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# Muslims, Soccer, and the Politics of National Identity

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# MUSLIMS, SOCCER, AND THE POLITICS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

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## ABSTRACT

Athletes are among the most visible representatives of nations: the nations' traditions, histories, values, and identities are condensed into the body of performing athlete, who act as ambassadors for their country each time they set foot on the field. However, when we think of athletes today that embody the nations' identity, how many of these athletes do we come up with of immigrant or minority background? How many do we come up with that are Muslim?

These questions predominantly depend on what countries and which sports we examine. In this MRP, I focus on soccer, and the participation of Muslims in this sport. Using a discourse analysis methodology, studying newspaper sources and theories of national identities, I examine the place of Muslims in the West today, and how their participation in soccer is viewed within the context of on-going evolution of national identities, and, most importantly, whether it is viewed as proof or not of their membership in the nation.

## KEY WORDS:

Soccer; Muslims; Multiculturalism; Europe; Nationalism

## Introduction

The rain has finally fallen on the plains of Spain, ending a 44-year trophy-less draught. The quadrennial Euro 2008 championship, a competition by all means more gruelling than the (also) quadrennial World Cup (Kelly 2008, S7), has recently ended, with the Spanish emerging victorious at the expense of Germans, winning their first significant soccer tournament in 44 years.

One here might question my usage of the terms “Spanish” and “German” without juxtaposing the suffix “team”. I will touch upon that later. For now, let’s focus on the 2008 Euro championship; in particular, the participation of a certain nation, or team, if you will: Turkey. The 2008 Euro saw the Turkish national team, which was eventually eliminated by the German team, surprising everyone by advancing through the first round of games to face off against the Croatian team in the second, knock-out quarter-final, stage. After 90 minutes of game time (plus injury time), and two additional periods, the game was forced to end in a penalty shoot-out, with the Turks leaving the field the victors, to the disappointment of many Croatian fans. Soon after the game ended though, the internet was flooded with angry bloggers, questioning the presence of Turkey in the competition to begin with; as “Paulo” (presumed to be a pseudonym, country unknown) *colourfully* stated:

First of all, iam bewildered about the fact that Turkey is included in UEFA, for me and for millions of *white* europeans, Turkey is an Asian country and Turkish people are not Europeans. This is disgusting that UEFA has included this Asian country in European football<sup>1</sup>. (Musab, 2008, emphasis added)

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<sup>1</sup> Although the emphasis on the word ‘white’ was added, otherwise, all blogs were provided verbatim.

Or as another commenter, “Porchetta” wrote in response to a post by a Turkish supporter:

... sorry, please dont term me as a racist. You are NOT Europeans and You are DEfinitely not White people. You have blunt features, Arabish..i have seen many Turkish people in Italia and in Spain where i live at present. There is a famous donar kebab tiena called as Istanbul Donar and i have many Turkish friends there( with the owner)..they r NOT whites, they are not Europeans..turkey is more Asian..a moslim country..U play good football..that is it but u r NOT Europeans..just look at ur players´faces for proof..i will give an example..ur goal keeper when he was sent off the other day against czechs , i had a clear look at his face..he can be a Morroccon or a Tunisian with those flat blunt features...(Musab, 2008)<sup>2</sup>

Granted, these were the comment of angry, grammatically incorrect, soccer fans, disappointed at the loss of “their” team, but such comments were not limited to angry blogging fans, grammatically incorrect or otherwise. Joerg Haider, an Austrian far-right politician, was quoted during the tournament, incidentally, in an Italian newspaper, wondering “what these two nations (Turkey and Russia) have to do with Europe?” (DPA, 2008), and stating that Turkey could “go ahead and win the Cup in Vienna (where the final game was to be held), but for the Turks the doors of Europe must remain shut...I don’t believe that they (Turkey) can accept the norms and culture of Europe. The roots are too different” (DPA, 2008).

And by “roots”, we can safely assume that he means the Islamic roots of Turkey. And though here, Haider is referring to Turkey’s ambition to join the EU, he has elsewhere expressed sympathies with European anti-immigration policies (DPA, 2008), which have taken on (I should say now more than ever) a distinctly anti-Muslim flavour. Comments like Haider’s, and others,

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<sup>2</sup> Incidentally, this is how Porchetta described herself:

iam not hispanic. If you did not know, frisinone is a province in the region of lazio and i can assure you that iam spotless white, with grey/hazel eyes and light hair and with chiselled aquiline features( which turkish or Hispanic can never have).Turks are Not caucasians, they are not white by any means, just ask the true whitesYou must be dreaming if u consider Turks as whites, because they are not even Remotely (Musab, 2008)

on the *inherent* in-assimilability of Muslims have influenced such anti-immigration policies, by portraying Muslim values, traditions, and identities as being incompatible with Western democratic values, traditions, and identities, as discussed by Samuel P. Huntington in his book *The Clash of Civilizations* (1998), and more recently, Mark Steyn's (2006) *America Alone: The End of the World As We Know It*<sup>3</sup>. Thus, according to Haider, Huntington, and Steyn, "American/Canadian Muslim" or "European Muslim" is an oxymoron, as a Muslim can never really become a citizen of the 'West' without first denouncing their Muslim identity. Should one choose to visibly maintain their Muslim identity (such as by wearing the *hijab*, the sartorial Muslim veil), then the deduction is that such a person, by choosing to identify themselves as "different", cannot fully adopt their new citizenship or the identity of the nation to which they are now loyal to, and is not a full member of the nation, even though they may be active members of their new communities and active participants in the civic sphere.

We see here how the alienation of Turkey from Europe is representative of the state of the Muslim immigrant in the West: democratically secular and politically active, while still internally adherent to an Islamic identity. Haider's Europe represents receiving/host countries; unwilling to accept these immigrants into the state, despite their participation and adoption of what is arguably the *lingua franca* of Europe, soccer, because of the inherent incompatibility between *their* Muslim identities and what defines *us*, including *our* democratic values and *our* sports. Since sport and war are the two most potent vehicle for the creation of collective national identities (as referenced in Duke and Crolley 1996, 4), why is it that, despite the participation of Muslims in soccer, they are still viewed as being a separate community within the nation, but not full members of the nation?

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<sup>3</sup> The author of this book published several articles in Macleans Magazine which are now the subject of a Human Rights Complaint in British Columbia, because of their alleged inflammatory and Islamophobic nature.

In order to answer this question, we must first examine the history of soccer and the participation, and representation, of Muslims in this sport. The history of soccer, perhaps more than any other sport, is a story of nations, migration, identities, and the exclusion/inclusion of certain groups and identities from these nations. The global spread of this sport is itself reflects emigration (though ‘colonial expansion’ is perhaps the more appropriate term) during the period of European colonisation of the global south, while its current popularity in certain countries, such as Canada and Australia, is a direct result of the importing of soccer culture by immigrants. However, soccer, which originated in its current form in Britain, predominantly owes its global popularity to British Imperial expansion. In Europe, it was brought to the Iberian peninsular and Scandinavia by British sailors and workers, it was taught to “schoolboys from central Europe” by British teachers (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999, 4), and it was brought to Turkey by English merchants “who played the game informally on the meadows of Istanbul and Izmir” (Kozanoglu 1999, 117). The last point is particularly significant, as it demonstrates the shared history of soccer in unquestionably European countries, and in Turkey, which is seemingly at limbo between the East to which it is typecast, and the West, which it aims to belong to.

In their article on soccer fans and class and social exclusion, Tim Crabbe and Adam Brown discuss how “real fans” are defined based on their shared and constructed memories and identities (Crabbe and Brown 2004, 28); and knowingly or unknowingly, by bringing up norms, cultures, and roots, Haider’s sentiments on the “real European” identity (a binary set up against the “Turkish” identity) reflect this statement on “real” football identities. This “real” football identity, and by extension, national identity apparently depends whether or not you are on the team with the upper hand: the ‘Old’ European team, or the team which consists only of “real” Europeans, whose loyalty to the state is unquestioned. In short, the team with the least amount of

immigrants or minorities of immigrant backgrounds, or the team with the least amount of visible ‘Others’.

If “real” Europeans are the ones that can trace their ancestry back to Europe prior to the eighteenth century (before large-scale migration), and real soccer and its associated identities is only to be found in Europe, then Haider is here at fault, as the history of soccer in Turkey parallels the history of soccer in his native Austria and, indeed, in most other indisputably “European” countries. In fact, Turkish soccer players were playing in Italy, one of the teams Haider supported in the tournament (DPA, 2008), for Italian league teams since the late 1950’s (Kozanoglu 1999, 118). The participation of Muslims in European soccer has become so entrenched, to the point that in the current EURO 2008 tournament, 9 out of 23 players (almost 40%) on the French national team were Muslim (Yahmid, 2008). In 1998, when France won the World Cup, they were lead by a Muslim captain, a point to which (before they won the Cup, ofcourse), the Minister of Culture vociferously objected to, questioning how the proud nation of France could be lead and represented by a Muslim man of immigrant background (Hase 2002, 304), despite the fact that France is home to six million Muslims (BBC News Staff, 2006), a significant proportion of the population.

The Minister’s objection elucidates a very important point: immigrants, particularly Muslim immigrants, can live in our countries, become our neighbours (literally and figuratively, as in the proximity of Turkey to its European neighbours), and, through acquisition of citizenship, become legally “One of Us”, but only on a superficial level. When it comes to war and sport though, through which national identities are defined, the immigrant, the Muslim, and the Other, belongs on the other side of the field. National identities are, by nature, selectively inclusive, as Benedict Anderson defines it, the ‘nation’ is “an imagined political community –

and imagined as both *inherently* limited and sovereign” (Anderson 2006, 6, emphasis added). However, this identity is fluid and constantly evolving in that *who* is considered to be ‘outside’ of the nation is constantly changing<sup>4</sup>. As a relatively new community in Europe and the Americas, how has the participation of Muslims in soccer, and in national teams, changed our perception of who belongs to these nations? Should we first be questioning whether or not the Muslim community is perceived as belonging to the nation or simply a minority, and temporary, community? Why is this community’s participation in soccer both particularly significant and particularly problematic?

