View from the Press Box:

Media Representations of Muslim Football Players in France

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International Affairs Honors
Spring 2021

Defense Copy
Defense Date: April 2, 2021

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the convergence of the positive sentiments around the multiracial and multi-religious French football team and the pervasive anti-Muslim sentiment in French society by conducting research on portrayals of Muslim football players on the French national football team over a span of twenty-one years. Conclusions were drawn from a content analysis of newspaper articles from four French publications—*Le Monde, Le Figaro, L'Humanité*, and *La Croix*—and supplemented by a questionnaire answered by over fifty French residents. The content analysis and questionnaire provided evidence for multiple patterns of representation. Minority players were subjected to portrayals of symbols of integration, notional acceptance, and brawn versus brains, Orientalist, and clash of civilizations rhetoric, while the team as a whole was often praised as a symbol of the multicultural quality of French society. The presence of these patterns of representation in both the media and questionnaire show that these racist discourses operate in French society and help explain why even second and third generation immigrants are not accepted as French. Additionally, these discourses and the writings about the French team as a symbol of multiculturalism suggest that this symbolism is superficial and only meant to appear as the acceptance of diversity. Rather, the French team is more a symbol of assimilation where minorities rarely speak of their different values and instead dedicate themselves to French victory.

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Introduction

France has the largest population of Muslims in Europe and a complex history with Islam. Long considered the daughter of the Catholic Church, France marked Muslims as the enemy beginning with the First Crusade, which pitted Christianity against Islam. When France took colonies in the Maghreb (North Africa), it interacted with Muslims in a way that reinforced its view that the West was superior. Colonial histories describe France as bringing progress to North Africa and "saving" the indigenous people from ignorance and Islam (Burke, 1998). In the Algerian war for independence from France in 1954 to 1962, both French and Algerian tactics included terrorism and torture. The *Front de Libération Nationale*, the leading Algerian guerrilla group during the war, drew most of its rhetoric from Islam, which gave rise to French resentment and fears of North African Muslims (Fetzer & Soper, 2004, p. 64).

Beginning in the 1970s, Muslim families began to immigrate to France in large numbers. The influx of Muslims corresponded with the appearance of Far-Right parties and racializing discourse about North African immigrants (Cesari, 2004). The anti-immigration and anti-Muslim rhetoric of France's National Front party (now National Rally: *Rassemblement National)* remains pervasive today. Marine Le Pen, the National Front party leader and daughter of the first party leader, advanced to the second round of the 2017 presidential election, proving the continued existence of anti-Muslim sentiment in French society.

Yet France continues to praise its multiculturalism and acceptance of Islam. Its football (soccer) team on which Muslim players have long been present is a good example. France has had an integrated football team longer than any other European country and, in the last twenty years, minorities and the children of immigrants actually have been overrepresented on the national team compared to the ratio in the general population. In 2018 when France won the

FIFA World Cup, fifteen of the twenty-three players on the team were immigrants or descended from immigrants, including the young 18-year-old star Kylian Mbappé (see Appendix A for short player bios). Additionally, seven out of the twenty-three players were Muslims, including Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kanté. Thus, 30% of players were Muslim while only 10-15% of the French population is estimated to be Muslim. A dissonance exists between the celebrated image of France's multicultural and multi-religious national football team as the champions of France, and the French society that votes for Le Pen, bans headscarves in school, and refuses to accept Muslims as fully French. In 2009, a survey found that over 85% of French people believed increasing Muslim identity was a bad thing (Bleich, p. 392). *Laïcité,* the French version of secularism, and the large terrorist attacks by Muslim radicals in the last decade, further complicate discussions of Muslims in France.

This thesis analyzes the convergence of the acclaimed multiracial and multi-religious French football team and the more negative pervasive stigma of Muslims in society by conducting research on portrayals of Muslim football players on the French national team over a span of twenty-one years. It investigates the patterns of representation of Muslim football players in the French media. My guiding questions are: How are Muslim football players on the French national team represented in France's daily newspapers? Does the French policy of *laïcité* function within these representations? And why is there a disconnect between anti-Muslim sentiment in French society and the acceptance of Muslims in football? To reach my conclusions, I analyzed newspapers articles on the French national team from *Le Monde, Le Figaro, L'Humanité, and La Croix* from 1998 to 2018. This analysis is supplemented with a short questionnaire answered by French residents on the topic of French football, the media, religion, and *laïcité.*

Background Information

In 2016, over 25 million Muslims lived in Europe and 5.7 million in France (Pew Research Report, 2017). In 2010, the city of Paris was 10-15% Muslim and Marseille in southern France was 25%. More than half of the immigrants to France are from Africa (Breton et al., 2019). Even if Muslim immigration to Europe were halted, the Muslim population as a percentage of overall population would increase because Muslim women in Europe have higher birth rates. On average, they have one more child than non-Muslims (Pew Research Report, 2017). The birth rate in France has an even wider divide: Maghrebin immigrant women have, on average, 3.5 children while *Français des souche* women have 1.88 children (Volant et al., 2019).

In 2005, Pew Research demonstrated that Islam is the fastest growing religion in Europe (Masci). With the large numbers of Middle East and North African immigrants to Europe coupled with declining religiosity among native European populations, these findings are still relevant. In 2018, Pew Research found that 64% of French people identify as Christian, though only 18% were practicing Christians (Pew Research Report, 2018). However, the younger generation in France is less religious. Stephen Bullivant (2018) found that 64% of young people in France identify with no religion. Of course, not all children of Muslims will choose to adopt Islam. In France, Pew Research finds that 10% of children raised Muslim convert to a different religion or choose no religion (Pew Research Report, 2017). Among Muslims in France in 2017, 56% were practicing believers and 38% non-practicing believers, while 6% claimed to be atheist or non-believers (Ipsos, 2020). Muslim communities in Europe are significant, well established, and growing, yet stigmatization, discrimination, and fears of the unassimilable "other" characterize the West's interactions with Islam. This is because the French perceive Muslims as possessing identities that challenge the common historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds

and identities of the French. This perceived incompatibility is especially prevalent due to France's republican principle of *laïcité.*

Laïcité

Laïcité is usually translated in English as secularism, and it secures for French citizens the right to freedom of religious belief. The 1905 *laïcité* law promised the neutrality of the state in matters of religion. In practice, many French people interpret *laïcité* as designating that religion has no place in public life. The roots of this concept of secularism go back to the French Revolution when the French sought to limit the influence and power of the Catholic Church in their everyday lives. Today, *laïcité* is still a governing value in France and many French people view Islam and *laïcité* as incompatible. The most prominent example of this was the French headscarf affair (*affaire de foulard).*

Since 1881, French public schools have been places of secularism. In 1989 when three schoolgirls were expelled from a public school because they wore headscarves, the controversy commenced a fifteen-year long debate about the place of the headscarf in public schools. In the end, the French government decided to ban "ostentatious religious symbols" in public schools. This ban most heavily effects Muslim girls, Jews who wear a kippah, and Sikhs who wear turbans. In 2010 the government banned the niqab—a head and face covering that reveals only the eyes and worn by some Muslim women—in public spaces, and a ban of full body swimsuits, "burkinis," came later.

Some politicians have initiated discussions on banning the option of pork alternatives in public schools. Former Republican president Nicolas Sarkozy and National Rally leader Marine Le Pen both disparage the accommodation of dietary habits based on religion in secular public

schools (Bohlen 2015; Mondon, 2015). Bohlen (2015) points out what others have noticed; *laïcité* seems to be used as an excuse for the French government to target Muslims. Scholars argue that anti-Muslim sentiment is less about biological racism or because the headscarf and burkini are incompatible with French society, but because the underlying values the republic ascribes to these symbols—female subjugation, patriarchy, and fundamentalism—are deemed incompatible with French values (Mondon, 2015; Bowen, 2011; Adrian, 2006). Islamic values are seen to be in conflict with what it culturally means to be French. The West has always attempted to differentiate itself from Islam. Gottschalk and Greenberg (2008) write that despite Judaism, Christianity, and Islam originating from the same area of the world (only 200 miles apart) and their shared heritage of monotheism, Judaism and Christianity are defined as "Western religious traditions" and Islam is set apart as an "Eastern religious tradition" (p. 6). The line between Islam and Christianity was drawn a thousand years ago and that line is still being defended and perpetuated today.

