"THE WORLD CUP'S UNIVERSE"...AS CONSTRUCTED BY THE US MEDIA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELECT SPORTS COMMENTARIES*

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This paper presents a critical discourse analysis of ten randomly selected sports commentaries published in the US during the 1994 soccer World Cup. The US occupied a prominent position in this tournament mainly because of its role as the host. It is suggested that in response to their country's unusual marginalization in a major world event, the sports commentators in the sample felt the need to construct a positive image of the US. In the articles discussed, the writers construct the soccer-playing world in ways which cast their own country in a rather positive light. They employ various discourse strategies, such as catchy headlines, metaphors, stereotypical images, contrasts, and exclusions, in order to perpetuate certain cultural values and assumptions in favor of their own country.

In the summer of 1994, the world championship in soccer was staged in the United States. In this "sports-infatuated nation" (Lincicome, 1994), voices greatly differed as to what role soccer plays in the life of US citizens. While soccer fans and clubs certainly can be found, disinterest in this sport is also wide-spread. Efforts to establish a strong national league and to win important world tournaments have so far been futile. For the US, there is no claim to fame as far as soccer is concerned, and the nation's role in the "world's most favorite sport" (Editorial *New York Times*, June 17, 1994) has merely been marginal.

In response to this unusual marginalization of the US in a world event, various national newspapers published commentaries defending and justifying their country's lack of interest and accomplishment in soccer. The discourse employed in these articles addresses the nation's apparent move from a central power to an outsider in a world affair, suggesting that the country's superiority and strength lies in its very rejection of a passion shared by the "World Cup's Universe" (*New York Times*, Editorial, June 17, 1994).

This paper investigates the discursive strategies employed by ten sports commentators reporting on the soccer world championship. It discusses the image which these commentators create of the US, and the assumptions and ideologies informing their writings. In the course of our analysis, the images constructed of various other nations, such as Brazil, England, Russia etc., is addressed as well. The first part of the paper will outline the theoretical foundations of the investigation and comment on newspaper articles as a source of data. The actual analysis will then focus on ten randomly selected articles published in six daily national newspapers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The theoretical background of this investigation is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This particular approach to the study of discourse aims at uncovering the relations between discourse, power, and social inequality. Discourse, from the perspective of CDA, plays a crucial role in the production and reproduction of structures of dominance. As the mediating link between social structures and discourse, Van Dijk (1991) proposes social cognitions. Forms of social cognition, he claims, include opinions, generally shared values, ideologies, and norms. These structures monitor social interaction and underlie social and cultural organization. They also link domination and discourse and explain the production and understanding of text and talk.

CDA explores the ideological assumptions contained in and activated through discourse. Ideologies, as Shi-xu (1994) phrases it, are "those discursive strategies that are tailored to maintain or establish social, cultural control to the extent of achieving domination or resistance" (p. 648). Shi-xu distances himself from scholarly approaches which situate ideology in the (un)conscious or

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define it as a distinct set of ideas and beliefs existing separately from discourse. He argues that discourse is essential for the expression of ideas and beliefs, and therefore plays a central role in the concept of ideology. From the perspective of CDA, discourse is "a process in which ideology operates and a mode in which it exists" (Shi-xu 1994, p. 645.).

CDA investigates how discourse is used to activate specific, preferred understandings or interpretations of texts. In composing an oral or a written text, speakers/writers choose among a multitude of linguistic forms available. Each particular choice is essential in creating a subjective form of reality (Fowler 1985; Kress 1990; Van Dijk 1991).

> All linguistic forms always express a particular stance, modality, or inflection of the thing to be represented. [...] To use language is always, inevitably, to enter into particular positions. (Kress 1990, p.90)

Critical discourse analysts are interested in analyzing why one form of expression is chosen over another and what ideological assumptions are represented in this choice. According to Blommaert and Verschueren (1991), the most "normal, seemingly unquestioned ways of speaking "(p. 505) are premier sites for investigating "the underlying assumptions about the self, the other, and their mutual relationships" (Blommaert and Verschueren 1991, p. 505). Like any other form of utterance, these texts necessarily contain an ideological stance. However, since they are relatively common and often appear self-evident, the ideological assumptions which they carry usually go unchallenged.