There have been a variety of sports used to form national identities or to instil a sense of national identity among citizenry; however, I chose to focus on soccer<sup>5</sup>, for three particular reasons. The first being the richness of the history of soccer, whether in continental Europe, or in the colonies where it was used to shape the identities of the indigenous peoples. The second reason is the obvious global popularity of soccer, and the emphasis placed on this sport by people around the world. The third, perhaps most important reason why I chose to focus on soccer, is because of my own particular interest in this sport. I chose to focus my research on a particular community, the Muslim community, their inclusion or exclusion in national identities, and their participation in this particular sport, in light of recent incidents highlighted by the media involving Muslims on the soccer field. Here in Canada, or perhaps I should specify in Québec, Asmahan Mansour, a young Muslim girl in 2007 was evicted from a soccer game for refusing to remove her *hijab* (CBC News Staff, 2007), which highlighted, once again, how “reasonable accommodation” of Muslims is still a continuously ongoing and seemingly endless debate, both

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see *How the Irish Became White*, by Noel Ignatiev (1995).

<sup>5</sup> Note on usage of this term: although globally, ‘football’ is the preferred term, for the most part, ‘soccer’ will be used instead, except for when the term ‘football’ appears in a direct quotation.



in Canada, and in Europe. The fact that discourse continues to focus on how to “accommodate” this community further marginalizes them, since it furthers the notion of *them* as different to *us* and in need of ‘special’ treatment.

Given the use of soccer and sport as a potent vehicle through which nations are defined and nationalism is instilled within the populace, the participation of the Muslim populace in soccer, and how this community is either included/excluded into constantly evolving national identities presents an interesting field of study. The first point to tackle in order to address the issue of Muslims, soccer, and the Western nation-state, is how these nations *define themselves*, and how soccer has been used as a vehicle for the creation of these national identities. The second issue is how Muslims are included (or excluded) in discourses on national identity, and whether they are included (or excluded) in this identity, particularly through their portrayal and representation by the media of these nation-states. This will be discussed through an examination of the Muslim population’s participation in soccer, whether in national teams, as with Ashkan Dejagah, an Iranian-German professional soccer player, or in youth leagues, such as in the case of Asmahan Mansour, an 11 year old girl who played in a youth league and was ejected from a soccer game in Laval in 2007 on the grounds that her headscarf presented a safety concern (Wyatt, 2007). Analysis of these two cases will illuminate how Muslims are perceived as members of the nation or as Others within our nation, and how this community’s participation in this particular sport is forcing a re-examination and re-defining of who belongs.

## **Theoretical Framework and Review of Existing Literature**

An initial review of the existing literature showed that while a great deal of work has been dedicated to the subject of soccer, its usage and role in the formation of collective national identities, and its usage in the enforcement of values and identities onto colonized peoples, very little attention has been devoted to the participation immigrants, both professionally in the teams of their new country of residence, or even in amateur (non-professional) leagues. This is particularly striking considering that soccer players are amongst the most mobile workers in Europe, and transfers between the top European soccer clubs is a multi-million dollar industry<sup>6</sup>, which often leads to confusion regarding national identities and loyalties, considering that an Italian soccer player (for example) could for several million Euros be sold to play for a club in Spain.

Given the highly mobile nature of professional soccer players, is the participation of new immigrants and communities in soccer at the national level viewed within the dynamics of “colonized/subjugated/minority” peoples participating in what has historically been viewed as the sport of the white, European, male, and the vehicle through which they can become members of their new nation? Or are they only seen as ‘temporary’ workers and/or migrants, to be admitted into the country (and the team) as required by labour (or other) forces but not on a permanent basis? What of the participation of people in soccer in Canada, a country where soccer is played by the majority in urban centres where immigrant, yet still considered a minority sport? How has this affected notion(s) of Canadian-ness among participants that instead of choosing to participate

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<sup>6</sup> The Spanish soccer club Real Madrid spent 78€ million to transfer Zinedine Zidane to their club (Desbordes 2007, 3).

in the national sport to solidify their place in the Canadian nation, immigrants and minorities are choosing to continue to identify with soccer instead?

The literature review which follows attempts to classify some of the sources available on soccer, nations, and identity into five sections, in an attempt to answer some of the questions highlighted. The first section contains a review of sources available on Muslims and soccer, in order to highlight some of the gaps in the literature. From the specific, we then move into the non-specific: the second section takes a broad look at how nations and notions of national identity are created, with emphasis on how sport, particularly soccer, has been used as the vehicle for the construction of these identities. The third section looks at sport and identity in the Canadian context, followed by the fourth section, which examines soccer and minority identities. The final section ties in the third and fourth section by examining soccer in the Canadian context.

### **i) Muslims and Soccer**

With the exception of Paul Silverstein's article on Islam, Soccer, and the French Nation State (2001), and a chapter in Franklin Foer's book *How Soccer Explains Everything: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization* (2004), the participation of Muslims in soccer in the West, although well covered by the media, is an all but untouched topic in scholarly research. Silverstein's article, "Sporting Faith: Islam, Soccer, and the French Nation-State" opens by discussing the case of several young girls of North African origin, expelled from their schools in the late 1980's for wearing the sartorial Muslim veil (the *hijab*) to class. This opening statement is significant because, although his article does not discuss the participation of veiled Muslim women in this sport in France, the *hijab* has become the most potent symbol of Islamic

fundamentalism (Todd 1998, 441), and by invoking these incidents in the mind of the reader, Silverstein reminds us how Islam has been reduced to a few publically recognizable symbols (the oppressed veiled Muslim woman and the crazed terrorist), through which we identify Muslims and Islam. This has seemingly reached a point where images of Muslims participating in seemingly “normal” activities, such as soccer, are unrecognizable and fail to resonate with us. When we see a soccer player on the field, we see an athlete representing their club or country; when we see a Muslim woman wearing the veil, we see a repressed woman who cannot participate in the academic field the way *we* do, play sports like *we* do, or participate in the civic sphere like *us*. Therefore it becomes difficult for the public to associate Muslims, particularly Muslim women, with the ability to participate in *our* sport, soccer.

This concept is no more clearly demonstrated than in Silverstein’s analysis of the Banlieu Marshall Plans of the mid-1990’s, which aimed to “reconstruct” the French-Muslim identity into one that was compatible with French notions of *laïcité*. Among the plan’s initiatives was the establishment of soccer programs for at risk male Muslim youth, in an attempt to encourage a secular, sport identity as opposed to a radical and religious identity (Silverstein 2000, 34). What the plan failed to recognize though was that the idea of ‘monitored’ sports was very unappealing to the youth it targeted, because of the obvious implication of the policing of their free time and leisure activities. Another failure was that the plan failed to acknowledge that Islam (religion) and soccer (sport) are not mutually incompatible. These youth were active soccer fans and played soccer informally without the states’ intervention; however the states’ intervention was seen as necessary in order to prevent the sport being used as a breeding ground for the proliferation of ideas which were seen as problematic. Thus, we can summarize the attempt of the French Banlieu Plan as an attempt to rid impromptu urban soccer of any Islamic association.

Whereas Silverstein's article focuses on Muslims and soccer in the West, Foer's chapter, "How Soccer Explains Islam's Hope" focuses on Muslims and soccer in the East. What particularly stands out from this chapter is how Muslim women are barred from participation in soccer, whether actively as athletes, or passively as spectators. In Iran, when police refused to allow women into the 120,000 seat Azadi stadium to celebrate Iran's victory against Australia in the 1997 World Cup qualifier, women began shouting "Aren't we part of this nation? We want to celebrate too" (Foer 2004, 221). The implication was that by not allowing the women to participate, they were not allowing them to participate in national pride and embracement of national identity. Eventually, because of the women's insistence in entering the stadium (resulting in the physical breaking of the police barriers), women were let in (Foer 2005, 221). The breaking of the police gates is highly symbolic, as women have only relatively recently been recognized as members of the nation, culminating in the granting of women the right to individual citizenship and the right to vote. The insistence of women in being able to participate in demonstrations of national pride in what has been traditionally been thought of as an all-men's game is similar to the insistence of women in the West on being granted the right to vote and the right run for public servant positions, breaking through the gender barrier that has historically marginalized women.

Because of the limited amount of academic sources available on the participation of Muslims in soccer (indeed, in sports in general), the reliance will mainly be on newspaper sources, while relying on theories of nation and nationalism, and inclusion/exclusion of minority identities in sport. Newspaper sources are constantly covering, debating, and questioning the Muslim communities' participation in this sport, and whether "they" (Muslims) can be like "us" and participate in *our* sport, while simultaneously shaping perceptions of who participates in

soccer and, ultimately, who this sport belongs to. This was particularly highlighted in the case of Ashkan Dejagah: Dejagah, an Iranian-born German-bred striker on the German U-21 national team in 2007 requested to be withdrawn from the team's European Championship qualifier against Israel, for personal reasons (Bosley, 2007). As a result, *Bild*, Germany's biggest-selling newspaper, called for Dejagah's exclusion from the national team, a call which was backed by Friedbert Pflueger, then a leading member of the conservative Christian Democrats. The reasons cited for the call to eject him from the team was that by refusing to play in Israel, Dejagah was not acting in a manner that "represented" the values of the German state, and as a player on the national team, he was an unofficial representative of the German state and obligated to represent German values.

Note that Dejagah requested not to play for personal reasons; as Iran does not officially recognize the state of Israel, his request to sit out this game arose out of a concern for the safety of his extended family in Iran, and his later ability to enter Iran to visit them with an Israeli stamp on his passport. His request though was viewed as an overtly political act by many, including the Central Council of Jews in Germany. They demanded that he be sanctioned and removed from the team, citing it as "an affront", whether to the nation of Germany or Israel, or indeed to the Central Council of Jews is not made explicitly clear, "to silently tolerate this behaviour" (Unir and Pfeffer, 2007). This particular example was highlighted because it shows how, despite that Dejagah's request was a personal one, as a soccer player of "non-German" background, his act was seen as proof of the in-assimilability of Muslim immigrants and their inability to fully integrate into the German nation particularly since, in this case, he was seen as choosing to represent the political views of his native country Iran, as opposed to the political views of his adopted country Germany.

By not conforming to the political views and values of the German nation, Dejagah was seen to be demonstrating an unwillingness to become a member of the German nation, despite that politics is only one of the spheres of civic life, and by all means, it seems that Dejagah was active member of the German nation, no more clearly highlighted than in his willingness to participate in the German national team as opposed to the Iranian. The call for his eviction from the national team is highly symbolic as it represents a call for his expulsion from the German nation because of his unwillingness to assimilate. It also furthers the formation of the collective, and *authentic*, non-Muslim German identity, by further widening the divide between *our* German identity and *our* German values, which includes maintaining good relations with Israel (Bosley, 2007), and *their* identities and values.

