

Nationalism and Sporting Culture: A Media Analysis of Croatia's Participation in the  
1998 World Cup

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## *Abstract*

The past two centuries have witnessed the rise of nationalist movements and widespread nationalism. As these movements gained strength in Europe, sport played a role in their development. Media representations of sport recount events in a way that reinforces cultural values and this research investigates media representations of Croatian nationalism in the weeks surrounding the country's third place victory in the 1998 FIFA World Cup. Sociological theories alongside more contemporary theories of sport and nation construction are considered. Croatian newspapers were analyzed for elements of national identity construction. The study concludes that the 1998 World Cup played an important role in Croatia's on-going construction of nationhood and invention of nationalist traditions. This research further demonstrates sport's ability to evoke strong emotions that are difficult to witness in other areas of social life and the direct role of sport in garnering nationalism.

Keywords: nationalism, identities, newspapers, Croatia, soccer

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### **Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION**

Throughout modern history, there are many instances in which nation states have used sport to promote their individual national identities. Such is the case in several of the successor states to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo (though Kosovo is not universally recognized as a state). In this region, religious and ethnic identification often intertwine: Slovenia and Croatia are predominately Roman Catholic, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro are predominately Eastern Orthodox Christian, Kosovo is predominately Muslim and Bosnia and Herzegovina is a mix of Muslims, Orthodox and Roman Catholic inhabitants. A nation historically under communist rule, in 1990 Yugoslavia witnessed the beginning of what quickly became one of the worst wars to plague Eastern Europe. In that year, communists had been voted out of power in both Croatia and Slovenia, eventually leading to their rebellion for independence (Sack & Suster, 2000).

The identity of a nation can be reflected and enhanced in various ways; however, it is important to examine the extent to which the members of that nation identify with its beliefs, values, symbols, and cultural ways of life. Individuals who are willing to voluntarily pledge themselves to a nation state and make sacrifices in the name of that nation state have committed themselves to civic nationalism. This means that these individuals symbolically represent the importance of their particular nation state through the sharing of its community and culture, regardless of whether they were born there. However, during the 1990s another variant of nationalism, ethnic nationalism, prevailed

in Croatia. Ethnic nationalism is an exclusive form of nationalism which emphasizes shared values and norms of a nation or people as opposed to a state. In other words, ethnic nationalism can be described as an identity that ‘runs through the veins’ (Goksoyr, 2010). Although Croats and Serbs lived in the same state since the formation of Yugoslavia in 1918, a majority of each group defined themselves as belonging to the ethnic culture into which they were born. Regardless of which region of former Yugoslavia they inhabited, Croatians were Croatian and Serbians were Serbian, and thus, ethnicity was all that mattered in terms of identity.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The specific purpose of this study is to investigate the media representation, specifically newspapers, of Croatian nationalism in the weeks leading up to, during, and the weeks following the country’s third place victory in the 1998 FIFA World Cup. There have been countless examples in recent history of the ability of the media to play an important and sometimes leading role in the construction of national communities while covering sport. Media discourse, in other words, has been part of the active construction of the national character of individual nations, and this research will focus on the nature of that construction, concentrating on Croatia. The media in Europe has been both indirectly and directly influential to the feelings of national uniqueness. In fact, the media’s impact on nationalism has only been growing as its influence has gained strength during the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first. Croatia provides a unique case study for this research mainly due to its recent independence, the stress on sport in constructing a new, strong identity for the nation, and the media’s treatment of sport.

The individual case of Croatia is one of many examples demonstrating the links between sport and nationalism but the findings in this paper regarding media representation of Croatian nationalism demonstrate that the links were particularly acute during an unusually important ‘moment’ in the development of the country and its national consciousness. The case study will play a role in further exemplifying the abilities of the media in fostering nationalism in general. Finally, this research in sport and nationalism is important because sports have the ability to evoke strong emotions that are difficult to witness in other areas of social life. The element studied here is the direct role of sport in garnering nationalism and this has strong influence in the unique case of Croatia and the 1998 FIFA World Cup.

### **History of Croatian Soccer**

In order to understand the important role of sport in contributing to the effort towards Croatian independence, a brief overview of the reasons Croats sought independence is necessary.

The reason for including a background here of Croatian history is to place the events of the 1998 World Cup into context and to understand Croatia’s political and economic situation during this time period. The importance of the third place finish in the World Cup will be better understood when considered alongside an understanding of this history. This preliminary historical account is included here both to place events considered in this study in their full historical relief, and also to justify the study given the unique set of events that transpired during the heady decade of the 1990s when Croatia was formed as an independent, sovereign nation, and when the development of its



national consciousness was crucial to the country's independence. Understanding the worthiness of the study, in other words, entails understanding the events that precipitated those unique events.

The Yugoslav state was formed in 1918 as a successor to Austria-Hungary and the Kingdom of Serbia. Slovenians and most Croats lived in Austria-Hungary where they were influenced by the cultural and political norms of Western Europe. Most Serbs lived in the Kingdom of Serbia but their culture was heavily influenced by the Ottoman Empire and the political and cultural norms of the east (Tanner, 1997). Once these groups lived in a common state, cultural, ethnic and religious tensions increased. From the beginning, Croats agitated for a decentralized state but Serbs favoured a strong central government. This divide was also prevalent after the Second World War when Croats and Slovenes pushed for greater decentralization while Serbs opted for a stronger federal government. During the elections held in each region of Yugoslavia in 1990, Croatia and Slovenia elected non-communist parties while in Serbia, the communist party retained power. Similarly, due to western European influence, Croats and Slovenians practiced Roman Catholicism, as opposed to the Eastern Orthodox religion practiced by the Serbian, Macedonian, and Montenegro people, and the Muslim religion practiced by the Bosniaks. However, though Bosnia-Herzegovina was predominantly Muslim, it is interesting to note that the western part of Herzegovina was strongly Roman Catholic and Croatian; the primary identity of the people of this region is as ethnic Croats and with the state of Croatia, as opposed to state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the communist period, religious identity was discouraged and religious freedoms for all religions were restricted. Roman Catholicism was particularly restricted because unlike every other religious

community in Yugoslavia, the supreme leader of the faith (in this case, the Pope), did not reside within Yugoslavia; the regime distrusted the foreign influence and power of the Roman Catholic Church. The communist regime also restricted expressions of ethnic nationalism and religion. This oppression of expressing both political and religious views and beliefs sparked Croatia's desire for independence and sport had an important influence in the region of Yugoslavia at this time (Tanner, 1997).

Never are nationalism and a shared sense of belonging more strongly felt between members of a nation than in times of sport and war, and this is especially true in the history of Croatia (Sack & Suster, 2000). Nationalism historian and theorist Eric Hobsbawm demonstrates the way that support for national identity is used by governments of nation-states as a strategy to rally support for political power. Through national celebrations and sporting events, the energy of the population is directed toward advocating the goals of the existing government (Hobsbawm, 1992). George Orwell quite famously referred to sport as "war minus the shooting" (Orwell, 1945) due to the competitive edge of sport and the frequent international prestige and recognition that accompanies great sporting achievements. Indeed, one does not have to step far into the sporting world to bear witness to this reference.

Nationalism and a shared sense of belonging can often be strongly felt between members of a nation during times of war, and this was certainly true during Croatia's recent history. This tight relationship between sport and national consciousness – people's sense of themselves in relation to the nation – appears most strongly when other geo-political tensions threaten the nation-state. Periods just prior to, during, and after war,

often demonstrate the importance of sport and national identity. Winning or losing a game takes on heightened importance during those periods.

National revolutions and international wars have intensified nationalism (Shafer, 1966). In Croatia's case, prior to the beginning of the tensions in 1990 that led to the war of independence, we can examine a particular case study in which a sporting spectacle emerged in a war-like fashion to foreshadow the fate of the country's future. Due to the importance of soccer and the intensity of ethnic nationalism in this corner of the world, examples from this region are extremely useful in demonstrating the strong relationship between sport and national identity and the way in which they can raise further, increasingly problematic issues for that nation, especially during times of war.

In May, 1990 the citizens of the Croatian region voted for a non-communist party that was committed to decentralizing Yugoslavia. The success of Croatian nationalists in the election further confirmed the resurgence of ethnic nationalism which had exploded since the death of Yugoslavian president Tito (Josip Broz) in 1980. While the communists in Serbia were re-elected, the 1991 Yugoslav census recorded a large drop in citizens identifying themselves as Yugoslav as compared to the 1981 census, opting instead to identify as members of the individual regions, particularly those from Croatia and Slovenia.

Though a difficult time for the nation, the newly-elected government realized that it was of vital importance to rally strong support from self-identified Croatian ethnic nationalists. Franjo Tudjman, newly elected president of the region, had a strategic plan to make this happen by reintroducing the Croatian national flag. Following his election, the Croatian state saw a surge of nationalist pride not seen since before World War II.

The Croatian red, white and blue flag with the red checkerboard crest emblazoned into the middle of it, could be seen everywhere in the capital city of Zagreb, representing the strong sense of unified pride among those who walked the streets (Sack & Suster, 2000).

Ultimately this thesis will provide support for the way that sport further promoted and encouraged this display of Croatian nationalism. Due to the high level of popularity that soccer had obtained in this region, both in terms of participation and spectatorship, both Croatians and Serbians highly identified with the sport and claimed it to be one of, and likely the most important of each country's respective national sports. As political differences between Serbia and Croatia became more evident, it was only a matter of time before tensions would be expressed through sport. The two leading Croatian and Serbian soccer teams Dinamo Zagreb and Red Star Belgrade respectively had two supporting fan clubs: Bad Blue Boys Zagreb and Delije Belgrade. These groups were as much paramilitary organizations as they were fan clubs (Sack & Suster, 2000).

On May 13, 1990, tensions escalated dramatically over a much anticipated soccer match between rivals Dinamo and Red Star. Indeed, the match eventually proved to play a pivotal role in the war that followed in the Balkans for the next decade. Over the course of the day, in preparation for the game, riots occurred throughout the city of Zagreb. However, when 25,000 fans from both Serbia and Croatia filtered into Maksimir Stadium, Red Star fans began singing nationalistic songs representing the strength of their country, verbally abusing Croatians, trashing the Croatian stadium and physically attacking Dinamo fans. Among the chants was one that was particularly threatening to Croatian political independence: "We will kill Tudjman" (Sack & Suster, 2000). To further ignite the riot, violence eventually spilled into the streets of Zagreb, where stores

were vandalized, cars overturned and fires set. Despite the violence, Yugoslavian authorities took no immediate action. Fighting between Croatians and police officers surged into the night. Both Croatian and Serbian spectators around the world, who had tuned into the game through their television sets, watched in shock as the opposing sides battled throughout the stadium in what eventually became the worst soccer riot known in Yugoslavian history and a clear demonstration of ethno-religious hostility. Croats accused the Serbian police of inaction at best and collusion with Serbian fans at worse. Soon there was fighting between Croatians and police officers which continued into the night.

As a further demonstration of hostilities between Croatians and Serbians, even the soccer players found themselves participating in the tensions. Zvonimir Boban, Dinamo team captain, had a strong opinion about the perceived lack of intervention on the part of Yugoslavian officials. Similar to the other Croatians in the stadium, the captain felt that the Yugoslavian officials were not fairly reacting to the situation at hand and taking harsher action towards the Dinamo fans than they were to the aggressing Red Star fans. At one juncture, Boban jumped into the crowd to defend a Dinamo fan from the biased authorities and ended up in a physical altercation with two of them (Sack & Suster, 2000). Many narratives claim this day and the riots at Maksimir Stadium to unofficially be 'the day the war started' (Brentin, 2013 p. 996). As Brentin (2013) similarly argues, the football stadiums became a place for Croatians to openly demonstrate their hostility and hatred towards Yugoslavia, without the threat of political backlash and judicial punishment.

Following this incident, Boban was temporarily banned from participation in soccer by the Yugoslav Football Association; however, to Croats, he was a national hero. Through his action, Boban made it clear that he believed the Yugoslavian forces were dominated by Serbs and he challenged Croats and their government to take action against this. The apparent inaction of many Serbs within Croatia's police forces in this riot served as a pretext for Tudjman and his government to terminate the employment of large numbers of them, especially those who were unwilling to publicly express their loyalty to Croatia. Tudjman seized upon an opportunity; he used the incident to gain support from the nation and as an opportunity to strengthen the Croatian people's sense of nationalism and themselves. It was also an opportunity to justify policies towards strengthening the armed forces, in preparation for the war that most assumed was inevitable (Sack & Suster, 2000).

It was understood and believed for some time that the Bad Blue Boys, the Croatian soccer fan club, were supported financially by the Croatian government. Serbian newspapers criticized the Croatian fan club for intentionally starting the riot so that Tudjman could make an example of the police and military forces, and use it as a reason to purge Serbs from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It is now well believed that members of both the Croatian Bad Blue Boys and Serbian Delije soccer fan clubs were strongly involved with military forces during the war of independence in 1990. In fact, Zeljko Raznatovic, leader of the Serbian Delije through the war years was also leader of a military group he founded called Tigers, a group responsible for much of the ethnic cleansing that occurred in Yugoslavia from 1990 to 1995. Raznatovic was later indicted

by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia but was assassinated before he could be extradited (Sack & Suster, 2000).

A second demonstration of Croatia's rebellion, similar to the riot at Maksimir Stadium occurred on September 26, 1990 when a match between the Croatian *Hajduk Split* team and the Serbian *Partizan Beograd* caught media attention. The Torcida fans of *Hajduk Split* of the city of Split, which are quite similar to the Bad Blue Boys that represent the Dinamo Zagreb club, ran onto the field, set fire to the Yugoslavian flag, and chanted, "Croatia – independent state" with the Croatian flag raised high. The importance of this incident is that, when considering other soccer hooligans and fan demonstrations, the aggression is often directed to fans of the opposing team. However, this case was a direct rebellious act against the entire Yugoslav state and everything that it stood for, not simply against the Serbian team. As such, while the riot at Maksimir stadium became termed 'the day the war started,' Brentin (2013) called this second game 'the day Yugoslavia stopped existing,' a strong statement representing the important role sport played in the early years of conflict in the region.

Rallying support for a government in power is crucial to its success, especially during trying times such as just before the war in the former Yugoslavian region. However, in Croatia's case, there was a second step taken by the government in its attempt to ensure the country's independence. For independence to truly exist, a nation cannot simply stand alone behind the shadow of its former self. It is important that the emerging state receives international recognition from larger countries that will back its goal in achieving independent status. Before seeking official diplomatic recognition, Croatia sought other forms of diplomatic recognition. Sport, once again, played a crucial

role. For Tudjman's government, a strategic plan was put in place to field a national team, named Croatia rather than Yugoslavia, and enter it into international competition, prior to becoming independent. In an increasingly globalized and interdependent sporting world, it was recognized that a method such as this could prove useful to a small nation such as Croatia. Sport events and victories have been used as a vital means of gaining attention, respect, and recognition from other nations throughout the world, as Grix and Carmichael (2011) have shown, and, as it turns out, this was certainly the case with respect to Croatia.

Following the soccer riot in May, the Croatian government and its Serbian minority began a course of collision. Serbian political representatives refused to attend the opening of the Croatian parliament and boycotted much of the proceedings. Croatian authorities required all who worked in the civil service, judiciary, and police to pledge loyalty to Croatia and those who did not do so were terminated from their positions. Approximately eight weeks after the parliamentary session opened on May 30, 1990, the Serbian minority seized the town of Knin and created a smaller mini-state. In an attempt to prevent a full rebellion, Tudjman sent helicopters to Knin, but preparations for war were already in the Serbian plan. With support from the Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbians took the city of Knin, blocked roadways and train tracks and distributed weapons throughout the city. In the meantime, the Croatian constitution was amended in autumn 1990. The preamble to the constitution previously described Croatia as a nation of Croatian and Serbians; the new constitution declared Croatia the nation of Croats and various minority groups, Serbs being relegated from a nation of Croatia to a minority akin to Italians, Hungarians and Slovaks. In addition, the Croatian government



declared the Croatian Latin script the sole official alphabet and eliminated usage of Serbian Cyrillic script which had previously been used in areas of Croatia populated by Serbs.

Although Croatia's Serbian minority was arming itself for confrontation, among Croatians, similar physical preparations for war were not nearly as evident as were emotional preparations through patriotic demonstrations. On October 16, 1990, Tudjman staged a nationalistic celebration which coincided with the return of the statue of the 1848 revolutionary Ban Josip Jelacic. The statue, which had been removed by the communist authorities in 1947 from the largest square in Zagreb, was returned and the square itself officially reverted to its pre-World War II name Ban Jelacic Square. Importantly, this celebration dovetailed with another manifestation designed to seek recognition of Croatia, a soccer match with the United States at Maksimir Stadium. Through agreeing to play the Croatians in international competition, the United States was demonstrating its support for Croatia to gain independence and become an autonomous nation.

In anticipation of the match, Croatians from across the nation travelled to Zagreb to watch the Ban Jelacic statue be re-erected in the capital city. Croatians detoured through Bosnia to avoid the road barricades in Knin and to watch their nationalistic statue be re-established as a symbol of a 'free Croatia'. On the day of the match, the vice president of Croatia, Antun Vrdoljak, addressed the home crowd: "We have the great honour of attending the first international game of the football team of Croatia after the free democratic elections, and to celebrate the return of our Ban, the return of our National Team" (cited in Sack & Suster, 2000 p. 314). For Croatia's independence movement, this match signified the beginning of its separation from Yugoslavia, and the

U.S. national team, representing one of the most powerful countries in the world, was joining the celebration. Furthermore, the game became an irreversible demonstration of U.S. recognition, signalling to the world's greatest power the strong desire for Croatian independence (Brentin, 2013).

Advertisements for the match featured the Ban Jelacic statue alongside the Statue of Liberty, and the new checkerboard Croatian flag together with the American flag. The Croatian flag, along with the checkerboard symbol that the Croatian team sported were quite closely related to Croatian flags used before the Second World War but the flag and coat of arms were interpreted by Serbs to be akin to the flag and coat of arms by the Croatian Ustase, a fascist regime responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Serbians and Jews during the war. The idea that the United States government would allow its team to play against the Croatians while they were allegedly supporting such genocidal symbols greatly offended the Serbians. It did not matter that the coat of arms had been used by Croatian communist authorities, with the addition of a red star; to Serbs it was tantamount to evidence of a resurgence of fascism. In addition, it served as a warning that in the event of war, American support would be for Tadjman and his democratic government, not Milosevic and the communist Serbians.

The time of the match plays a significant role in Croatian history. At a time when political leaders were engaged in negotiations regarding the future of the country with the largest entity Serbia blocking any discussion of decentralization, the fact that the United States would extend a form of recognition to Croatia and its Croatian "National" Team as part of an independent nation created controversy in Belgrade. However, to ask a member of the United States National Team from this match to recall the political significance of

the match would lead to confusion. Teammates and coaches remember displays of the Croatian flag and chants and cheers from fans, but in comparison to other international competition, it was nothing out of the ordinary (Sack & Suster, 2000). Of particular importance though is that only the anthems of the United States and Croatia were played, and congruently, among the chants was one calling all Croatians to Knin, to fight for the land that they believe was ultimately “their Croatia.”

