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Youssef HeshamSaleh900113847Doctor RihamBahiEast-West Dialogue: Cross-CulturalPerceptions and RepresentationsTerm Paper13/12/2017OUTLINETHESIS STATEMENT: Although studieson sports and nationalism are plentiful, studying nationalism through sports isa suitable answer to this critique because it shows exactly how common peopleassign meaning to their respective countries in light of an everydayphenomenon. INTRODUCTION: Sports offer anopportunity to see how individual, national, and global factors together affectnational identities (Skey 2013), studies of sports and nationalism areimportant because sports are everywhere in late modern societies and very ofteninvolve nationalist dimensions; these are apparent during international sportsevents such as the Olympics and World Cup, but are also found in domesticsports. Furthermore, since sports seem so important for many people, and so manyresources are devoted to them, it is timely to question how they might havepolitical and democratic importance. MAIN BODY PARAGRAPHS: Bothindividual and national factors are presented below, and then how theseindividual and national factors might combine in random effects andinteractions is discussed. The point is to indicate how these factors mightplay a role in the processes of generating national pride from sports. CONCLUSION: Nationalism (asrelated to sports) might play different roles in various countries; it pointsbeyond the classic east–west distinction and reveals the need for empirical andtheoretical refinements.

INTRODUCTIONSports offer an opportunity to see how individual, national, and global factors together affect national identities (Skey 2013), studies of sports and nationalism are important because sports are everywherein late modern societies and very often involve nationalist dimensions; theseare apparent during international sports events such as the Olympics and WorldCup, but are also found in domestic sports. Furthermore, since sports seem soimportant for many people, and so many resources are devoted to them, it istimely to question how they might have political and democratic importance. Sports being of consequence for national identity is one possible way toapproach this question. Even though a huge literature on nationalism exists, acommon critique has been the “ failure to see the everyday nationalism thatorganizes people’s sense of belonging” (Billig 1995; Calhoun 2007: 27; Edensor2006; Skey 2013). Although studies on sports and nationalism are plentiful, studying nationalism through sports is a suitable answer to this critiquebecause it shows exactly how common people assign meaning to their respectivecountries in light of an everyday phenomenon. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVESIn general, it seems reasonable to presume that sportnationalism has two sources. On the one hand, sport nationalism might alignitself with nationalism: individuals with strong national sentiments are alsothose proud when national athletes succeed. On the other hand, sport nationalismmight also depend on affection for sports: those interested in sports may feel nationallyproud of their athletes despite not otherwise expressing strong nationalfeelings.

Based on these two sources, both individual and national factors arepresented below, and then how these individual and national factors mightcombine in random effects and interactions is discussed. The point is toindicate how these factors might play a role in the processes of generatingnational pride from sports. As Calhoun (2007) and Smith (2009) pointed out, nationalidentities are often based in deep cultural layers, and among these, “ the linksbetween religion and national consciousness can be very close” (Hobsbawm 1992: 67). Religion could be expected to further nationalism, because it is, likesports, often linked to rituals, places. Furthermore, in the context ofcomparative survey research, culture is often linked to cognitive skills(Bollen and Medrano 1998; Inglehart 1990); the idea is that more educatedpeople have a better understanding of otherness, more easily imagine themselvesas a part of larger social groups, and thereby end up being more cosmopolitan(Beck 2009). In addition to culture, one should expect material resources tomatter in terms of nationalism. The point of such arguments is that people withsecure finances feel less threatened by others than those with insecurefinances.