Multiculturalism and Communitarianism

Despite, or perhaps because, of France's long history as an immigrant-receiving country, many French harbor fears over losing their national and cultural identity. One of the words they use to manifest this fear is communitarianism (*communitarianisme).* Communitarianism is the development of ethnic, religious, cultural, and/or social communities. In France, communitarianism is typically understood to be contrary to French Republican values. This is because communitarianism permits minority groups to create distinct and separate communities that make specific political demands. Montague (2013) writes that "anti-communitarian discourse asserts that recognizing group demands would fracture the Republican community and

create discord within the nation itself" (p. 220). As such, the French perceive minorities who form communities as dividing the nation to the detriment of integration, because they fear members of that community will be more loyal to their community than to France. Thus, the French value *anti-communitarianism*, which condemns the formation of any distinct communities so all people will be loyal to France. This value has the same roots in the French Revolution as *laïcité*. In order for French citizens to be first and foremost loyal to France, citizens had to relinquish their traditionally strong attachments to their religious groups and communities. Muslims tend to retain strong ties to their Muslim communities and therefore are perceived by many French as *not* being first and foremost loyal to France. France's experience with some of its youth being radicalized by Islamic fundamentalism in the past decade has only exacerbated and justified their fears of communitarianism as they see young people raised in France choose political Islam over France.

Multiculturalism has several similarities with communitarianism in both its definition and that it is another concept the French fear will result in the loss of their national identity. Multiculturalism is the presence of several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within society. Though the popularity of multiculturalism as a political ideology has waned considerably in Europe since its inception in the 1970s, many countries have maintained their history of acceptance. France, however, has always been anti-multiculturalist because of its fears of communitarianism and lost cultural identity. Vertovec & Wessendorf (2010) write that "French society has never considered itself to be a multicultural society" (p. 92). Bleich (2009) found that over 85% of French people believed that increasing Muslim identity was a "bad thing" (p. 392) and 46% believed that a Muslim community was "a threat to France's identity" (IFOP & Le Figaro, 2016). Ernest Chenière, the principal who expelled the three girls wearing headscarves in

1989, said, "It is *laïcité* that has allowed the public school to be the melting pot in which […] differences vanish so the nation can emerge" (Fetzer & Soper, p. 62). In France, differences have long been considered a threat. However, not everyone in France is against multiculturalism; May (2016) found that articles about multiculturalism in *Le Monde*, *Libération,* and *L'Humanité* tended to have positive connotations, though *Le Figaro* was very critical, equating multiculturalism with a loss of French cultural identity and anxiety over Muslim integration.

France has chosen to forgo policies of multiculturalism, hyphenated identities, and communal behavior, and continues to force inclusion and monocultural ideals on immigrants and their children. France wishes to unite all of its people around universal principles and values, while other European countries (like Britain and Germany) are more willing to accept minority cultures, customs, and principles, even if the term multiculturalism is no longer used.

Islamophobia

Racial discourse against Muslims is evident across Europe in both right-wing rhetoric (Clare & Abdelhady, 2016; Mayer, 2011; Mondon, 2015) and media coverage (Clare & Abdelhady, 2016, Silverstein, 2000). Politicians and the media often depict Islam as a religion that is culturally incompatible with French society and values (Amara, 2013; Krasnoff, 2016; Mondon, 2015, Silverstein, 2000). Bleich found in 2009 that Muslims were the most disliked religious group in France and over 85% of people in France believed Islam was the most violent religion (p. 391-92). Negative attitudes towards Muslims do not arise only from the right wing. In 2011, Mayer wrote that 35% of the French left believed there were too many immigrants in France and 36% said there were too many rights for Muslims. The large number of terrorist attacks in France in the past decade has likely only increased these feelings.

Anti-Muslim sentiment plays out in more than opinion polls. Minority populations in Europe are overrepresented in lower socio-economic groups (Hermansen, 2016). In France, immigrants have high rates of school dropout and unemployment (Cesari, 2004; Simon, 2003). Second generation Maghrebin immigrants face the same social problems (Alba & Silberman, 2002). A Muslim job applicant is two and half times less likely to receive a call back than a Christian candidate with the same qualifications and country of origin (Adida et al., 2010). Muslims in France also experience discrimination in housing, when stopped by police, at school, and when entering bars and clubs (IFOP, 2019, p. 9). Educational and professional success does not prevent discrimination from occurring (Beaman, 2012). For many second-generation French Muslims, it is incredibly frustrating that French society and *Français de souche* ("French with roots," meaning native born French people) do not view them as French. These second-generation immigrants identify themselves as both French and Muslim, yet French society does not consider them French (Beaman 2016; Penney 2016). The 2005 riots in the Paris suburbs and other cities were partially a result of this socio-economic inequality and the lines the French seem to draw between *Français de souche* and second, or even third, generation immigrants.

The situation for Muslims is complicated by the many terrorist attacks in France carried out by radical Muslims. Much far-right rhetoric intends to link the Muslim communities in France to the jihadists who have attacked France (Mondon, 2015). These attacks include the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting in 2015 where two Islamists attacked the satirical magazine's headquarters in retaliation for a published political cartoon of Muhammed. Also in 2015, radical Islamists attacked several locations in Paris, including a concert and the Stade de France where France was playing a game for the Euro 2016 finals. Dorsey (2016) writes that jihadists target stadiums because of their high media visibility and to appeal to groups with domestic political

grievances. The Stade de France meets both goals as it is located in the Saint-Denis neighborhood (*banlieue*) which is the poorest area of France and often demonized as a breeding ground for radical Islam and crime (Harding, 2019). Attacks continued in 2016 when a man drove his truck into a crowd in Nice on Bastille Day. Stabbings, shootings, and vehicle rammings claimed by the Islamic State characterized the next four years. The proliferation of attacks on French soil by radical Islamists reinforces the notion that Islam is incompatible with French society. Additionally, this narrative of violence from Muslim terrorist organizations in France creates tensions with the local Muslim communities.

Football in France

Governments have sought ways to counter the hostility towards Muslims and encourage assimilation and integration. One tool for integration is sports. Football in France is an important institution. About 45% of French people followed France's premier football league, Ligue 1, in 2019 (Odoxa, 2019). Over two million football licenses—necessary for organized play—were issued in France in 2019, the highest for any amateur sport (Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports & INJEP, 2019). France was also the first European country to have an integrated national football team with over 10% of players during the years 1946 to 1968 with origins outside mainland France (Bretin-Maffiuletti & Erard, 2009; Krasnoff, 2016).

Recent history has been much more checkered. In 1996, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of the National Front party, commented on the fact that the French national football team did not "look" French, nor did some of the members sing the "Marseillaise," the French national anthem (Dubois, 2010). It the aftermath of this comment the national team won the 1998 World Cup. Politicians, the media, and French society heralded the team as being multi-ethnic and

representative of French diversity. Two Muslim players, Zinedine Zidane and Lilian Thuram, scored pivotal goals in the course of the tournament. Zidane, the star player, is of Algerian descent and Muslim faith. Other members of the team were also immigrants, born of immigrant parents, and/or Muslim. It was France's first World Cup win, and the country celebrated with Algerian flags waved alongside the French *tricolore* (Wines, 2010).

This air of euphoria for multicultural France did not last long. In 2001, the French national team played a friendly match against the Algerian team. Many minority supporters booed the "Marsellaise" at the beginning of the game and spectators ran onto the field in the middle of the match waving Algerian flags. The game was never finished. Wines (2010) writes that this incident was a reminder that the 1998 victory with a multiracial team as a symbol of a new, diverse France had not changed conditions for many (p. 129). Anti-immigration ideology and the far right continued to gain popularity. For example, in 2002, Jean-Marie Le Pen of the National Front party advanced to the second round of the presidential election.

In 2006, the French team finished second in the World Cup. Again, the team was incredibly diverse with Muslim players Lilian Thuram and Thierry Henry from the 1998 team joining Zidane, as well as newcomers Franck Ribéry and Eric Abidal. In overtime, Zidane, the star of the 1998 team, received a red card in the 108th minute because he headbutted an Italian player. Many assumed it was because the Italian player, Materazzi, had made racist remarks. France lost 5-3 on penalties.

The 2010 tournament did not see an improvement. With antagonism already brewing between the players and head coach Raymond Domenech, and the absence of Zidane, the French team begun on uneven footing, underperforming in qualifications. Yoann Gourcuff, a young French player, was supposed to be the replacement Zidane. Gourcuff played the same position,

was the same height, and had a very similar playing style to Zidane (Lichfield, 2009). However, unlike most of the players on the team, Gourcuff had grown up in an upper-class region and rumors spread that he was at odds with some of the other players. The *Irish Times* wrote that it was no surprise that conflict erupted: "Gourcuff is seemingly from a different mold to the others" and "Most of France's squad grew up in much tougher conditions in the poorest suburbs" (Spiro, 2010). In the first game against Uruguay, the players Anelka and Ribéry, both converts to Islam and players who rose from difficult conditions to find succuss, refused to pass to Gourcuff (Spiro, 2010). Later, during the tournament, Domenech sent Nicolas Anelka home for insulting him. The next day the team went on strike, refusing to practice because of Anelka's dismissal. France lost the next game and returned home disgraced, with much of the blame falling on the black and Muslim players and the team's lack of "national identity" (Chrisafis, 2011). In other words, the media was blaming differences between players along ethnic or social lines as the root of the team's problems.