After Croatia and Slovenia’s declaration of independence on June 25, 1991, war eventually broke out in Croatia which ended in 1995 with the liberation of Knin after “Operation Storm,” headed by Croatian General Ante Gotovina and backed by the United States. The Operation was recorded as the largest European land battle since the Second World War and resulted in the Croatian Army regaining control of over 10,000 square kilometres of territory (Riley, 2010). The war was a complete victory for Croatia and most of its Serbian minority fled the country as refugees after the fall of the Serbian mini-state. The soccer matches played at Maksimir Stadium were simply a small reflection of the real political, ethnic, and religious tensions existent in Yugoslavia, but they also played a critical role in demonstrating that these tensions were strongly at play.

To say that sport provided Croatians with feelings of strength and unity through the upcoming war years is an understatement. First, the use of the Bad Blue Boys soccer fan club, as well as the Delije for the Serbians, created a group of men that served paramilitary purposes for their sides in the war. “Some of the nationalistic soccer fans [in the Balkans] quickly became some of the earliest nationalist warriors – and war criminals” (Sack & Suster, 2000 p. 317). In addition, the riot at the Maksimir Stadium

match gave Tudjman's government reason to raise awareness about the over-representation of Serbians in the Yugoslavian police force.

Second, Tudjman's use of the Croatia-U.S. soccer match was a brilliant ploy to gain informal recognition from the world. Linking old pro-Croatian nationalistic symbols to the innocence of freedom and autonomy that Croatia was trying to achieve was also an incredibly brilliant sign of strength for Croatians. At a time when war was almost certain, it was important that Tudjman muster as much Croatian support as possible throughout the world and the match, in conjunction with the restoration of Ban Jelacic, proved a perfect tactic. Throughout the war years, Tudjman's war effort relied heavily on Croatian émigrés and the United States government for funding, supplies, and human resources.

### **Importance of the Research**

Presently, Croatia contends as an independent nation in various international sporting events throughout the world and has experienced high levels of success in soccer, finishing in the quarterfinal round of the FIFA 1996 European Cup and most impressively winning the third place game in the FIFA 1998 World Cup. In contrast, Yugoslavia had a slower comeback into international competition, particularly due to sanctions imposed against it, which prevented it from competing on the international stage. Today, Serbia and Croatia, as the largest successor states to Yugoslavia, both compete in international soccer competitions, with Croatia having more success than Serbia. Interestingly, Croatia and Serbia still participate against one another in sporting events and needless to say these events still carry evidence of hostility. Games such as the 2013 World Cup qualifying match that was played in March between the two nations are

used by Croatians to pay tribute to war veterans and continue to celebrate independence. A match is not held without the waving of new Croatian flags and the chanting of anti-Serbian protests and vice versa.

For Croatia, then, sport has played an important role in garnering people's shared sense of national identity both leading up to, during, and after the war for independence. Under the waving of flags, during the singing of anthems, and through witnessing the representations of other patriotic symbols, even complete strangers have been encouraged to come together in unity to support their nation at an especially important political moment in the country's history. For Croatia, in short, the game of soccer was seen not just as a sporting match but instead it was viewed as part of the battle for the honour of the country. Particularly in Croatia, sport in general and soccer in particular provide a unique source of information "contributing greatly to the formation, establishment, and conservation of the emerging national identity," particularly since the nation's separation from Yugoslavia in the early 1990s (Brentin, 2013 p. 993).

The 1990 soccer riots in Split and Zagreb are two examples – albeit unusually clear and dramatic ones – of the role that sport plays in directing people's sense of nationhood; however of course there are countless examples throughout modern history, some of which will be discussed in the thesis. In reference to the soccer match against the United States, Brentin (2013) concludes that, from the perspective of the Croatian government and Tudjman's goals, sport played a crucial role: "ultimately, sport related narratives should pervasively assist the country's political elite in perpetuating a particular ideological goal: to meld and totalize the idea of the 'birth of Croatian statehood from the heroic and defensive *Homeland War*' with Tudjman's persona and the

HDZ [*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* (Croatian Democratic Union)] as his infrastructural apparatus” (p. 1003). This highlights the central role sport played in the 1990s in Croatia and this point will become increasingly apparent as the research unfolds.

The goal of this thesis was to study and attempt to understand the way that sport in general and soccer in particular have come to play important roles in contributing to a nation’s sense of unity. The following sections outline in clear detail the intention and importance of the research, the literature that supports the expectations and need for the research, the theoretical framework upon which the intended research is structured, and the approaches that will be used to conduct the research.

The next chapter provides an overview of the current literature surrounding the emergence of nations and nation-states and subsequently, nationalism. Similarly, it identifies the important role that nationalism plays in the lives of individuals and why it has become an important element to be studied. Chapter two also will discuss the role that sport plays in the development of nationalism. Chapter two plays an important role in the thesis – this is reflected in the chapter’s length – because the various theories regarding nationalism and, in relation to them, theories of sport’s link to nationalism are considered. These theories are later considered in the Conclusion with respect to the specific findings of this study.

Following this, the third chapter provides an overview of research methods that have been followed for this study. This includes methodologies, data collection, and data analysis, along with justifications for why these approaches were selected. The chapter also highlights some potential limitations, ones that will be discussed once again in the Conclusion.

The fourth chapter provides the results and themes that were emergent after data analysis was complete. The five emergent themes are *Fan Behaviour and the Use of National Symbols; Prestige, World Recognition, and Expectations of Success; General Elements of Croatian Nationalism; Negative Nationalism;* and finally, *Invented Tradition and the Political Importance of Soccer*. Each is described with examples. Finally, the fifth chapter of this thesis draws inferences and conclusions for what these results mean for current and future research surrounding nationalism and sport.

## **Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following chapter outlines themes based upon the development of nations and nation-states, the development of nationalism, and finally the important relationship between sport and nationalism. The chapter begins with an introduction into the emergence of nations and nation states in eighteenth century France. From here, we see a parallel in the rise of nationalism and major ideas regarding this important theme are reviewed, drawing on the conclusions of various historians and sociologists regarding when nationalism emerged and the role that it plays in our lives. The chapter then concludes with an overview of the role that nationalism has come to play in sporting institutions and how the media has both strengthened and influenced this role.

### **Nations and Nation-States**

The question of nations and nationalism over the past two centuries has long been a topic of contemplation in sociology and other related disciplines. Historians, sociologists, and political theorists alike have been challenged with the task of defining nations and the role that they play in the lives of individuals. Various factors have significantly affected definitions of nationalism and nations, but scholars have generally been in agreement that the quest to understand the essence of nations emerged alongside the American and French Revolutions, occurring in the late eighteenth century (Clarke & Jones, 1999). During this time, the principle idea and practices of nationality equated individuals with their state and the ideal of nations was to bridge the gap between the state and society and to bring members of the population back from a sense of alienation



from the state and its government that had emerged during the Revolutions, to better reintegrate people with society as a whole (Clarke & Jones, 1999).

As Benedict Anderson summarizes, “in Western Europe the eighteenth century marks not only the dawn of the age of nationalism but the dusk of religious modes of thought” (Anderson, 1983 p. 51). The beginning of the French Revolution came from the years 1789 to 1799. For politics, this in turn meant the coming of age of what is currently known as nationalism. With the demise of religion as an overarching authoritative power in Western Europe, there was the emergence of modern ideologies and new methods of political rule that, in turn, influenced ways of living and existing in the world. As a result, during a decades-long (and arguably centuries-long) transitional period, nations became aligned with the religious community and in extreme cases served as an eternal replacement of the religious community (Anderson, 1983). In France, the strength of the monarchy and the powerful position once held by the Roman Catholic Church began to diminish, along with the privileges held by the clergy and aristocrats. The new state was placed on national foundations where the bourgeoisie and middle class citizens were placed in more dominant positions (Snyder, 1980). As such, by the mid-nineteenth century a new era of triumphant bourgeois liberalism emerged (Hobsbawm, 1992).

It is also important to regard the birth of administrative vernaculars, or print media, in the sixteenth century that preceded the religious upheaval of the eighteenth century, as this is vital in understanding the emergence of nationalism. As Pecora (2001) summarizes, print resulted in the basis of national consciousness in three ways. First, it initially created a new form of common exchange and communication. Second, print gave a new fixity to language that provided the antiquity so central and ubiquitous to the

essences of nations. Print, in other words, provided a link to history and the previous generations through the words of ancestors. Finally, print capitalism created languages of power that developed and changed over time and stretched the links between communities (Pecora, 2001).

According to Eric Hobsbawm's (1992) important work *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, in order to classify a community of individuals as a nation, the existence of a long established cultural elite possessing a written national literary and administrative vernacular must be present. However, the French people challenged this in later years through linguistic diversity, resulting in the erosion of the sacred imagined community and the development of a second form of nationalism. In theory it was not the native use of the French language that made a person French as so few people used the "national" French language. It was in fact the willingness of the population to acquire this among other liberties, laws, and common characteristics of the free people of France. This willingness and choice to pledge oneself to a nation that may not necessarily carry the individual's ethnic roots is what is now referred to as civic nationalism (Hobsbawm, 1992). This form of nationalism will later be further examined.

Prior to the French Revolution, in France, individuals strived to be sovereign under God, but as the Enlightenment and Revolution challenged the legitimacy of religion and introduced religious pluralism, the idea of sovereignty as a nation state became increasingly important. France became indivisible as a collectivity of citizens whose determination as a sovereign state resulted in their freedom of citizenship, mass participation and choice that was inalienable for the individual. Nations became the inevitable consequence of this self-determination as the French Declaration of Rights in

1795 defined that, as Hobsbawm puts it, “each people is independent and sovereign whatever the number of individuals who compose it and the extent of the territory it occupies” (Hobsbawm, 1992 p. 19). Self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies and the formation of an independent state (Pecora, 2001).

France’s reformation as a state can also be attributed to three particular philosophers and their respective works: Montesquieu on laws, Rousseau on sociopolitical structure, and Voltaire’s criticism of the Church. The resulting concept of nationalism grew along with these philosophers. All three believed that the notion of love of country was a vital component in the existence of democratic forms of government. For a democracy to truly exist, the responsibility of government is entrusted in the hands of the citizens and as such, in order for a nation to achieve success in its governing bodies, there must be a love for nation that trumps the desires of individual interests (Snyder, 1980). Political duty to the polity that encompasses and represents the nation overrides all other obligations.

Societies suddenly were exposed to new learning and philosophies of those that were introduced during the Enlightenment and Romantic eras. New nationalist movements were generated in order to satisfy the needs of individuals. This need was to belong to a coherent and stable community which, until then, was fulfilled by family, neighbourhood, and religious community. However, the last century and a half challenged these institutions due to social and intellectual change. Eventually nationalism disarmed the strength of the Church. Nationalism is a sociopolitical movement reflective of the breakdown of traditional structures.

It is important to note, however, some of the strong similarities between religion and nationalism because they have both had similar functions in terms of a people's identities in relation to society more generally. Both can play a strong guiding role in the lives of individuals and the fact that nationalism often serves as a replacement for religion in some senses reinforces the similarities between the two social practices. First and foremost, just as religion has the emergence of the "chosen people," nationalism too is based on ethnic selection. A common nationalist narrative about the origins of people's nation-states and sense of nationalist feelings celebrates the politicization of an ethnic identity and the awakening or reawakening of national identity. Second, there is a sacred territory, "promised land," or homeland which is a fundamental part of the history and character of the culture and just as a clergy had and continues to have control over the Church, political-identity hegemony for nation states ensures the predominance of a national identity within "the people" and the empowerment of a cohort of politicians associated with that project within "the homeland." Third, there is the commemoration of great heroes who have died in defence of the nation or in its liberation just as with religious institutions there is the celebration of those who have died for religious causes and in the defence of the faith (Bierstedt, 1978, p. 3-38). Over time, religious beliefs and values have been reproduced as nationalist ideologies to provide the basis of nation formation. Religion and nationalism represented ways of life that have to be both cherished and protected, and it is because of this belief that Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Voltaire were able to construct ideals about the importance of love for nation (Bierstedt, 1978, p. 3-38). Also, because they made such strong links between politics and religions, their ideas were generally accepted by readers, as they were not radically attempting to

eliminate religious beliefs altogether but, rather, incorporate religious ways of thinking into new political forms.

The three philosophers and their ideals mentioned above fostered national sentiment along with the desire to create a common government. There was also a belief by the nation that the government should be ruled by a portion of the citizens, thus representing common interest and good over particular interest and privilege. Thus the nation was characterized by those who formed it, whatever limited power they may have had (Hobsbawm, 1992). These theories and practices from France soon encapsulated neighbouring states in Western Europe.

It may be valuable here to recall Max Weber's notion of "ideal types." The ideal type is the result of rigorous conceptualization and the composition of many different aspects of reality. The goal behind this ideal type is to create as close to a "utopian" or perfect idea of social forms, all the while accepting the fact that this can never be absolutely achieved. Due to the fact that there are such variations in beliefs, ideas, and values, the best that can be done on the part of the researcher is to attempt to understand society in its own context, and to try to include as many concepts as necessary that apply to this understanding (Weber, 1981). For nations, this ideal type comprised a named community of history and culture possessing a unified territory, economy, mass education system, and common legal rights. Nations and nationalism became viewed as an ideology which structured the political behaviours of the individuals that belong to the nation, an imagined political community that was inherently sovereign and free (Brown, 2000 & Anderson, 1983). In a way, nationalists have made ideal types a concrete reality by creating a unified population, with shared myths and memories. After all, nationalism is

an ideological movement for the “attainment and maintenance of identity, autonomy and unity on behalf of a population, some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’” (Clarke & Jones, 1999).

In nineteenth-century Europe, the initial stages of nationalism were strongly evident in the cultural, literary and folkloric forces that existed. What this meant for a nation politically was not particularly evident during this period. It was only during later phases that bodies of pioneers for “the national idea” emerged and so began political campaigning in support of this idea. The final phases of nationalism occurred when the political governments in favour of the concept and its strength and benefits acquired mass support (Hobsbawm, 1992).

Nations exist not merely as functions of a territorial state or with the aspirations to establish one, but they also occur in the context of stages of technological and economic development (Hobsbawm, 1992). However, these were not the only forces at play, as nationalism was also part of a new way of comprehending the world. The ability to think about nations and fathom the concept became commonplace, particularly through paintings and other forms of art, along with the novels and newspapers that were coming into print which expressed national sentiment. The idea of the imagined community, thus, became a visual and aural reality through technical forms that now represented the community. This encouraged individuals to consider themselves and their relations to others in new ways (Hobsbawm, 1992).

As the nineteenth century blossomed into the twentieth so did the element of a single state government and political unity where people occupying a geographical place could collectively conduct themselves as a state (Clarke & Jones, 1999). The idea of

nations converted from the aggregation of a group of inhabitants belonging to a specific province, country, or territory, and including foreigners, towards an idea of a single political state governed by a common body, as well as the individuals that constitute that state (Hobsbawm, 1992). The increasing importance placed on the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen from a century and a half or so earlier, ushered in an age of nationalism that led to the conscious creation of nation states through forces of decolonization, division, succession, secession, and unification (Roeder, 2007). The nation thus became:

the community of the citizens of a state living under the same regime or government and having a communion of interests; the collectivity of the inhabitants in a territory with common traditions, aspirations and interests, *and subordinated to a central power which takes charge of maintaining the unity of the group*; the people of a state, excluding the governing power (Hobsbawm, 1992 p. 15).

The modern concept of the state is the historical result of nationalist practices, alongside political institutions and other contingent events that create national identity resulting in independence and unity. In the pre-modern era, nationalism was experienced through traditional elements and processes including pre-existing cultural resources, such as documents and artifacts, as well as the reconstruction and reinterpretation of previous cultural formations, just as in the case of religion. Modern nationalism, however, emerged alongside novel processes during an age that experienced a high culture of

science, technology, bureaucracy, capitalism, secular education, and rationality (Clarke & Jones, 1999).

Anthony Smith (1971) identifies the nation state as the, “most undisputed foundation for world order, the main objective of individual loyalties, and the chief definer of a man’s identity” (p. 2). The nation state, in other words, is an entity that is far more significant for the individual than any previous type of political and social organization. Due to its emotional and cognitive attributes, the concept of nation has become increasingly important in the lives of individuals as they find comfort in the solidarity and security that nations provide.

Later in the twentieth century, beyond the nation and its linkages to territorial states, an emotional component of the nation became increasingly more evident and important. A collective union of individuals with common ethnic origins, resulting in the same languages and traditions and a strong loyalty towards homeland became an essential feature of nations. As this element of nations emerged, so too did the question of the cultural roots of nationalism. Nations are the outcomes of long histories of efforts, sacrifices, and devotion (Clarke & Jones, 1999).

Nationalism links communities’ past traditions to the modernising process in three distinct phases. The first of these is differentiation, whereby one unit of the society breaks down into two or more elements in order to work more efficiently. The next phase of modernisation is reintegration which is responsible for the coordination of these new units. Finally, there is dislocation which is the resulting panic, inevitable conflicts, and violent discontinuities that follows the first two phases. Nationalism acts as a cushion to dislocation as it produces a new sense of personal and collective identity which in turn



creates an ideal harmony. Newly emerging institutions will always generate change just as they have done historically and modernisation demonstrates society's ability to adapt to this and continue to grow in the face of these changes. Failure for a nation to develop alongside modernisation processes can result in poor integration, social eruptions, and protest movements. Ideologies like nationalism can bridge the gap between society and state based on interest.

Gellner (1983) states that "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self consciousness, but rather it invents nations where they do not exist" (p. 168). Nations are generated from the ethnic core of individuals, which provides their basis for culture and identity. As time progresses, the community creates a heritage from myths, symbols, memories and values that have been previously encoded in their vernaculars and rituals (Clarke & Jones, 1999). The elements of artifacts along with invention enter into the creation of nations through the forces of nationalism which take already existing culture and reinvent them. It is these common forms of identification that foster and preserve networks of solidarity that characterize and are essential to nations, providing a basis of uniqueness. This in turn produces an ethnic form of nationalism, which will also be examined later in greater detail. Ernest Gellner believes that nationalism is a "principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent (this principle also implies that the political duties of citizens to their nation override all other obligations)" (Ozкимli, 2010 p. 96). Nationalism then is the imposition of a higher government and cultural form on a society that is already held together by a shared culture.

This common possession of a rich heritage that links a nation's past and present, along with the consent and desire to live together in a homogenous culture preserves the

undivided nation. When such strong forces unify men and women and pervade entire populations, a situation arises under which we have nations with unshakeable unity under which individuals identify and are willing to pledge themselves and their lives. Here, however, the question arises of why individuals are so passionate about something that some scholars claim is an invented fabrication and why the loyalties and attachments are so strong that people are willing to fight and die for their nations?

Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" is helpful in considering this question. "Members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1983 p.13). Anderson argues that nations are more about imaging and creation rather than invention and falsification and that there is still a strong cultural core amongst members of a population. Nations are a strong community brought together through common origins, histories and character that have been experienced and understood by all members. These associations produce solidarities that are distinct from other cultures, and constituted by shared belief and mutual commitment. Thus, people imagine themselves as strong, cohesive communities, who, regardless of inequalities, experience strong comradeship that makes individuals willing to sacrifice their lives for even such limited imaginings, and the source of this comes from the very roots of nationalism (Anderson, 1983).

Anderson's intention was not to assert the belief that nations were in fact mythical communities. On the contrary he believed that nations were one of the strongest forms of social groups. The idea of "imagined communities" rather meant the process by which nations came to exist. The members of the nation need to acknowledge that they have a

common relationship rooted in interests that will subsequently alter how they act. The idea of creating a nation therefore means understanding that they are members of a special national community. For example, sport is sociologically important to this sense of imagined national communities because it offers occasion for an emotionally-charged interaction. Similarly, the flags present at these events orient people to a single idea – the nation which is ruled under this flag (King, 2006). Therefore, when a sport is played for a nation, under the ruling flag, it takes on heightened importance. Anderson may have agreed that the official nationalisms that we see in present society emerged as the effect of national movements that occurred in Europe in the early 1800s and that they can be understood by aligning the resulting nationalisms with the political ideologies of that time. Nationalism, then, was an attempt at creating social communities surrounding new politico-economic realities (Ozkirimli, 2010).

Furthermore, these imagined communities are reinforced by Hobsbawm's idea of "invented tradition." Hobsbawm defined invented tradition as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (cited in Ozkirimli, 2010 p. 94). Those in powerful positions use history to legitimate action and cement group cohesion and therefore, nations do not create nationalism, but the other way around. Hobsbawm is a modernist in that he believed the origins of nationalism emanated from the intersection of politics, technology, and social transformation. Furthermore, Hobsbawm identified three stages in the emergence of nationalism. The first occurred from the end of the French Revolution to 1918, when nationalism initially emerged and gained popularity. The

second stage occurred from 1918 to 1950, where there was a surge of militant nationalism in the aftermath of World War I, during World War II, and in the years that preceded the Cold War. And the final stage occurred from the late twentieth century to present day, where nationalism is, as Hobsbawm believes, a reaction of fear in the face of the processes of modernization (Ozkirimli, 2010).

### *Nationalism*

The goal here is to identify how different types of nationalism have emerged both due to and alongside the emergence of nation states. Similarly, it is here that we identify why nationalism has come to play a strong role in the lives of individuals. A common historical view of nationalism states that all individuals crave some level of security and the desire and need to belong to a group. Nationalism is an ideology allowing for this belonging and affording individuals this strong security. The success of nations relies heavily on its group creating coherence within its population through the overpowering of other beliefs and societal structures. Nation-building is heavily reliant on the construction of national institutions by the state, favouring the integration and ultimate assimilation of ethnic minorities by the culture of the dominant ethnic majority (Smith, 1992).

For example, though a common, dominant ethnic background is a pre-requisite for a nation to create a strong ethno-historical legacy and in order to determine the formation and shape a nation, there are often cases of a single nation with several ethnic communities. It is the role of the state to homogenise these individuals and thus form them into a single, unified entity. This creation of identity hegemony must be done prior to any hopes of independence and nationhood. This can be done through incentives to

coordinate identities, along with coercive resources that suppress public expressions of alternative national identities (Roeder, 2007). The state coordinates identities by serving as a unique focal point, but it reinforces a natural psychological tendency by rewarding supporters, suppressing proponents of alternative nation-state projects, and propagating the official project through public ceremonies, public education, and the many other tools a state uses to celebrate itself.

National consciousness develops unevenly among the social groupings and regions of a country as smaller cultures only fit into progress insofar as it can accept a subordinate status to some larger unit. National identities are created through the combination of culture and willingness to work with political units. This incorporates loyalty, will, and voluntary adherence on the one hand, and fear, coercion, and compulsion on the other (Pecora, 2001). It is important to remember, however, that ideological movements are not always reflective of what is in the minds of even the most loyal citizens and supporters and that when national identification does exist it is not always superior to the subordinate groups of cultures. National identification changes and shifts over time; it is an on-going, continuous process.

The Encyclopedia on Nationalism (1980), explains eight roles that nationalism plays in our society. The first is that of unity, where nationalism can work as a method of integration and consolidation among political differences. For a successful nation to exist and achieve its statehood, the political and cultural units within it must be congruent and there must be widespread consensus over what constitutes the nation. Until this is achieved, the nation will exist only in the minds of the political activists battling one another over competing visions of the future (Gellner, 1983 & Roeder, 2007). The second

force of nationalism is disruption. Throughout history, nationalism has been the means by which nations of various ethnic units have broken down, as each ethnic group desires its own sovereignty. This links closely with the third force of nationalism, independence, which is the result of this need for self-determination and therefore the separation of these different ethnic groups into their own nations. The fourth is nationalism as a force for fraternity, occurring when these striving units want to win union as a single cohesive group. The fifth force is nationalism as colonial expansion where the imperialist powers use nationalism as a tool in striving to enhance their position. A sixth force for the use of nationalism is aggression. This can result from the often selfishness of nations to acquire greater territory, wealth, power, peoples, and so forth. Such nation state projects have sometimes resulted in high costs and violent destruction. The sense of unity that lies at the heart of national consciousness has also resulted in ugly manifestations of inhumanity among national groups historically around the world (Conner, 1992). Anti-colonialism is the seventh force of nationalism. While nationalism has regularly been used in the creation of new states, some fail to recognize the strong role that it can play in opposing nation-building and defying the current ruling political system. Anti-colonial nationalism can represent the common interests of different classes in colonial society, allowing a unified resistance to imperialism (Breuilly, 1985). The eighth and final force of nationalism is that it is used as a method for economic expansion for developing nations and particularly for already strong economic powers to extend their international positions.

Nationalism involves politics which in turn involves power; therefore, by providing the nation with a collective character, one may secure the support of the

masses. Nationalism provides those in a position of power with a way of coordinating members of the state around a common identity. It also allows for the mobilization of support for the government that has implemented this identity. Nationalism is a convenient tool for generating mass support and is therefore a politically-induced cultural change.

Nationalism is, in the simplest of terms, an expression of the nation. If the nation desires independence, then the role of nationalists is to articulate and try to realise that desire (Breuilly, 1985). Nationalism expresses a sense of national identity among nationalists that try to express a more widespread identity. It is important to remember that non nationalist sentiments can be existent in the group identities of nationalists, and also, the elevation of one identity over the other means the suppression of minority identities that may be equally or more important (Breuilly, 1985). In a sense, the only constant role that national identity plays in nationalism is the ideological one that nationalists of the era assign to it.

Ozkirimli (2010), summarizes John Breuilly's argument that nationalism was used as a method of individuals justifying their desire for state power and to legitimize the goals of their political movement. For Breuilly, a nationalist political movement will be successful if the following criteria are fulfilled: 1. There needs to exist a nation with a unique character, 2. The interests and values of this nation must take top priority, and 3. The nation must be as politically independent as possible (Ozkirimli, 2010).

Nationalism can have both positive and negative impacts on a nation in that it can provide its people with independence and liberty, and conversely be associated with ideas of aggression and repression (Goksoyr, 2010). However, for a strong national identity to

exist among the members of a nation, there are criteria that must be met and sustained. For example, there must be consensus regarding national issues and an agreement towards what makes them all unique. This consensus or agreement can be fulfilled through ideas, values, and beliefs, or the languages, religions and histories shared by that nation. Secondly, there needs to be a commitment to this commonality and cohesion, and the individuals must be self-determined agents when agreeing upon these criteria (Goksoyr, 2010).

As is the case with any concept in any time period throughout history, nationalism too is not without its critics. Nationalism has resulted in wars, been overturned by military and presidential dictatorships in recent times, and has been feared as simply a mask to cover the forces of modernity. Nationalism and the creation of free nations supports the idea that the government should be determined by those it governs. However, Lord Acton, writer of various essays on nationality states that “liberty and prosperity are actually lost in making the nation the mould and measure of the state” (Smith, 1971). Similarly, due to the strong forces at play in nationalism, and the strong unifying bonds that are created through it, nationalism creates conflicts that are often much less amenable to negotiated peace than other forms of conflict because individuals are unwilling to compromise over their principles. It seems that over the years, there is a multiplicity of examples in which nationalism has actually brought about more conflict, exacerbated tensions and brought catastrophe even to those innocent of politics.

It is important here to identify the different approaches to nationalism that have been defined by various historians and sociologists over the years. Primordialists are in general agreement that nationalism is a historical entity that is natural to the existence of



the individual. In contrast, modernists would argue that nationalism emerged alongside modernization and in that sense is historically-specific.

### *Primordialists*

The first view of nationalism presented here is the primordialist view.

Primordialists identify themselves as the natural, organic community which defines the identity of its members who feel an innate and emotionally powerful attachment to it (Brown, 2000). Such nationalism has been similarly identified as authentic ethnic nationalism. Members of nations, according to primordialists, are born into a linguistic, racial, or homeland community, resulting in an inevitable bond over common ancestry or attributes that make them distinct from other nations. As a result, these individuals feel as though they have a moral obligation to one another as they are unified by a belief in ethnocultural sameness, origin, heritage, and blood. Primordialism can be extremely intolerant and exclusive, yet, at the same time, be a very powerful form of nationalism.

The primordialists try to point to certain constant biological features of the human condition. They argue further that, though nationalism as an ideology may be modern, nationhood and national consciousness emerged as a much older historical concept (Kumar, 2006). Primordialists think that the principle idea of nations and nationalism are natural to humankind, including the growth of nations out of ethnic groupings. Therefore, primordialists argue, the study of these ethnic groups is the only way to adequately understand nations, even if these structures were triggered by forces of modernity (Greenfeld, 2006). Primordialists believe in natural origins and, therefore, nations must be intrinsic to human evolution. This means that for primordialists,

nations are the foundations of human history, extensions of primitive kinship groups with common ancestry and clear social and territorial boundaries; they can be forged out of a variety of elemental aspects such as language, race, religion, and custom and nations and their characteristics can be identified from one another (Greenfeld, 2006 p. 158).

Primordialists further argue that nationalism has the capacity to overcome insecurities brought on by modernity (Haugaard, 2006).

An example of this approach can be seen in *Nationalism in Contemporary Europe*, written by Dr. Franjo Tudjman, prior to his election as Croatian president:

Nations, grow up in a natural manner, in the objective and complex historical process, as a result of the development of all those material and spiritual forces which in a given area shape the national being of individual nations on the basis of blood, linguistic and cultural kinship, and the common vital interests and links of fate between the ethnic community and the common homeland and the common historical traditions and aims.

...Nations are the irreplaceable cells of the human community or of the whole of mankind's being. This fact cannot be disputed in any way (Tudjman, 1981, p. 288-9).

Tudjman here provides us with a classic example of the primordialists' perspective. He defends the recurring nature of nationalism throughout history and the ideas that blood and descent strengthen the cultural bonds which, in turn, lead to nationalist sentiments.

Especially given the crucially important role that Tudjman played in Croatia's recent history, his position will become highly relevant for the conclusions reached in Chapter Five.

As mentioned, primordialists consider nationality as an inherent attribute of the human condition and would also argue that an individual's membership to a nation overrides all other forms of belonging. This nation encompasses the idea of a unique history and destiny, an historic "homeland," and a common descent. Therefore, primordial identities are a "given" condition (Ozкимli, 2010). Perennialists, which are a subcategory of primordialists, note that, though this is true, the idea of nations are not "facts" in nature, but are instead fundamental features of life that have been continuously recorded throughout history.

However, the primordial view of nations is not by any means universally accepted. For instance, Anthony Smith disagrees that nations are a primordial part of our biological evolution. Instead, he places greater emphasis on cultural components such as shared myths, symbols, beliefs, and so forth, even if these may have an ethnic component (Puri, 2004). Nationalism is therefore less of a concept based on natural historical development but is rather the evolution of imagined concepts and myths, similar to Anderson's notion of the imagined community mentioned earlier. Other critiques of primordialists also point to their failure to account for the 'socially constructed' nature of nations, such as individual choices. In other words, those in influential positions, whether this means politically or not, have the ability to create and recreate ideal forms of nationalism. Similarly, critics stress how boundaries of nations are continuously negotiated and redefined (Ozкимli, 2010). This gives evidence that the nationalisms

experienced and practiced by individuals can change over time as they are strongly influenced by the nation that the individual is a part of, which also changes.

### *Modernists*

Another view of nationalism is the modernist one. Modernists base their account of national identity on institutional or ideological frameworks which offer formulas of identity and diagnoses of contemporary problems. The modernists, in opposition to primordialists, claim that nations and nationalism are by-products of modernization, although they agree that ethnic groups represent the source out of which nations grow. Modernists see nations as recent historical ideologies rather than natural phenomena and recognize that the power of nationalism is enforced through the social and political elites of the time, even if they rely on the participation of the people (Greenfeld, 2006).

Similarly, modernists state that nations and nationalism are intrinsic to processes such as capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, secularism, and the emergence of the modern bureaucratic state, that are specific to the modern world. Nationalism is determined by certain features of the world political economy in the era between the French and Industrial Revolutions and present day (Ozkirimli, 2010). Theories regarding the capitalist economy play a particularly important role in this theory. As capitalism became a popular movement among world leaders, outsider nations were forced to catch up; however, they experienced the influx of capitalism in power nations as domination and invasion. Therefore, nationalism became the socio-historical cost of the rapid implantation of capitalism. Modernists are the most influential and widely prevalent theorists of nationalism.

Situationalist nationalism is a form of modernist approach, which specifically sees national unity and identity as resources employed by groups of individuals for the pursuit of common interests (Brown, 2000). As threats and opportunities for nations change, so does the utility of nationalism. For example, situationalists believe nationalism can be deployed in the defence of interests in the face of power disparities or when communities and authority structures are being disrupted, in order for the government to regain the control and support of the nation.

Both modernist and situationalist nationalisms are forms of civic nationalism. This is a voluntary, individual decision or process to adhere to the shared norms of the state. It is a solidarity formed between individuals of the nation state, created by the feeling of sacrifices that one has, and is willing to make for the nation. Individuals of civic nationalism pledge themselves to the nation as well as to the symbols that have emerged to represent and be of importance to the nation. In the context of civic nationalism, there is a shared sense of national identity, community, and culture, and those that choose to adopt this way of life are considered part of the nation, even if they are not bound to it by blood. Civic nationalism can produce the similar sense of belonging and provide the same strong roots as ethnic nationalism, since it subordinates ethnic minorities and promotes the same sense of belief in the form of a sense of community, a common territorial homeland, and commitment to state and civil society institutions. This idea generates a distinctive national character and civic culture such that all citizens, regardless of their diverse ancestry, comprise a community in progress toward a common destiny of equal citizenship (Brown, 2000). Similarly, strong

multicultural nations strive to achieve a community which respects and promotes the cultural autonomy and status equality of its component ethnic groups.

### **Sociological Theories**

In order to fully comprehend nationalism, it is important to analyze, not just the approaches to nationalism as demonstrated above, but also to identify some sociological theories and how they can be applied to the study of nationalism. Theories are a disciplined, organized, systematic means of making sense of the social world through use of logically-connected concepts, assumptions, and conclusions about society (Nixon, 2008). Theories aid observers in comprehending the notion of nationalism – its history, causes, consequences, and people’s experiences of it. It is both appropriate and necessary to review the relevant theories that apply to nationalism that will in turn be applied to this study. Analysis will begin with general historical theories of sociology with a strong focus on Emile Durkheim and functionalist theory in sociology, as it has been applied to nationalism, sport, and the combination of the two. There will also be a slightly different version of this theory, in as much as it has been influenced by the psychological perspective. Following this, there will be an examination of the Marxist theoretical approach to nationalism, which can be considered as both an opposing view as well as a critique of the functionalist and psychological approaches. Finally, a review of more contemporary theories of nationalism, as they apply and relate to those of Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx will follow. These theories are relevant to current sport research but also express the way that matters of nationalism and sport have progressed

historically. The summaries of these theories come from a variety of texts and have been combined and worked out into individual theories that will apply to the research.

### *Immanuel Kant*

The first theory emerged based upon Immanuel Kant who was a philosopher of the nineteenth century. As science began to explain how the world exists, there was a similar emerging need for the absolute and pure reasoning for everything. Autonomy, morality, and practicality were some of the themes alongside Kant's studies (Bock, 1978, p. 39-79). Kant's ethics state that the good will of the individual is also the free will and thus the autonomous will. As a result, the individual is the self-determining centre of the universe and this self-determination becomes the good to strive towards and also becomes a large component of the essence of nations. Universal and individual consciousness guarantees rationality and stability and together these comprise the individual's ego. Universal consciousness refers to our relation and oneness with everything surrounding us. The individual's judgment, based on these two levels of consciousness, allows the world to be coherent. Just as the individual cannot function without one of these two elements, the state cannot exist without each of its parts. The creation of the organic theory of the state emerged from these ideas. This means that the state becomes an organised body such that each part maintains the whole and through doing this maintains itself as well (Smith, 1971). It is through this that humans can achieve self-realization and thus express the individuality of a nation. These ideas foreshadow Emile Durkheim's structural functionalist point of view which is crucial for considering Durkheim's view of nationalism.

*Emile Durkheim and Structural Functionalism*

The psychological and functionalist theoretical approaches introduced by Durkheim and applied to nationalism work together and are, as we will see, particularly important for this study. Both theories begin with the common notion that individuals have a need to identify with something larger than them. The theories similarly identify this personal importance of groups for political action and momentum from the population to support that action (Breuilly, 1985). According to these theories, for example, the impact of capitalism on a formerly traditional society results in chaos due to the necessary adjustments to a changing world. People were removed from their former roles and positions in society and could no longer identify with one another and ultimately themselves on the basis of their occupations or social relationships (Gellner, 1983). Nationalism, then, filled this void in a positive sense by providing an encompassing identity with which the population could relate, allowing them to once again feel as though they belonged to something greater.

If one were to make a general distinction between the functionalist perspective and the psychological, one might say that the former represents the effects of a practice while the latter approach accounts for its appeal. Functionalism can act as a way of understanding how social systems remained stable as they moved towards modernisation: “Functionalist sociology often works with a dichotomy between tradition and community and modernity and society” (Breuilly, 1985 p. 418). The rapid change of modernisation is a breakdown of the relations and values of the traditional community in order to successfully establish the relations and values of the modernised society. This has clear



psychological implications as the breakdown of traditional identity presents the urgent need for a new one. Nationalism provides nationalists with a way of mobilising support for a more generalised identity. It can often be used, for example, as a recovery for an existing identity that has been forgotten, abandoned or threatened.