## **ii) Creating the Nation**

The case of Dejagah demonstrates two ways in which a nation could perceivably identify itself: through sport, and through the creation of a perceived “enemy”, physical or ideological, both of which serve the purpose of binding people, who may not otherwise have much in common, together against a real or perceived enemy (including a rival soccer team) or threat. Conversely, the case of Dejagah also shows how soccer can also divide participants, including observers, along political, ideological, religious, and racial lines: in this case, it was “us” Germans and our values vs. “them” immigrants who import values and identities, and do not belong to our state.

This leads us to ask, in a world where human mobility is at an all-time high, who really belongs to our (insert name of country here) state or nation? How do we define who belongs?

According to Walter Bagehot (1992), “the history of the nineteenth century” is the history of ‘nation-building’ (Bagehot, cited in Hobswam 1992, 1); simultaneously, we could equally argue that the history of the nineteenth century should also be called the century of European colonial expansion, and increased awareness of ourselves as a collective identity and Others as a parallel collective identity. Incidentally, the nineteenth century was also the century of expansion and codification of soccer in England, the home of the sport and from where it spread to Europe and the rest of the World (Duke and Crolley 1996, 12). All three themes: increased awareness of the notion of the/a ‘nation’, colonial expansion, and the expansion of soccer, have had profound effects in the creation of the collective identities of those who were perceived to belong the ‘nation’, but, more importantly, who was *not* to belong to this newly formed nation.

Hobswam emphasises that the concept of Nation is “not part of free-floating philosophical discourse, but socially, historically and locally rooted, and must be explained in terms of these realities” (Hobswam 1992, 9). He defines the Nation as neither a primary, nor an “unchanging social entity”, but a definition which is exclusive “to a particular, and historically recent, period” (Hobswam 1992, 9). Thus, within the context of the history of the formation of the European nations, we should not view the formation of the European nations within a vacuum, but to locate the history of soccer within the formation of these nations, to deduce that since both were “created” around the same time, if a new member of the nation (read: immigrant) who cannot locate or trace his or her ancestral history back to this region, he cannot claim legitimacy to national identity, nor can he be considered a legitimate participant in *our* sport. This is particularly problematic, as it suggests that identities of minority athletes or athletes of newcomer background in sports which define nations (including soccer, and in Canada, hockey), are



probationary and can easily be revoked should the athlete present him or herself in non-conforming manner, including by displaying alternative political views.

For example, during the 1968 Olympic games in Mexico, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, two black runners who won the gold and bronze medals for the U.S., raised their hands in the “black power salute” (Reynolds, 2008) as the U.S. national anthem was being played. They also wore black socks with no shoes, and the silver medal winner, Peter Norman of Australia, wore the Olympic Project for Human Rights badge, in solidarity with the runners and the Civil Rights movement. As a result, Smith and Carlos were reprimanded, ostracized, and expelled from the games. Smith went on to publically say “if I win I am an American, not a black American. But if I did something bad then they would say ‘a Negro’” (BBC News Online, 2008). Peter Norman returned home to Australia, a country which, until 1973, had a “whites-only” immigration policy<sup>7</sup> (Jones 2003, 113), to be ostracized and criticized by the media and the public over his actions, although not to the extent that was faced by Smith and Carlos.

The public outcry against the athletes and their subsequent suspension demonstrates how minority identities in sport are fluid, but not in a positive way; they are fluid in that they can change and be moulded based on the dominant, public opinion, where if a minority athlete does well and behaves “properly”, then he is “allowed” to represent the nation; if he diverges even slightly from the norms and values of the nation, then he or she is stripped of their national identity, which is viewed as never really their claim to begin with. Therefore sports, and the identities of minority participants in sports, are not to be viewed within a vacuum either, their identities are continuously viewed as being on probation; provided the dominant majority

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<sup>7</sup> In fact, The Bulletin, an influential Australian newspaper, had the slogan “Australia for the White Man” at its masthead from 1908-1961 (Jones 2003, 113).

approves of their actions (on and off the field), they can be considered members of the nation, but once an athlete of minority or immigrant background diverges from this identity, then he or she can be threatened with expulsion from the nation.

The examples of DeJagah, Smith, and Carlos also demonstrate how the sports field can provide a political field for political messages that might otherwise not find an outlet for media attention, although perhaps it would be unfair to cite both cases together, as DeJagah's request was non-political but became politicized, whereas Smith and Carlos' actions were consciously highly political in nature. This presents a way in which the sports field can be reclaimed by minority athletes: such athletes, who are scrutinized by the media as they participate on the sports field, instead re-appropriate the sports field and use the media and publicity as a platform for the projection of political messages that may not have found an alternative outlet for public media attention. One only need to look at the amount of advertising that is invested in stadiums, in corporate sponsorships, and even on athletes bodies (such as the advertisements that appear on soccer players shirts) to demonstrate the value of the sports field for the projection and promotion of ideas (and products). This phenomenon is only recent in nature, largely "evolved" during the 1990's, when soccer "moved from being a national culture to real internalization", creating "a huge business with several dimensions" (Desbordes 2007, 1). The creation of this "huge business" came out of the realization that soccer attracted a wide and diverse audience, and thus competitions provided a platform to send out advertisements to a large percentage of the population at once. When Mohammed Aboutrika lifted his shirt after scoring against the Sudan in the 2008 African Cup of Nations to reveal an undershirt with the message "Sympathy with Gaza", in both Arabic and English (Sannie, 2008), he was using the field to advertise a message that otherwise would not have passed the "corporate legitimacy" test: he was advertising the

suffering of Gaza, under Israeli blockade for weeks without access to fuel, sanitized water, food, and other basic necessities. The juxtaposition of the message on his shirt in a field dominated by Coca-Cola and other multi-million dollar companies was particularly striking.

It is also worth highlighting how sports are used to further national identities among non-participant audience members. By casting out these athletes, Smith, Carlos, DeJagah, and even Norman to a lesser degree, the nation is able to define itself in relation to what it is *not*. Under ‘normal’ circumstances, sporting competitions provide an outlet for nations to present themselves to other nations in a positive light through their athletic prowess. For example, the Brazilians are known for soccer, the Canadians for hockey, and even the hosting nations use competitions being held in their country as a way of presenting their prosperity to the rest of the world<sup>8</sup>. As such, everything is highly regulated, and in a sense, everyone is on their best behaviour. Thus when Smith and Carlos diverged from the norm and aired the U.S.’s “dirty clothing before the entire world” (Hartmann 2003, 11), they were rejecting the norms and niceties that dictate behaviour in highly regulated sports in order to prove that under the facade of niceties in sports lies real human suffering. Consequently, they had their actions reduced to “a juvenile gesture by a couple of athletes who should have known better” (Hartmann 2003, 11): however, their ‘juvenile gesture’ would go on to define the 1968 Mexico Olympics (Hartmann 2003, 6), and continues to define struggle for minority identities recognition (in sport and in the nation) today.

In the case of Peter Norman though, he can still stake a claim to the Australian nation by virtue of being white, and being of Anglo-Saxon origin: his shared European history with the majority of the nation, prevented him from being fully evicted from the nation. In effect, because

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<sup>8</sup> This can be quite an expensive project: the opening ceremony at the current 2008 Olympics in China is estimated to have cost upwards of \$40 billion (Yum, 2008), by far the most expensive on record.

he was the right race, he didn't suffer the racist backlash that Smith and Carlos faced in the U.S. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's 2000 article, "'This is White Country': The Racial Ideology of the Western Nations of the World System", elaborates on the continued impact of racism in definitions of national identities by discussing how, despite years of positivist policies in several Western countries that have attempted to eradicate racism within the public sphere (such as affirmative action in public universities), racism still exists, albeit in more subtle forms, and continues to shape our notions of who 'legitimately' belongs. He also argues that racism (like nations), is dynamic and changing, and is so entrenched in our society that we often fail to recognize it because it so easily changes forms (Bonilla-Silva 2000). Thus, while DeJagah, Smith, and Carlos were cast out because of their visible (and definable) difference from the majority of the 'nation', casting out of Norman would not have been feasible, as he was, by all means, representative of the 'typical' Australian: white, Anglo-Saxon of origin, and male. Although Bonilla-Silva's article focuses on racism in society (particularly in the public sphere), in fact, racism continues to be cited as the major barrier to the full inclusion of newcomer, immigrant, and minority communities within the nation. What also stands out from Bonilla-Silva's article is how current celebrations of nationalism, more often than not, have acquired an ethno-national character (Bonilla-Silva 2000, 1), which thereby exclude minority ethnic or racial groups, a point which is particularly significant considering the ultra-nationalistic celebrations involved in sports, particularly team sports like soccer.

Canada, as a major immigrant receiving country, and where the major metropolitan cities are among the most diverse cities in the world<sup>9</sup>, presents an interesting case study on its own, regarding the participation of its immigrant and minority communities in sports, whether the

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<sup>9</sup> Toronto, for example, boasts a population of 49.97% foreign-born residents (Kopun and Keung, 2007)

official national sport (lacrosse), the unofficial national sport (hockey), or the global sport, soccer. Canadian's are known for their love of hockey, but the participation of immigrants, particularly immigrants of visible minority status, and minorities in professional leagues is not representative of the demographics of the nation. Returning to Bonilla-Silva's thesis on how nationalistic celebrations have taken an ethno-racial character, can we still say that the excitement, passion, and pride of watching the Canadian national hockey reach the finals is representative of Canadian pride in our nation and athletics, since a significant portion of society will not be able to see themselves (and their communities) reflected in this sport? Can the celebration of a Canadian win against a foreign team be fully embraced as a nationalistic celebration, if it excludes many members of the nation who are of immigrant and/or minority background?

### **iii) Sport and Nation: The Canadian Example**

Carl Berger's 1997 article, "The true north strong and free", discusses notions of Canadian-ness, Canadian identity, and by extension, Canadian nationalism, providing theories of nation-identity formation, and arguing the importance of geography and climate in the formation of the Canadian national identity. According to Berger, Canada, as a northern, cold, climate, is the territory of "northern", or European peoples, as the northern Indigenous peoples of Canada are conspicuously absent from his discussion. However, "Canadian" within this context excludes members from southern countries from being able to define themselves as Canadian (Berger 1997, 5), as they would be "climatically" un-adaptable. This article demonstrates how climate

(like sports) has been used in attempts to differentiate *us* Canadians, of Anglo-Saxon and West European heritage, and the *others*, in this case, warmer-climatic peoples.