A sore spot in France at this time was that some players born in France to immigrant parents chose to play for the national teams of their parents' country rather than France. For example, the Algerian national team that qualified for the 2010 World Cup was called "the other French team" because so many of the players had dual nationality with France and Algeria (Amara, 2013). In 2011, French website Mediapart reported that the FFF (French Football Federation), including new national team head coach Laurent Blanc, had approved secret racial quotas to limit the number of North African origin players in French training camps for those as young as twelve (Chrisafis, 2011). The media offered several hypotheses for the impetus behind the suggested quotas. One theory was to stop training talent that would go play for other national teams, as in the Algerian national team example above. A second theory reasoned that there were

not enough *Français de souche* players on the team. After an investigation, Blanc was cleared of any wrongdoing.

The French team improved in 2014, placing seventh. Notable Muslim players on the 2014 team were midfielder Paul Pogba and forward Karim Benzema. Benzema was involved in a scandal in 2015 that prevented his selection to the French team for Euro 2016. The police were investigated Benzema for alleged involvement in a friend's attempt to extort money from Mathieu Valbuena, a member of the French team. Benzema accused coach Didier Deschamps of not selecting him for the team because of Benzema's North African origins and religion. Benzema justified this accusation by citing Deschamps' decision to also leave fellow Muslim player Hatem Ben Arfa off the French team (Chrisafis, 2016**)**.

In 2018 the French team won the World Cup again, twenty years after its first win. Fifteen players on the winning team were immigrants or the children of immigrants (*descendance directe*), including the nineteen-year-old star Kylian Mbappé. Additionally, seven of the twenty-three players were Muslim. These were Adil Rami, Paul Pogba, Benjamin Mendy, Ousmane Dembélé, Nabil Fekir, N'Golo Kanté, and Djibril Sidibé. Many French were quick to reassert the team's representation of multicultural France.

However, as in 1998, the multiethnic and multireligious team's victory in 2018 may once again be touting a myth of acceptance. Among National Front sympathizers, support for *Les Bleus* is low, only 42% (IFOP & WYYLDE, 2017). In November 2018, Mediapart revealed information that Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), the Ligue 1 team out of Paris, had used a recruitment form where scouts checked a box to note the player's ethnic origin, which is illegal in France. PSG confirmed that the form had been in use since 2013 but blamed the form on an ex-employee (Peltier & Panja, 2018). Further, only a quarter of French people believe that *Les*

Bleus victory will help improve relations between *Français de souche* and French people with immigrant backgrounds (IFOP & Atlantica.fr, 2018). Despite the joy of victory, the divisions and tensions created between Muslims and native French throughout history still exist and impact French society today.

Literature Review and Theory

Sports as a tool of integration

Sports have a long history of being about more than the game itself. Wines (2010) writes that throughout the 19th and 20th centuries the "health of the national was deemed dependent on the well-being of individuals" (p. 116) and that sports were perceived as formative, "as makers of good warriors and citizens, sculptors of character" (p. 118). Government interest in sports can be about physical health, national or community pride, and social integration. In an increasingly globalized world characterized by immigration, Western governments have sought ways to encourage assimilation and ethnic integration. Sports has been one common government tool for integration. Scholars have written about the impact of sports on integration: sports can help people build identity (Walseth & Fasting, 2004; Walseth 2006; Walseth, 2016), keep youth from engaging in delinquency (Walseth, 2016; White Paper on Sport, 2017), and encourage social relationships (Ganideh, 2018; Walseth & Fasting, 2004). Even watching elite sports, such as the FIFA world cup or the Olympics, can be a tool for integration and community-building (Ganideh, 2018; White Paper on Sport, 2017). Sports emphasize more than the formation of social relationships. They can teach values such as equality, solidarity, and compliance with rules (Silverstein, 2000, White Paper on Sport, 2017). These studies lend support to the government policy of emphasizing sports for social integration, shaping belonging, and introducing immigrants to the values of the host society.

In France, football has been used as a tool of integration and assimilation for Muslim children. Silverstein (2000) notes that revitalization efforts in largely immigrant neighborhoods (*banlieues)* often include sports facilities (p. 33). In 1990, the government emphasized sports organizations in the *banlieues* in response to riots and in 1992 the Ministry of Urbanization worked with the Olympique Marseille football club owner to launch a "Youth and Sports" program (Silverstein, 2000, p. 33). Krasnoff (2016) calls football "an incubator of French citizenship" (p. 313). Football in France is also an arena where the French republican value of *laïcité* can be defended. In 2016, the mayor of Nice threatened to pull subsidies from amateur football clubs that allowed Muslim players to pray on or near the football field, which was in opposition to a new secularism charter (Warren, 2016). Through sports programs, the French government can introduce immigrant children to the values of French society and begin the process of social integration.

Sports as a promoter of national identity

Winning brings a sense of pride for both the team who wins and the teams' supporters. Many nations emphasize their athletes' medals at the Olympics every two years because wins by a country's athletes are viewed as wins for that country. Sports teams are, in many ways, national symbols. Dubois (2010) writes that "football teams become symbols for towns, regions, or countries to rally around, and games become opportunities for people to celebrate and perform their allegiance to a particular place" (p. xix). The Institut Français d'Opinion Publique (2020) indicates that 80% of French people support the national football team wearing gear made in France. The French want their national football team to be outfitted in French-made gear to further emphasis the team as a national symbol, as representative of France. Meier and Mutz

(2016) show that athletic success on the field or court is a greater indicator of national pride than success in science, arts, or politics. van Hilvoorde et al. (2010) acknowledge the common political rhetoric of quantifying national pride (e.g., "more wins equal more pride") but that there is no empirical evidence for this concept of national pride. Rather, national pride can experience temporary fluctuations from sport success (van Hilvoorde, 2010). Elling et al. (2014) argue that sports does not increase national pride in general, only national sporting pride, which can "nurture" national pride. However, van Hilvoorde et al. (2010) and Elling et al. (2014) agree that to experience an increase in national pride as a result of sport achievements, the person must have some sense of belonging to the nation. Considering the research on sports as a tool of integration, people often develop feelings of belonging to the nation. Thus, sports are intended to both bring together people of all backgrounds *and* increase their pride in their nation.

National identity and competitions like the Olympics or the FIFA World Cup, however, can reinforce an "us" vs. "them" mentality, especially because the media is a national tool that mostly emphasizes athletes from its own country (Billings & Eastman, 2002). In the realm of sports, the media can influence levels of national pride and identification. Mutz and Gerke (2018) show that national identification is higher in groups who watch an emotionalized media broadcast than a neutrally worded broadcast. Also, the more emotionally invested a person is in the team or the event, the more likely he/she is to experience national identification (Mutz & Gerke, 2018). People watching a victory in highly emotionalized settings like the stadium or a sports bar will experience greater national identification. If the media is highly emotionalized, then people can experience a similar boost in their own homes by themselves. The media's broad reach can bring uninterested parties into the world of sports. For example, in the Netherlands during the 2010 World Cup (The Netherlands played in the championship against Spain) media

attention and the enthusiasm of friends and family drew in people who self-professed to be uninterested in major sporting events (Elling et al., 2014). This is an example of the media's role as an agenda-setter.

Sports figures as symbols

Governments hail professional sports as tools—and symbols—of integration (Ganideh, 2018; Krasnoff, 2016; Silverstein, 2000; White Paper on Sports, 2017). The 1998 French multiethnic national team was a symbol of successful ethnic integration; the chant of the time was "black, blanc, beur," (black, white, Arab) a play on France's colors "bleu, blanc, rouge" (blue, white, red) (Krasnoff, 2016; Silverstein, 2000). During the ensuing celebration after the game, France hailed Zinedine Zidane, a second-generation immigrant, as the hero of the match and projected his image on the Arc de Triomphe. Silverstein (2000) likens the images of Zidane holding the 1998 World Cup and singing the "Marseillaise" as the "postcolonial equivalent of the black soldier saluting the French flag" (p. 41). Wines (2010) dubbed the event mythmaking. Krasnoff (2016) writes that broadcasts of winning athletes are symbols of a reinvented French identity: a multi-racial, multi-ethnic identity. The team's, and Zidane's, victory for France was viewed as an assertion that immigrants had integrated into French society and fit into French identity. The people were praising a multicultural France without divisions, without communitarianism complications. Zidane singing the national anthem was a sign that he was more French than anything else, and this was what successful integration looked like.

France is not the only country to flaunt successful minority athletes. Britain presented Mohamed "Mo" Farah, an Olympic gold medal winning long distance runner, as a symbol to enforce the idea that the United Kingdom was a diverse and multicultural country (Black, 2016).