In his work, Durkheim developed the idea of social solidarity in the sense that he believed people were united by bonds that in turn determine the formation of social aggregates. For example, kinsmen were united by similarity of minds, ideas, and sentiments, reflecting mechanical solidarity, as opposed to organic solidarity exemplified through political organizations that were united by differentiation of functions and division of labour. While mechanical solidarity was automatic, organic solidarity showed differences among people who were nonetheless linked in some way; everything they did was separate yet all actions and duties fit into the whole. Durkheim concluded that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; however, the whole would not exist without each of its parts. These forms of social solidarity are particularly important when studying Emile Durkheim's famous notion of the conscious collective, which, just as nationalism does, allows members of the society to relate to other individuals within their community and to feel as though they belong to a greater sum (Tiryakian, 1978, p.187-236). Nationalism similarly brings this sense of bond to the individuals of a nation and also helps to contribute to the conscious collective. For example, the collective effervescence that comes with national successes and victories is a result of a strong sense of national unity and ultimately, nationalism.

For Durkheim, symbols aid in reinforcing social solidarity by contributing to collective representations which designate and represent affective states while helping to

clarify and create sentiments. Communication and community construction develop through symbols or practices that unite the population. These symbols typically originate from religion, ethnic traditions or civic practices (Maguire et. al., 2002). Symbols such as flags, jerseys, anthems, and so forth, carry emotional value and ideals that, combined, contribute to a set of social bonds. For example, in religious life, when individuals come together, they feel part of a whole and forget personal preoccupations. It is in these situations where ideas are created and society experiences these ideals as a whole, further promoting solidarity. The gathering of individuals over shared beliefs and values is, once again, what Durkheim referred to as a conscious collective. Religious life reflects moral reality and aspects of the social community and is thus a fundamental structure of the conscious collective. Just as it can be argued that nationalism and the nation have been used as a replacement for religion, it can be argued that sports have done the same thing. In some circumstances they have come to reflect religion in many ways.

In his discussion of Croatian nationalism – one to be presented more fully later in the thesis – Brentin (2013) argues that symbols allow for public displays of national identity while simultaneously projecting an image of “national distinctiveness and individuality on an international stage, drawing external boundaries against others” and therefore, further promoting nationalism by increasing separation from the other (p. 994). Importantly, Brentin argues that being Croatian was defined as being in strict opposition to being Yugoslavian, and a strict determining factor in “national self-understanding” (Brentin, 2013 p. 1000).

Durkheim’s theory is important to consider in that the sense of belonging that individuals have to a nation is strongly related to the social bonds experienced between

members of that nation and the resulting conscious collective and, therefore, nationalism that is felt. However, critics may say that this theory fails to account for cross-cultural diversity such as differences in political and economic factors as well as traditions, beliefs and values specific to individual cultures. These sorts of differences can, for example, create tension during sporting events and cause conflict between various sporting nations, competing fan groups, and individuals. Durkheim's approach, then, fails to consider more complex ideas that factor into the values and beliefs reflected through sport, most importantly the notion of power (Guillianotti, 2005).

### *Karl Marx and Critical Theory*

Using Karl Marx's critical theory, we can begin to examine how nationalism can be used as an ideological tool misleading the masses in order to sustain bourgeoisie control. The Marxist approach is a particular interpretation of nationalism that places strong emphasis on class and economic conflicts among societies. According to the Marxist approach, nationalism is a modern phenomenon that has developed around the emergence of capitalism (Breuilly, 1985). Nationalism has the ability to reproduce various classes and thus relationships among them. The control of the state over the nation and therefore nationalism relies on the political support and consent from members of the population. Since the state in Karl Marx's time did not represent a majority of class interests (and by many accounts still does not today), the state and political actors who held power within the state apparatus had to find an alternative approach to cohesiveness that would appeal to all classes. Therefore, Marxists argue, nationalism came into play. Eric Hobsbawm (1992) presents the Marxist-oriented view that nationalism has been used

by upper classes as a political strategy to ensure the stability of the people and the nation-state. Through national celebrations – including national sporting events – the energy of the population could be directed toward activities that would prevent the population from rallying against the existing political powers or, worse, entrenched class interests.

As nationalism emerged, so too did new class conflicts that it projected. Under this theoretical approach, it is claimed that nationalism can have three different functions corresponding to three separate forms of class relations. First, nationalism can be the work and expression of one single class and have relatively little involvement from other classes. Second, it can comprise a set of class alliances in which each component or class has its own interest. Third, nationalism can represent the interests of a single class and gain support from other classes. Regardless of the function and the set of relations, in each situation there is a leading class whose interests take precedence over the interests of the other groups. Challenging any situation, particularly political, calls for manpower as this is the main resource of exploited societies in the hopes of achieving equality or recognition (Breuilly, 1985). Therefore, while it has been argued that nationalism is often reflective of dominant class values, when used as a means of organizing people for political resistance, it can transcend class divisions. This is possible because it fosters a common identity in the struggle against exploitation that often coincides with language, culture, race, or religion.

### ***The Role of Nationalism in Sporting Institutions***

Nationalism, over the years, has been a contested terrain that originally arose as an historical phenomenon from the emergence of nation-states and the realization of

national uniqueness. As the wave of nation-states and nationalism gained strength in Europe and the Western world, their role in sporting culture and vice versa grew congruently. Nationalism's connection with the sporting environment of a given nation has also been a matter of debate since the modern period, when both nationalism and sports arose as important factors in the way individuals defined themselves and their role with the nation. With the increase in the popularity of sports paralleling the growth of nationalism and nation-states, there emerged a realization that the connection between sports and nationalism was something to be studied in terms of its impact on the individual and cultures.

The organizational and institutionalized context of sport over the years has become more formally structured, having official rules, enforcement of rules by regulatory bodies, hierarchical arrangement of roles, and other bureaucratic structures (Nixon, 2008). Initially, sport emerged as an environment where middle and upper class men could meet and socialize, and ultimately separate themselves from the working class citizens. On an international level, the popularity of sport has resulted in numerous movements across the globe that led to its study and relation to society (Ritchie, 2011).

Perhaps the most important movement that has been studied by sport sociologists and historians was the emerging Olympic Games. Baron Pierre de Coubertin's rebirth of the Greek Olympics, performed centuries earlier was meant to reinforce the values of the upper class, particularly through the Muscular Christianity movement, with the hope that sport would build character and instil values and morals into young men (Beamish, 2009). Through the ensuing decades, the Olympic Games movement encountered struggles but eventually flourished in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1936 in particular, the

Olympic Games were strongly impacted by the realization that sport could be used for national propaganda. Through its organization and structure, the 1936 “Nazi Olympics” came to be regarded as one of the most influential, organized, and overall successful Olympics in history to date. The 1936 Games also permanently changed the structure of sport (Beamish, 2009).

Paralleling this time frame, various movements that opposed the Olympic Games movement surfaced. Since the Olympics were seen as a setting for the elite and aristocratic Caucasian male athlete, it is evident that workers, as well as women, were not included in such an event. As a result, the emergence of such movements as the workers’ and women’s games challenged the current sport system. The Workers’ Olympic Games in particular challenged the hegemony of Coubertin’s Olympic Games and, indeed, brought more spectators and significantly more participants than his Olympics (Ritchie, 2011). These Games represented cooperative and non-competitive displays in addition to competitive events, and demonstrated unity and solidarity amongst workers. Similarly, just as we have observed resistance to cultural and nationalist movements, we can observe cases of resistance to sporting movements. For example, the Women’s Olympic Games were created as a resistance to the Olympic Games that limited the participation of female athletes.

With the end of the Second World War, the cold war era witnessed sport used as a weapon of symbolic war between nations. During this time, the German Democratic Republic organized the most successful and comprehensive state-run sporting system in history, thus training and supporting its athletes, and showing that sport had, despite

constant claims to sport's a-political nature, become a political and economic institution through and through (Beamish and Ritchie, 2006).

The political spin-off of the successes of various countries during the cold war, especially the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the USA, and the GDR, demonstrated to interested national authorities around the world that high performance sports could be effective conduits for the promotion of national identity, especially in major international sporting events such as the Olympics. The victories of individual high-performance athletes were portrayed as national victories and celebrated as evidence of national pride (Harvey, 2001). With international success in a given sport, members of nations began to increasingly feel a connection with their athletes and, in turn, a stronger connection with their nations. Teams or athletes that were victorious in international sporting competitions were seen as key players in fostering national unity as it was their national, not personal, identity that was recognized (Guillanotti, 2005). International recognition in sporting events, in short, became a major contributing factor to national unity.

From the 1970s to the 1980s, various boycotts along with the increasing commercialization of professional sport, particularly in the United States, resulted in further attention to and the increasing institutionalization and politicization of sport. Forms of study and focus emerged with specific interest in the role that sport played in reinforcing dominant values within social systems, such as self-discipline and competition within capitalist societies (Ritchie, 2010). Sport received recognition for its capacity to mould individuals as disciplined members of society, while teaching them important values such as cooperation and merit, so that they could positively contribute to

the greater social system. While considering the expected benefits of sport, sport sociologists and others interested in the social, political, and historical aspects of sport also began to examine the potential negative impacts of sport. A critique of sport's role in reinforcing capitalist economic and social relations emerged. For example, some sport sociologists critiqued the manner in which sport separated individuals by class and status or the manner in which it reinforced subservience and obedience to authority. Another issue was that sport, through forcing the individual to unnaturally train and use the body as if it were a machine, resulted in the alienation of the body (Beamish & Ritchie, 2006).

It has also been recognized that sports have been one of the most important venues for the construction and promotion of national identity. They have been used to gain national status, for example, through the Olympics and other international events. This international recognition is of vital importance particularly for small nations as sporting victories have been used as a vital means of gaining attention and respect in an increasingly globalized world. The advertising and promotion of successful athletes is a tool typically used by nations to promote and continue to build national unity. There are certain integrationist properties associated with national sporting achievements as they can contribute to a nation's perceived sense of 'greatness' and transcend international strife and social deference (Maguire et. al., 2002). Naturally, this point is important for this thesis given that the goal is to study and understand ways in which national consciousness has been accentuated through sport in Croatia's case.

Matti Goksoyr (2010) has determined that one of five factors must be fulfilled in order to support the claim that a sport belongs to an individual nation and to ensure that individuals really believe the sport being played is theirs. The first of these is that, at



some point in the history of the nation, national authorities have declared the sport as belonging to the nation (i.e. the national sport of the nation). Declaring a sport the sport of that nation has consequently also been used to support the political interests of nations to build unique and individual identities. For example, the importance of fostering a strong sense of identity is hardly more necessary than after wars of independence, as experience by Croatia in the mid-1990s after its break-up from former Yugoslavia. The second factor is the use of sports to promote the important cultural virtues that are characteristic of a particular nation. For example, the game of baseball became American because it demonstrated American culture. The fast paced, lively approach to the game of baseball was reflective of the American way of life, and thus, was ideally categorized it as an American game. The third approach to claim that a sport belongs to a particular nation is to elect the nation's national sport on the basis of how well that nation performs in the sport during international competition. The national sport is that in which the nation has received most international merit. If sporting bodies are typically victorious in a given sport, they receive international recognition and it is generally assumed that other players from that background will be equally as successful. The fourth method of determining the national sport of a nation has been to study the level of participation in that sport from members of that nation. This reflects "identity through mass activity," as Goksoyr puts it. Historically, sports organizations have been built around the popular movements with the goal of achieving mass participation. Congruently, a fifth factor in identifying the national sport of a country is not simply whether or not it is played there, but also by the level of spectators that watch the sport. If the sport is engaging for both participants and the viewing population, it becomes part of the culture and

commercialized entertainment industry. However, problems arise when considering the degree to which an entire population relates to sport as not all people of a nation identify with sport. In each nation, there is a multidimensional structure of identity due to various social factors, such as gender, socioeconomic class, or ethnicity. Indeed, sport can play a role in further exacerbating differences between people in nations, rather than promoting their cohesive potential.

As mentioned in the sections on nations and nationalism, invented traditions are a set of practices, governed and put into place in order to instil certain behaviours or values into a culture. Much research in sport and national identity invokes the notion of imagined community or invented sporting traditions that symbolise the nation. For example, ideally, major national sporting occasions create an imagined community of people across the country that come together in support of the nation and to reflect their national sentiment (Maguire et. al., 2002 & Smith, 1971). Similarly, national teams provide a common reference point within the national context for a larger portion of the population. Therefore, sport further promotes the values of society, building trust, encouraging healthy relationships, developing beliefs and traditions, and fostering cohesive cultural morals.

As Giulianotti summarizes, “sports are a source of expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of the community” (Giulianotti, 2005 p.8). Giulianotti identifies seven particular similarities evident between sporting events and religious ceremonies that help to demonstrate this point. First, both occur in specific spaces that hold sacred and emotional elements. Second, spectators and participants in sporting and religious rituals are seated according to power or status. Third, both include critical

temporal affinities, where games and ceremonies follow a sequential calendar. Fourth, participants engage in specific ritual acts and are dressed accordingly. Fifth, there is an organizational framework vital to the successful organization of both religious and sporting ceremonies and events. Sixth, there is a sequential order also to the way that the game or ceremony is done, whether this be through pre-game to post-game warm-up or the procedure through which religion is celebrated. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the rituals contribute to the conscious collective in that participants form a community with one another. They are afforded the opportunity to gather together surrounding shared values and beliefs, rallying toward specific causes or around shared identities. Similarly, sport and religion are commonly celebrated through national holidays or festivals. Similar to religion, sport is a source of inspiration and fulfillment. It is capable of inspiring deep feelings of devotion and dedication (Nixon, 2008). Sports can therefore be viewed as a tool for strengthening organic solidarity within increasingly secular nations. However, rival belief systems and identities can destabilize the social order or at least reflect sport's complex structural relations to the wider social system.

Similarly, sport is a powerful metaphor that reveals the most intense and deep-rooted values of the specific cultural, political, and economical life of the nation. Sports can also reflect personalities, characteristics, and ways of life that have become virtuous in a particular culture. As previously mentioned, governments play an extremely powerful role in defining just what these values may be, particularly for newly emerging nations that lack a strong cultural core (i.e. the history and myths that anchor the form and character of a nation and thus provide the basis for national unity) (Houlihan, 1997). Here, we see the positive effects that a strong emphasis on sport can have on a nation, if

used correctly by those in power. The perceived negative effects as presented by Marx will be reviewed later.

Now that some of the roles of sport in today's culture have been discussed, one can relate them back to how this is relevant for the theories of nationalism discussed earlier. Durkheim's conscious collective reflects a common moral order underpinning similar roles, duties, and beliefs, and also helps to reinforce both organic and mechanical solidarity. What follows is a look at the way in which this conscious collective is represented in terms of religion and its influence on sport. Sport in general and the various sporting rituals that combine to create the sporting experience in particular have often reflected the values of differing religions and have, in fact, acted as a replacement for religion.

In considering the functional role of sports, Durkheim's theory of structural functionalism reflects a holistic approach in that all components of society contribute to the greater good. Sport is a social institution reflecting the totality of society and its relationships with other institutions. Sport plays a role in satisfying a cultural need and human urge for recreation and the pursuit of pleasure (Curry & Jiobu, 1984). Similarly, sports have a socio-emotional function that contributes to the maintenance of socio-psychological stability.

However, Durkheim's theories can be criticized when one considers the social integration of individuals in sports. Durkheim would have us believe that sport can result in the socialization of cultural beliefs and mores, the harmonious integration of diverse groups, and the opportunity for social mobility (Allison, 2000). However, the problem here is that Durkheimian functionalism emphasizes only the positive aspects of sport. It

fails to mention the ways in which sports have been used as a distraction, by those in powerful positions, from other things that are important in society and the lives of individuals. Also, although we see through the conscious collective that sports can positively be used to reinforce values within a society, the theory downplays the role of social conflict. Sport often creates tension through its cultural goals and social structure because there is a struggle to control sport according to distinctive interests, cultural identities, and world visions (Giulianotti, 2005).

Another criticism of the functionalist point of view is based on the fact that the perspective suggests sport has the ability to produce a cathartic “feel good” effect, through its consumption and participation. In other words, sport can be seen as a temporary relief from an over-bearing and overly-rationalized work world. However, Marxist-inspired critics have argued that the rest and recreation achieved through sport that replenishes workers’ energies is in fact a form of alienation. The sole aim of sport, critics argue, is really to increase the productivity of the athletes and workers, impeding the development of true autonomy and silencing individual creativity. Masses, in short, are coerced into enjoying sport while being diverted from their subordination (Curry & Jobu, 1984). For Marxists, sports can be seen as an opiate producing a real but temporary and falsely-produced sense of happiness and euphoria.

In short, the central criticism of Durkheimian functionalism is that sport has reformed into a predictable, automated institution that can actually alienate individuals rather than promoting social solidarity. A clear example of this can be seen in the fact that not all members of society have equal access to resources, including basic financial ones, to be able to attend various sporting events. Similarly, profit and production have taken

precedence over pleasure and enjoyment. Athletes are often forced to train in a regimented fashion, even when they may be injured. Similarly, Durkheim's theory fails to account for cross-cultural diversity such as differences in political and economic factors as well as traditions, beliefs, and values specific to individual cultures. This can further create tension during sporting events and cause conflict among various sporting nation, groups, and even individuals.

Hobsbawm (1992), in his discussions of nationalism, in fact studied the influence of sport and he discussed it as a site for construction, expression, and imagining of national identity but his Marxist approach to sport was also built on the fact that sport was used as a tool of control in nation-building projects. A more specific issue of nationalism, and particularly important for this thesis, is the role of elite sport in promoting and constructing national identity. Elite sport is regarded as one of the main vehicles for constructing and maintaining an idea of national identity (Hilvoorde, 2010). It allows for a number of emotionally-charged occasions in which citizens can be made aware of and express their common identity with the nation (Houlihan, 1997). There is some evidence that sport unites people and is capable of generating communal passion and a sense of national identity (Hilvoorde, 2010). According to the Marxist point of view, however, individuals belonging to such a nation are more likely to be distracted from their lack of freedom and therefore, less likely to rebel. While sport can provide a release from stress, frustration, disappointment, and problems, it can also be a diversion from other things that are important in life. In the end, Marx would argue that sport serves only those that have economic, social, political, or ideological power in society (Maguire et. al., 2002). For example, politicians and world leaders use sport to further

their careers or their political and national interests, often with disregard to the material conditions of people's – especially poorer people's – lives (Nixon, 2008).

Also, Marxist-inspired critics argue that sport tends to be seen as an unquestioned ideal – it is seen as 'inherently good' for its own sake. Naturally, it is known that being physically active results in healthier lifestyles and an increase in life expectancy. Having said this, we can pose the question of why governments may find it necessary and more important to fund elite sport as opposed to sport for all. The "virtuous cycle of sport," presented by Grix and Carmichael, (2011), states that, if the members of a nation have a strong sense of belonging to that nation, elite successes on the world stage lead to prestige and a strong sense of national unity; this, in turn, results in mass sport participation and a healthier population, providing a large pool of potential future elite athletes and elite success. The importance of this success is to gain international recognition and, particularly in the cases of smaller or newly emerging nations, to gain acceptance as independent states. There is constant pressure on nations to establish a level of national unity on the world stage, however they are expected to do so through a means of limited and increasingly uniform capacity; examples include waving flags, national anthems, armed forces, memberships to international communities, and so forth. The more intense the nationalist fervour around the world, the more similar these nationalist sentiments and methods of expressing nationalism seem to be.