In their analysis of minority politics in Belgium, for instance, Blommaert and Verschueren (1991) expose the power structures hidden within the seemingly objective language of mainstream political texts and news reports. The authors demonstrate how generally accepted ways of speaking about the Other, who in this particular case is migrant workers in Belgium, contain underlying assumptions which actually scorn these workers. The authors' pragmatic analysis demonstrates that the implications raised by an utterance are as important as the explicit statement.

Fairclough's (1989) comparison between CDA and speech act analysis (SAA) provides further illustration of a critical approach to the study of discourse. Fairclough discusses the utterance *The door is still open*, spoken by a teacher in a classroom context. From an SAA point of view, it is sufficient to investigate the immediate textual and contextual conditions which inform the interpretation of the utterance as a command. CDA, on the other hand, is interested in the power structure which enables this speech act. It attempts to relate the description of language use to a larger sociopolitical power structure and ideological background. Fairclough (1989) argues that this particular utterance will only be understood as a command in a traditional classroom environment in which power relations between students and teachers are hierarchically organized and obvious to all participants.

As stated above, the main objective of CDA is to unravel the relationship between discourse structure and social power structure, and to "help increase the consciousness of how language contributes to the dominance of some people by others" (Fairclough 1989, p.231).
This kind of analysis frequently focuses on aspects of domination and subordination. The discourse in our sample, however, is not directed at a dominated group of people. Rather, it has been written for the dominant, mainstream audience itself. Van Dijk (1991) explains that

> in discourse understanding and reproduction by the (dominant) audience itself [...] we will generally expect the discourse to focus on the persuasive marginalization of the "other" by manipulation of event modes and the generalized attitudes derived from them. (p. 265)

The following analysis will explore the discourse strategies employed by ten US sports commentators to evoke and perpetuate culturally shared norms and assumptions. The discussion will demonstrate how headlines, stereotypes, metaphors, contrasts, and omissions are employed for framing the Other in a negative light in order to improve the image of the "Self," in this case the US.

DATA ANALYSES

As mentioned above, ten sports commentaries written by ten different male authors were selected at random from six daily US newspapers (*Chicago Tribune, LA Times, New York Times, USA Today, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post*). While nine of the articles appeared during the months of June or July 1994, one was published as early as December 1993 (Weir, *USA Today*, December 17, 1993).

For a variety of reasons, newspaper articles provide an excellent site for undertaking CDA. News coverage in general is important in the transmission and perpetuation of cultural values and assumptions (Van Dijk 1988). As Van Dijk (1993) points out, "managing the mind of others is essentially a function of text and talk" (p. 254). Newspaper articles are a form of public discourse created to reach a wide audience. They therefore posses the infra-structure and the power to influence and "manage the mind" of a multitude of people. To many readers, they might seem nothing but an objective source of information on national and international events. However, like any form of text, these articles are bound to contain particular ideological stances (see *Review of Literature*). According to Nir and Roeh (1992),

> journalistic coverage of a sociopolitical reality is by necessity replete with ingredients of utopia and nostalgia, judgment and value-setting, even when the motive underlying the journalistic practice is an ideology of objectivity. (p. 47)

Since newspaper articles can be counted among the most everyday of texts read on a routine basis, the cultural biases and values they contain are likely to go unnoticed and unchallenged. It is the purpose of this analysis to investigate the ideologies and norms which not only inform our sample of articles, but which, at the same time, are perpetuated in these writings.

HEADLINES

According to Van Dijk (1991), headlines are crucial in the understanding of a text. Since they are usually read first, they provide the organizational structure and the referential framework for the passages to follow. Since headlines are generally short and aimed at catching the reader's attention, they are also the most likely information to be retained from a newspaper article. Furthermore, they serve as advance organizers, activating the reader's background knowledge and assumptions. Van Dijk (1991) claims that headlines "often have ideological implications" and provide a "subjective definition of the situation" (p. 51). They are the mental representations of the world as the newsmakers see it. The writer of the headline is not always identical with the author of the article. Rather, in many newsrooms, the editor creates the title of an article. Van Dijk (1991) suggests, therefore, that headlines could also be read as representative for the newspaper's general ideological orientation.