Female football player Nadia Nadim was born in Afghanistan and immigrated to Denmark as a child. Danish newspapers present her as an example of successful integration (Agergaard, 2019). Surinam-Dutch Olympic medalist Deborah Gravenstijn was "whitened" and naturalized as Dutch through media representations that emphasized her femininity rather than the typical stereotype of a masculine and aggressive black women (Elling & Luijt, 2009). These articles constructed Gravenstijn as a typical Dutch athletic winner despite her ethnicity. Thus, the media represents these athletes as symbols of integration and the ideal ethnic citizen, but in doing so the media denies them of other aspects of their identity. For example, Nadim's identity as a Muslim is hardly mentioned in the media (Agergaard, 2019). A historical example is Jesse Owens, a four-time gold medalist in the 1936 Olympics. Owens was a symbol of minority racial success against Hitler's Aryan ideals. The media wrote about Owens as a hero, an athlete kept completely separate from the man who faced similar racism at home in the United States (Milfourd, 2012). These minority athletes as acclaimed symbols of success are celebrated when they are successful. Millward (2007) argues that immigrant players are never completely accepted. During bad seasons or after tough loses, national differences between players are often expressed through xenophobia and "othering." Turkish football player Mezut Özil, who played for Germany, demonstrates this othering: "I am German when we win but I am an immigrant when we lose" (Bryant, 2018). Minorities often live on this knife-edge of acceptance whereby through their own actions or societal circumstances, they can be claimed by the majority or distanced as "other."

Media on Minorities

Anti-Muslim sentiment is evident across Europe in right-wing rhetoric, media coverage, and opinion polls. For most of French conservative society, Islam is a religion that is culturally

incompatible with French society and values and this is often represented in the media (Amara, 2013; Clare & Abdelhady, 2016; Krasnoff, 2016; Mondon, 2015, Silverstein, 2000). As a result of this perceived opposition, minorities must attempt to fit into French society through both practices and values. Beaman (2012) interviews a Muslim woman who says, "I have to eat pork and drink alcohol—then I would be considered French" (p. 51). Ethnic minorities must continually prove their loyalty to their host country (Fortier, 2005; Mondon, 2015). Even then, minority's otherness is never gone. Newspaper coverage on the children of immigrants who were born in France (and, as such, are French citizens) focuses on discrimination/racism, crime, identity, and *banlieues* (Clare and Abdelhady, 2016). Penney (2016) quotes a North African woman from the *banlieues,* "I am French. But today in France people don't recognize me as completely French…When something bad happens, it's always the fault of immigrants, or the fault of Muslim people." This quote is almost exactly like that of football player Mezut Özil who said he was identified as an immigrant when the team lost. Thus, acceptance of minorities in the majority is notional in many aspects of life, including sports.

Although governments promote sports, and football in particular, for the purpose of integration, discrimination and racism exist in the world of sports, as well. Massao and Fasting (2014) found that in Norway minority male athletes were associated with perceptions of being troublemakers and minority female athletes were perceived as second rate and passive. In Norway, sports, while meant to help integration, are still organized around the norms of the dominant white majority, and so minorities are still "others" (Massao & Fasting, 2014). In the American NBA, as of 2010, more fouls were awarded against players by referees of opposing race than own-race referees (Price & Wolfers). Hamza Azaoum, a coach for a Muslim football club in Germany, believes that his team is discriminated against by referees because of their

religion. In response to a player being suspended for six games, Azaoum said, “Had his name been Thomas, and he was a Christian, he would have been suspended for only two matches” (Shavit, 2019, p. 283).

Western media use Orientalist and “clash of civilizations” rhetoric to frame immigrant players as irrational, violent, and an opposing “other” (Amara, 2013). Orientalism, a term coined by academic Edward Said from 1978, is the imperialist framing of the inferior and irrational East as antagonistic to the superior and rational West, while clash of civilizations is a theory created by Samuel Huntington that argues future conflict will be between cultures and religions rather than countries. Researchers have identified themes and discourse from these two concepts in media reports about minorities. Another pattern in sports reporting portrays white athletes as successful because of hard work, commitment, and intelligence while black athletes succeed based on innate athletic skills and physical capabilities (Billings & Eastman, 2002; Hughey & Goss, 2015). Even multiracial athletes who challenge racial identities are ascribed either the “black brawn or white brains” identity (Deeb & Love, 2018). The inherent duality implicit in presenting success as a result of either physical or intellectual capabilities creates stereotypes connected to skin color. A Maghreb origin coach in France said,

> They think we (Maghrebin) are too vindictive, too cunny. If we are defenders, we are brutal. If we are attackers, we are selfish. Blacks suffer from another kind of racism than us, especially if they come directly from Africa. They are seen as primitive, not very clever, made to be obedient. But if they come from the neighborhood, they are “scums”, like us. Still strong and tough, but wild (Bradbury et al., 2018, p. 324).

This quote shows the attribution of characteristics based on ethnicity and race, which are very problematic stereotypes that are often reinforced in the media.

Researchers have also found that minorities are more accepted when they frame themselves like the majority group. Just as one Muslim girl commented that eating pork and

drinking alcohol helps others accept her as French, King (2004) asserts that black football players in England must "play the white man" to be accepted in football. In Dutch football, the media confirms and naturalizes racial and ethnic discourses, but also sometimes challenges them (van Sterkenburg et al., 2012).

The media has a position in most Western countries in which it can influence opinions and beliefs. In all, negative media portrayals of minorities tend to use "clash of civilization" and "othering" rhetoric, "black brawn vs. white brains" rhetoric, or it "whitewashes" minority players and ascribes to them the identity of the perfectly assimilated ethnic citizen.

While these studies describe common themes in media representation of minority athletes, the representations of Muslim football players in France specifically has not been studied. This study, then, seeks to discover the patterns of representation of Muslim football players and to determine if the French media follows the same themes presented above: presenting players as symbols of integration, subjecting footballers to notional acceptance based on performance, and using clash of civilizations and brawn vs. brains rhetoric to present players. *Laïcité,* communitarianism, and multiculturalism are also critical.

Methodology

The purpose of this research is to determine the media representations and public perception of Muslim football players in France through a content analysis of print media articles about the French national football team. Four French daily newspapers—*Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *La Croix,* and *L'Humanité*—provide the foundation for this research. To supplement the newspaper analysis, I emailed an online questionnaire to a small network of acquaintances living

in France. The questionnaire asks opinion questions on the French national football team, religious expression in football, and media representations of footballers.

Why Newspapers

Agenda setting and framing are two roles that are often associated with the media. Agenda setting theory posits that the media influences the public by prioritizing certain topics while placing less importance on others, and framing theory suggests that media can affect how audiences interpret events (de Coninck et al., 2019). In other words, how journalists and the media position and write about certain events can influence how audiences think about those events. Many scholars have found support for framing theory, particularly in news media about immigrants and minorities. For example, Park et al. (2012) found that the media emphasized race in the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting by positioning the incident within the contexts of other shootings by Asians rather than within the context of other school shootings.

De Coninck et al. (2019) tie framing theory to social identity theory, explaining that stereotypes disseminated in the media can lead to prejudices against all members of an outgroup (p. 125). They find this to be the case in Belgium: commercial television news reports that negatively portrayed immigrants were associated with negative attitudes towards immigrants in watchers (De Coninck, 2019, p. 135). However, in Sweden, they found the news to not be significantly positive or negative when reporting on immigration (De Coninck, 2019, p. 135). As the news framing was not significant, the researchers were unable to find any connections between the media and audience attitudes in Sweden.

Newspapers in France tend to be politically parallel. Political parallelism is a concept by Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004) that refers to the extent to which the news media reflects

the political divisions in society (p. 21). In other words, political parallelism refers to media that has distinct political orientations or connections to political or ideological organizations. French newspapers have a demonstrated history of political allegiances in how each presents news (Clare & Abdelhady, 2016). For example, the newspaper *La Croix* is a Roman Catholic publication that supports the ideology and opinions of the church. Benson (2002) writes that "journalistic professionalism in France has been defined not as a detachment or distance from political or ideological allegiances, but as the right to hold and defend a set of ideas" (p. 53). As such, French newspapers reflect the partisan and ideological divides of the country. Benson (2010) argues that despite being divided ideologically, French newspapers do make an effort not to be entirely biased in their reporting. However, it is reasonable to expect that the political leanings present in French newspapers may result in more emotional language or forceful language as the newspaper seeks to reinforce its political affiliation. These publications may influence how audiences interpret events or people, which is in line with the framing theory of media, and designates the study of these French publications essential, particularly as to how they portray minorities athletes, specifically Muslims, because of the strong anti-Muslim sentiment present in the country.

Parameters

I performed a content analysis of four French newspapers. The four newspapers were *Le Figaro, Le Monde, La Croix,* and *L'Humanité*. These publications were easily accessible through Nexis Uni, though *L'Humanité* was only available beginning in the year 2002. Seeking to include a left-leaning publication, I decided to use it in the study despite the four years that will be missing. Unfortunately, *L'Équipe,* France's daily sports magazine was not available on the

database during the years under examination. *Libération,* a left leaning publication with a larger circulation than *L'Humanité,* also had a very limited availability. Further, while *Les Echos* has a larger circulation base than *La Croix,* and *L'Humanité,* it is primarily a financial publication.