Scholars of sport's role in nation-building projects have pointed out that sports have the ability to conjure feelings of enthusiasm, hatred, love, anger, intensity, desire, spirit, and fanaticism. But these feelings can be either controlled and positive, directed toward the celebration of sporting victories and pride in a nation, or they can be

misplaced and negative, often resulting in violence and aggression (Maguire et. al., 2002). Sport has the capacity to acquire extra-political cultural, religious, national civic and ethnic characteristics. Ethnic identities in particular can be central to the nation state or nationalism and sport provides an arena for creating and reinforcing this (Maguire et. al., 2002). After all, sports are typically linked and associated with all the aspects of nationhood, including distinct ethnic groups, symbolism of a common culture, shared self-image, common history, flags, emblems, anthems, and so forth. Historically, we have consistently seen the role of sports at international levels and their ability to reflect national pride. In the future, sports will continue to have a strong impact on national identity which will in turn continue to have a strong impact on national unity and the existence of autonomous nations.

Finally, European football, or soccer as it is more informally known in North America, has of course played a central role in the development of nationalism. Its ability to promote high levels of loyalty among fans worldwide is rarely seen in many other sporting environments. Soccer's widespread popularity lies in part in its accessibility (Guilianotti, 2007). Individuals from any socio-economic status, cultural background, or geographical climate, have both the ability and resources to participate in the sport. The rules are simple to follow, it does not require expensive equipment, and it is adaptable to various terrains. Cumulatively, these factors have resulted in the popularity of soccer around the world. This combined with the fact that sport, as previously discussed, has played such an important role in nation-building projects, makes soccer particularly important for understanding nationalism world-wide. Soccer fields afford nations a place to demonstrate symbolical rivalries – and friendships – that have in fact been created



based on long-standing and complex historical differences and similarities (Guilianotti, 2007). Naturally, the competitiveness of sports, including soccer, does much to further reinforce these rivalries.

Dimeo (2001) has pointed out that soccer's role in rival group identification and contestation has a long history in Europe. Throughout the Middle Ages, football matches frequently occurred between rival groups and often resulted in high levels of violence. This was due to the fact that the international recognition of football occurred during a time when many of the nations in Europe were still negotiating borders and creating their cultural identities and this was further promoted by the use of national symbols and anthems. Crolley and Hand (2002) further emphasize this point by writing that football characteristics can often become a reflection of cultural identity that can later be remembered and recounted. This demonstrates the influence that sport in general, and soccer in particular can have on a nation and thus reinforces the importance of research in this area.

### ***Sport, Nationalism, and Print Culture***

The emergence of administrative vernaculars and print media, as mentioned previously, played a strong role in contributing to national identities in Europe as they allowed for the entire nation to participate – even if indirectly – in the life of the nation, overcoming geographical space limitations, in particular (Anderson, 1983). As Dimeo (2001, p.107) says, “the experience of sitting down to read a national newspaper and knowing that millions of others are reading the same one at the same time is a significant cognitive leap that lends itself to imagining the nation as a community.” Here Dimeo

stresses the importance of mass communication in defining nations, nationalism, and people's sense of national identity. Dimeo's point is important to this thesis because it reminds us that links between sport and nationalism are made through the production and public consumption of newspaper articles (among other forms of media). Indeed, in regard to print culture, Benedict Anderson in his seminal work believed that a connection between members of a nation is provided by the simultaneous consumption of newspapers (Anderson, 1983). Print capitalism allowed unified communication and provided the nation with a sense of antiquity which is the central theme in the ideological development and emergence of nations (Ozkirimli, 2010).

With respect to the development of sports coverage in print culture, it began in England in the early nineteenth century with *Athletic News* and *Football Echo* bringing the first accounts of strictly soccer coverage of the English Football League. Soon after, the twentieth century brought an expansion in national press and daily newspapers devoted increasing space to football (Crolley & Hand, 2002). From the 1930s to the 1960s, breakthroughs in photography, quicker printing processes, and the addition of interviews and pre-game and post-game coverage, increased the popularity of sport in print culture. Over time, the media impacted people's lives in many more significant ways than just reporting on the events of the day. The stories we read in current newspapers are no longer simple reflections of current local issues, sporting scores, or results of international events. The media has in its own way become a patriotic tool, drawing on the emotions and feelings of individuals and playing an increasingly significant role in fostering nationalism around the world.

The understanding of the influence of print culture is particularly important for this research as its intention is to study the effects that newspaper reports of sporting events have had on a nation. Through the 1980s and 1990s, sport pages in England dedicated entire sections strictly to the coverage of European football, and as a result, people began to pay attention to the individual writing styles of journalists (Crolley & Hand, 2002). Due to the competition from television that had emerged, “the language used by print media cannot afford to be dull, and as a result, they typically play with strong images and deal in the emphatic and striking rather than the subtle and understated” (Crolley & Hand, 2002). In other words, Crolley and Hand argue that it was during this period that the language used to report sporting events became increasingly emotionally charged and reporters wrote and reflected on games in order to stir stronger feelings within the readers. The authors go on to point out that the description of soccer through media is a contributing source of information about cultural elements of nationalism: “Collective imagination is fuelled by the media representations that define a nation inwardly in terms of its own history, invoking familiar, indigenous cultural traditions and outwardly in terms of its difference from other nations” (Crolley & Hand, 2002). Crolley and Hand also point out the important point that a particular style of writing has emerged and been widely observed in European soccer coverage, in that the use of military metaphors and the vocabulary of warfare has become increasingly common (Crolley & Hand, 2002). This specific method will be examined through my research, as we will see shortly.

Other studies have emphasized the role of media outlets on the tight relationship between sport and national identity. In 1999, Maguire and Poulton conducted a study on

media discourse and its influence on the construction of English national identity in the European Cup of 1996. Their findings concluded that sport media representations reinforced invented traditions and national habitus codes for the English side, through the reports on the games in which England participated. They further noted that matches played served more to reinforce stronger emotions towards their individual English identity, rather than to evoke emotions about European identity in general. This evidence has a strong tie with a study by Lechner (2007), which documented the ability of Dutch media discourse to create an “invented tradition” of the Dutch as a unique soccer nation that has enriched soccer globally, due to their style of play that reflects Dutch virtues.

A similar study done by Poulton in 2004 highlighted television media’s role in the construction of national identity and cultural separation through sport participation. The study documented television broadcasting of the English National Team during the 1996 European Football Championships. The article notes that the nationalistic sentiments that were present in newspapers in the study conducted in 1999 were not as apparent in televised broadcasts. Congruently, negative language or reactions towards opponents, references to war, and national stereotyping were also rare, as opposed to what was documented from newspaper articles. Newspapers were also more likely to draw on past political events when comparing the soccer matches of the day and ultimately, newspaper accounts of the soccer matches were generally far more derogatory and negative towards opponents. By contrast, by repetitively making audio and visual references to national symbols and important historical events from England’s history, televised broadcasts did more to contribute to a feeling of community for members of the nation and therefore helped to promote invented tradition.

More recently, a study conducted by Cho (2009), looked at sporting nationalism in South Korea throughout the modern Olympic Games. The article considered the use of media representations in enforcing Durkheim's "conscious collective" and the role that sport media played in this structure. The expressions of solidarity that were reported through newspaper accounts served as evidence to the way that teams and players represent one nation and therefore are a close link with cultural nationalism. The author concluded that media allowed for the strengthening of "imagined communities" as an increased number of the nation's population was afforded access to the competition and the nation's results during the competition. The article referred to this type of nationalism as a "sporting nationalism" and stated that newspaper coverage was vital to the construction of this type of nationalism that has encouraged a sense of national unity, belongingness, and international prestige (Cho, 2009).

Similarly, Ismer (2011), in his study on soccer and the construction of national identity, concluded that the FIFA Football World Cup provided an arena for nation-related rituals and this gave evidence to the idea that media broadcasts allowed for millions of people to become involved in these rituals. His study surrounded the "collective effervescence" that connected individuals with their community and that are crucial to the reinforcement of a "conscious collective." The study looked carefully at two matches played by Germany in the World Cups of 1974 and 2006, both of which were held in Germany, and documented the relationship between the two as well as how national consciousness may or may not have changed when comparing the two. The media discourse used in this study helped to conclude that the attitudes toward Germany were more of a rediscovering of national feelings which had always been present, and

further noted the strong connection between the head (imagined community) and the heart (loved nation) of German fans (Ismer, 2011).

Articles that have been introduced in Chapter One by Sack and Suster (2000) and Brentin (2013) demonstrate the ways in which Croatian nationalism has been reflected through sports in the past. The research done here is an extension from these studies and uses the articles as further support for the findings. In contrast, the methods used in these studies are different from those used here. The articles will come to play an important role in the Conclusion of this thesis.

The theories and past research viewed here are vital to my study because they provide a framework with which to view the conducted research. The results that are summarized in chapter four concentrate on the tight symbiotic relationship between print culture – newspapers – and Croatian football. The theories and research summarized in the current chapter highlight the crucial role sport has played in the development of nationalism and the unique relationship that has emerged between newspapers and football in recent European history. The Croatian National Team's third place victory in the 1998 World Cup is an ideal case study with which to support the theories of how sports have played a role, in sometimes both positive and negative ways, in fostering a unique identity in a newly-developing nation. Furthermore, as will become evident, media discourse does in fact play a strong role in both allowing widespread access to soccer coverage and in the construction of national sentiments.

### **Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODS**

This chapter outlines the methods and methodologies that were considered as a framework for this thesis. It begins with an overview of the paradigm and conceptual framework that was followed through the research phase and then continues with a detailed discussion of the research steps taken and the justification for these methods based on the works of researchers and studies that had similar objectives.

Willis (2007, p.114) states that a paradigm is “made up of the general theoretical assumptions and laws, and techniques for their application that the members of a specific scientific community adopt.” A paradigm, therefore, guides a set of rules and strategies, including specific techniques, methodologies, and methods, that form a set of beliefs of the researcher and help to lay the framework for that which is being studied. The paradigm within which this study operates is the interpretivist view. The goal of interpretivist research is to provide an understanding of a particular situation or context rather than the discovery of universal laws or rules (Willis, 2007). Therefore, for interpretivist research, the context of what is being studied is important to the interpretation of the data. Similarly, what the world means specifically to those under study is both a valuable asset to researchers and another goal of interpretivist research. Interpretivist research is premised on the idea that reality is socially constructed, allowing individuals or groups to build their own understanding of the world through experience.

Interpretivist research also takes the relativist ontological stance that states “the reality we perceive is always conditioned by our experiences and our culture” (Willis, 2007 p. 48). An interpretivist’s view of the epistemology of research is that it is

subjective and thus created by the interaction between the researcher and what is being researched. In this study, an interpretivist view allows us to understand the media representations of the 1998 World Cup, and to interpret what the experience of that media representation may potentially have meant for Croatians themselves in terms of the development of Croatian nationalism during a critically important moment in the country's history. Finally, an interpretivist methodology includes case study research – in this case, the development of Croatian nationalism as one important moment in time – that emphasizes the fact that historicity is essential to our understanding of the world, meaning that knowledge and research is influenced by what people have lived and experienced (Willis, 2007). This will come to be important for the methodology of this study as the case examines the experiences of Croatian fans, players, and reporters during the time of the 1998 World Cup.

### **Methodology**

A methodology is a term describing the design, data collection, data analysis, and other aspect that are specific to how the research will be conducted (Willis, 2007). Case studies involve a qualitative approach toward the study of an issue explored through one or more cases in a bounded system over time; the study often reports a case description of details on the way that the events unfolded (Creswell, 2007). In short, case study research is “an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, event, person, process, institution, or social group” (Willis, 2007, p. 238). It allows for the gathering of rich, detailed data in an authentic setting. By authentic, it is meant that case studies reinforce the idea that much of what we can know about human behaviour is best understood as a



lived experience in the social context and, as a result, unlike experimental research, case studies can, and should be done without predetermined hypotheses. Interpretive case studies focus on understanding the intricacies of a particular situation, setting, organization, culture, or individual. A case study is also a valuable approach when “the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases” (Creswell, 2007, p. 74).

In the current study, a single, instrumental case examines theories of nationalism. The example of the development of Croatian nationalism at a critical juncture in the country’s history illustrates or offers further support for various aspects of the theories. The relevance of the third place victory in the 1998 World Cup to a newly emerging nation such as Croatia involves complex political and cultural factors. These cultural and political factors are variables that can provide much information in a case study, and as we will see in the Conclusion of the thesis, the cultural and political factors lend support to and interact with the more specific findings from the media accounts.

The latter point is important methodologically. Willis (2007) points out that historical information has the potential to shed light on the social environment and also that the attempt to place social events in their proper historical context involves “a process of systematically searching for data to answer questions about a past phenomenon for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of present institutions, practices, trends, and issues” (Willis, 2007, p. 251). For a historical case study, this type of research employs techniques common to historiography, particularly the use of primary source material. The goal of historical case studies is to understand an event and apply one’s knowledge to the present. Therefore, practice means “knowing the event in

context of the event, the assumptions behind it, and perhaps the event's impact on the institution and participants" (Willis, 2007, p. 243). The primary source materials used for this study are newspaper archives. Archives are the method of "coming face to face with the primary record of the past" through letters, memoranda, minutes, reports, and other forms of documentation (Wenn, 1995). Here is where historical research proves beneficial and relevant as the intention is to discover what a historical sporting event that occurred fifteen years ago meant to the construction of national identity for Croatians. Given that, as is the case with all nations, nationalism is constantly socially constructed – a point made in the previous chapter – the events of 1998 continue to have relevance today (Brentin, 2013).

### **Significance and Justification**

The importance of studying this area of research is to contribute to the small but growing body of literature on the ability of media to affect, influence, and change the perceptions of individuals with regards to national identity, sport, and media, as discussed earlier. This case study is a replication of previous studies conducted under similar conditions where newly emergent nations used sport in an attempt to create a unique national identity for themselves. However, due to the fairly recent history of Croatia, in particular the events surrounding the breakup of Yugoslavia that occurred just prior to the 1998 World Cup, this research provides an unique case for examining the influential role of the media during times of international conflict when nationalism and nationalistic values are critical for a nation. This examination then sheds light on the importance of

sport and media coverage of sport as a vehicle for fostering a strong sense of nationalism within a nation.

### **Research Design**

#### *Sample and Methods for Data Collection*

Procedures for conducting a case study are complex. Once an approach to research was determined, the individual case study to be examined was identified, which in this case, was the 1998 FIFA World Cup and its relevance to the construction of Croatian nationalism. Typically, research that is undertaken in case studies involves interviews, observations, and participant observations. However, for my specific case study, the focus is on the document analysis of archival records.

The main challenge posed by case study research is to ensure that the case under examination is relevant and ideal for providing data and fulfilling the purpose of the study. This requires that the case provides sufficient information and data so that the researcher can provide an in-depth description and understanding of the context, situation, and theory or theories under study (Creswell, 2007). The expectation was that the case study of the 1998 World Cup would be an appropriate fit for considering the theories of nationalism and their relation to sporting victories based on the information presented earlier in Sack & Suster (2010).

Keeping this in mind, there were challenges in defining clear boundaries for the case study. Selected articles were those leading up to, during, and following the 1998 FIFA World Cup, specifically from the day prior to, the day of, and the day following each individual match that the Croatians participated in during the 1998 World Cup. This

selection was based on the criteria of an earlier study by Maguire and Poulton published in 1999 – *European Identity Politics in Euro '96: Invented Tradition and National Habitus Codes*. In this study, the authors selected articles from the day before, the day of, and the day after soccer matches during the 1996 event. For interpretivists, because the context of the research is so valuable, data sources tend to be those that are close to the point of application (Willis, 2007). Based on this methodological point alongside the example from the Maguire and Poulton study, my research design for newspaper articles' selection was chosen.

Also, the current research included newspaper articles based on the extent to which exploring them could potentially achieve the research goals, following research conducted by Lechner's study from 2007 – *Imagined Communities in the Global Game: Soccer and the Development of Dutch National Identity*. In that study, newspaper articles were used to reflect the promotion of national identity in Dutch culture. All newspapers used in this study were Croatian-based and intended for the Croatian community, allowing for opinions based solely on Croatian sport journalists during the 1998 World Cup. Based on readership levels from a 2010-conducted study explained below (Vozab, 2011), the newspaper articles used were selected from the following two newspapers: *Vjesnik* (Gazette) and *Novi List* (New Gazette). Original newspaper documents were accessed through national and international libraries. The intention was to observe and analyze a large quantity of newspaper articles and select those that provide understanding from Croatian citizens on their specific experiences or, at least, newspaper accounts of them. Total articles read and analyzed from the two newspapers were 295 (141 from *Vjesnik* and 154 from *Novi List*).

As mentioned, the newspapers used (*Vjesnik* and *Novi List*), were selected based on a study of readership levels that was conducted in 2010, of which they were both in the top five. The newspaper *24Sata* (24 Hours) had the highest level of popularity, however it was not established until the year 2000, making it obviously incompatible for the purposes of this study. The other two newspapers that were in the top five readership levels were sold to German and Austrian publishing in the same year as the 1998 World Cup. Therefore, to avoid biases and potential opinions that were not solely based on Croatian reporters, these newspapers were not used. In addition to this, the reason that only two newspapers were selected as opposed to more is based on the recommendations of Tracy (2010) who suggests that the researcher finds consistency through ideas and themes before data collection is stopped and, though research came from sources from two different cities (*Vjesnik* in Zagreb and *Novi List* in Rijeka), the accounts of the soccer matches were strongly similar. Even though the *Vjesnik* newspaper is more pro-government while *Novi List* tends to be more independent, one can see from the results presented that these political points of view did not have a large effect on the reporting as both newspapers seemed to have similar observations, beliefs, and opinions.

During the 1998 World Cup, the Croatian National Soccer Team competed in seven games. All articles from the day prior to, the day of, and the day after these matches that related to the 1998 World Cup were analyzed. Creswell (2007) discusses the need for purposeful sampling in which samples demonstrate multiple perspectives of the event; this is why there are a variety of newspaper articles chosen. In this case, the articles were chosen based on the recommendations of Tracy (2010) in search of consistency through repetitive themes or emergent ideas.

*Analysis of Data*

The newspaper articles in this sample included interviews with players and team staff conducted during the World Cup and reports made by the reporters of their observations and experiences of the World Cup. Embedded analysis (Creswell, 2007) was used to analyze, through inductive reasoning, a specific aspect of the study, in this case, nationalism and the emotions toward sporting victories. The specific historical context of the case and the chronology of events in which it occurred were detailed. Also, articles selected were written in Croatian and thus needed to be translated. Having a strong knowledge and fluency in the Croatian language, this was done by the researcher. Following this, the case was analyzed and themes were distinguished in order to understand the complexity of the case.

Data (i.e. newspaper articles) were organized into units based on events, sentences, or paragraphs of comments or observations about what it means to be Croatian and how soccer influenced this meaning, including emotions felt about the approaching soccer games, emotions throughout the tournament, and feelings toward the victories. Articles with similar research objectives that were presented in Chapter Two were read in order to understand the importance of various themes and to understand what may be important to my research. As a result, the following list of five themes was generated: fan behaviour and the use of national symbols; prestige, world recognition, and expectations of success; general elements of Croatian nationalism; negative nationalism; and finally, invented tradition and the political importance of soccer. These categories emerged on

their own and then in turn reflected the theories discussed earlier and discussed later in the Chapter Five.