The headlines introducing our commentaries on the soccer World Cup frequently contain allusions and images which are aimed at evoking feelings of national pride and superiority in the readers. "The Spirit of America Greets Arrival of the World" (*Washington Post*, June 17, 1994), for instance, reminds readers of certain core values of the US society, such as independence, opportunities, and happiness for everyone. In this particular headline, two different entities are created: the world on the one hand and the US on the other. The choice of words, however, does not create the image of a nation left in isolation. Instead, the phrase reminds readers that they should be proud to be citizens of their country - rather than the world. If US citizens cannot be proud of their accomplishments in soccer, other qualities are evoked to make up for this. What does the world have to offer? Not much, according to this headline. "America" is characterized by its "spirit," the world, on the other hand, does not seem to have any distinctive attributes. While this headline evokes an image of "America" and its people, it fails to characterize the rest of the world.

Various headlines in our sample of articles refer to the World Cup as something alien. "Futbol on the 4th of July" (Sterba, *Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 1994), for instance, contrasts two

issues: the foreign nature of the sport and the national independence of the US. The unusual orthographic representation "Futbol" identifies the event as something foreign. The headline visually exemplifies the incompatibility of this foreign affair and the US. No regret is implied, however, since "Futbol" obviously is not something intrinsically American. Furthermore, "Futbol" is likely to index "football" to most Americans. This introduces another dimension of contrast, since football is generally a fall sport. This particular kind of "Futbol," however, is played in the summer, and thus incompatible with US traditions.

STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes have been widely studied in the area of social psychology, and various theories explaining stereotype formation exist. According to Van Dijk (1984), a landmark work in stereotype research was published in 1922 by the American journalist Walter Lippman. Lippman was the first to apply the term stereotype within the social sciences, describing the ways in which people perceive the world around them. Lippman claims that

> for the most part, we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world, we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture. (Lippman 1922, p.81)

Up until the late 1960s, the main strands of stereotype research explained the human tendency to stereotype either as a social or an individual, psychological need (Van Dijk 1984). In 1969, a landmark article published by Tajfel initiated a profound change in the area of stereotype research (Stroebe & Insko 1989). Tajfel (1969) criticized the then prevalent "blood-and-guts model" (p. 80) of research which did not allow for reason as a factor in the formation of stereotypes. He claimed that stereotypes can originate irrespective of social influences and are regular cognitive structures (see also Hamilton and Gifford, 1976).

Interestingly, Tajfel's later work has moved away from a merely cognitive approach, and helps to define a different angle for stereotype research. Tajfel is one of the founders of Social Identity Theory (Van Dijk 1984), which emphasizes the importance of stereotypes for the definition of group identities. According to this theory, stereotypes help differentiate between in-group and out-group cohesion in a positive way (Tajfel 1981). Tajfel's approach to stereotyping provides the basis for our understanding of the ten sports commentaries. By creating negative heterostereotypes, i.e. stereotypes of the out-group (the Other), a positive image of the in-group (in this case, the US) is created.

Illustrations of this strategy abound in Kamm's article on Brazil (*Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 1994), a country renowned for its expertise in soccer. Brazil's expertise might create a particular need for positive identification and differentiation of the US on the part of this sports commentator. He evokes the following stereotypes: (1) South American countries are as superstitious, and (2) foreigners are dirty. Describing the "soccermania" in Brazil, the author claims that there are various theories attempting to explain the Brazilians' behavior during soccer tournaments:

> There's the progressive school, which believes that [the Brazilian fans'] undergarments definitely don't influence the Brazilian squad's performance. There's the liberal school, which holds that you have to wear the same underwear as long as Brazil wins, but "you can wash between games," says one of its exponents, historian Adam Gryzbowski. And then there's the fundamentalist school, for which washing one's underwear, let alone changing it, between games is akin to treason. (Kamm, *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 1994)

This passage rests on the wide-spread assumption that cultural practices of other nations are often different and strange. Instead of appreciating this assumption of possible differences, however, the writer uses it to devalue another nation. The "expert" voice of a historian which is

inserted is supposed to underscore the statement's validity. The passage reflects the Western cultural tradition of categorizing the world and rendering it in scientific terms. The contrast which is created between the (seemingly) scholarly US sports writer and a superstitious Brazil ridicules the South American country and perpetuates stereotypical images.