1n 2019, *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* had the highest daily circulation numbers of any publication in France at over 300,000 each. They are center-right and center, respectively. *La Croix,* a newspaper aligned with the Roman Catholic Church has a circulation of over 85,000, and *L'Humanité,* a left-wing publication, had a circulation of 33,000. The time frame of my study is twenty-one years (1998-2018), from 1998, when the French team first won the World Cup, to 2018, when France won again. This is a natural span of time to encompass wins, losses, and several scandals in the middle.

To find relevant articles, the search terms were very specific as a simple search of only "*football"* AND "*Les Bleus"* generated over 10,000 results. To find a manageable number of articles I used very exact search terms (see Appendix B, Table 2). I choose to study articles about the national football team, called *Les Bleus,* as it attracts more attention than Ligue 1 (the premier football league in France) and participates in the biggest football tournaments in the world, the FIFA World Cup and the EUFA Euro championships. I used several words with different connotations to find articles on Muslims, Arabs, and North Africans because the French tend to be sparing in referring to people by their ethnicity or religion. Religion is considered a very private affair and, because the French have a policy of "colorblindness," meaning they do not take records on a person's ethnicity or race, it is not always common to refer to someone with an ethnic or racial identifier. In total, 440 articles from *Le Monde, Le Figaro, L'Humanité,* and *La Croix* were included in the analysis (see Appendix B, Table 3).

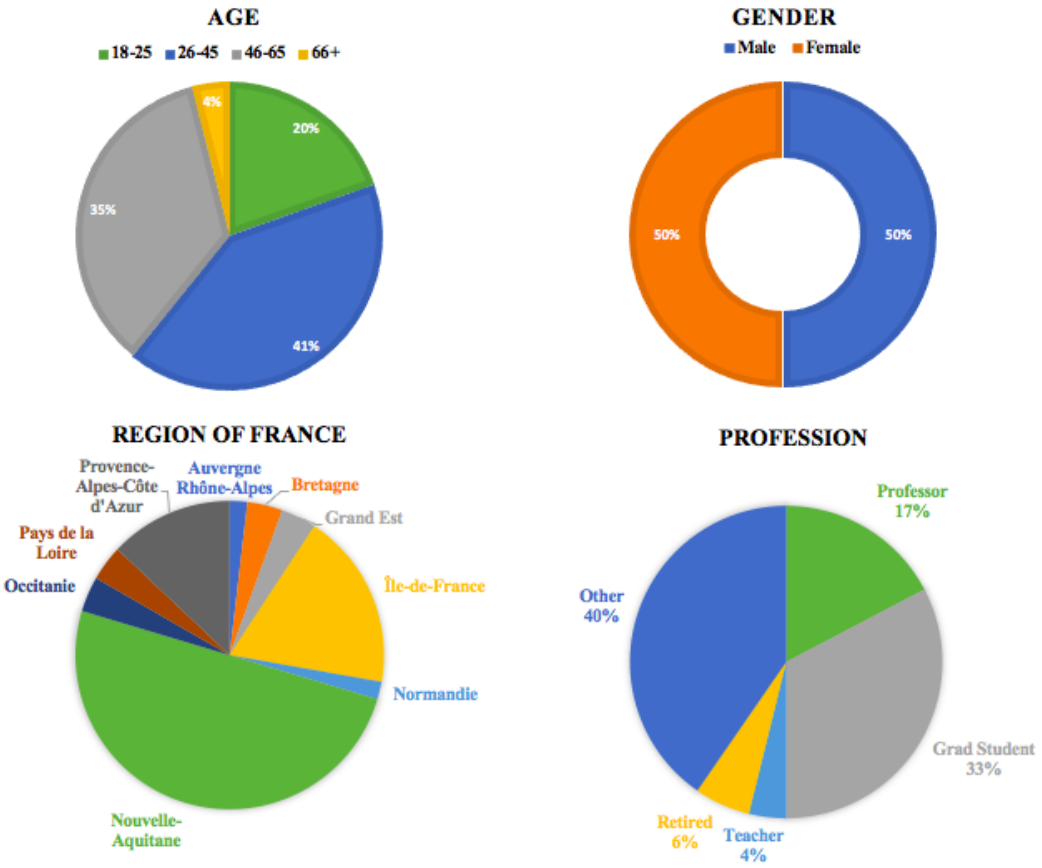
Approach

Using the qualitative analysis software Nvivo, I coded for themes in the articles. During the coding process, I used both a deductive and inductive approach. I used a deductive approach because I developed a theoretical framework based on existing literature on media representations of minority athletes. I coded for words, phrases, and ideas that represent the four themes in my theoretical framework: symbols of integration, notional acceptance, clash of civilizations, and brawn vs. brains. I also coded for the presence of *laïcité* as it is unique to France and may complicate discourse on minorities. I recognized that with a deductive content analysis, there is the possibility of bias as I coded the articles with certain themes in mind. Therefore, I also used an inductive approach because themes may exist that I have not found in the existing literature. If new codes are discovered, I will add them to my analysis. Additionally, I recognized that some or all of the themes found in my theoretical framework may not be present.

The Questionnaire

A second aspect of my research is a short questionnaire sent to a network of contacts in France. The purpose of the questionnaire is to investigate perceptions of French Muslim football players in a small subset of the French population. Survey participants must be eighteen or older and must currently live in France. The survey consisted of a section of multiple-choice questions where participants expressed their demographic information: age, gender, profession, and region of France. The open-ended questions were on the topic of the French national football team, religious expression, and media representations of minority football players. Fifty-two people responded to the online questionnaire. The demographic information is presented below.

Figure 1
Demographic information from the questionnaire



I coded the responses to the open-ended questions for emotions and perceptions directed toward the diverse national team and I compared these findings to the patterns of media representation of French Muslim football players and the French national team with the aim of understanding whether media representations of the French national football team and Muslim players mirror the perceptions of French citizens. It is important to note that while the survey can contribute to the understanding of emotions and opinions present in the French population, I do not seek to address whether French people are influenced by newspapers or newspapers merely reflect what is already believed.

Findings

The newspaper content analysis revealed evidence of Muslim players being portrayed as symbols of integration, experiencing notional acceptance, and being subject to both brawn versus brains stereotyping and clash of civilizations rhetoric. I also found evidence for the French national team being presented as a mirror or reflection of a multicultural society and evidence for the use of football as a tool to integrate and educate minorities on the values of French society. In the category of clash of civilizations, I found evidence for use of Orientalist language depicting footballers as savage and irrational without a direct contrast to the west, so I created a small category titled Orientalism for these one-sided negative portrayals. The clash of civilizations category was then reserved solely for instances when the East and the West—minorities and the French/Europe—are portrayed as opposing or antagonistic.

Table 1
Main themes that were identified and number of articles in each by publication

Themes	Le Monde	Le Figaro	L'Humanité	La Croix	Total
Multicultural Symbol - Positive	32	18	14	11	75
Multicultural Symbol - Negative	21	18	14	10	63
Player as Integration Symbol	26	16	13	13	68
Sports as Integration Tool	28	17	8	10	63
Notional Acceptance	32	9	6	6	53
Brawn vs. Brains	22	8	10	6	46
Orientalism	9	4	1	4	18
Clash of Civilizations	18	8	2	6	34

The themes in the questionnaire are centered around the four opinion questions, which are: whether the French national football is culturally representative of France, whether the FFF encourages religious expression, whether the French media devotes too much attention to footballers of Muslim religion, and how the media presents Muslim football players.

Discussion

Content Analysis of Newspaper Articles

Multicultural Symbol of France

Almost half (205) of the analyzed articles depict the victorious 1998 French national team as a multicultural symbol of France or present individual players as symbols of integration. This section focuses on the articles that discuss the national team as a whole as a symbol or reflection of France. The following section's theme focuses on individual minority players as symbols of successful integration into French society.

The articles that discuss the national team in its entirety as a symbol of a multicultural France most often do so using the coined catchphrase of 1998, "black, blanc, beur." The media discourse around "black, blanc, beur" and the multicultural nature of the team is presented in both negative and positive ways. Seventy-five articles assert positively that the French team was or is a symbol of multicultural integration.

Within these articles, there exists a clear link between the number of positive articles and the years when the French team performed well. For example, eighteen articles in 2018 linked the diverse winning team of 1998 and the diverse winning team of 2018 as symbols of a multicultural French society. In 2000, when the French won the Euro Cup, six articles praised "black, blanc, beur" France. In 2006 when *Les Bleus* reached the final game of the World Cup, eleven articles celebrated the team as a reflection of French multiculturalism. This link between sporting success and the media phenomenon of increased praise for the multicultural nature of the team and increased praise for the team as a mirror of French society years is natural because it is difficult to make an unsuccessful team into a successful symbol of anything. This link also supports the media pattern of notional acceptance, which I discuss in a later section.