Carl Berger's article on Canada as a land of 'northern' and 'free' men is helpful for a historical examination of how the idea of the distinctive "Canadian" identity was gradually developed through the medium of climate, but it does not examine the role of distinctive, Canadian, winter sports in the formation of the collective national identity. We can deduce from it though that while winter sports, or colder winter activities, would be incorporated into the national identity, southern (warmer climatic) sports, will always be viewed as foreign to Canada – as will the peoples who introduce these sports and participate in them. Jane Crossman's (2003) book, *Canadian Sport Sociology*, and Colin D. Howell's (2001), *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* though focus on sport and examine its role in the Canadian identity, unsurprisingly, both focus predominantly on "traditional sports", including hockey and lacrosse. *Canadian Sport Sociology* provides several chapters which examine sociological theories and perspectives on sport, and how sports affect both participating members and society at large, including how sports can affect or influence perceptions of identity. *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers: Sports and the Making of Modern Canada* discusses Canada's relationship with sports, with particular attention to sporting events "that act as unifying cultural enthusiasms" (Howell 2001, 129), which "help construct the nation as a coherent identity" (Howell 2001, 129), as opposed to Bonilla-Silva's discussion of such "enthusiasms" which divide members of the nation among ethno-racial lines. Howell's work extends on Crossman's work by providing a link on how sport can shape the identity of the individual, then extends to society, and finally to the nation, and how sport connects the identities of all three. We can see this in the example of

Asmahan Mansour; it grew from being an incident involving one player, to an issue of in/tolerance and the *hijab* in Québec, to the greater debate on Multiculturalism and Canada.

In addition to discussing various sociological and theoretical approaches to sports studies in Canada, Crossman's book also provides an extensive and detailed history of sport in Canada, from Confederation and into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. She discusses how, historically, the Anglophone community has been more active in organized sport than the Francophone community (Crossman 2003, 5), but that the Anglophone community were exclusionary in their practices (both regarding who was allowed to immigrate to Canada, and who would be allowed to participate in their sports), to the point of excluding labourers, Irish, and Scottish immigrants from playing in their sports. She also describes how the "physical activities" of the Aboriginal peoples were described by the Anglophones as "utilitarian, impromptu, and spontaneous" (Crossman 2003, 23), and were generally looked down upon by both the newly arrived English, and French, settlers. However, these "utilitarian, impromptu, and spontaneous" physical activities were later absorbed by the British settlers; indeed, one of these activities was to become the precursor for the national Canadian sport of lacrosse (Poulter 2004, 293).

Ironically enough, by 1880, Aboriginals "were excluded, by race, from competing in amateur competitions for lacrosse" (Crossman 2003, 121), which by then was being hailed as the archetypical "Canadian" sport, distinct from "imported" British sports (Poulter 2004, 293). Here, we see distinct pride in the creation of a new nation and a new identity (Canadian), which seems to be solidified and legitimized with the creation of a distinct, novel, and new sport that distinguished its participants. The creation of a Canadian sport is a move which we can see as being as important to notions of the Canadian identity as the creation of the Canadian flag - but at

the expense of the original inhabitants, who now became excluded from the nation, as represented by their exclusion from this sport.

Gillian Poulter suggests that new Anglo-Saxon immigrants would therefore participate in these new sports, including lacrosse and snowshoeing, as a way of staking a claim to a “native-Canadian” identity, by participating and imitating their sports and leisure activities. By participating in the same sports that the first people of Canada participated in, an immigrant can then claim to be as native to Canada as the indigenous populations (Poulter 2004, 295). The concept of participating in sport as a way to stake claim to an identity (in this case, Canadian, as opposed to British), is discussed by Poulter in her chapter of Mangan and Ritchie’s (2004) book, *Ethnicity, Sport, Identity: Struggles for Status*, and is particularly useful in examining how sport can be used as a way of integrating and ‘nationalizing’ participants.

It is important to note though that the original Aboriginal version of lacrosse was discarded in favour of a new, institutionalized, version of the game, developed by George Beers in 1869 (Crossman 2003, 125). Beers took the basics of lacrosse, as it was played by the Aboriginals, and organized new rules “in a manner that he found meaningful, as opposed to the ways the game was played by Aboriginal Canadians” (Crossman 2003, 125). The changing of the rules of lacrosse in this way, “demonstrates his [Beers] privilege by race over the originators of the game of lacrosse” (Crossman 2003, 125), and can be seen as a way of “imprinting” the Anglophone identity into the sport, and by extension, Canada. More sinisterly, we can also view the ‘Canadian-ization’ of lacrosse as an early demonstration of how ‘Aboriginal Canadians’ became simply ‘Aboriginals’; their gradual exclusion from the game and eventual exclusion from the newly formed state. As d’Azeglio stated “We have made Italy” now we must make Italians” (Hobsbawm 1983, 267), it seems that Canadian settlers, after having “made Canada”, now created



a sport which had enough remnants of the original Aboriginal sport to legitimize its claim to “native-ness”, but was institutionalized and regulated, demonstrating old, colonial, obsession with order and regulation. This indeed created a sport that was, and is, “truly Canadian”; a fusion of Aboriginal identity and Old World notions of order and orderliness.

None of the previous sources outlined though discuss soccer, the unofficial sport of Canada, and the growing popularity of soccer among urban and immigrant youth in Canada. According to the Canadian Soccer Association’s 2007 report, soccer “is the nation’s number one participatory sport with over 850,000 registered players” (Vaidyanath, 2008), however, the sources discussed all but ignore soccer, and indeed the participation of immigrants in sport in Canada. What does the increased participation and growing popularity of a temperate-climate sport mean to evolving Canadian identity, especially in light of Berger’s argument? Also, why is it that soccer is played by the majority, yet still viewed as a minority sport played predominantly in urban centres? What role has soccer played in the formation of the Multicultural Canadian identity?

#### **iv) Soccer and the Identity of the “Other”**

Brian Stoddart’s (1998) article, “Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire”, looks at nationalism and notions of the nation among colonized peoples, linking a post/colonialist perspective with a sport’s studies perspective. In his article, Stoddart argues that sport has been used by the colonizing powers to enforce culturally specific notions of “civility” upon the colonized people (Stoddart 1998, 653) and as such was “a resources by which the powerful attempt to dominate others” (MacClancy 1996, 10). Although in this case, Stoddart

is referring to cricket and not soccer; soccer, as with cricket, also originated in the British Empire, and was brought to the early colonies (including Canada) by early settlers and immigrants. In fact, part of the British Imperialist model was to introduce soccer to the natives of their colonies in Africa and the Middle East, “as part of the ‘civilizing process’” of the indigenous populations (Ben-Porat 2001, 136), and as a way of indoctrinating not only British, but also religious Christian values into the natives (Sorek 2007, 15). Through this framework, we can see how Christianity in soccer would be gradually normalized, and the presence of other religions, such as a Muslim girl wearing the *hijab*, would be seen as problematic.

The underlying message in Stoddart’s, as in Bainer’s, work seems to be that while nationalism often manifests itself in sports, including soccer, nationalism can also be the precursor to involvement in sport, for athletic participants and for spectators. This concept was not limited to European colonialists: forgers of the former Soviet state were well aware of the potential of sport to indoctrinate their own people, and used sport “as a tool for socializing the population into the newly established system of values” (MacClancy 1996, 10). A more current example is the Marshall Banlieu Plan, where soccer programs were used to encourage assimilation, integration, and secular identities, among Muslim youth in France (Silverstein 2000, 33).

While soccer, and other sports, can be used to instil notions of nationalism and affiliation with a national identity, it can also been re-appropriated by minority and subjugated identities to mobilize *alternative* identities. As a team sport played on a grass field with eleven players and one referee, soccer provided an ideal and seemingly effective tool to subjugate colonized peoples, as it involved the regulation and policing of leisure/free time and bodies and the newly-occupied land on which this sport was played, through the imposition of rules by the referee. From a

colonialist power-struggle framework soccer “cannot be comprehended without reference to relations of power: who attempts to control how a sport is to be organized and played, and by whom; how it is to be represented; how it is to be interpreted” (MacClancy 1996, 5), as it is a highly regulated sport, by which participants (by extension) could also be highly regulated. The imposition of soccer on the natives can be viewed as a form of power struggle by which colonizing powers attempted to regulate colonized peoples and enforce new identities (and by extension, loyalties) on them.

However, in African colonies, soccer provided an alternative means to rebel against the imposition of colonial authority. Soccer was introduced to the continent by European settlers who promoted it “as a way to occupy what they regarded as the indolent young males who had moved into town” (MacClancy 1996, 12). It was viewed as a way of keeping the indigenous peoples occupied, perhaps out of the fear that these *indolent* young males could potentially become *revolutionary* young males, who might cause trouble to the foreign powers by questioning their presences in their countries. What the European colonial powers were not expecting perhaps was how soccer would be re-appropriated by the colonized peoples, and not only be accepted, but also incorporated into the indigenous culture, but under terms separate from those negotiated by the colonizing powers. In effect, soccer literally became a field for the “political contest between the colonizers and the colonized” in Africa (MacClancy 1996, 12).

Thus, by “successfully striking against the white controllers of their soccer league, the players established an autonomous space in urban life for themselves and other indigenes, one from which they could build” (MacClancy 1996, 12). The ability to defeat the colonialists at their own game, played under their rules, terms, and conditions, would be a win laden with symbolism for the indigenous players. This made soccer a “cultural weapon” and rallying point for the

“formulation of anti-colonialist nationalist sentiment” (Sorek 2007, 15), an important concept which links soccer to resistance and counter-hegemonic discourse. In fact, many political leaders in Africa “attached themselves to the sport as a means of promoting national pride (and their own careers) in the early days of independence from the colonial powers” (Crolley and Hand 2006, 151-152), and also perhaps a way of relating to the general populace by evoking memories of common struggles.

In the case of the soccer programs in France which target Muslim youth for the purpose of integrating them and indoctrinating in them French values, with the assumption being that French Muslim values contain no similarities and bridging points with French secular values, the programs were received with lukewarm enthusiasm by the population they were targeting, in spite of the popularity of soccer among young Muslim men. However, this is not to diminish the role of soccer in integrating newcomers and immigrants. Patrick Mignon’s (1994) chapter “New supporter cultures and identity in France: The case of Paris Saint-Germain” in *Game without Frontiers: Football, Identity and Modernity*, discusses how “the love of football in France is enhanced by new processes which are sustained by the crisis of the French model of integration and the definition of identities” (Mignon 1994, 273). He suggests that for many citizens in France “school, the hope of becoming a civil servant, of taking over the family business, or of entering into the steel works like one’s father, constituted realistic dreams of social climbing” (Mignon 1994, 277), but faced with real factors such as economic hardship and real or perceived racism, immigrants and newcomers, “the Polish, Spanish, Italians, then those from the Maghreb – felt that football was the best means of escaping from work in the mines” (Mignon 1994, 277). Although soccer has been used “as a resource by which the powerful attempt to dominate others” (MacClancy 1996, 10), here, soccer provided the ladder by which immigrants and newcomers

could climb out of economic and social disadvantage, and fast-track their acceptance into the French nation.