The importance of these themes in helping to understand the theories of nationalism discussed in Chapter Two will also be discussed in the Chapter Five. However, it should be mentioned here that the newspaper articles clearly revealed the fact that media reported on much more than simply the scores and technicalities of sports. Articles read were often emotionally-charged, and the manner in which that emotion manifested itself and its links to the development of Croatian nationalism will be described more fully in the next chapter. But for now, it is important to point out that the newspapers accessed did seem to reveal a high degree to which sporting spectacles and victories were crucially important to Croatian nationalism before, during, and after the 1998 World Cup. Nationalism, sport, and the media, in other words, were interrelated and reinforced one another.

During the analysis, sentences that included any references to the above list of themes were coded for further analysis. The researcher then examined the deeper meaning or potential outcomes resulting from the language used, as well as the way the language could be interpreted on the part of other readers. It is important to note that all sentences incorporating the above references were analyzed repeatedly in order to bring forth any underlying meaning that may exist. The researcher's self-reflexive journal and note-taking also was an important aid in this process. Following this, similar units and categories were developed to aid in looking for links, associations, and relationships between data components.

According to Creswell (2007), analysis for case studies typically ends with a written report of the detailed analysis that was conducted, presenting a thick description of emerging themes and the ways in which these themes have applied to and helped to build on relevant theories. Here, a final step involved relating meanings gleaned from the newspaper categories to the development of Croatian nationalism and, ultimately, theories of nationalism as a whole. Once data analysis was completed, inferences were drawn in order to compare themes and draw conclusions based on the extent to which the results supported the sociological theories of Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx, and other, more contemporary theories of sports and national identity that were discussed earlier in the previous chapter.

The study discovered and documented how Croatia's third place victory in the tournament was relevant to the construction of national identity as a soccer contender, but more importantly how sport helped to project the nation as a community of individuals with a perceived strong sense of pride and unity both to Croatians themselves and the wider global community. The implication of this in terms of the development of Croatian nationalism during the important post-war period in the country's history will also be discussed in the Conclusion.

### **Quality Criteria**

#### *Credibility*

Like many other forms of research, there are implications involved in taking an interpretivist approach to research. Credibility according to Tracy (2010) refers specifically to the trustworthiness of the research. Trustworthiness is regarded as the



recognition and consideration of the potential limitations of a study (Patton, 2002). An important aspect to consider for researchers is that there will always be alternative views in studies. There is no specific piece of research or particular perspective that produces the absolute truth, but rather all research extends the knowledge that has already been created by others in limited, but hopefully significant ways. An interpretive researcher studies not whether the results are an ultimate and final truth, but whether they are an advance in relation to the existing fund of knowledge in their field (Maguire and Young, 2002). It is important to work to produce accurate data, but to also consider that there are alternative explanations that may be relevant to conclusions reached. As such, the research must accept that to gather all newspapers that have been written in relation to the Croatian soccer team's performance in the 1998 World Cup would be impossible and to completely interpret and understand the underlying meaning of each of the articles is equally as difficult. It is also important to note that newspaper accounts cannot provide complete accounts of the lived realities of Croatians as well as the context of the political and social events of the time. These limitations will be further discussed in the Conclusion.

In order to ensure further credibility within research, there are criteria against which to measure what is being done based on rigorous research methods and the credibility of the researcher (Patton, 2002). The triangulation of data in order to ensure this credibility includes recapturing and reporting from multiple perspectives. In the current study, this was accomplished by comparing newspaper articles in search of consistency through repetitive themes or emergent ideas. Rich rigor means that the "study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex theoretical constructs, data and time

in the field, samples, contexts, and data collection and analysis processes” (Tracy, 2010, p. 840)

According to Tracy (2010), credible research is characterized by, “thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge, and showing rather than telling” (pg. 840), which I feel is evident in Chapter Four. The term “showing” means that readers are given sufficient detail in the description of events that they may formulate their own conclusions. Similarly, “tacit knowledge” includes being able to understand underlying meanings of speech and actions that are specific to a culture, for example the meaning of nuances and idioms. The basic role of tacit knowledge is to “transcend the immediate surface of speech, texts, or discursive materials” (p. 843).

Similarly, prolonged research or in some cases engagement with the documents under analysis can ensure further credibility. Research journaling has also been a form of triangulation frequently used by researchers, including maintaining audit trails or journals to aid in thoughtful consideration and analysis of data. These sort of self-reflexive journals – what Willis (2007, p.221) refers to as a “record of your thinking as you collect and analyze the data” also help to provide support for a researcher’s conclusions by helping to explain how the researcher arrived at the results. In his classic study *The Sociological Imagination*, C. Wright Mills (1959) had in fact encouraged students to create such a journal to bring to life the ideas and thoughts that pass through their minds and “draw out their full implications” (p. 197). This was done through this research by recording thoughts and interpretations based on the information provided by the newspapers throughout the research process and allowed for links to be made between

events that occurred over the course of the 1998 World Cup. My journals proved to be a valuable source of information as I worked my way through the study.

### *Resonance*

As already discussed, the expectation for this research is not that it will be able to be generalized to other situations, as the context of the event is extremely complex with various factors – cultural, religious, situational, and so forth – that contributed to it. Nevertheless, the hope is that the specific aspects of the theories that are supported by this research may later be transferable to similar, but not exact, situations.

Resonance means that, “the research influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through aesthetic, evocative representation, naturalistic generalizations, and transferable findings” (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). Some things to consider are the criteria for parsimony that was presented by Willis (2007). This includes providing straightforward meaningful explanations that support large portions of the theories presented in this study. In relation to transferability, the scope of the theory and the degree to which it can be applied to other situations is considered parsimonious and the logical internal consistency of the theory is important in that, a researcher must address whether the components of the theory are logically interrelated (Willis, 2007).

### *Role of the Researcher*

Finally, from the perspective of a researcher in any study, there are biases that need to be avoided or at least acknowledged in each case. Reflexivity and praxis allow researchers to consider the ways their own experiences affect what they understand and

how they act in the world, including during acts of inquiry (Patton, 2002). One form of research bias includes selecting only data that fits the researcher's theory or selecting data that stands out to the researcher.

My ethnic Croatian background both benefits my research and, quite naturally, must be carefully reflected upon as a potential source of bias. The background aids the research immensely as it allows access into the community and provides a heightened understanding of the context of the 1998 World Cup. This similarly applies to a form of triangulation that involves extended experience in the environment, as presented by Willis (2007). Growing up in the Croatian community allows me to bear witness to elements of Croatian nationalism, particularly given that I grew up in the face of Croatia's emerging independence movement. In many senses, having this background helps to provide greater insight into the real context of the situation under study. Given that part of the goal of this study is to provide interpretations based on the thoughts, feelings, and actions of Croatians, having a Croatian background and understanding the emotional and cultural struggles of the 1990s for Croatians affords the opportunity to provide a more accurate and detailed analysis of the findings of the study. This further aids in the credibility of this research by contributing to my tacit knowledge of the culture.

However, clearly having a Croatian heritage can be a source of bias and as a researcher it is also important to understand that the purpose of this research is to provide further insight into soccer and Croatian nationalism as reflected through newspaper articles. As such, the temptation of avoiding articles that may contain overly negative and derogatory attitudes towards Croatia's sport opponents and/or articles that may reflect

Croatians in a negative light must be overcome with an emphasis on unbiased research. Congruently, it was important to keep in mind that articles must be read and reviewed from a professional perspective and that the information and critiques of the Croatian team will not always be recounted and interpreted in a positive light and that such articles often provide the greatest and most interesting amounts of data that have proved vital to data analysis. Therefore, any such bias was acknowledged with a conscious effort at overcoming it. Similarly, it is important not to allow my Croatian heritage to reflect the overall study, not only the interpretations of the articles, but also the results drawn from them and the conclusions made about the effects of the 1998 World Cup on the importance and positives of Croatian nationalism and its promotion through sports.

#### Chapter 4: RESULTS

This chapter of the thesis presents the results of the archival newspaper research – the emergent themes – the methodology of which was discussed in the previous chapter. The chapter is broken down into the five themes that emerged over the course of data analysis. The five themes are: *Fan Behaviour and the Use of National Symbols; Prestige, World Recognition, and Expectations of Success; General Elements of Croatian Nationalism; Negative Nationalism; and finally, Invented Tradition and the Political Importance of Soccer.*

Before presenting the emergent themes, a brief background to Croatia's participation in the 1998 World Cup tournament will be helpful. In June 1998, the Croatian National Team began the journey of its first FIFA World Cup tournament, hosted in France. The 32 teams participating were divided into eight groups, with Croatia playing in Group H alongside Jamaica, Japan, and Argentina. Croatia finished second in its group, beating Jamaica 3-1 and Japan 1-0, before falling 1-0 to Argentina, but still securing themselves a spot in the round of 16. It was here that they faced Romania, who had finished first in their group. Again, Croatia was successful, coming out on top with a 1-0 victory.

In the quarterfinal match, Croatia faced powerhouse Germany and were greatly rated as underdogs. However, with a shocking 3-0 defeat of the Germans, the Croatian team made a powerful statement at the World Cup and, as a result, was on its way to face the host team, France. Here, in a heartbreaking loss, the Croatian soccer fairy tale seemed to be over as they dropped the semi-final match to the French, 2-1. Croatia did however

get the chance to redeem themselves in a third place match against the Netherlands, who had lost their semi-final game to Brazil. Once again, the Croatian soccer dream team fought hard and, with a 2-1 victory, returned home to Croatia's capital city of Zagreb with a bronze medal.

The following interpretations were taken from newspaper articles in *Vjesnik* and *Novi List*, which were published in Zagreb and Rijeka respectively.

### **Fan Behaviour and the Use of National Symbols**

The first emergent theme discovered through the newspaper articles that related to the theme of nationalism was the emphasis placed on fan support. Not surprisingly, fan support was evident at all stages of the tournament which demonstrated the national team's success in evoking strong emotions among fans and the general population. As *Vjesnik* reported, "without fans, soccer loses its charm" (*Vjesnik*, 13 June 1998: 15) and it was exceedingly apparent as Croatia progressed through the stages of the World Cup that there was support of fans both from home and abroad. Prior to their first game against Jamaica, a feature article in *Novi List* reported that, "tonight, Croatian hearts beat as one heart, a soccer heart, the ball will captivate politics, our souls will hover like feathers if we beat Jamaica, soccer will unite all Croats" (*Novi List*, 14 July 1998: 23). This was supported in an article from *Vjesnik* a week later that stated, "Croatians travelled from places as far as New Zealand, the United States, Canada, and from all corners of Croatia itself to provide support for their national team, often times travelling no less than 30 hours by bus" (*Vjesnik*, 21 June 1998: 19). The article noted that this encompassed over 6000 dedicated fans singing soccer songs and repeatedly chanting "Croatia, Croatia."

Wherever the “vatreni” went (i.e. the team, translated to “Blazers”), the “vatrene” (i.e. fans of the team) followed, wearing paraphernalia from head to foot and, as the tournament progressed and the success of the Croatian team reached unexpected heights, their fan base grew to encompass members of countries whose teams were no longer there to compete.

When fans were later interviewed by reporters regarding their trips and what it took them to get to Paris to support the Croatian team, many responded that the theme for the tournament was “*sve do kraja*,” meaning “to the very end” and fans made it clear that the travelling was “all for our players and we don’t really care what struggles we encountered as long as we win” (*Vjesnik*, 21 June 1998: 19). Some fans said that, “we crossed in cars and trucks at the Slovenian-Italian border and the Slovenians sang with us, and right then we knew we weren’t going to be alone” (*Novi List*, 7 July 1998: 12). Croatian Football Federation president, Branko Miksa expressed what this level of worldwide support meant for his team by saying that “this commits us more to achieving great results” (*Vjesnik*, 29 June 1998: 17).

Following Croatia’s successes, an article in *Vjesnik* reported that “Croatian fans, with their exceptional cheering and appropriate behaviour, were, unlike others, undoubtedly the ‘12<sup>th</sup> player’ at Croatia’s matches” (*Vjesnik*, 5 July 1998: 5). Articles revealed that after Croatia secured a spot in the semi-finals after its defeat of Romania in the round of 16 and Germany in the quarterfinals, celebrations, flags, and songs sang in support of the team continued well into the night as thousands of hearts beat for the National Team (*Vjesnik*, 1 July 1998: 24). This type of support is often witnessed at sporting events, but that, until then, had rarely been seen for the Croatian side.



One reporter called the game against Germany “a huge, beautiful, historic victory worthy of the World Cup Semi-finals” (*Vjesnik*, 5 July 1998: 17). The articles also headlined, “Croatia knows how to celebrate their entry into the world soccer elite” and went on to say that “there is a celebration of the 11 ‘vatreni,’ the magnificent 11, joined by all of Croatia, mostly in Ban Jelacic Square, where the celebrations will go well into the night...IDEMO DO FINALA (‘WE ARE GOING INTO THE FINALS!’)” In the same article, the reporter thanked the players on behalf of the fans: “thank you boys, thank you for all the joy in our hearts” (*Vjesnik*, 5 July 1998: 32).

Even as 6,000 plus fans cheered for Croatia in France, the atmosphere back in Croatia was not much different. Franjo Tudjman, Croatian president, described in an article as the “najvatrenijeg navijaca hrvatskog reprezentacije” (translated to “the most fiery fan of the Croatian team”), sent his congratulations saying “all of Croatia is behind you, celebrating every success” (*Novi List*, 5 July 1998: 19). Articles further referenced the players who expressed that “we heard about the craziness at home, and even for a minute, we wanted to be there to witness all of it” (*Vjesnik*, 5 July 1998: 32). Croatian defender Dario Simic stated, “this is phenomenal, I still can’t believe what we have done, I want to be in Croatia to celebrate with our fans. I hear that, in all cities in Croatia, long celebrations are going on, these things happen once in your life.” In the same article, midfielder Aljosa Asanovic said, “I’m interested in what it is like at home. I would love nothing more than to be at home right now, but I’m thankful to those that came, they’re a part of us, they pushed us to achieve a historical success for the Croatian national team” (*Novi List*, 1 July 1998: 22). The article also joked that, “if we win today, all of Croatia is going on a collective vacation to Paris. Today’s game brings all Croatians to their feet.”

Following the Germany-Croatia game, pictures in the paper showed fans at the post office wearing shirts saying “s vatrenima u mislima” (translated to “we have the Blazers in our thoughts”) and team captain Zvonimir Boban said, “we saw it all on the television, we’re really happy that people are happy and that means a lot to us. We feel proud of what we have done” (*Novi List*, 7 July 1998: 24).

The passion shared among Croatians reached those who, prior to the World Cup, had little interest in soccer. Articles in both *Vjesnik* and *Novi List* reported that fans in Croatia sat in front of their television, watching and shaking, praying to God and crying, even those who did not typically follow soccer. The Croatian articles also noted how newspapers in France similarly expressed how impressed they were with the way celebrations went in Croatia. When Croatia was defeated in the semi-finals by the French home team, fan support only grew stronger and Croatia’s victory in the consolation championship against the Netherlands placed them in third place, affirming the position of their young nation in the world. *Vjesnik* reported that, “fans back home celebrated from the eve of that match until the much anticipated arrival of their players back to their capital city of Zagreb” (*Vjesnik*, 12 July 1998 32). *Vjesnik* also quoted the following from Croatian player Igor Stimac, “one more time for the Croatian fans, thanks to the countless fans who were behind us in France. Thank you to everyone at home. We’re going to do everything we can to win you third place” while reporters in turn thanked players for the “beautiful June/July dream” (*Vjesnik*, 10 July 1998: 12). Furthermore, an article from *Novi List* reflects the importance of this tournament to the Croatian population after a few of the six to seven thousand fans were interviewed saying, “we felt the way we did after ‘Oluja,’ everyone recognized us, waving Croatian flags and chanting” (*Novi List* 7 July

1998: 12). In order to understand just how strong of a statement this was, it is important to note that “Oluja” was the military operation that liberated occupied Croatian territory and ended their war of independence in 1995. Another article stated, “Croatia conquered the world and bronze feels like gold. The little Croatian nation lived for the success of this team, the team that affirmed the nation in the best way possible, and the medals are being brought home to the fans” (*Novi List*, 12 July 1998: 22).

### **Prestige, World Recognition and Expectations of Success**

The importance of playing at the level that the Croatians did in the World Cup was almost incomparable to other areas of social life for their world recognition. It was a matter of historical success for the nation and a reflection of the country’s emergence in the global community. When the tournament began, media accounts from other nations but reported by Croatian papers failed to acknowledge or even believe in the abilities of the Croatian soccer team but this slowly grew to respect as Croatia showed that they could compete with the top teams in the world. Success was the only criterion that could remove the doubt and challenges that lay before them and they would open the first page of the chapter of Croatian soccer history by showing their talent and quality at the biggest sporting event of this millennium (*Novi List*, 14 June 1998: 19).

The simple fact that the team advanced in the tournament was, as Tudjman said in *Vjesnik*, important: “160 teams to the top 32 was a success, and then from 32 to the top 8 was a huge success” (*Vjesnik*, 1 July 1998: 20). Tudjman later stated that, “For Croatians, [when they play Sunday], at the very least, millions of people will, for the first time, have the chance to hear something about our country” (*Vjesnik*, 14 June 1998: 17). Despite the

attention of international media on Croatia since its international recognition in 1992 and its war of independence, Croatia's participation in this tournament provided publicity to an audience that was still unfamiliar with the country. Articles reveal that the tournament, in short, for the first time provided Croatia with a truly global audience.

Prior to their match against Argentina the newspapers reported that, "on Thursday at midnight, the Croatians were already beginning a proper Croatian party while the Argentineans were more reserved with higher ambitions after already winning two World Cups. The difference is that Croatia is just beginning to create its place among the world elites" (*Vjesnik*, 27 June 1998: 16). Following the match, as the Croatians celebrated their advancement to the city of Bordeaux to participate in the second round, the reporters noted that this in itself was a historic announcement as they were the smallest country remaining in the tournament and that even if other countries did not respect them to this point, they would now be aware of the team and their capabilities.

Although Croatia had a population of less than five million, its accomplishments at the World Cup was noted by Croatian reporters as "ruthless toughness in a checkered jersey" with Croatia ranking among the most powerful and talented football nations around the world (*Vjesnik*, 5 July 1998: 5). For Croatian striker, Davor Suker, "this [success] means everything for our players and staff, but foremost for the land that right now celebrates unseen glory. We played with our hearts and showed that the small [nation] can beat the large [nations], and we hope that everyone will have more respect for Croatian soccer" (*Vjesnik*, 5 July 1998: 18). In *Novi List*, after Croatia succeeded in getting into the second round after only two out of their three group matches being played, Suker said, "We showed that favourites do not always win, it doesn't matter who

we play next, it just matters right now that we got to that [second round] game” (*Novi List*, 21 June 1998: 25). Goalkeeper Drazen Ladic followed up a few days later saying, “not all favourites win. We can play with everyone, we are going to go far, you’ll see” (*Novi List*, 26 July 1998: 24).