An exception to the pattern of better performance equating to more articles about the team's representation of a multicultural France was in 2002. That year, *Les Bleus* did not pass the group stage in the FIFA tournament, yet nine articles praised the team's multicultural make-up. Several of these positive articles written before the World Cup responded to Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of France's far right National Front party, making it to the second round of the presidential election. It was this demonstration of the growing popularity of the far right that inspired several journalists to heavily reassert the strength of France's "black, blanc, beur" national team as a representation of the strength of France's multiculturalism. These articles were written before the FIFA tournament in the summer of 2002, so the team had not yet performed poorly, and its legacy of success was still prominent in French consciousness. While Le Pen's popularity certainly challenged the story of a proud multicultural France, he did not win the second round and journalists understood his loss to mean that "black, blanc, beur" France was victorious. After the 2002 World Cup tournament where France performed poorly, journalists choose to blame the financial success or complacency of France's players for the poor performance rather than identity divisions or failures of multiculturalism. However, in the years to come, journalists would begin to attack multiculturalism as a reason for French football failures.

In these articles that positively link the multicultural French football team to a successful multicultural French society, there are patterns in the way journalists represented this connection. Journalists and the French citizens they interviewed for several articles often used the words "unity" and "communion" to describe the effects of the 1998 and 2018 wins. These people attributed the positive sentiments to the national team, its victory, and its diversity. Journalists and citizens alike seemed to view the French team's diversity as directly correlated to greater

strength in football and therefore an important part of the team's immense success. Several articles also used the team's success to call for more sectors of society to embrace multiculturalism, for example, greater representation of minorities in media and entertainment.

The last major subtheme among these positive multicultural articles revolved around terrorism. Rather than using terrorism to refute the story of a multicultural France, most articles on this subject offered terrorism as a justification that the French team was a strong multicultural symbol of a strong multicultural France. Several articles mentioned the ISIS attack on the Stade de France in 2015. Researchers Dorsey (2016) and Harding (2019) theorize that the French stadium was targeted because *Les Bleus* are more than a football team; they are a symbol of a multicultural France. Thus, the Islamic State targeted the stadium precisely to strike a blow against that symbol and attempt to create division in society. Several journalists supported this theory in their articles, writing that ISIS attacked the Stade de France to attempt to break the French team's symbolism. To break something, it must first be present, so these journalists use discourse around Islamic terrorism in France to strengthen the bond between the French team's multicultural quality and the multiculturalism of French society.

That the French praise their national team as a symbol of multiculturalism and a reflection of the multiculturalism of all of French society seems contradictory because, as mentioned in the background section, the French never embraced a policy of multiculturalism like other European countries. Instead, France pursued policies of integration and assimilation. However, the 1998 team as a symbol of French multiculturalism was compelling to the French *because* of their dislike of multiculturalism. The French team was a symbol that could be characterized as multicultural because of the obviously different origins of the players through their skin color and names, yet the team was actually a symbol of the successful integration of

minorities and *Français de souche* because all of these different players worked toward the same goal: victory. Therefore, the national team was a way for the French to acknowledge that people look different (race, ethnicity), but simultaneously *not* accept any differences in terms of culture, beliefs, and values because those things are not abundantly obvious on the football field. It was clear that the French did not embrace difference in 1998, did not embrace true multiculturalism, because the headscarf affair had been enflamed again only four years earlier and would again become a major point of contention in the early 2000s. Thus, the national team was a kind of surface-level multiculturalism where the French could pretend to embrace the ideology of multiculturalism like other European countries at the time, but maintain their belief in integration and assimilation rather than accept differences. Because this multiculturalism was a façade, it broke down quickly.

Over sixty articles announced the "black, blanc, beur" team as a symbol of multiculturalism as false, a myth, or overexaggerated. With these denouncements of the team itself, the journalists were also refuting that France had a multicultural society. Of these negative articles, the majority were written in years where the French team performed poorly. This correlation follows the theme found above: the French team was unsuccessful, so it was natural to present their symbolism as false or unsuccessful. Most of these articles claim that a multicultural France never existed and use words such as "myth", "illusion", and "dream" to describe the 1998 "black, blanc, beur" team and its message of multicultural France. However, several of these negative articles were also written in 2016 and 2018, years when *Les Bleus* performed well. These negative articles proliferated during these years of successful football playing because journalists wanted to caution the French against letting their hopes get as high as they were in 1998, because, the journalists noted, these multicultural hopes would only be

shattered once again. These negative articles match with the idea that the multicultural team and multicultural France were a façade, and true multiculturalism was beyond the desires of the French.

Several players from that 1998 winning team also denounced the idea of the team as a symbol of multicultural France. In a 2008 *Le Monde* article, Emmanuel Petit from the 1998 team rejected that the French team itself was a multicultural community. He said, "If we had really been the united group that we pretended to be in front of the cameras, we would have formed a body and shown unity in the face of the difficulties that arose afterward" (Mandard, 2008). Petit claimed that while the team may have been successful in football, they were not united as people in the way the French believed. In a *Le Figaro* article from 2007, 1998 player Lilian Thuram said, "In 98, when the French team won the World Cup, I denounced the fiction of a black-blanc-beur France" (Guerin, 2007). Even during the year of the team's greatest success some players did not find the multicultural acceptance that they supposedly represented. These players' opinions support the notion that the French belief of multiculturalism in 1998 was a myth and dream, that multiculturalism was something the French wanted to say they had without really wanting the reality of it or putting in the work to make it a reality.

A common thread among these negative articles was naming events in France that "shattered" the myth of a multicultural France. The most mentioned events were the 2002 popularity of Jean-Marie Le Pen, Nikolas Sarkozy's comments about the *racaille* (scum) in the banlieues, and the 2005 banlieue riots. Articles also mentioned events that happened to *Les Bleus* that shattered their symbolism of the multiculturalism of French society. The most commonly mentioned were the 2010 bus strike in South Africa and Karim Benzema's accusation of racism being behind his non-selection for Euro 16. As Emmanuel Petit said, true multiculturalism

among *Les Bleus* and among French society would have been able to overcome or outlast these events, but multiculturalism was a myth, and these events demolished the ability to continue spouting the myth.

The last theme in this category of negative articles is the assertion that football be treated as only football, rather than a comment on society, and the need to make actual changes in French society. Pascal Boniface, a professor in International Relations at the University of Paris-8, commented in a 2006 *L'Humanité* article that "Football is a weapon against racism. Not an alibi for doing nothing" (Guérard, 2006). As such, Boniface critiqued other journalists and politicians who spoke at length about the national football team proving France's multiculturalism, and thus used the team as an excuse not to put forth policy in that area. Several other journalists wrote that had multicultural policy been created to support the symbolism of a multicultural team, then society could have moved toward truly being multicultural.

In addition to the many positive and negative articles on the multicultural makeup, or lack thereof, of the French team, over forty articles used the catchphrase "black, blanc, beur" in relation to topics other than French football. This catchphrase appeared in articles about the French rugby team and French cycling team; it appeared in articles about ethnic policies in France and about national football teams in other countries. The national football team in Germany was written about several times because it observed France's "black, blanc, beur" success in 1998 and decided to include immigrants on the German national team under the catchphrase "multikulti." The "black, blanc, beur" saying from 1998 developed into a useful catchphrase to signify diversity whether the article was talking about a Muslim woman winning the Great British Bakeoff or the French saying no to an ethnic registration law. It is used both to hail multiculturalism across Europe and to call to mind the bitter illusion of multiculturalism

veiling harsh reality. While articles that praise the multicultural football team as a reflection of French society exist alongside articles that identify that phenomenon as a myth and bitter dream, it is clear that the success of the French team in 1998 and the ensuing narrative of multiculturalism, whether true or not, has stuck in peoples' minds.

Players as integration symbols

While the majority of the representations of the French team as a whole are as a symbol of diversity and multiculturalism, the individual minority players are written about as symbols of integration. In other words, their foreign origins or cultural differences are sometimes mentioned, but the players are praised for being *for* France, for representing their ability to "be French." While many minority players received this treatment in the analyzed articles, Zinedine Zidane was the most common. In total, fifty-seven articles represented specific players as being symbols of integration. Of those articles, forty-eight mentioned Zidane, eight mentioned Kylian Mbappé, six were about Lilian Thuram, and four were about Franck Ribéry. Other players were also included, but not as the focus. The majority of the articles used the word "integration" in reference to the player and their symbolism, though some used variations of "mixed France," "link," and "bridge."