#### **v) Soccer and Canada**

However, the theory that soccer is used by the majority to dominate the minority does not explain the popularity of soccer in Canada: as an urban sport associated with immigrants, newcomers, and minorities, wouldn't participation in soccer, as opposed to lacrosse or even hockey, further distance oneself from identifying with the nation? The story of soccer in Canada, and in Australia, is distinct in comparison to the story of soccer in other colonies, as its spread is due predominantly to the efforts of immigrants, as opposed to being imposed by colonialists. In Australia, the "the World Game was played in microcosm among migrants who arrived" (Murray 1998, xi), as in Canada, where "the drive to establish soccer came from the immigrant Scots – and a handful of Ulster Irish" (Murray 1998, 16).

The immense popularity of soccer in urban, immigrant receiving centres thus can be seen as a result of newcomer and immigrant settlement patterns: in Canada, most newcomers choose to settle in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and surrounding areas, creating the "microcosms" of immigrant communities that Murray mentioned. Several studies have been conducted as to why immigrants may choose to settle in such "microcosms" as Murray describes; according to Seamus Grimes own literature review on residential segregation in Australian cities and ethnic concentrations (Grimes 1993, 103), because early settlement policy neglected immigrants of non-Anglo-Saxon background, newcomers to Australia who did not belong to this class would choose to live near other newcomers, in order to benefit from an unofficial support system created by

having the ready experience of 'older' newcomers within close proximity. Although such a system provided short-term benefits, it effectively meant that newcomers would be further racialized and would remove the need, and responsibility of, creation of government funded settlement services. Peter Li (2003) provides a similar argument with relation to Canada, discussing how the segregation of people, both geographically and socially, legitimizes minority and immigrant racialization. The physical segregation of people would also segregate them from participating in or observing each other's recreational activities, which may be the reason why soccer, up until recently, has almost exclusively been associated with immigrants and minority communities, both in Australia and in Canada, and has particularly flourished in urban centres with a high percentage of immigrants.

Thus, in Canada, the children of immigrants who live in ethnic enclaves or immigrant receiving neighbourhoods would be exposed primarily to sport familiar to their own culture, instead of assimilating and adopting the sports and activities of their new environment. This theory is further discussed by Loring M. Danforth (2001) in his article, "is the 'world game' and 'ethnic game' or an 'Aussie game'?" narrating the nation in Australian soccer". Using Homi Bhabha's work on nation and narration (Danforth 2001, 363), Danforth extends the theory that sport, "like literature, is a fertile site for narrating the nation" (Danforth 2001, 363), and that the history of sport in a country is the history of that country's peoples: and in the case of soccer, the history of soccer in Australia becomes the history of immigrant communities in Australia.

Sport, particularly soccer, is also part of the diasporic experience in immigrant communities, providing a (relatively) non-political way of remembering the Old Homeland. Soccer also serves as a way of maintaining transnational ties with the country of birth or ancestry; similar to how on Saint Patrick's Day, everyone becomes Irish, during the World Cup, everyone

finds a nationality to support, either by legitimate or adopted claim. Even those who do not participate in sport as athletes, but participate as spectators, use the “vehicle of sport” to define their identity during this time, manifested in the increased sales of team jersey’s and flags during important competitions. Marketing, advertising, and promotion play a significant role in the creation of this identity, observed especially in the marketing tactics used to promote sports gear, particularly crested team jerseys.

These sentiments are often so strong, that even outside of the homeland they are still expressed by the diasporic communities; one such aspect is internal tensions and conflicts within the nation that continue to shape how the diasporic communities view themselves in relation to the homeland and the homeland’s “Other”. This can often manifest itself in violent forms, as demonstrated by the conflict between Serbs and Croats in Canada. In October 2007, because of the rowdiness and prior violence committed by the young fans, Serbian fans were allowed to attend only one game, while Croatian fans were to attend the other, in the two-leg match between the Serbian White Eagles and Toronto Croatia in the Canadian Soccer League amateur championships. In the previous year, “the two squads played three times...and there was violence in the last two matches” (Vincent, 2007), and so the separation of fans was seen as the fairest, since each side would be allowed to attend one game, pre-emptive solution to spectator violence.

It was perhaps the most effective solution available, although it was certainly an unpopular one. For many, although on the surface it appears as “ethnic violence”, spectator violence is part of the fun and “atmosphere” of the game. For Robert Badurina (27) and Ivan Zupan (28), both Croatian fans, “some rowdiness is just part of the atmosphere” (Vincent, 2007), and is part of the sport. Badurina stressed that both Serbs and Croats are European, and have grown up with the European mentality that spectator hooliganism is part of the game, and part of

the fun. Badurina also claimed that such policies are “unfair for the fans. It’s a better atmosphere when both fans (sides) are there” (Vincent, 2007). The implementation of security measures can also be viewed as an implementation of North American standards into the game, since, for many of the fans, violence is inherently part of the game. Although hockey is a more violent sport than soccer, the “subcultural organization of soccer fans is significantly different than for hockey or American football” (Crossman 2003, 99), and soccer fans are more likely to engage in violence than hockey fans. To implement similar security measures for both sports is to reject the differences in identity of soccer fans and hockey fans.

Here we see how the ‘soccer identity’ has been traditionally linked to subcultures associated with violence and hooliganism, but has also been associated with other identity markers, such as nations (Brazil) and players (Pelé). However, what has not been associated with the soccer identity are Muslims and Muslim communities, perhaps contributing an explanation (or partial explanation) of why this community has been excluded from this identity, despite the visibility of famous Muslim athletes, such as Zidane. The term ‘visibility’ here was carefully chosen as, despite the apparent obscurity of Muslims in soccer, the Muslim community has been hyper-visualized in another outlet, the media. How have representations of Muslims and soccer by the media affect notions of their identity and belonging?

## **Methodology**

As demonstrated, very little scholarly research has focused on the Muslim community’s participation in sports, including soccer, whether in works of non-fiction or even in fiction. In Dionne Brand’s novel *What We All Long For*, Tuyen, one of the protagonists, describes how



during the 2002 World Cup, Toronto's 'ethnic' neighbourhoods are in a continuous state of celebration. She then describes the various ethnicities and nations represented in these celebrations; yet Muslims, or nations with Muslims majorities are completely absent from her description (Brand 2005, 203-204), despite the increasing visibility of the community in this sport in Canada. For example, among the 'Success Stories' featured on the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website is the story of Mohamed, who immigrated to Canada from Guinea, and now plays for the Canadian U-17 national team (CIC website, 2007). Considering the role of sport in instilling notions of national identification among participants and observers, and the increased participation of the Muslim community in soccer in Canada (both at the professional and amateur level), the omission of this community from scholarly work is particularly conspicuous.

Given the lack of scholarly work on Muslims and soccer, the hyper-visibility of Muslims in the media, and the role of the media in shaping our perceptions of who belongs to the nation and constructing the 'social reality', the natural solution would be to examine Muslims and soccer in the media. However, such a task would not be possible at the time of writing, given the large amount of media available. Instead, the focus will be on a few cases and a few sources, while drawing theoretical inferences from the sources outlined in the literature review. Although many sources were examined, the focus will be on three Canadian sources and three international sources. The Canadian sources are *The Toronto Star*, based in Toronto, a city with the distinction and honour of being the most multicultural in the world (City of Toronto Website, 2007), *Macleans* magazine, a weekly publication which heralds itself as the "Voice of Canada" and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) online. Internationally, *Der Spiegel* (a weekly

German newsmagazine), *Deutsche Welle* (Germany's international broadcaster), and the *BBC* news online were examined for depictions and/or portrayals of Muslims and soccer in Europe.

All these resources have the advantage of being easily (and freely) accessible through the internet, although *The Toronto Star* requires a small subscription fee to access articles published before 2006. Additionally, all sources cited were either written in English, or provided English translations online. All articles chosen were written within the past three years, from 2005 onwards. However, most of the sources cited focus predominantly on current events with popular appeal, and therefore tend to reflect current ideologies and contemporary debates rather than providing any analysis of how such events influence our perceptions of Muslims and the nation.

An initial search within the constraints outlined (time and news medium) yielded several articles and stories of interest on Muslims and Muslim participants in soccer. However, the results were further narrowed down to articles which portrayed and discussed two particular incidents involving Muslim soccer players and notions of nation and identity. Although this resulted in only a few articles being selected for analysis, they were chosen specifically as they demonstrate how the portrayal of the Muslim athlete featured can affect the way we view either the Muslim community's membership to or exclusion from the nation. This was done by selecting articles that discussed two particular case studies: the case of Ashkan Dejagah and the case of Asmahan Mansour.

Since a discourse analysis methodology was employed, the emphasis was focused on the quality of the sources chosen rather than the quantity of sources cited (Tonkiss 2001, 253). The two particular stories that were chosen, the case of Ashkan Dejagah (previously mentioned in the literature review), and the case of Asmahan Mansour, a young Muslim soccer player in Canada,

were selected because of the contrast in individuals both these cases present. While Dejah is male, above the age of 16, of Iranian (non-Arab) descent, born outside of his country of citizenship, and plays soccer professionally for a European team, Mansour is female, under the age of 16, of Arab descent, born within her country of citizenship, and plays amateur soccer for a North American team. Both athletes were chosen as foils to each other because of their differences, and because of the similarity that ties these two cases together: that both are soccer players who are identified as Muslim. They were also chosen because of the language and discourse used to describe both stories, two keystone features of discourse analysis (Tonkiss 2001, 246), and how the language and discourse chosen construct the social reality of Muslims in the West. However, a major drawback to this methodology is that, inevitably, my own biases will affect how *I* perceive these articles and what importance I give to them, a limitation I am well aware of and have kept conscious of throughout the examination of the articles.