The Croatian team was no longer classified as outsiders that did not belong in the World Cup ranks, but as strong competitors who could bring challenges and problems to even the strongest contenders. Sports headlines carried the message loud and clear. “Croatia celebrates a magnificent success” claimed one headline, followed with the subheading: “with their fantastic playing at the World Cup in France, Croatian players achieved not only the unexpected, though coveted, success, but they did much for the prestige of our country throughout the world” (*Vjesnik*, 5 July 1998: 5). *Novi List* called it a “Croatian ode to soccer” in proving that they were a world soccer superpower, placing them in the house of soccer immortals (*Novi List*, 1 July 1998: 22). German soccer coach Berti Vogts called the Croatian team “world class” through their efforts in the Cup (*Vjesnik*, 4 July 1998: 17). Branko Miksa put the victory in perspective for Croatians when he said that “Croatia has achieved a result that the whole world will speak of. Other than us, there are four world champion and three European champion teams, but let us not forget that little Croatia, with heart and talent achieved being in the elite. Congratulations to my players, we are strongest when we are together” (*Novi List*, 1 July 1998: 22).

The perception of the reporters of the articles is that the Croatian team and nation itself became the talk of the world as soccer fans tuned in to watch the little nation they once only knew as part of Yugoslavia. From the articles one could also see that those who once did not know where or what Croatia was, now knew because of the participation of

the Croatian team in their first World Cup, under their new flag and new crest and that Croatia had put itself into a coveted place where the whole world was talking about the nation. Even the city of Vittel, where the team's camp was set up, acquired a skill for Croatian cuisine and even went as far as to name a drink after the coach, "Cocktail Blazevic" (*Novi List*, 10 July 1998: 25). The recognition that Croatia received through its victory was part of its patriotic goal; as one article in *Vjesnik* expressed, even if it meant that only 15% of the world knew about Croatia, it was better than the 5% that knew about her before the World Cup (*Vjesnik*, 10 July 1998: 3).

Prestige and recognition continued as a media theme. One article quoted Ivo Sanader, the then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in Croatia, saying that, "this is a major propaganda goal for Croatia – let all this success continue to be an incentive to build our nation" (*Vjesnik*, 5 July: 17). *Vjesnik* also quoted Dusko Grbovac, a member of the Croatian National Football team coaching staff, saying "we have to use this big success to create a positive atmosphere to help create depth for our soccer" (*Vjesnik*, 9 July 1998: 16). *Novi List* referenced Grbovac again, saying, "this generation has to place Croatia at the top of world quality. I knew we could go far and here we are. A lot of champion teams have gone home and we have stayed. A refreshing team like Croatia is good for soccer. I don't even think we realize what it means to find ourselves among the four best in the world" (*Novi List*, 7 July 1998: 24).

For the time, the success of the Croatian soccer team and its meaning for Croatian prestige and recognition was immeasurable. Tudjman also went on to thank the press in France that had, through its vocabulary and pictures, praised the triumphs of the Croatians who, "made a big contribution to the image and recognition of Croatia in the

world, even in diplomatic circles” (*Novi List*, 9 July 1998: 23). Recognition through the largest sporting tournament in the world rivalled diplomatic recognition achieved only a few years earlier.

The games signified the future of Croatia and Croatian soccer as their victories generated a general worldwide interest in the nation thanks to the successes of their players, including the French who were tested on the soccer field by a nation that they still associated with Yugoslavia. One article underlined this by stating “we sold the French our best product – soccer” (*Novi List*, 11 July 1998: 17). Prior to Croatia’s match against France, Davor Suker said, “The World Cup is the biggest event. We have the opportunity to play at this event for the first time and we know that it is nicest when you achieve something for the first time. We are writing history here, but we have to write it to the end” (*Novi List*, 8 July 1998: 21). Although the Croatians lost to France and competed in the consolation match against the Netherlands for third place, Branko Miksa said, “even though this achievement would have seemed impossible and ridiculous months ago, we would not be able to justify being ‘just fourth’ ” (*Novi List*, 10 July 1998: 24). Despite their semi-final loss, the team had won the heart of the soccer world, and Ladic stated, “however much the defeat hurts, it is nice to know that the world loves you” (*Novi List*, 10 July 1998: 23).

The Croatians eventually went on to beat the Netherlands 2-1 and brought home the bronze medal to fans back home. As Alen Boksic stated, “we are very thankful to our players because this is just the beginning of our affirmation as a nation. The soccer phenomenon, Croatia, does not stop after the defeat by France because our desire for affirming Croatia as a nation does not stop” (*Vjesnik*, 10 July 1998: 13). Croatia’s soccer

success therefore confirmed its standing as a nation and is seen as part of its nation building, a process which did not stop with its international diplomatic recognition or its military success in “Oluja.”

### **General Elements of Croatian Nationalism**

The major theme that could be arguably linked to all others evident in the newspapers is the idea of Croatian nationalism. Through fan support, national symbols, the success of Croatians, the failures of opponents, and the fight for world recognition, traces of Croatian nationalism were present throughout. The purpose, however, of Croatian nationalism being separated into its own theme is that, though these instances of national unity through support for the Croatian team and flag waving were found throughout, there were also cases where it seems that the main objective of the reporters was to project strictly this idea of nationalism.

Croatian players on the National Team made it clear that they felt they were present at the 1998 World Cup for different reasons than other National Team representatives in emphasizing things such as, “We are not here for soccer accountability, like for all other [national] representatives. Thoughts of our homeland and what this means for sports transforms us and our role in France, we decided long ago that this was for the Croatian people and for Croatia” (*Vjesnik* 14 June 1998: 17). It was evident that when asked, Croatia was playing for many non-sport related reasons, including for all those Croatians that would, for the first time, be seeing their flag, their crest, and their nation, at the World Cup (*Vjesnik*, 10 July 1998: 4). Midfielder Robert Prosinecki described his feelings saying that, “this year is different from when I played in 1990 [for



Yugoslavia], this year we want to do something for Croatia” (13 June 1998: 14). When asked whether there was a strong sense of nationalist pride that the team experienced in 1996 before the European Cup in England, team captain Zvonimir Boban said, “In England, we just came out of a war and it’s natural and logical that we were filled with a special charge, but we have that along with hope this year” (*Vjesnik*, 14 June 1998: 17).

Boban expressed how these games meant more for him than any game that he played for his Milan club team because it was for his nationality and his country and when asked how he felt about games that he previously played for Yugoslavia, he replied by saying “before, I respected the Yugoslavian jersey, but I love this [Croatian] one” (*Vjesnik*, 7 July 1998: 17). Boban also said that, at the European Cup in 1996, “we were carried by nationalist feelings. We are all big patriots, which is normal, anything else would be weird. I love my country, and I respect others” (*Novi List*, 7 July 1998: 25). He also said that the representation was everything to him and that he would “play with one leg” if he had to (*Novi List*, 19 June 1998: 24). Similarly, Franjo Tudjman believed that it was time for a Croatian president to sit amongst those that came to support their representations and they were determined to show that their nation was about far more than political struggle and that they had to believe in their value (*Vjesnik*, 29 June 1998: 17).

Interestingly, there is evidence that Croatian reporters not only supported the national team, but also showed support towards other countries deemed to be supportive of Croatia in its struggle for independence. For instance, one reporter rooted for Australia as Australia had been a staunch ally of Croatia during the war as it struggled to become a sovereign state. Another reporter supported the Chilean team since it too had experienced

fighting for independence, and since Croatian immigrants were valued in Chile (*Vjesnik*, 13 June 1998: 15).

Other athletes and organizations also supported the efforts of Croatia's national soccer team. The team had the strong support of the Croatian Olympic Committee that stated, "we are behind you, as fellow athletes, we celebrate the joys and struggles with you, stay strong and continue to do what you are doing" (*Vjesnik*, 7 July 1998: 16). In the same article, soccer players acknowledged the support of Croatian tennis star Goran Ivanisevic who followed the team while competing at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in England (in which he finished in second place) by wearing shirts under their uniform with the slogan "*Hvala Goran*" ("*Thank you Goran*") written across them. This helps to demonstrate how soccer has played a role in bringing the nation together in support of one cause and helped to gain attention for other sports in Croatia as well. As forward Suker said, "I want to be an idol for others. Our country is full of talent for all sports. The ball is a part of our soul. I am going to play until my heart lets me" (*Novi List*, 4 July 1998: 40).

*Vjesnik* and *Novi List* reflected (and likely reinforced) a sense of unity emerging across the country during the tournament. Newspaper reports remarked on this unity even during the early stages of the World Cup, acknowledging that the tournament had united Croats in a way that many other elements of culture could not: "tonight, Croatian hearts beat as one, a soccer heart, the ball will captivate politics, and soccer will unite all Croats" (*Novi List*, 14 June 1998: 19). When Davor Suker scored the goal that guaranteed Croatia's entry into the second round, he was labelled a national hero. Newspapers reported how he had, "delighted the heart and 'hit the net' of Croatian joy" (*Novi List*, 21

June 1998: 23). Croatia's appearance and success at the World Cup was not just a celebration of soccer reserved for soccer fans, it was a celebration of the nation by all its citizens.

As the World Cup progressed and Croatia achieved their third place victory, the players once more reinforced that their performance was for them, for Tudjman, and for the Croatian people. The Croatian players made their way into history first and foremost as a homogenous entity, playing in fairness, freedom, and peace, just like all other teams. Reporters wrote about how the nation was one family and how they were continuously thankful to the beautiful moments of happiness and pride that the team had brought them, as their hearts beat strongly for the national team. They also described fan support as "explosions of national pride" (*Novi List*, 8 July 1998: 23). It was the biggest international step for the Croatian people since the creation of their independent state years before.

### **Negative Nationalism**

Croatia participated in the 1998 World Cup in the hopes of affirming the nation as a soccer competitor, but also with the hope that, after all was said and done, other nations would know a little more about the emerging country. One of the stereotypes that Croatians were hoping to avoid was that they were just another little country, that was once part of a much stronger entity, and that they were neither threats nor contenders. "Negative nationalism" in this sense means the references that other nations made to Croatia that were perceived as contrary to what Croatians wanted to believe of themselves in terms of a self-perceived 'strong' nation. First, references to Croatia's

association to Yugoslavia were not welcomed. French television at the beginning of the World Cup showed Croatia with borders inside Yugoslavia, making it appear that Croatia was still part of Yugoslavia (*Vjesnik*, 7 July 1998: 17). Strong evidence of the desire to disassociate with Yugoslavia lies in the actions of Croatian defender Slaven Bilic, who, after receiving treatment prior to the World Cup from the Yugoslavian team trainer, felt the need to lie to media about really being at his aunt's house on the day in question (*Novi List*, 13 June 1998: 23).

There were also negative inferences originating from the Second World War. Croatians were divided into two camps: those who supported the Independent State of Croatia which was allied with Germany and those who supported the Croatian resistance which later transformed itself into a pan-Yugoslav communist force. Three English newspapers implored fans to be against Croatia and "all Nazi ties," while European reporters stressed the importance of taking action against racism and anti-Semitism that the Croatians were associated with during World War II (*Vjesnik*, 10 July 1998: 3). Such sentiments were simplistic assessments of Croatian history as many Croatians who wanted freedom from Yugoslavia during this time opposed anti-Semitism but these sentiments created a negative impression of Croatia and Croatians in general. It appears from the articles that it was these accusations the Croatian team wanted to avoid. They wanted to be a part of the sport that brought together people from around the world, in the hopes of removing the negative characterization of Croatians as one of contempt, hooligan rampage, violence, and darkness. "We should be known for more, for our freedom, our colours, our flag, our love for the game, our emotions, and our free Croatian national insignia," said Croatian reporter, Ivan Bekavac (*Vjesnik*, 10 July 1998: 4).

Accusations were made against the jerseys of the Croatian National Team which carried the historic Croatian red and white checkerboard emblem. There were calls in some media circles in western Europe asking Croatia to change the jerseys due to its alleged association with the fascist Independent State of Croatia, while ignoring the fact that the emblem predated the state by hundreds of years and a version of this emblem was the official symbol of the Socialist Republic of Croatia in communist Yugoslavia. In any event, Croatian Football Federation president, Branko Miksa, made it clear that the jerseys, “were a representation of the Croatian nation since the 700s, we are not changing them because we do not want to change our [nation’s] history, because of that, they are staying the same” (*Novi List*, 9 July 1998: 24).

Similarly, the Croatians had to fight the rough insults that had been written about them, by other international newspapers, about their lack of skill and inability to compete at the level of other competitors at the World Cup. Few foreign reporters put value on any players other than those who competed in the Champions League, such as Davor Suker and Zvonimir Boban. Croatian forward Robert Jarni was quoted during the games saying, “People have to worry about us more than they are, we can beat anyone” (*Novi List*, 19 June 1998: 24). Jarni’s concerns were likely warranted, as the German, French, Romanian, and Italian media insulted, underestimated, and ridiculed the Croatians over the course of the tournament writing words such as, “they have no conception, it will be easy to play with them, if we could pick an opponent we would pick them” (*Vjesnik*, 5 July 1998: 19). Blazevic’s response to this was,

German radio, television, and newspapers classified our game as slow and old fashioned, saying that the Germans will not have big problems.

I was affected by their measuring of our playing, their underestimation of our philosophy of play. It hurts like I was bit by a poisonous snake. It is going to be more of a motive to win (*Novi List*, 3 July 1998: 23).

Croatia went on to beat Germany 3-0 and eventually, with their exceptional performance, the Croatian soccer phenomenon forced reporters to write more positive things about them. Following their victory over Germany, Blazevic once more stated, “We are not outsiders, we do not have a tradition or reputation yet, but it is a shame that teams do not see us as a competitor, but that is our motivation too. We see only Brazil in the finals, I believe in that the way that I believed in this a month ago” (*Novi List*, 7 July 1998: 23). Though the Croatians did not face off against Brazil in the championships, the Croatian team displayed a strong soccer form and showed how they too had the right to look ahead to their place in the future of soccer. After the Croatians went on to place third, Tudjman said Croatia was “a nation previously known for having problems and we’re now known for having a modern, virtuous game” (*Novi List*, 11 July 1998: 2)

### ***Invented Tradition and the Political Importance of Soccer***

The ability for reporters to emphasize the importance of soccer for fans and to not necessarily create but rather recreate fan traditions in the soccer arena was apparent through their constant reiteration and recollection of the comments made about soccer’s unifying abilities and its ability to produce a collective catharsis of the nation. This use of invented tradition will come to be important in the Conclusion as it will demonstrate the way that soccer representations were constructed around them and the main function of these traditions was to promote Croatian nationalism.

*Vjesnik* quoted Olympic Games founder Pierre de Coubertin who in 1882 wrote that soccer was “a new sport gaining interest around the world, like a school of life, moral perfection, and social apprenticeship. A game in which we could metaphorically recognize all proprieties, emotions, and obligations of everyday life” (*Vjesnik*, 14 June 1998: 17). De Coubertin, the article went on, also stated the importance of participating in sport and *Vjesnik* reporters stressed not only the importance of participating in sport but also the importance of winning in sport, for reasons among which are enhanced pride (*Vjesnik*, 14 June 1998: 17).

One author in *Novi List* wrote,

Sometime after Jesus, God sent the people of the world a soccer ball as a source of joy but as much more than that. The soccer ball is an industrial spectacle of fun and money. It is the one thing that connects the continents, religions, and races. For everyone, only one Bible exists, the soccer one. It is stronger than all politics and war, a game of all religions, powered by an army of supporters with one another all over the world who live and experience and pray to the gods for a win. Playing under their flag, emotionally. A game that does not divide people by skin colour, religion, or nationality. One is the world of soccer (*Novi List*, 1 July 1998: 21).

The function of this invented tradition is to use soccer as a method of creating a link between the nation that currently exists, and its historical past. The very brief statement “sometime after Jesus” that we see at the beginning of the quote also lends further evidence to support the notion of invention of tradition, as soccer itself was really

introduced in the nineteenth century while sometime after Jesus encompasses thousands of years and implies that soccer is in fact a more historical pastime than it is.

Prior to the beginning of the World Cup, reporters made it clear that they did not want to write about politics, and that the power of soccer surpassed the political realm for the time being. These games, reporters often told their readers, were about emotions of soccer and that they can only hope that with the quality, skill, and heart that the team members possess will allow them to perform at their very best (*Novi List*, 13 June 1998: 17).

However, at the same time, Croatian team coach Branko Miksa felt that politics and sport were in fact strongly related. In an interview, Miksa, who in this case is worth quoting at length, said:

I plan to leave a trace on the biggest show ending the second millennium. I think an interesting phenomenon has been awoken of Croatian patriotism through soccer. Everyone who has said soccer is not political, look at the reaction of the people. I communicate with people in Croatia and I see that even those who did not have a clue what the ball was are infected by this great success and a general sympathy towards our team and everyone is going out into the streets, it is a behaviour of the masses. As a small country, we need to see affirmation on every side because we are in a political European game, exposed to high pressures and someone is always belittling us, trying to alienate us from Europe. But now we have come into a situation where in the most important thing in the world we are among the best on the globe. It is



amazing. Another huge success is our fans from all over Croatia who are united with our representation, staying here a month already, coming by bike, train, bus, car, dressed in Croatian national characteristics. That is priceless publicity. No nation can afford to pay people to spend that much time walking and basically being a commercial for their nation. Soccer is a business, a mega spectacle and a stronger propaganda ambassador of the country than any politician. It means more than the big efforts of individual diplomats who make great efforts visiting countries and Croatia and promoting Croatia (*Novi List*, 4 July 1998: 20).

We can see here all other themes of this research embodied in one statement. The nature of this statement similarly reflects the strong political effects of soccer and this will be further examined and reflected on in the Conclusion.

When asked how sports are tied to political relations, Tudjman had this to say: for a nation that does not have strong sport relations, there can be a link. Sport is something that, beyond developing friendships, still arouses opposition. That is unavoidable. All in all, the World Cup is really important. When there is no war going on, sport is the main occupation of the world (*Vjesnik*, 29 June 1998: 17).

Tudjman travelled to France to be behind his team and players and commented on soccer's effect on the Croatian nation in the postwar period. In his view, the successes of Croatia's economy and politics were now reflected in their sport success. He stated that the language of soccer has become stronger than the diplomatic one and that, now that the

nation was no longer at war, sport would become the area by which they would be recognized. Even if a majority of the nation lived in poverty and the land had been destroyed, in a soccer realm, all of that was forgotten. Sport was therefore a metaphor for war by political interpretation, because the world would always find time for sport and war. Tudjman went on to say that,

Life is ironic and not understandable. Unfortunately for publicity, one of Sukanec's goals means more for the little nation than the loss of thousands of young lives in the war. Soccer is no longer among one of the most important things in the world. It is the most important, and it is a phenomenon that will never be able to be explained (*Vjesnik*, 7 July 1998: 17).

