction to the principles of post-foundational discourse analysis, outlining its alignment with both structuralist, post-structuralist and constructivist approaches to discourse, and emphasising the analytical utility of this approach which has been absent from the study of sport and nationalism. Grodecki's attention then turns to the application of his post-foundational discourse analysis approach in his case study of nationalist discourses espoused by Polish 'ultras', highlighting the existence of specific discourses concerning such constructs as the traditional Polish family, anti-communism, 'national heroes', and anti-refugee sentiment. For

Grodecki, this analysis illustrates that “ultras groups have been proven to create distinctive meanings of nation... analysing the process of how these meanings are produced in this environment can bring new insights into our understanding of the process of (re)production of nation in general” (p. 12).

In contrast, the final article from Nosal, Kossakowski and Woźniak centres its analysis on the concept of ‘guerilla patriotism’ to examine the nature of the nationalistic symbolism which is often associated with football fans in Poland. For Nosal, Kossakowski and Woźniak, ‘guerilla patriotism’ should be understood as “an example of anti-establishment, victimised, ready-to-fight pro-national attitude” (p. 2), contending that this form of national identity is the result of the gradual withdrawal of fans of a number of Polish football clubs from supporting the Polish national football team. The article specifically focuses upon the status of the ‘Cursed Soldiers’, a term used to describe “a large spectrum of heterogeneous underground movements which continued the guerrilla war against the Soviet Army operating on the Polish territory and against the institutions of the emerging Polish communist state in the aftermath of World War II” (p. 5). They argue that the Cursed Soldiers maintain an important symbolic role for football fans who align with the concept of ‘guerilla patriotism’ identified by Nosal, Kossakowski and Woźniak, thus symbolising the marginalised hero status which Polish football fans aim to align with in their own notions of national identity. Whilst the authors conclude by posing a number of future questions with regards to the notion of ‘guerilla patriotism’, the article exemplifies the potential for theoretical innovations for the study of sport and nationalism found across the collection contained within this Special Issue, thus successfully concluding an excellent and diverse set of articles.

Conclusion

Drawing upon an eclectic range of theoretical approaches to the study of nationalism, this Special Issue showcases the theoretical diversity of contemporary scholarship on sport and nationalism. This theoretical diversity is evidenced in the deliberate selection of articles which offer contrasting theoretical approaches, applied to a range of contrasting national contexts as outlined above. Given this international emphasis, coupled with the ongoing academic interest in the nature of contemporary nationalist movements in the European and global context, this Special Issue acts as a timely reminder of the ongoing importance of

theoretically-informed analysis of the nexus between sport and nationalism. We therefore hope that this collection of articles can act as a catalyst and inspiration for future analyses of sport, nationalism and national identity, encouraging similar high-quality, theoretically-informed accounts of this complex issue.

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