Given my own biases, before examining the articles, an examination of how the media has traditionally portrayed the Muslim community by other authors and academics is warranted, considering the influence of the media in shaping public perceptions and how this influence is used. For example, the Canadian Islamic Congress conducted a study on the portrayal of Muslims in Canadian media from 1998-2003 and found that Canadian Muslims “rarely appear in the press, as indicated by the lack of coverage of their achievements and events”, (Henry and Tator 2006, 255), but at the international level, particularly since the Palestinian Intifada, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Muslims and Arabs in the media appear in “narratives, images, and everyday discourses [which] commonly contain overt and implicit messages of “otherness”” (Henry and Tator 2006, 255). In the words of the late, great, Edward Said, Arabs and Muslims, indeed people who were defined under the derogatory term

“Oriental”, were “rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined over or” (Said 1994, 207): in the case of Muslims in Canada, they are viewed as a community *in-separable* from the global events that occur outside of Canada involving Muslims. This is particularly problematic as such depictions continue to feed the notion of the Muslim community’s inability to integrate into the state and become valued citizens and members of the nation, and has great effect on how we come to identify the Muslim community in general, and how we view their ability to participate in *our* sports and *our* activities.

However, the problem of negative or misrepresentation by the media is not an exclusive grievance of the Muslim (or Arab) community, indeed it is the result of systemic bias and racism in the media. The Canadian Ethnocultural Council’s 1985 brief expressed how “the relative absence of minority men and women in the Canadian media is remarkable” (Canadian Ethnocultural Council 1985, 92), despite the passing of 37 years since Multiculturalism was adopted as part of Federal policy. Whereas soccer is used to construct nations, the media contributes to our perception of *who* belongs to the nation; the “print media, and other cultural forms (e.g., art, literature, films, and theatre) provide the elements out of which we form our identities—our sense of what it means to be male/female, our sense of ethnicity, of class and race, of nationality, of “us” and “them”” (Kellner 1995, in Henry and Tator 2006, 254). Thus, the omission of minority communities, including the Muslim community, from the media in a positive context, including as news anchors or media people, furthers the notion of this community as the “Other” and not members of the nation, an ironic notion given the media’s public espousal of “democratic values of fairness, equality, and freedom of expression” (Henry and Tator 2006, 254). Through negative stereotyping and “racialization of issues such as crime

and immigration”, the media instead contributes to the “marginalization of people of colour in all aspects of media production” (Henry and Tator 2006, 254), marginalization which contributes to the perception of the affected communities as *others*, and non-members of the nation.

Eventually, one can argue that constant negative media depiction has resulted in society’s gradual dehumanization of the Muslim community, contributing to the ultimate exclusion of this community from belonging to the global citizenry. Several authors have argued the role of the media in the dehumanization and “Other-ing” of Muslims, including Jack Shaheen, who has argued that since the earliest days of Hollywood, not a decade goes by without the release of a blockbuster movie that misrepresents Arabs and Muslims. In his book, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2001), he lists hundreds of movies which have for years influenced societies’ ideas of who and what an Arab and Muslim is, reflecting “a deeply embedded anti-Muslim bias within the mainstream print and electronic media” (Henry and Tator 2006, 257), both in Canada and in the West. For the most part, the most offensive (in terms of stereotype) movies were produced before the 1980’s and the large-scale migration of Muslims into Canada; however, political tension and wars during the 1980’s and onwards resulted in increased media portrayal of the Muslim community. These portrayals would come to affect how Muslims immigrants would be viewed by their new neighbours in their new country of residence *before* they even moved into their neighbourhoods.

This inevitably brings to mind the recent (2007) controversy in the small town of Hérouxville, Québec. In that year, Hérouxville, which had one immigrant family recently move in, implemented a town council declaration stating that it was illegal to burn, stone, or circumcise women (BBC News, 2007), among other notices that reeked of the anti-Muslim stereotypes Hollywood has all-too-happily portrayed. The Hérouxville example was soon after followed by

the hamlet of Saint-Roch-de-Mékinac, which had a zero percent foreign-born population (Gordon, 2007), and 5 other Québec towns, all of which implemented new town council declarations and resolutions that stated, among the other laws mentioned, that it was illegal to stone women and for women to cover their faces, except on Halloween.

It's worth reiterating that none of these small towns had immigrant or minority communities (Hérouxville had one family move in, which led to the adoption of the declaration). These towns implemented the new laws before any significant Muslim presence settled, leading us to assume that the idea of Muslims as stoning, circumcised, face-coverers must have been the result of what was observed through the media. As Henry and Tator have stated "the relationship between the White community and [minority groups is] largely filtered through the perceptions, assumptions, values, and beliefs of journalists and other media professionals" (Henry and Tator 2006, 254), showing the influence the media has in shaping our views of communities, inevitably influencing how we come to associate or interact with the communities portrayed. Given the limited amount of resources on Muslims and sport, and the influence of media in shaping perception of identities, the examination of media portrayals of the cases of Dejah and Mansour sheds light on the perception of Muslims and their belonging within the definitions of who constitutes a member of the nation.

### **Analysis I: The Case of Ashkan Dejah**

Immigrants in Germany from predominantly Muslim countries (mostly Turkey, but also the Maghreb and Iran) were seen, for many years, as merely temporary guestworkers (Ewing 2008, 19). Hence perhaps the outcry caused by Ashkan Dejah when, not only was he selected to play

for the German national team, but also demonstrated how *enshrined* within the country the Iranian and Muslim “guestworkers” were when he requested to sit out the game against Israel. His request showed that not only have the ‘temporary’ workers become a permanent (or at least semi-permanent) community within the nation, but at that a community that was well aware of their right to exercise their political freedom.

As mentioned previously in the Theory and Literature Review section, the case of Dejahlah also demonstrated two different methods by which the Nation could identify itself: using sports like soccer, and through the creation of a perceived enemy that stands in for the Other – and Dejahlah penetrated through the boundaries that delineated the Other by participating in the nations’ soccer team. In Germany, Katherine Pratt Ewing (2008) has argued that “the stigmatization of the Muslim man and the Turk occupies an important place in the constitution of German nationhood and subjectivity at this historical juncture” (Ewing 2008, 5), because the Muslim man serves the “Other” to our “Us” through which the national imaginary, “a system of cultural representations that makes the contours of the nation-state emotionally plausible” (Ewing 2008, 2), was created. Thus, having a Muslim man (the perceived enemy) not only playing on the same field as ‘us’, but also donning ‘our’ national uniform<sup>10</sup>, meant that the enemy had crossed over from being the *Other* to being simply *an-other* (one of us). As Hobswam has stated, the identity of the nation “seems more real as a team of eleven named people” (Hobswam 1990, 43, in Carrington 1998, 102), and so the reality of seeing the German nation represented by 11 players that included Muslim men, would force the nation to re-evaluate its identity as a European Christian state. This controversy however is not limited to Germany, France too has a significant Muslim minority numbering over 6 million and 9 out of its 23 man team in this years’

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<sup>10</sup> Note that national team jerseys are often in the nation’s colours and emblazoned with either the country’s flag or symbols.

Euro 2008 competition identified themselves as Muslim (Yahmid, 2008). For Germany though, a country which does not “have a monarchy of proud war records, soccer success appears to be the most powerful idiom and symbol for the production and reproduction of a sense of nationhood” (Merkel 1999, 61); and so the infiltration of a Muslim man into the German national team is seen as particularly problematic.

Not only that, but this player was perceived to be enforcing his values onto the rest of the state by requesting ‘accommodation’, instead of the player adopting the states values. This was depicted as demonstrating the failure of German integration policies (Dowling, 2007), particularly as soccer, the ultimate expression of belonging to the nation, was involved. Since soccer was supposed to be a “tool for socializing” people into a system of values (MacClancy 1996, 10), the failure of a soccer player, who plays for the national team no less, to fully be ‘socialized’ into the German system of values becomes not only a stain on the effectiveness of this sport for the indoctrination of people, but also suggests a weakness in the identity of the German state itself. The last point is particularly significant to the German state, as the development of a parallel Muslim society with its own set of values within Germany “threatens the coherence of Germany as a recently reunified state” (Ewing 2008, 4-5). Soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the reunification of East and West Germany, intense public debates “around articulations of national identity and citizenship, including the place in the future of a united Germany of Turkish and other Muslims as Germany’s largest minority” ensued (Ewing 2008, 16). However, these debates on citizenship “were also accompanied by expressions of xenophobia and ethnic violence that targeted the Turkish population” (Ewing 2008, 16).

Of course, the basis for most of these concerns, though shrouded in debates on accommodation and integration, are racist in nature, cited earlier as the major barrier to the full



inclusion of newcomer, immigrant, and minority communities within the nation. In Germany, the “debates over how integration should be accomplished are intense” and “are grounded, not as much in disagreements about tactics, as in fundamental principles involving competing visions of the nation, the meaning of citizenship, the nature of identity, and the desirability of difference” (Ewing 2008, 18). The last point, the “desirability of difference” is particularly significant, as it underlines the problem of Muslim migrants in Europe: they’re simply *too different* to be desirable, and their values often clash with those of the majority. As the *Spiegel Online* wrote, the social problems currently in Europe “began when the first guest workers arrived in Holland – as soon as we let people from the third world come here to work in our rich country, we had a guilt complex and somehow saw them as sacred victims. We then let them bring their wives and children over without having any clue that we were importing integration problems with which we had no experience” (Spiegel Online 2006, as referenced in Ewing 2008, 17). The quote makes no mention of the entrenched discriminatory economic and social factors (such as racism) which contribute to ‘social problems’, placing the emphasis entirely on the immigrant community.

The ‘failed integration’ angle however seems to have been the angle the German media predominantly choose to represent this story through. Also according to the *Spiegel Online*, which ran a feature summarizing the division in the media on this case, “the press is divided on whether to condemn or condone the player and some newspapers ask if this is a sign of failed integration” (Dowling, 2007). Whereas the left-leaning *Die Tageszeitung* backed DeJagah, saying that while it would’ve “been pleased” if DeJagah had instead taken a stance against Iran’s “inhumane regime [is] permanently campaigning against Israel”, he could not be expected to do so when “he has family in Tehran” (Dowling, 2007), the conservative *Die Welt* reported him as having stated “I have more Iranian than German blood in my veins” and that “*One* doesn’t have

to accept that. A national player represents his nation – he is neither an international nor a dual citizenship player” (Dowling, 2007, emphasis added). The emphasis was added on the pronoun ‘One’, as this elusive ‘One’ is not identified, but we can safely assume that the author meant the German of purely German stock, the *One* individual that represents the nation and its values.