Following Croatia's defeat of Germany on July 4<sup>th</sup>, he also stated that the victory would do much to promote Croatia's reputation and the self-confidence of its citizens since, "they had won in the creation of an independent Croatian state when they won the war, and that now, other nations would be more careful of them in a sporting environment as well" (*Vjesnik*, 5 July 1998: 18). Tudjman also stated that the Croatian nation had been accepted and highly respected now worldwide from a sport perspective, although this had not yet happened for them from a political or economic comparison (*Novi List*, 11 July 1998: 2).

One reporter felt that Croatia's third place victory is a result that will weigh on future generations of soccer because it will be up to these future generations to uphold the strong fan culture that was demonstrated during these games. Goaltender, Drazen Ladic, had similar feelings, "the victory we accomplished is the new Croatian sport history" and

Croatian forward, Davor Suker said that “we are writing Croatian history, and we are going to write it until the end” (*Vjesnik*, 5 July 1998: 19, *Vjesnik* 8 July 1998: 15).

Croatians around the world had the opportunity to participate in the general joy that soccer brings. Soccer is something that the government, the world and the Croatian team gave their citizens a chance to be a part of. *Vjesnik* reporters wrote that “winners celebrate while the defeated are sad, from the day that humans were on the earth, no other game has been raised to the powerful status of globally important event” (*Vjesnik*, 10 July 1998: 13).

When asked how this victory would affect his presidency, Tudjman made it clear that, they may as well claim another victory and virtually secured his future in office explaining that it would be natural now to vote for his governing party the *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* (*Croatian Democratic Union*). After all, they not only created the country, but had also secured one of the largest sporting successes (*Novi List*, 11 July 1998: 2). Tudjman often viewed himself as the founding father of the Republic of Croatia and saw his political party as the sole entity that achieved what was seen as Croatia’s rightful place in the international community. It is clear that he saw the success of the Croatian National Team through similar lenses.

### **Discussion**

In the first theme of this study, *Fan Behaviour and the Use of National Symbols*, there was a positive correlation between success on the world stage and the promotion of unity in particular and nationalism in general. As the results indicate, not only did Croatians around the world tune in to support the national team, but many also travelled

from near and far, in sometimes difficult conditions, to be in attendance at the tournament in France. Croatian athletes in other sporting disciplines also followed the Croatian team through to the end and offered continuous support and words of encouragement for their continued success. For a nation of less than five million to rally around a team of eleven men makes a strong statement about the ability of soccer to unite individuals and contribute to solidarity sense of social “uniqueness,” highlighting Durkheim’s notion of social solidarity discussed earlier. Similarly, the newspaper articles also revealed the fact that, of the five million nationals, many became fans after never having taken an interest in soccer prior to the World Cup. Let us also recall here the comments made about the feelings of fans during the 1998 World Cup. There was one fan in particular who strongly related his feelings of excitement and happiness after Croatia’s victory to the same feelings he experienced following their largest and most successful military operation of all time, “Oluja.” This lends strong support to the ability that soccer has to evoke strong emotions among members of a nation.

The second theme, *Prestige, World Recognition, and Expectations of Success*, points to the ability of soccer to place a smaller, typically ignored, nation on the international stage. It was shown that those individuals and nations who had little to no prior knowledge of the Croatian nation were now strongly aware of not only its existence, but also of its strong sporting talents. The Croatian National Team helped to place the nation in a position where they became the “talk of the world.” For the future, this would mean recognition not only on a sporting terrain, but also in diplomatic circles worldwide. Similarly, the initial labels placed on Croatia as a weak soccer contender and as a nation

that would not be nearly as successful as Yugoslavia once was, were replaced with respect and recognition.

The third and fourth themes, *General Elements of Croatian Nationalism* and *Negative Nationalism*, relate to one another in that the former represents the image that Croatians wanted the world to see when considering them, and the latter identifies the image and stigmas that Croatians had at the time of the 1998 World Cup that they were hoping to eliminate. Such negative stigmas included the association between the Independent State of Croatia and Germany during the Second World War. This negative association followed the Croatians in the years after the war of independence and many non-Croatian journalists voiced opposition to the Croatian team. The team was even requested to change the jerseys that they had spent years playing in and that was a strong part of their history in order to disassociate themselves from the stigma of the Second World War. In the end, the jerseys were not altered. As such, the newspaper articles reveal the fact that Croatians felt they needed to prove themselves not only on the soccer field, but in terms of negative media attention as well. Soccer then played an important role in challenging negative accusations regarding the country's past and, in turn, its present by association with its past. Arguably this was successful because following the 1998 World Cup, Croatia was first and foremost recognized as a soccer superpower, rather than with past political associations dating back more than half a century.

*Invented Tradition and the Political Importance of Soccer* is the final theme and is perhaps the most important for this study. The reports in both *Vjesnik* and *Novi List* continuously referenced individuals who stated the importance of soccer in the world and the ability of soccer to overcome economic, social, religious, and political barriers.

Croatian Soccer Federation president Branko Miksa discussed how these successes would place Croatia on the map. In a similar way Franjo Tudjman stated how this would not only help his government stay in office longer, but also how this sporting victory, which took place over a few weeks, did more for the international recognition of Croatia than a four year war had. Prior to and since the World Cup, Croatia has qualified and competed in six of eight major soccer tournaments. Nevertheless, the year 1998, stays fresh in the minds of countless generations of Croatians, and is known as the “golden age” of Croatian soccer.

The general tone suggested here in terms of Croatian nationalism is that the sense of national unity and pride was strongly enhanced over the course of the 1998 World Cup. The themes presented here largely support the previously defined expectations that soccer has the ability to promote nationalism, particularly in the cultures that seem to need it most in trying times. The sport of soccer in particular has brought together a nation of millions in support of a common cause, the success of their national team. However, as we will see in the Conclusion, though the perception is that the results presented promote this positive nationalism, there is more than one perspective with which they can be interpreted.

### *Chapter 5: CONCLUSION*

The final chapter outlines important implications drawn from the results provided in the previous chapter. What follows also includes a discussion of the results found in the current study – the emergent themes just presented – in terms of previous studies conducted on the recent history of Croatia, sport, and nationalism. In other words, this chapter does not solely attempt to summarize findings and draw out implications from those findings in terms of our understanding of the development of Croatian nationalism, as important as that is. The chapter attempts to *contextualize* the findings in terms of others studies of the same topic and the specific discussion of historical and political events in Croatia from those studies. In the end, this will lend itself to a greater understanding of sport and nationalism more generally in the sports studies literature. Finally, this chapter discusses implications in terms of further research alongside suggestions for directions that future research can take, and also limitations to the study conducted. As expected, this research in sport and nationalism has contributed to the growing literature in the field of sport and nationalism, demonstrating the ability of sport to evoke strong emotions that are difficult to witness in other areas of social life.

The role played by soccer in Croatian politics during the 1990s has attracted scholarly review in the past. Having said that, there are very few studies, and this highlights the need for the current one, a point discussed in the first chapter. Two studies that are particularly important are one published in 2000 by Allen Sack and Zeljan Suster, and another published in 2013, coincidentally during the final stages of production of the current thesis, by Dario Brentin. Sack and Suster describe the convergence of soccer and

politics during the 1990s, as the country emerged from Yugoslavia as a fully recognized state. The authors refer specifically to two soccer games that both played a role in fostering Croatian nationalism and support for the Croatian government. Sack and Suster document the strong relationship between sport and politics in terms of soccer fan clubs that were, interestingly, constructed around military regimes. The current research follows in the footsteps of their analysis. The findings of Sack and Suster demonstrate the use of soccer matches to give Croatia a positive image as a newly emerging nation and my findings of the 1998 World Cup have come to similar conclusions.

Croatians used their success during the 1998 World Cup to express their identity as both a unified nation and as a soccer contender. Furthermore, Sack and Suster document the use of nationalist symbols to enhance their independent state during the early 1990s and my research confirms the use of similar symbols in 1998 as demonstrated through the use of flags, anthems, and the national crest. Sack and Suster (2010) conclude that the use of soccer matches was a strong force in promoting Croatian nationalism. Though their research reflects on a time prior to the Croatian war of independence in the early 1990s, when Croatian nationalism seemed not only valuable but a necessary commitment, the findings from the research in this study confirm that in the early years following the war, this strong sense of Croatian national pride still manifested itself through sport. In fact, not only is such pride still existent today, but it is also equally as strong. Sack and Suster state that “through its success in soccer, and in other sports, Croatia has been able to enhance its image as a nation prepared to play a more significant role in the European Community and in the world” (Sack & Suster, 2000 p. 318).



Tudjman played a critically important role in the developing use of sport to promote Croatian nationalism during and after the war. Tudjman stated that, “football victories shape a nation’s identity as much as wars do” (cited in Brentin, 2013 p. 993). Brentin (2013 p. 993) argues that Tudjman recognized the important role sport could play because, in general, modern sport has become one of the most popular rituals of today’s society but more specifically an institution that is often used to reinforce the position of politicians and as a justification for authority, including the “military might” underlying that authority. Tudjman was strongly aware of the potential role that sport would play in the shaping of the future Croatian nation and it has been argued that he is personally responsible for systematically pressuring certain individuals into ensuring that *Dinamo Zagreb* won the Croatian football championships in the late 1990s. The success was portrayed as a reflection of Croatia’s national character, will and strength. Tudjman went as far as to give professional athletes abroad, such as Tony Kukoc and Drazen Petrovic from the National Basketball Association, who refused to play for the Yugoslavian national team, and tennis player Goran Ivanisevic, almost equal credit as the soldiers that fought in the war for contributing to the recognition of Croatia as an independent state and for raising awareness of the war being fought at home (Brentin, 2013 p. 998). Sport, Tudjman argued, was the athletes’ way of participating in promoting Croatian national unity. Sport, then, became an integral component for creating a unique Croatian identity and in fact Tudjman argued that athletes’ successes should be thought of as a reflection of their “true Croatianness” (Brentin, 2013 p. 1002). Brentin also argues that athletes everywhere opined that Tudjman was the father of the Croatian independent nation. National soccer team coach Miroslav Blazevic in fact said that “without him all my

young players would play for Yugoslavia and not for Croatia [in the World Cup]; without his bravery and his party we would not have experienced any of this” (cited in Brentin, 2013 p. 999).

Similarly, Tudjman ensured the team that, “the entire Croatian people, numbering some eight million, from the homeland and abroad stood behind you,” demonstrating that Tudjman recognized their success as being a result of the strong “Croatian spirit” rather than the skills and abilities of players (cited in Brentin, 2013 p. 999). This demonstrates the idea of “collective effervescence” that Durkheim referred to in his work on nationalism and its contribution to the “conscious collective.” Tudjman’s ethno-nationalist approach to governance resulted in the dominance of nationalist narratives in almost all fields of life (Brentin, 2013).

The newspaper analysis demonstrates a correlation between the development of Croatian nationalism and Croatian soccer success during the 1998 tournament. Emerging themes suggest that Croatian fans identified with their National Team in a way that directly linked soccer to politics and Croatia’s recent fight for independence. Croatia’s newly established independence was particularly important, and strong nationalist sentiments were expressed in the hopes of affirming the country’s place in the world. Not only did Croatia qualify for the World Cup, become the smallest nation to advance to the semi-finals, and bring home a bronze medal; but its participation and success in the 1998 tournament also succeeded in unifying the nation to an extent that shocked other participating countries in the World Cup. The pro-nationalist rhetoric revealed in the newspaper accounts also sought to specifically correct the perceived mistaken idea that Croatia was still associated with Yugoslavia.

In their article, Sack and Suster (2010 p. 310) referenced one major case of fan violence where a riot broke out between Dinamo Zagreb of Croatia and Red Star Belgrade of Serbia. The article further notes that expressions of fan violence typically emerge when nationalism is threatened. Perhaps for this reason, although there was an initial expectation on my part to find newspaper accounts of the 1998 World Cup describing instances of fan violence, this was not the case. Quite probably this is due to the fact that Croatia was not playing Yugoslavia in this tournament. Similarly, it was expected that there would be a larger amount of jingoist language against opponents, in other words that Croatian independence would have been reinforced through the process of “othering.” However, it seems that the level of competitiveness remained healthy and friendly throughout the competition as did the general language in the newspaper articles reviewed.

This research has added to the growing body of literature on the influence of media on the production of national identity and invented tradition based on their high level of emphasis on soccer success. It provides further background to the situation in Croatia, which at the time was a newly emerging nation, when of course national traditions, rituals, symbols, and feelings play an important role. Similar to Sack and Suster’s article, my study makes similar conclusions with respect to the role of media has in fostering national pride and nationalism through its reporting of the National Team during the World Cup.

### **Implications and Future Research**

In contrast, we may consider other interpretations of the research found here. Though most of the results appear to support Durkheim's theory in contributing to a collective identity, there are those who would argue that the strong emphasis placed on soccer and fan support throughout the months surrounding the World Cup does in fact support Marxism and the use of sport as an opiate to distract from other areas of social life. For example, the articles shed a positive light on the Croatian National Team and their successes and how it contributed to Croatia's national identity. Marxists would argue, however, that the World Cup provided a temporary distraction from things that are more important in life, such as poverty levels following the war for independence, mismanaged privatization, corruption, and Tudjman's own sometimes authoritarian tendencies. Marxists would further argue that those in power at the time of the 1998 World Cup, i.e. Tudjman's Croatian government, used the Croatian team successes as part of their podium for the next election, claiming responsibility for winning the war, sporting success, and the links between the two; in other words, sport in 1998 was used as proof of national superiority that had presumably, and by association, played a role in the victorious war and represented at the same time the superiority of Tudjman's administration.

On this note, Brentin's article from 2013 is informative and demonstrates the way that sport was both used and misused by the Croatian government and Tudjman in an attempt to legitimize his ruling party. In fact, Brentin's discussion supports the reference to Eric Hobsbawm made by Ozkirimli (2010), suggesting that nationalism too can be used as a method of gaining legitimacy for methods of governance. As Brentin argues,

due to the fact that sport has become such an important component of popular culture, success on an international level allows for the government in power to “enhance prestige, secure legitimacy, and compensate for deficiencies in other areas of life” (Brentin, 2013 p. 994). This idea is important for this thesis in particular because, at the time of their success in the 1998 World Cup, Croatia was only three years fresh out of its war for independence. The football championships, then, served as a distraction from the catastrophic conditions in which the country found itself following the war. From a critical perspective, some commentators even labelled the games as a “pathetic and desperate act to divert the public’s focus from the countless problems and political apathy Croatia faced in the weeks and months prior to the tournament” (cited in Brentin, 2013 p. 1000).

Ironically, the perceived downfall of Tudjman could be attributed to the strong emphasis placed on sport. In 2000, Croatia and Yugoslavia participated in a qualifying match that would determine which team would advance to the UEFA European Football Championships in the summer. Due to the fact that, as mentioned, soccer was considered a national sport in both nations, the match was highly meaningful for both nations. Tudjman stated that “we have a team that knows that we are fighting for Croatia, against Yugoslavia, for one’s homeland’s reputation while the Yugoslav team will not be able to feature such homogeneity” and he labelled this as the reason why Croatia would win (cited in Brentin, 2013 p. 1001). When the Croatian team tied the match, it resulted in their failure to advance since the Yugoslav team had more points in their favour. In any case, though Tudjman died of cancer only a few months later, in the opinion of many reporters the game was detrimental to his position in presidency as they believe he would

have lost the next election that soon followed and the reason for that, many believed, was Croatia's absence from the European Cup of that year.

We can further elaborate on this point by challenging Tudjman's motives based on previously presented information. In 1981, Tudjman wrote a book entitled *Nationalism in Contemporary Europe*, which was, in fact, discussed in chapter two. In one particular reference from that book, Tudjman discussed how the basis of nationalism emerges from the natural human being, from birth and blood. However, in contrast to Tudjman's claim, this thesis demonstrates Tudjman's clear manipulation of sport in order to create a national identity surrounding the successful promotion of athletes. One may argue whether this contradicts his earlier claims that nationalism cannot be created but rather exists as a historical entity and whether the Croatian nationalism was in fact real or a part of invented tradition that was also discussed earlier, i.e. created for political use and to justify the war efforts and therefore central to politics in general. While it may have been convenient for Tudjman to argue that nationalist sentiment arises through people's "blood," in other words, the newspaper articles analyzed in this thesis demonstrate that nationalism is – and must be – constantly socially reinforced.

For research, it must be acknowledged that to gather all newspapers that have been written in relation to the Croatian soccer team's performance in the 1998 World Cup would be impossible and as such, there may be alternative explanations to the conclusions reach here. It is also impractical to interpret every article and find and understand every underlying meaning of each article. Therefore, the scope of this study is limited. However, various newspapers have been compared based on the

recommendations of Tracy (2010) in search of consistency through repetitive themes or emergent ideas.

Similarly, the justification for using newspaper articles comes from various studies conducted around nationalism and sport research that were undertaken in the past decade. In this sense, it is important to note some of the limitations in using newspaper articles. First, newspapers often present accounts and stories from the biased perspectives of its individual reporters and/or editors. Congruently, media discourse has a way of both exaggerating and overemphasizing certain aspects of important sporting events. For this reason, two different newspapers were selected and the results of this study highlights information that was found in both newspapers. But again, that does not overrule the fact that both newspapers could have used the exaggerated language or reflected the perspectives of reporters and editors, as just mentioned.

But it is here that we find a second limitation of this study in that future research may benefit from considering more than two different newspapers and cross referencing information to uncover potential biases. Furthermore, all articles were written from a Croatian point of view and therefore it would be interesting to consider how other nations viewed the successes, actions, and emotions of the Croatian team and fan base. Though articles contained interviews with players, coaches, fans, and government officials, further research may consider conducting follow up interviews with these individuals in the years following the 1998 FIFA World Cup and how Croatian nationalism was affected on a long-term scale. Congruently, the thesis has not directly studying the Croatian population, and observations and opinions were based solely on reporters.

Though the population of individuals who have read the articles will be influenced by the writing, there still exists a disconnect here.

As already discussed, the expectation for this research was not that it would be able to be generalized to other situations, as the context of the event is extremely complex and has a large scale of factors, including cultural, religious, situational, and many others, that contributed to it, in addition to the fact that the events during and that preceded the 1998 World Cup were unique, especially given the dramatic political events in Croatia's recent history. Nevertheless, the hope is that specific aspects of the theories that are supported by this research may later be transferable to similar, but not exact, situations. However, it is my expectation that similarities will still be found between this research and those of a similar nature. By understanding the nationalism surrounding certain sporting contexts with various teams, we can better understand the importance that individual nations or groups place on sporting events. It is also clear that the media coverage of this sporting event has demonstrated how the success of the team served as a unifying tool for Croatian nationalism. Members of the nation came together in support of the team of eleven men that represented them in France. Croatia's sport media reinforced nationalist sentiments and emphasized the role of soccer in the lives of individuals more than any discourse on politics ever could. Similarly, the World Cup of 1998 and Croatia's third place in it did much to affirm the nation in the world, making it both recognized and respected as a soccer contender and a nation with a strong sense of national pride and unity. The careful documentation of media analysis of both fan and participant behaviour has provided many strong and clear examples in support of the ability of sport to transcend many other areas of social life.



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