In addition to cultural practices, foreign names also serve as a source for stereotyping in our articles. When describing an actual soccer game, one columnist remarks:

> A lot of guys named Pedro and Boris and Hwana run around in short pants playing toesy with a ball for half a day. (Sterba, *Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 1994)

This statement suggests that soccer players are foreigners without a distinct identity. Foreigners, it is implied, occur in large numbers, all holding the same names. The omission of last names indicates that as individuals, they are of little importance. In disparaging citizens of other nations, these nations themselves are scorned and dismissed as unimportant.

In another article, the stereotype of foreigners with unpronounceable names is evoked. Howe gives his readers the following advice:

> There are many soccer superstars [...] Don't worry about memorizing all their unpronounceable names. These will do: Jürgen Klinsman [YOOR-gen KLINZ-man] of Germany, Roberto Baggio [ro-BEEERRRR-to BAAAA-gee-oh] of Italy, Romario [ro-MAAAR-i-o] (they go by one-name soccer nick-names down there) of Brazil [bra-THEEEEL] Claudio Caniggia [CLOUD-ee-o ca-NITHCHGK...oh, never mind] of Argentina. (Howe, *Washington Post*, June 18, 1994)

Although Howe admits that there are superstars in soccer, he immediately lowers their fame by claiming that knowing their names is not important. Again, soccer is identified as an entirely foreign sport, played by people not worth knowing.

It is interesting to note that in this passage, Howe also perpetuates a common stereotype of US Americans. Assuming that his readers are ignorant of foreign pronunciations, the author construes them as monolingual and uneducated. At the same time, he creates an image of himself as the informed reporter and expert on foreign pronunciation.

In the above passage, Howe degrades one nation in particular. He frames Brazil as an unimportant country, suggesting that his readers might not even know how to pronounce it. Moreover, he refers to the country's geographical location with "down there," implying its inferior status. "Down there" provides rather vague geographical information, and indicates that Brazil's part of the world is not too important. Scorning this South-American nation that excels at soccer, the news writers raise their own nation's image. It is interesting to note that such derogatory treatment of foreign names and countries generally does not occur in the Olympics, another global sports event.

METAPHORS AND IMAGES

Apart from stereotypical depictions, metaphors are also frequently employed for casting the rest of the world in a negative light. To call the "soccermania" (Kamm) a "World Cup fever" (Feldman) is common in the articles selected. Various writers, however, carry the metaphor further. Sterba (*Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 1994) wonders whether the interest in soccer "is a scratchy throat that will turn into something real serious." Feldman claims that "evidence persists that, at best, [the World Cup fever] is a low-grade infection" (*LA Times*, June 26, 1994). By linking interest in soccer to diseases, the sport is turned into something undesirable transmitted by the soccer-playing nations. The metaphors used do not allow for a positive identification with the nations taking part in the tournament.

Soccer in the US, Sterba writes, seems "about as popular as an oink in Saudi Arabia" (*Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 1994). This statement shows a clear lack of respect for different religious orientations on the part of the sports commentator. Had he explicitly mentioned the Saudi's avoidance of pork, Sterba's statement would not have been as degrading. Representing this

nation's religious orientation through the sound of an animal, Sterba certainly ridicules Saudi-Arabia.

In various articles, soccer is also compared to a "game for the playground" (Sterba, *Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 1994), or a "prom for ninth graders" (Brooks, *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 1994). By depicting the sport in this way, the commentators assume the position of adults who have outgrown this game in which you find "grown men running around in kiddie clothes" (Sterba, *Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 1994). Soccer is displayed as a primitive sport, and those who play it are just as simple.

> No doubt, groups of cavemen would kick rocks around on Saturday afternoon while their cave-wives rolled their eyes. (Howe, *Washington Post*, June 18, 1994)

Picturing a world engaged in a primitive and child-like game, the sports reporters justify their nation's apparent disinterest in a sports event that has so many nations passionately involved.

Syntactic structures also serve to associate soccer and, by implication, the soccer-playing nations, with negative images.

> (1) Not long ago, America was largely a drug-free, graffiti-free, and soccer-free zone.[...]
>
> (2) The planet is filled with starvation, war, disease, inconceivable cruelty, and soccer fans." (Sterba, *Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 1994)

The strategy of combining soccer with negative nouns and choosing "soccer" as the list's climax in both sentences might entice the reader to giggle. However, in (1) this kind of structure also puts soccer on the same negative level as drugs and graffiti. Both phenomena are connected to subcultures. By association, those nationalities introducing soccer to the US are characterized as yet another subculture. The global concerns mentioned in (2) further link soccer to negative images and question the priorities which govern the world outside the US.