*Die Welt* also stated how Dejagah:

has revealed an important dilemma in the immigration society. There are many immigrants...who maintain a completely functional relationship to their new home...They often demand full civil rights but then, after they get them, they still feel foreign. And they often feel a deep loyalty to their old home and to the blood in their veins. In more naive times this double orientation was lauded as enriching society: two identities...were better than one. Dejagah has now emphatically shown that unclear loyalties can be a danger to a free society (Dowling, 2007).

The implication of ‘unclear loyalties’ is that you can never really trust where such a person’s loyalties truly lie: that is, whether they are with you or against you. This further highlights the previous point regarding the concept of the *One* German national, whose loyalty to the nation is unquestioned and through whose participation in sport solely the nations’ myth and identity is further created. This is slightly ironic in a sport like soccer, where players are transferred from one club to another (particularly in Europe), with ‘loyalties’ constantly changing and the loyalty of the player to the new team hardly being questioned.

Even harsher was the ‘center-left’ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which wrote that Dejagah “could have wrangled his way out of the game with a conveniently timed injury...Instead he opened his big mouth and said he couldn’t go for ‘political reasons’” (Dowling, 2007). It also brought in how Dejagah’s father “told the Iranian state news agency IRNA that he would like to see his son playing on the Tehran’s national team. Their new country has not become a real home for the family. Dejagah’s case is, above all, a typical Berlin example of failed integration” (Dowling,

2007). The evoking of Dejah's father's political views is particularly problematic because it fuels the stereotype of the violent and controlling Muslim man, who rules his family with an iron grip. But what these quotes particularly highlight is how alarming the growing presence of Muslims in Germany, and in Europe, seems to be, particularly with regards to integration of the Muslim community. If a soccer player on the national soccer team, the highest honour a player can achieve, has not been fully integrated within the nation, then what hope is there for the 'average' Muslim citizen in Germany?

Thus, the case of Dejah was used as proof of the inability of Muslim communities to integrate into Germany, and in Europe in general, because of this community's problematic maintaining of values (such as lack of recognition for Israel) and traditions (the notion of the controlling patriarch), while rejecting the values and traditions of their new surroundings. This creates the phenomenon of a nation within a nation: a community of Muslims who are legally German (through acquisition of citizenship), but who are not viewed as being members of or representing the nation, despite participation in national sports, because of what defines this community as different from the dominant majority. However, the case of soccer in Europe, although not unique, cannot be extrapolated across the Atlantic and applied to the US and Canada, simply because the popularity and ultra-nationalism of soccer in the Old Continent is not as visible in the New Continent, and also because of the formal adoption of Multiculturalism and its policies towards immigrants as a way of defining the Canadian nation. How has this affected the way we view soccer and its participants in Canada? More importantly, how has this affected, or continues to affect, the way we perceive minorities and immigrants in Canada?

## **Analysis II: The Case of Asmahan Mansour**

The case of Asmahan Mansour struck me as worthy of examination for several reasons, in particular because although the West has constantly been criticizing the East for preventing women from engaging in the public sphere, as in the case of the women in Iran who were barred from celebrating at the Azadi stadium (Foer 2004, 221), here, it is the West (or at least Western values) that prevented a Muslim woman from participating publically in a sport. The scarf that Asmahan Mansour wore on her head, by her own account (CBC News Staff (2), 2007) was tucked into her shirt and did not affect her speed, vision, or agility. However, her scarf was perceived as “dangerous” (FIFA Law 4, as referenced in CBC News Staff (2), 2007), a very symbolic choice of word considering the increasing fear of homegrown terrorism in Canada (Stein 2007, 3). The referee (who, ironically enough was a Muslim woman) who chose to enforce the ruling on headscarves and the Soccer Associations involved were what prevented Mansour from participating in this game.

Both the case of Mansour and Dejahaghi resulted in the re-ignition in the media of the debate on the accommodation of Muslim communities in the West. Whereas in Dejahaghi’s case, his request (and subsequent permission) to sit out the game against Israel was seen as proof of the failure of integration of Muslims in Germany, Mansour’s case was categorized under the debated on reasonable accommodation of minorities in Canada, particularly as it occurred soon after Herouxville’s adoption of a “list of norms” (Wyatt, 2007). At the heart of the debate in Mansour’s case was the role of Multiculturalism in Canadian society today, and how far we are willing to accommodate in the name of Multiculturalism.

Since 1971, Canada has adopted Multiculturalism as part of its official federal policy (Stein 2007, 1), but has since continued to struggle with the balancing of equality rights and other “fundamental Canadian values”, particularly regarding women, and the right to religious freedoms. In May 2007, following the “list of norms” produced by small Québec towns, and the ejection of Mansour, *The Toronto Star* published an article on finding the balance between the religious rights of the many religious minorities in Canada, and “fundamental Canadian values” (Diebel, 2007), in light of several recent incidents, including the case of a Muslim man who plead “not guilty” to the killing of his wife in 1999 on the basis of her being un-faithful, pleading innocence because he was protecting “family honor” (Diebel, 2007). In the case of Mansour though, multiculturalism failed her on both counts: both her religious right to don the *hijab* was violated, as was her fundamental Canadian right to equal access without fear of gender discrimination, in this case, to sport.

While multiculturalism, in theory, professes to allow Canadians of all backgrounds and cultures “to be themselves” (Stein 2007, 1), in practice, in order for Asmahan to participate in soccer the way the other young Canadian girls were participating she would have to revoke her Muslim identity by removing the *hijab*. Although not explicitly stated, this is what Valmie Ouellet, the regional technical services coordinator for the Québec soccer federation suggested when she stated that “sometimes, when we make some choices according to faith, it is possible that along the line we won’t be able to do everything we want to do”, and that clearly, Mansour had made her choice (Wyatt, 2007). However, it is important to note that Ouellet’s comment regarding having to make a choice is unique in that it suggests that Canadian’s have to make a choice regarding whether or not to continue to express their religion or culture in Canada: for the most part, the media focused on how multiculturalism still has a long way to go regarding the

accommodation of veiled Muslim women in our society, rather than how such Muslim women prove lack of appropriate integration in Canadian society.

*The Toronto Star* featured the story of Mansour under the title “Headscarf ban inflames ethnic debate”; although technically incorrect (Islam being a religion, not an ethnicity), it thus helped externalize the issue to one of access for minority communities, rather than an issue of accommodating the Muslim community. This theme was further examined in this article and in a feature several months later on accommodation of gender, cultural, and religious rights within a multicultural society (Diebel, 2007). However, throughout these articles, the distinction was carefully made between ‘integration’ and ‘assimilation’, summarized in a quote by the spokesperson from the Muslim Council of Montreal, who stated that “asking minority groups to integrate cannot be equated with forcing them to assimilate and stripping them of their identity and rights” (Wyatt, 2007). Contrast this statement with the quote from *Die Welt* on page 40 regarding immigrants “who maintain a completely functional relationship to their new home” (Dowling, 2007): both these quotes effectively show how each nation views the Muslim community within their countries. While in Germany, they are still considered foreign, and the issue is how to ‘instil’ German-ness within them at the expense of the ‘old’ Muslim identity, in Canada, the distinction is consciously being made between assimilation (the stripping of the old identity) and integration, in this case, the search for a balance between the safety concern the *hijab* might present and the right to the expression of religion.

*Macleans Magazine Online* took two different stances regarding the Mansour *hijab* and soccer issue. In one article, published on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007, a Muslim Conservative MP broke the “party’s silence on *hijab* ban” (Macleans.ca Staff, 2007), and commented on how unfortunate it was that this incident should occur “so closely with the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter of Rights

and Freedoms”, also discussing how there “seems to be a little bit of over-sensitivity against the *hijab*” (Macleans.ca Staff, 2007). While the secretary of state for multiculturalism and the secretary of state for amateur sport both remained silenced on this issue, the MP stated that the eviction of Mansour was “a violation of the girls’ rights to ban them from competing in tournaments” (Macleans.ca Staff, 2007), an ironic comment considering multiculturalisms stance on the sanctity of women’s rights. This was followed by an article in September, in which Macleans published an article on the “fear of visible minorities” (Patriquin, 2007) in Québec in particular, limiting the issue to one of reasonable accommodation in Québec only, rather than in Canada in general. According to this article, for many in Québec, reasonable accommodation “has since become a code phrase to describe the threat immigrants pose to their way of life” (Patriquin, 2007).

The article also included comments on the perception of Muslims within Québec, such as one woman’s comment on her “shock and dismay after seeing two veiled women at a local shopping centre with five children in tow” (Patriquin, 2007). This quote particularly highlights how the increasing visibility of Muslims is re-shaping the identity of the nation, an idea particularly problematic in Québec with its deeply rooted Catholic history. Reading between the lines, this quote suggests that the issue of immigrants ‘posing their way of life’ onto Canadians perhaps is not a threat to Multicultural Canada in general, but a threat to Québec, which has historically challenged its identity in Canada, as a French-speaking, Catholic identifying province in Canada. The suddenly increased visibility of non-French non-Catholic peoples can be seen as further weakening the fragile identity of this French-speaking Catholic province amidst English-speaking Protestant provinces.

Also in this article, Rémi Lefebvre is quoted as saying that “in Egypt, I lived among Muslims. I endured them, and it looks like I’ll have to endure them again”, a comment which was followed by cheers and applause (Patriquin, 2007). It’s particularly striking that the idea of ‘Muslims’ as a community to be ‘endured’ rather than accommodated into the ‘Canadian Mosaic’ is what would draw the cheers and applause of this particular audience. Catholicism, because it is so deeply rooted and entrenched in Québec history and society, has become normalized, at the expense of other religions, including Islam. Similarly, Christianity is unofficially (because of its European association) normalized in soccer, to the point that the visible presence of other religions or religious markers, such as the *hijab*, on the field is considered alien. The alienation of Muslims in sport effectively bars this community from participating in one of the most potent vehicles for the creation of national identities, further alienating the community and contributing to their inability to fully integrate into the ‘Canadian Mosaic’.

Despite all the flaws of multiculturalism (and there are many), it is important to recognize that multiculturalism is not a complete failure. Although multiculturalism contains many pitfalls, particularly regarding the accommodation of religious rights, the alternative solution (that is, no multiculturalism), presents many more. And over thirty years of multicultural policy in Canada may have had a greater effect on the average Canadian’s psyche and how they identify ‘Canadian’ than perhaps could be measured or even imagined. When Asmahan Mansour was forced to walk off the field for failing to remove her *hijab*, her teammates walked off with her, knowing fully well that by doing so, they were forfeiting the game. And in solidarity, four other teams walked out of the Québec tournament (CBC News, 2007).