For Zidane, several articles critique him within his role as a symbol of integration, criticizing the star player for not doing more with his symbolic status. A young man from the banlieue's commented about Zidane in 2006, "'I think he has no other ambitions than football'" (Leras, 2006). Emmanuel Petit, Zidane's 1998 teammate, said in 2008, "'With his demi-god aura, Zidane would have the means to help change things'" (Mandard, 2008). The implication in Petit's words is that Zidane did *not* use his influence to effect change. Several journalists criticize

that Zidane was made into a symbol at all, citing Zidane's rashness in headbutting Marco Materazzi in the 2006 final as one of the reasons he should not be an integration symbol or a role model for *banlieue* children. However, other journalists wrote of his headbutt with praise and asserted that it did nothing to destroy Zidane's symbolism of integration. A few articles pointed out that some French people considered Zidane too French to be like immigrant children and too Arab to be French, rather than as a mix or a symbol of integration. Additionally, two articles disparaged France's players in general for being too far removed from the neighborhoods from whence they came because of their money and status, arguing that children from the banlieues can no longer see themselves in the flashy French team.

However, these negative articles are very few. Twenty-five articles praise Zidane specifically as a symbol of integration with seventeen more articles doing so in less explicit terms. In five articles, both Franck Ribéry and Zidane are shown as representing an Islam allied with France. A *Le Figaro* article in 2001 wrote of Zindane, "Zinedine Zidane, born in Marseille but of Kabyle origin, offers young Arabs an accomplished model of alliance between two worlds, Christian and Muslim" (Rioufol, 2001). One article even compared the fervor around Zidane to that of the "messiah" and "savior" (Collier, 2005). The evocation of religious terms is very interesting as the Christian messiah Jesus was, in his time, a rallying point for the persecuted and oppressed Jews in Israel. Framing Zidane in Jesus' image presents the footballer as a rallying point for an equally oppressed population—minorities, particularly Muslims, in France. Many more articles showed examples of immigrants and their children feeling able to identify with the French team. Young people shouted "Liberté, Egalité, Mbappé," a play on the French national motto; a seventeen-year-old boy said, "'The France team represents the youth, thanks to it, we feel proud to be French'" (Bain et al., 2018); and another second-generation

immigrant said, "'I am Moroccan, the French have won, *we* are the strongest'" (emphasis is mine) (Alain, 2000).

A 2018 article in *La Croix* wrote of the significance of these integration symbols. The journalist wrote, "After this World Cup, the gifted Kylian Mbappé or the radiant N'Golo Kanté can replace for people the repulsive figure of Amedy Coulibaly" (Beaud, 2018)[1]. Coulibaly was a Malian-French man who killed four hostages and a policewoman in Paris a few days after the Charlie Hebdo attack in 2015. This article offered Mbappé and Kanté in opposition to Coulibaly because all three share the same skin color. The journalist hoped that with a victory under their belts, Mbappé and Kanté will change the mental equation of dark skin equaling terrorist to dark skin equaling French victory in the World Cup. This mental shift seeks to replace in peoples' minds a figure of terrorism, who is the ultimate example of unassimilated and unintegrated, with these two players who are symbols of integration, who have different skin color but are one hundred percent dedicated to France and her glory and her success.

The French team, but more specifically the minority players on the team with which immigrants and their children could identify, were most often presented by the French media as bridging a gap and connecting parts of French society. Minority sports players on the French national football team are particularly strong symbols of integration because they represent the ideal French minority citizen—one who is dedicated to France. Elite football players, by means of how much time they devote to football, are model minorities as they spend the majority of their time in pursuit of what is, essentially, French glory. These players work to better themselves for their own personal success, but in sports, personal success is often tied up in team success. This is the ideal of integration for France: minorities who join pre-existing French

[1] Original French quotes in author's possession

structures, like the football team, and dedicate themselves to it while espousing French values rather than foreign values. Zidane, for example, is the ultimate French integration symbol because he brought the French team to victory and never challenged the state, never used his position to effect change. Instead, this son of foreigners dedicated himself to France and the French team. He's the perfect symbol—all for France.

Sports as a Tool of Integration

Sixty-three articles were identified as dealing with sports as a tool of government and/or integration, and four subthemes were found among these articles. The first subtheme is described as "sports impacting politics." Eight articles support this theme, and they include instances where the national football team has helped or hurt politics on the basis of its performance. For example, a 2002 article from *Le Monde* argues that *Les Bleus'* win in 1998 boosted morale for President Jacques Chirac and helped usher in a positive beginning to the cohabitation of the president and prime minister (Boub, 2002). Another article mentions Chirac's approval rating after the 1998 win shooting to 67% (Zennou, 2018). However, several of these articles also mention that sports can impact politics in negative ways, as well. When *Les Bleus* perform poorly, their ability to influence the morale of French society can be a double-edged sword.

Politicians and politics can also interpose onto football. Seventeen articles show indications of this, such as the state creating propaganda around football, the decision to host a French-Algeria game in 2001 as a mark of friendship, the Olympics as a place to share national ideology, and especially when the French government used the 1998 victory of a diverse team to create a rhetoric around a multicultural French society. In a 2004 interview, Patrick Vieira, a member of the 1998 national squad, said, "Zinédine Zidane scores two goals in the final: it was

an opportunity to say that this team was a model of multicultural integration" (Mandard, 2004). Eight articles agree with Vieira; the journalists discussed how the French national team was diverse before 1998, it was simply the big win and the political ability to capitalize on the positive rhetoric of a united and multicultural France integrated through sports that made the French football team into a political object. One journalist wrote about 1998, "Politicians were discovering mixed-race France" (Gabizon, 2006). Thus, by interposing its own agenda on French football, political discourse granted the national football team the power to influence, positively or negatively, the nation.

Seven articles mention organizations with the goal of integration and social cohesion through sports, specifically for *banlieue* children. Thirty-three total articles extol the virtues of participating in sports, such as unity, feelings of belonging, respect for rules, discipline, solidarity, tolerance, and perseverance. One journalist defends that football can be a tool of westernization in that it promotes individual qualities in service to a community, taking initiative, and liberal ideals (Schreiner, 2002). Another writes that football intrinsically bears values of fraternity, tolerance, respect, tenacity, and collective effort (Ndiaye, 2018). The majority of articles in this section praise the virtues inherent in football, particularly its egalitarian nature as both teams, whether at the local or national level, start on a level playing field. Sociologist Stéphane Guérard writes in *L'Humanité*, "Hopes of victory do not depend on the gross national product, or the number of soldiers in a country. In this, football is very democratic. Everyone is equal at the start line" (Guérard, 2006).

The last theme in this section is caution over the negative aspects of football. Albert Zennou writes in *Le Figaro* that "Football is the continuation of war by other means" (2018). Therefore, football can reinforce an "us" versus "them" frame of mind, sometimes even resorting

to violence. Jean-Philippe Acensi, the Director General of the Agency for Education through Sport, warned that while football has the ability to teach positive values, it can also cultivate grouping up and less social mixing (de Montvalon, 2015) Other articles warn that while football has the power to unite, it can also divide or reinforce racial stereotypes. Thus, football is often used for integration and teambuilding purposes, but without the right coaches or mediators or community guidelines, it can actually do the opposite.

Overall, the majority of these articles show that French politicians are invested in football both in terms of the national team having an impact on the morale of the country and in regard to using football as a way to integrate minorities and educate them in the values of the republic. As the elite French national team players are symbols and examples of the ideal integrated citizen, it is natural that even at the lowest level politicians encourage immigrants and their children to join sports teams in order to also integrate themselves into French society rather than maintain their own cultural, religious, or social ties, customs, and pastimes.

Notional Acceptance

The pattern of minority representation that I termed notional acceptance was present in fifty-three articles. Notional acceptance has two parts. The first is when a player is doing well, he is accepted as the dominant nationality, but when he performs poorly, he is marked as "other." The second aspect of notional acceptance is the idea that players with different origins, or who might be viewed as having different origins from the dominant nationality, must work harder to assert their patriotism. Sometimes they also must reach higher benchmarks than a member of the dominant group in order to be recognized or included. A large number of articles address the

idea of notional acceptance in general terms while twenty-three present notional acceptance cases of specific players.

These more general statements about the presence of notional acceptance in football are mostly observed by journalists and coaches. A *L'Humanité* journalist wrote that "an immigrant's child must work 'twice as hard, because he is from elsewhere'" (Deroubaix, 2004). This statement supports the idea that minority players have a higher benchmark to reach to be judged successful. A *Le Monde* article noted the difference between the years of victory and the years of poor performance by the French team, and wrote, "What had been worshiped was, therefore, vilified" ("La France, au miroir," 2013). This supports the two sides of notional acceptance: praise after exemplary play and animosity following a poor performance. Another journalist wrote, "It is clear there is an increase in animosity each time an Arab or colored player faces misconduct. He is asked to prove his attachment to the jersey, therefore to the country" ("Équipe de France et obsession nationale," 2016). This example shows both forms of notional acceptance: first, that there is increased animosity against Arabs or other minority players when they make a mistake or misbehave, and second, that these players are forced to prove their dedication to their team and their country where members of the majority group are not. Journalist Jean-Loup Amselle theorized in *Le Monde* that one of the reasons minority players on the French team are subjected to different, higher standards than white players is because of the contradiction between the players economic status as professional footballers and their social and/or racial origin (2016). He blamed this on postcolonialism, essentially stating that the legacy of colonialism in France creates discomfort within the French when they perceive a financially successful member of a minority group who has roots among previously colonized peoples. Three additional articles discussed the postcolonial influences on how minority players are

scrutinized, and two more articles choose to blame the complications that money creates for players with low socio-economic origins. Eric Cantona, a player from before 1998 remarked, "'A French team that wins is black-white-beur. A French team that loses is the scum of the neighborhoods" (Dupré, 2016b). Cantona uses the word *racailles* (scum), which is important because in 2005 Nikolas Sarkozy used it to describe the children of the *banlieues*, in other words, immigrant children.