CONTRAST: "US" VERSUS "THEM"

The Tortured Europeans

Brooks (*Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 1994) echoes the general dislike of soccer voiced in our sample of articles. He considers the issue in its global context and claims that "the clash over soccer is not just a matter of taste but a conflict of civilizations." He does not stop at this assertion, but implicitly provides his evaluation of these civilizations. His article evokes the stereotypical view of Europe as the cradle of many literary talents.

> Watch the players, especially the European ones, during the games. There's no high-fiving, fanny-slapping encouragement, just 22 tortured souls - Dostoyevsky steals the ball and passes it over to Kafka on the wing. (Brooks, *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 1994)

What the author alludes to here is the stereotypical image of Europe as the center of Western literature. However, with Dostoyevsky and Kafka as its major representatives, this image is framed in a very specific way. As writers, both Dostoyevsky and Kafka are preoccupied with profound existentialist issues, and their works are likely to instill feelings of uncertainty and pessimism in the reader. With this in mind, Brooks' article seems to ridicule the Europeans who manage to experience pain and plight even during an event which should be filled with pleasure and fun.

Brook's article depicts the soccer-playing nations as lacking in vigor, initiative, and creativity. The Norwegians, for instance, made it into the World Cup, simply

> because they discovered that if you remove any hint of imagination or flair from your own game, you can create an atmosphere of mindnumbing ennui not only among the fans, but also on the opposing team. They get so bored that they neglect to defend your players on one of your rare offensive turns, and you win 1-0. (Brooks, *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 1994)

In this passage, Brooks suggests that neither imagination nor ability are essential for participation in the World Cup. To be as boring as possible, he claims, is the decisive factor. He seems to imply that the US should be glad about its marginal position in this particular world event. The nations involved, Brooks indicates, lack certain positive characteristics which are generally considered important for achieving success.

Violence

In his article "Soccer for the Soccer-Impaired," Howe addresses the issue of violence associated with soccer games. In his commentary, he contrasts instances of violence in the US with those in other nations, and constructs a positive image of the US. Howe first singles out England, a country infamous for its soccer matches and related violent outbursts.

> Most Americans have learned only one thing about soccer. English soccer fans kill people. This is outrageous. I can personally vouch for 12 Englishmen who haven't slaughtered anyone. This undeserved rep is akin to saying Americans kill German tourists. There have been some very gruesome incidents involving, yes, the Brits. At a soccer game in Belgium, visiting Liverpool fans attacked fans of the Italian team Juventus. A wall collapsed and 39 people died. In 1989, a riot at a soccer game in Sheffield, England, left 96 dead. (Howe, *Washington Post*, June 18, 1994)

In this paragraph, the writer apparently provides evidence that the stereotypical association *England - soccer - violence* is incorrect. However, his evidence is merely personal and the figure he provides almost negligible. The numerical proof in fact serves to weaken his assertion that English fans are not violent, and supports the assumption that the fans are hooligans. The writer's style implies that his positive attitude towards the British is based on personal evidence. It seems that he is forced to admit that, "yes, the Brits" have been involved in some incidents. The adjective "gruesome" puts these incidents into a very serious light and stands in contrast to the casual tone of the rest of the sentence. This contrast questions the credibility of the writer's initial statement. Furthermore, the figures cited in the remainder of the passage erase the weight of Howe's reassurance which is based on personal experience. The structure of the excerpt thus actually serves to reinforce the image of the British as violent.

Almost hidden in this paragraph is the suggestion that violence can be found in the US as well. Since the one sentence hinting at this issue is embedded in allusions to British violence, its content almost goes unnoticed. Moreover, since the British incidents are actually supported by figures, they seem concrete and serious. Compared to the high numbers of casualties at the British incidents, the killings of an unspecified number of tourists in the US appear to be of minor importance only.

Later in the same article, Central and South America are reprimanded even more strongly than England.