These were young, Canadian girls, under the age of 12<sup>11</sup>, who were raised in the tradition of Canadian Multiculturalism, equality of rights for all peoples, and a great respect, not just tolerance, for all religions. Thus, when their teammate was evicted for choosing to express her religion through her veil, the young girls were very rightly upset and “backed up Asi (Asmahan) very strongly” (CBC News, 2007). According to teammate Lisa Furano “I felt disgraced, I was crushed, I couldn’t see Asi like that” (CBC News, 2007). In short, her teammates viewed her as ‘one of them’, a Canadian soccer player who happens to wear the *hijab* and had the right to participate in this sport the way they did, and not as an ‘outsider’ who’s mode of dress presented safety concerns. And although the International Football Association Board endorsed the ban of the *hijab* on the soccer field, the Ontario Soccer Association chooses to allow “players to wear religious clothing on the field” (Wyatt, 2007), and has urged its Québec soccer counterpart to follow suite, in an effort to make sure the sport is accessible to all. Perhaps also to the credit of multiculturalism, soccer is embraced within the country and soccer players are viewed as members of the community whose needs are to be addressed, in this case, the balancing of the *hijab* and safety concerns. The embracing of Muslims in mainstream soccer associations represents what Janice Stein calls ‘deep multiculturalism’, which “builds bridges across cultures”, as opposed to ‘shallow multiculturalism’, which “strengthens each culture within its own boundaries” (Stein 2007, 19). While there do exist Muslim soccer leagues in Canada which Mansour, as a member of the community, could have easily gained access to (shallow multiculturalism), the decision to allow religious symbols by the Ontario Soccer Association represents ‘deep multiculturalism’, as it encourages (by making accessible) communities to interact in this sport by removing obstacles and barriers to participation by Muslim women.

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<sup>11</sup> I made this assumption based on the fact that Mansour played for an under-12 team, the Nepean U12 Hotspurs (CBC News (2), 2007).

While it seems that the Canadian media in the case of Mansour attempted to externalize the issue into one of accommodation and multiculturalism as much as possible, part of the issue here is that Muslim women are rarely represented in the media, and if they are, usually because of a controversy that surrounds their performance, which takes precedence in the coverage over the athletes actual performance. According to Sarah J. Murray, “many Americans have been conditioned by media, politics and prejudice to associate women of Islam with notions of oppression and indignity” (Murray, 2002); when a female Muslim is competing in a sport, she is breaking conventional stereotypes, however, if there is any controversy surrounding her performance or her presence, she is fulfilling the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman, and it is this aspect of the story which would tend to receive more coverage. This was highlighted in the case of Hassiba Boulmerka, an Algerian athlete in the 1992 Olympic Games, who won the 1500 meters wearing men’s shorts.

Instead of “celebrating the first Algerian<sup>12</sup> to accomplish such a feat, Muslim fundamentalist denounced her victory for ‘running with naked legs in front of thousands of men’” (Murray, 2002), and Boulmerka was subsequently forced into exile “because of death threat from her fellow countrymen” (Murray, 2002). Although Murray focuses on Americans when she states that they “create understanding through the thousands of visual images they encounter every day, and pictures are largely responsible for shaping our view of sport”, which creates a “very narrow, or even absent view of Muslim women athletes”, this argument can be applied to media coverage of Muslim women around the world, including in predominantly Muslim countries. In the case of Boulmerka, the focus shifted from her performance in the Olympics to the controversy she caused back home; in the case of Mansour, the score of her team was considered irrelevant, their

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<sup>12</sup> Note that she wasn’t simply the first female Algerian to win, she was the first Algerian citizen

position and standing in the league was not mentioned by any of the articles examined, and, most disappointingly, Mansour's position (forward, defence, etc.) on the team was apparently considered too irrelevant to the story of her eviction to be mentioned by the media. While her religious background was covered, that of her parents, even that of the referee that forced her eviction, was discussed by the media, anything to do with her actual performance as an athlete was glossed over.

Considering the fact that sport has been used as a way of indoctrinating ideas and values into colonized peoples Mansour, in a sense, rebelled against these majority ideas and values by infusing her presence, and the presence of the *hijab*, in the game. However, we continue to be motivated by the image of the meek, shrouded, and oppressed Muslim woman, and so the presence of a woman on the field with a headscarf, who, by all means, should be representative of how we truly multicultural we have become, by her eviction, has shown us how far we still have to go. While multiculturalism has contributed to the enrichment of our Canadian heritage, it biases us by providing us with set notions and ideas of how we perceive a community's identity; in particular, we are biased by what we view as 'the norm' portrayed on TV, which, in the case of the Muslim community, has more often than not been negatively biased. These prevalent biases are what shapes our perception of who belongs, who can belong, and who must be 'accommodated' in Canada today.

## **Conclusion**

A few days before the opening of the 2008 Olympics in China, Cam Cole, for the *Canwest News Service*, wrote an article lamenting the current state of the Olympic Games amid the controversies

that seem to overshadow athletes' performances, both in current and past Olympics. He comments on how there are "Chinese table tennis players competing for many countries" (Cole, 2008), how Australia imported "Russian female pole-vaulters and Bulgarian weightlifters to help boost their medals totals", and how David Ford, a Canadian kayaker "with his funding cut by his own country" resorted to teaming "with an Irish competitor to hire a Dutch coach, with the Irish Olympic Committee footing most of the bill" (Cole, 2008). Quoting his colleague Gary Kingston, he suggests that "the parade of nations into the Opening Ceremony on Friday really ought to be, instead, a sport-by-sport parade, to better reflect the blurring of national boundaries and loyalties" (Cole, 2008). Perhaps it is because of the 'blurring' of current national boundaries that we seem more aggressive in defining national boundaries, and who 'resides' (read: belongs) within them.

Kingston and Cole's suggestion is idealistic, but the reality is that sports teams embody the spirit and the identity of the nation in an all-encompassing manner, warranting the phrases (for example) "French national team" and "German national team" redundant. Although this is particularly obvious in team sports, it is also prevalent in individual competitions, as observed by China's aggressive campaigning for the maximum number of medals in this year's Olympics (Kay, 2008). As much as we would like to claim it isn't, sports, including soccer, are not about athletics, but about the participants in the sport and what they represent. And more specifically, the nations they represent.

Nations are dynamic: borders are constantly changing and the people who reside within these borders today may not necessarily reside there tomorrow. Currently, the identity of immigrant receiving nations seem to rely not on the people who live within its boundaries in the present, but on those who resided within the boundaries in the past and have maintained continuous residency. Their feats, triumphs, and victories, particularly in athletics, are the

vehicles through which national identities are shaped. Such definitions though exclude a significant portion of the population in countries like Canada and Germany, but the increasing visibility of immigrants, newcomers, minorities, and Muslims in national sports are forcing nations to re-examine how they define themselves. Perhaps because of this the participation of Muslims in sports in the West is viewed as particularly problematic: what was supposed to be a temporary community is now permanently ingrained within our nations' identity, through their participation in *our* sports nonetheless. Whereas Stoddart (1988) suggested that soccer was re-appropriated by the indigenous and colonized communities as a form of anti-occupation struggle, we see here soccer being re-appropriated in a different form of struggle: the struggle to belong.

This was clearly demonstrated in both the cases of Dejah and Mansour, one a professional soccer player who requested not to play, the other a young girl who was asked not to play. Both cases were used to fuel the ongoing debate regarding accommodation and integration of a community which for years has been painted as the "Other", but now lives within our borders. The continuous "Othering" of Muslims has influenced us to the point that we no longer question whether or not they are like us, we automatically presume that they are not, and cannot be like us, or even participate like us in *our* sports, as we observed this in the case of Mansour, it was directly assumed that the scarf would present a choking hazard, regardless of the fact that she wore her *hijab* neatly tucked into her shirt where it was out of reach by her teammates.

It is also worth mentioning that in all the sources examined, neither Dejah nor Mansour self-defined themselves as Muslim, rather it was a label imposed, and the lens through which their actions were observed and their consequences determined. By the nature of the label imposed (their Muslim identity), their loyalty to the state and nation is viewed as subject to questioning, and as a privilege which is subject to retraction, as in the cases of Tommie Smith

and John Carlos, although this is perhaps more the case with regards to DeJagah and Europe than Mansour and Canada. Admittedly, this is a weak analogy, considering how historically, soccer has had a minor role in the shaping and identification of the Canadian identity. Perhaps lacrosse, the official sport should have been examined, or hockey, considering as how the 1972 win against Russia went down in Canadian history as the moment that defined our nation (Berry 2001, 217). Then again, it is the only comparison we can draw, considering there are no professional Muslim hockey players.

Through naturalization and the granting of citizenship, and also through participation in soccer, we see that the Muslim community is, or has become, more like *Us* than like the *Other* we have been conditioned to view this community as. It represents how entrenched and rooted the community is, and perhaps how permanent the community is, given the nationalistic pride that comes with participating in your country's team and representing your country's flag. The ritualistic aspect of soccer furthers this claim: the beginning of soccer tournaments that pit nations against each other feature each teams' national anthem, played while the players of the team raise their right hand to their heart, and often mouth the lyrics to anthem. Quite a powerful way to ingrain nationalism, both in the players, and in the observing audience members; understandably then, we are still quite selective as to who gets to stand on the field while the national anthem is being played, similar to how we are still quite selective as to who we allow to immigrate to our countries. The Minister of Culture's objection to a Muslim man (Zidane) leading the French team is analogous to the immigration dilemma today: we need immigration to sustain our economy, but we don't want the immigrants that come through our immigration programs.

The implication that citizenship no longer defines who belongs to the nation reinforces the importance given to alternative identity markers through which nations identify themselves. Since war and sport are the two most potent vehicles for the creation of national identities, to further the analogy of sport as a form of warfare, further study could potentially look at the recruitment and participation of immigrants and minorities in the army. Particularly interesting would be a study of the participation of Muslims citizens in Canadian, American, or European armies, considering the current, and seemingly ongoing, war in Afghanistan and Iraq, both predominantly Muslim countries. Through the increasing participation of Muslims on *our* side, whether literally in the military or symbolically through sport will hopefully lead to re-examination of this community as the designated 'enemy' and instead lead to re-examination of national identities to incorporate their Muslim communities as full members of the nation.

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