This implies that people with high incomes should be lessnationalistic than those who earn lower salaries. Studies indicate that the effects of gender depend on theform of nationalism under study (Kunovich 2009). As such, it is not obvious howgender might affect sport nationalism, but if it does, it could be reasonableto assume that because men are often more dedicated to sports than women, theyhave a stronger tendency for sport nationalism. Next, studies seem to show thatolder people in general are more nationalistic than younger people. This effectis probably due to younger generations’ more cosmopolitan attitudes, but couldalso result from experiences specific to different generations and cohorts invarious countries, related both to sports events and non-sports eventsassociated with wars and politics. Cultural globalization measures the spread of ideas, information, and people, and is assumed to have an effect parallel to educationat the individual level; that is, more globalized countries have morecosmopolitan citizens, which in turn means they are less nationalistic. Onecentral theme in the literature on nationalism is the distinction between acivic/ democratic and primordial/ethnic nationalism, often linked to aneast–west divide (Björklund 2006; Jayet 2012; Smith 2009). The east–westcontext could also impact sport nationalism, although it is difficult to get atthis divide except in the case of the countries in the study having (more orless) geographically clear east-west positions.

Furthermore, there are obviousdifferences—urban/rural, industrial/postindustrial, particular sportstraditions, national cultures of various types—linked both to nationalism andsports. For some of the variables, the expectations of theeffects are unclear or there are reasons to expect that these effects will varybetween countries. This is true for age, the effect of which could depend onspecific national events, sports-related or otherwise.

Gender roles varydrastically, and women in countries with more liberal gender regimes might bemore interested in sports and thereby more easily made proud by theachievements of athletes. The effects of both material (income) and cultural(education) resources are dependent upon establishing a type of boundarybetween “ us” and “ them.” These boundaries form the basis for comparisons withothers, and the result is supposed to give rise to different levels ofnationalism. This makes it reasonable to assume that the effects of these twovariables at the individual level might depend upon parallel characteristics atthe national level; the way cultural and material boundaries develop at theindividual level depends on the cultural and material resources at thecollective level. For countries with poor economic resources and a lessglobalized culture, it is assumed that the effect of income and education willbe more weakly negative than in more prosperous and globalized countries.

CONCLUSIONSport nationalism is, generally, a widespread phenomenon; many people feel very proud when their national athletes do well. Nevertheless, differences in levels of sport nationalism between countries are alsoconsiderable. A first finding is that West European countries are prominentamong the countries with low levels of sport nationalism, yet in other” western” countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, thelevel is higher than the world average. Second, the East European countries aremostly above average, though there are substantive differences between them. For example, the Czechs are below average while Poland is among the most sportnationalist countries.

Three less-developed countries—the Dominican Republic, South Africa, and the Philippines—are the most sport-nationalist countries, whereas three Latin American countries—Chile, Mexico, and Uruguay—are close tothe average. Of the Asian countries, South Korea is rather sport-nationalist, while Japan and Israel are below average. Given the pervasiveness of sports in late modernsocieties and the many evident links to nationalism, it comes as no surprisethat sport-related national identities—being proud when national athletessucceed—are relatively strong and widespread. Even though, at first glance, ahigh level of sport nationalism makes countries appear more similar thandifferent, there are also strong and systematic differences between countries’sport nationalism. The countries/ regions with low levels of sport nationalismare all West European (Switzerland, Finland, Norway, Flanders, and France), whereas most of Eastern Europe (Poland, Croatia, Russia, Latvia, and Slovenia)have higher than average values. This could indicate that nationalism, as it isfound in relation to sports, reflects some type of familiar east–westdifference in nationalism. There are, however, two precautions to this conclusion.

First, the Czech Republic, despite being an East European country, is low onsport nationalism, and several Western countries—Australia, New Zealand, andthe United States—are above the world average of sport nationalism. Second, theeast–west nationalism distinction mostly comes with an idea of substantivedifferences (ethnic versus civil) in nationalism. Furthermore, in many cases itseems that differences in sport nationalism are related to economic andcultural resources, and as has been determined, variations at the nationallevel suggest national differences other than east–west. In general, countrieswith low GDPs and low levels of democracy and cultural globalization areclearly more sport nationalistic than other countries. This indicates that nationalism(as related to sports) might play different roles in various countries; itpoints beyond the classic east–west distinction and reveals the need forempirical and theoretical refinements.

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