> [...] for real macho soccer violence, the finger should point south, not east. Members of an Argentine soccer team kicked a linesman [...] to death in 1972. In 1964, when a referee disallowed a goal in a tense match between Argentina and Peru, the ensuing pandemonium left 318 dead and 500 injured. And in 1969, El Salvador and Honduras went to war over soccer. [...] Makes those Merseyside louts look like teddy bears, doesn't it? (Howe, *Washington Post*, June 18, 1994)

Introducing the paragraph with "for real macho soccer violence," the writer indicates that the situation in Central and South America is worse than it is in Britain. When he discusses the incidents in Britain, Howe identifies the exact location and even the name of one of the clubs involved. When mentioning the occurrences in Central and South America, however, Howe does not specify any club or city. This strategy causes the entire countries to appear implicated. Referring to an unspecified "Argentine soccer team" also lets the Argentineans appear uncontrollable and unidentifiable. Against the backdrop of the negative picture painted of England and Central/South America, the US is cast in a rather positive light in this article.

COUNTRIES (NOT) MENTIONED

As already stated, the US team is not among the world's most famous soccer teams. The sports commentators in our sample appear to compensate for their team's marginalization in a world tournament by degrading various other nations involved in the event. The strategies they employ to this effect activate and perpetuate certain cultural stereotypes and assumptions. Above, we have already considered Brazil in this context. Weir's passage in *USA Today* ridicules another country, Russia.

> The rest of the world, we keep getting reminded, loves soccer. Surely, we must be missing out on something. Uh, isn't that what the Russians told us about communism? (Weir, *USA Today*, December 17, 1993)

For many of our contemporaries, the recent collapse of the Eastern block countries provides proof of the failure of communism. They feel confirmed in a belief which they have long harbored. The general tendency in the US certainly was to dismiss communism as inherently negative. Equating soccer with the threat of communism, Weir seems to imply that the world outside of the US is full of potentially negative influences, and that the US has so far wisely and correctly remained immune to these influences. Weir thus attempts to induce in his readers a negative attitude towards the rest of the world as represented by Russia.

The only other countries explicitly mentioned Weir's article are Cameroon, Uruguay, Madagascar, and Bulgaria. The author claims that

> there's a good reason you don't care about soccer, even if it's the national passion of Cameroon, Uruguay and Madagascar. It's because you're an American. (Weir, *USA Today*, December 17, 1993)

Weir chose to name countries which are relatively small and have not filled our news with any major political or sociocultural developments. Their absence from our landscape of global issues is likely to lead readers into believing that these countries are insignificant. Based on this assumption, there appears to be no need to show any interest in them.

In composing a text, writers face certain choices as to what to include and what to leave out. It is important to note that meaning is not only derived from what is explicitly mentioned. Gaps or exclusions in a text can be as telling as the actual text. Weir, for instance, explicitly names only smaller countries which are not too crucial to the sociopolitical reality of the US. Had he instead mentioned the names of soccer-playing countries like Italy, England, or Brazil, this would have evoked more complex associations in the readers. Since the relations between the US and those nations are more involved, these countries and their national interests cannot be so easily dismissed.

Along a similar vein, Feldman's article (*LA Times*, June 26, 1994) marginalizes less known countries and thus underscores the status of the US in the world. In order to retain his seemingly objective voice as a news writer, Feldman creates an interviewee who inserts certain ethnocentric remarks, such as: "I suppose I'm interested in the United States. But Cameroon? That sounds like a cookie" (*LA Times*, June 26, 1994). This comparison shows considerable arrogance and implies the apparent insignificance of small and lesser known countries. This remark is likely

to be offensive to many readers as well, since it alludes to the stereotype of Americans as ignorant of world geography.

CONCLUSION

In the 1994 soccer World Cup, the US occupied a prominent position mainly because of its role as the host of the tournament. In response to their country's unusual marginalization in a major world event, the ten sports commentators in our sample felt the need to construct a positive image of the US. In the articles discussed above, the writers construct the soccer-playing world in ways which cast their own country in a rather positive light. They employ various discourse strategies, such as catchy headlines, metaphors, stereotypical images, contrasts, and exclusions, in order to degrade other countries and to perpetuate certain cultural values and assumptions in favor of their own country. The articles considered in this analysis aimed at depicting the US' apparent isolation in a world event as an actual sign of strength and superiority.

The preceding analysis was conducted from the (inevitably subjective) perspective of a female German discourse analyst. It would be interesting to examine this same analysis from the perspective of CDA and to reveal the cultural assumptions and ideologies contained in it. For further research, it would also be interesting to compare this author's interpretations to those of different readers from different cultural backgrounds.

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