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As a sport sociologist, one of my main interests is the impact of sport and sporting successes on European identity-formation. Consequently, the main title of Liz Crolley and David Hand's 2006 book – '*Football and European identity*'- was definitely an eye-catcher. However, since I am quite skeptical towards contextual analyses of print media texts –in my opinion, these studies rarely depart from well-defined theoretical frameworks and often stick to a descriptive and superficial level- the subtitle '*Historical narratives through the press*' was less attractive. But before turning to these (rather subjective) issues, what is this book about in broad terms? During the 20th century, not only the socio-economic value of football to Europe increased, so did its coverage in the daily press. However, this has not always been the case. Consequently, a *first* broad aim of the book is to track this development towards a burgeoning attention paid to football in European newspapers. Moreover, newspaper reports of international football matches are inextricably linked with wider psychological, cultural and ideological processes which provide information about the nations whose representatives are participating in the match. In this way, a *second* aim of the book is to explore the role of football in the construction of national and cultural identities. Both themes are unquestionably emphasized throughout the book. The methodology used involved the structural analysis of print media texts from the early 20th century to the present day as well as a contextual analysis of the social, political and historical environments in which the newspaper texts were produced, consumed and decoded. The following countries were the focus of the present study: England, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Africa, The USA and North East Asia. However, football writing was only examined in '*quality daily newspapers*' (p. 9) from England (*The Times* and *The Guardian*), France (*Le Monde*, *Libération*, *Le Figaro*, *Le Temps* and *Le Matin*), and Spain (*ABC* and *El Pais*).

The book is broadly divided into three main parts. The first part, *Old Europe*, analyzes the ways in which the national identities of the main European football nations (England, France, Italy, Germany and Spain) are portrayed in print media discourse on football. This is done from the perspective of both autotypification (how they perceive themselves, i.e. how the image of Frenchness is portrayed in sports

media texts inside France) and heterotypification (how they are perceived by others, i.e. how the image of Frenchness is portrayed in sports media text outside France). The second part, *Nations within States*, examines the status of Corsican, Catalanian and the Basque identities within French and Spanish football. The third part, *New (Football) Worlds*, explores the ways in which the newly emerged football regions of Africa, North East Asia and the USA are covered in the European press. In all three parts, the richness of stimulating examples is impressive as is the range and the level of detail, which is one of the book's greatest strengths. The authors definitely surprised me by going several steps further than the pure descriptive level. However, the book might have benefited from a synthesis at the end of it or at the end of each chapter to gain better insight into the key principles. In addition, a critical comparison of the different case studies might have been interesting. This, however, was not the primary aim of the researchers. *'Our achievement is less a cross-national comparison of the ways in which national identities are mediated than an exploration of how and why identities are mediated in each context. Identification of similarities and differences in portrayals of national identities –generally considered a principle objective of cross-cultural research- was, therefore, not a primary objective of the research'* (p. 11). Perhaps this might be a suggestion for further research? Despite my initial reservations with respect to the (non-)description of theoretical frameworks, the introductory section of this book provides the reader with a brief but comprehensible overview of the following three issues. First, the authors give a concise outline of *'one of the most important frames to be identified and analysed in print media discourse on football'* (p. 2), 'national identity', of which several definitions are discussed. The next session provides a brief summary of the evolution of football journalism from description-based to interpretative journalism in England, France and Spain. A final theoretical frame is related to different playing styles which are perceived as representatives of national identities. The authors rely on the conceptual model of Larsen (2001), who identifies three levels within which the concept of football playing style operates: (1) the preferred playing style influenced by various socio-cultural factors, (2) the chosen team tactics, and (3) the configuration of the match, the match climate and the playing style. According to the authors, 'quality'

daily newspaper reports always seem to consider *level 3* events (the match as it unfolds) to the interpretive framework provided by *level 2* choices and especially *level 1* factors. Although this theoretical background section provides an excellent starting point for the research conducted by Crolley and Hand, some readers might have welcomed a more elaborated framework.

Overall, I consider *Football and European identity. Historical narratives through the press* a very welcome addition to the sport, media and communication literature. Moreover, the detailed picture of the used methodology makes this book an excellent example for all scholars with an interest in the field of discourse analysis.

References:

- Crolley, L. and D. Hand (2006). *Football and European identity. Historical narratives through the press*. London: Routledge.
- Larsen, O. (2001). 'Charles Reep: A major influence on British and Norwegian football', *Soccer and Society*, 2 (3), pp. 58-78.