Yannick Noah, a professional French tennis player and singer with African roots, wrote in *Le Monde*, "'No matter what some people like, whether I win or lose, whether I play tennis or sing, I have always been French" (2012). Noah continued on to critique those who used racialized language and blamed the minority players on *Les Bleus* for the disaster in South Africa. Noah's assertion of his Frenchness is significant because if he thought all the French believed the same, he would not feel he had to reassert these statements, just as he would not have to defend the minority players on the French team.

As for the notional acceptance of specific players, striker Karim Benzema was well represented in this category with mentions in ten articles. Benzema commented, "If I score, I'm French, if I don't score, I'm Arab" (Begag, 2018). Here, Benzema speaks of the acceptance he receives upon a good performance and the "othering" he experienced when he did not score. Another article wrote, "For 2010, we forget that Benzema was not in South Africa but that Hugo Lloris, the current captain, was there" (Krug, 2018). Krug suggested that the desire to blame someone of a certain identity—a Muslim boy from the *banlieues*—made people believe Benzema was present for the disaster in 2010 when he was not actually a part of that team. Franck Ribéry, previously regarded by the French as a "nice guy," also experienced an image shift after the 2010 World Cup (Krug, 2018). Ribéry, a Frenchman who converted to Islam, was

antagonistic to *Français de souche* Yoan Gourcuff and aligned himself with the other Muslim players on the team. Several players, including Benzema, were targeted for their refusal to sing the "Marseillaise" before matches. Since Jean-Marie Le Pen's comment in 1996 about players not singing the "Marseillaise," the national anthem has become one of the ways that French players are expected to perform their dedication to France, a sort of "French citizenship certificate" (Lepidi, 2014). Because of Benzema's origins, his choice to not sing was held up as a mark against his Frenchness.

In 2015, Karim Benzema was indicted for alleged participation in an attempt to blackmail a fellow teammate. As a result, the FFF ruled that he could not be selected for the national team for Euro 16 while still under investigation. Benzema later accused coach Didier Deschamps of giving in to the FFF's ruling because Deschamps was conceding to a racist part of France that did not want Benzema, a Muslim and an Arab, to play for the French team. Benzema justified this accusation by pointing out that two other Muslim players had also not been included: Samir Nasri and Hatem Ben Arfa. An article in *Le Figaro* addressed Benzema's accusations. The journalist placed the blame for Benzema's, Nasri's, and Ben Arfa's non-selection on their behavior. Benzema was still facing the sextape scandal, Nasri had been banned for three games in 2012 because he insulted a reporter after a loss that removed France from the Euro 2012, and Ben Arfa had been briefly questioned in regard to the solicitation of an underage prostitute. Benzema and Franck Ribéry were also indicted on the underage prostitute case, but all charges were dropped in 2014. The *Le Figaro* journalist accused Benzema of victimhood activism and reverse racism consisting of "always blaming others in order to deny your own [blame]" (Thréard, 2016). The journalist referred to the players as *voyous* (thugs) in the next sentence, thus applying racialized language and marking them as "other." While Benzema was banned by the

FFF from being selected and the other two did not have perfect records, they had acted in ways that were not exceptional and so they were othered. In the face of their non-selection and misbehaviors, they were marked as "not French."

A *Le Monde* article wrote of Paul Pogba, who supposedly made an arm of honor (an anti-Semitic gesture) during a football game, by defending that the gesture was not obvious, and neither was its intended target. Yet, the journalists noted, it was already the beginning of a controversy (Dupré & Seckel, 2016). Whether Pogba intended the anti-Semitic symbol or not is unclear at the time of this article, yet the immediate uproar and accusations showed the higher standard he was held to as a Black Muslim player.

One *Le Monde* journalist wrote of notional acceptance as the absolution of all one's *supposed* sins. He wrote, "the day after winning, Didier Deschamps is a little less racist. And these players, these millionaire and stateless scum, are a little more respectable. If they win the final, the coach will be Nelson Mandela and the team will only be made up of holy men" (Hopquin, 2016). In this article, the journalists defended that the *racailles* (scum) will be acquitted of their impropriety and the coach's accusations of capitulating to racism will be wiped clean because of the privilege and acceptance that comes with winning. Conversely, by implying their forgiveness in the face of winning, Hopquin implies that at the time (in 2016 before France's good showing at the Euro) these players who were the legacy of over ten years of poor performance were regarded as scum. The journalist also used the word *apatride,* which translates to "stateless." Not only does Hopquin use the racialized derogatory term *racailles,* but he indicates that these players are not French, rather they are stateless, like refugees who reside in a country but are outside of it.

Zinedine Zidane is present in eleven of the articles in this section. Zidane is an interesting case because he does not experience this dependent acceptance in the same way as other players. Like other players, when he plays well, he is fully embraced as French. One journalist wrote in 2004, "Foreign father, French son" (Deroubaix). This is significant because the majority of the children of immigrants in France are not accepted this way. This is the first side of the coin of notional acceptance—a player is accepted when extraordinary. Unlike for other French players, Zidane does not experience the full consequences of the other side of the coin—being "othered" when performing poorly. Only a few articles actually carry out the other side of the notional acceptance coin and subject Zidane to some forms of notional acceptance. For example, the article "Tous Ensemble" (2006) from *Le Monde* states that Zidane's mistakes made him a counter example to the youth in the *cités* who had believed in the power of his fairy tale—the son of an immigrant becoming the symbol of a victorious and accepting multicultural France. The author of the opinion piece wrote about Zidane: "suddenly, an icon breaks" ("Tous Ensemble," 2006). This article did not use stigmatizing language to mark Zidane as "other." Rather, it reminded us of Zidane's "foreign" origins through a comment about his parents being Algerian and used his headbutt to shatter the myth of French diversity equating to victory**.** This is because Zidane's headbutt was in response to racist remarks by Materazzi, thus, to this journalist, diversity was what killed France's chances to win.

A different *Le Monde* article participated in both notional acceptance of Zidane and unconditional acceptance. The article discussed Zidane's headbutt and other faults (such as a doping affair when he played for Juventus), and utilized the racially charged term *voyou* (thug) to refer to Zidane: "'Zizou' often behaved like a thug with expulsions" (Dupré, 2016a). Yet, the same article continued on to forgive Zidane, stating "Zidane is a myth…Like any myth, he

receives some form of immunity" (Dupré, 2016a). This unconditional acceptance was not seen with any other players in these articles. For the majority of French, Zidane exists somewhere in the national consciousness as an untouchable figure.

Several articles brushed off Zidane's headbutt and defended his hero status with no mention of "othering." In a *L'Humanité* article, Zidane's headbutt was contrasted to Thierry Henry's "hand pass" that aided France in qualifying for the 2010 World Cup (Sugnot, 2014). The contrast was significant as Henry was labeled a cheater and condemned by the world for his mistake, while Zidane's headbutt was quickly forgiven and did little to tarnish the icon's reputation even though it contributed to France's loss against Italy. Two articles mentioned that President Jacques Chirac officially pardoned Zidane after his headbutt and a third asserted that "Everyone protects him, especially the media" (Dupré, 2016a). A potential difference between Henry and Zidane, however, was that the public could consider Zidane "punished" for his actions—he was removed from the game and France lost. On the other hand, Henry was not punished for his "hand pass," rather it assisted France in qualifying for the tournament. Gérard Gélas and Jean-Pierre Vincent, theater stage directors in Avignon, commented to *La Croix* after Zidane's headbutt that Zidane was like the hero of a Greek tragedy. Jean Pierre Vincent said, "if he [Zidane] was the victim of racist remarks, then he found himself in the position of the hero in the Greek tragedy: he must not act and, at the same time, he must" (Mereuze, 2006). This description of Zidane as a tragic hero painted him as someone who had been placed in a situation where both decisions could be considered wrong or right, yet he freely paid the penalty for whichever decision he made. Henry's "hand pass" saw him and the French team prosper, which is contrary to what most people want to believe, i.e., "cheaters never prosper." This interpretation

may also shed some light on why many people continued to deem Zidane a hero following the 2006 headbutt and subsequent French defeat.

When looking at this pattern of notional acceptance, it is easy to see how the discussion around *Les Bleus* as a multicultural symbol of a multicultural France could be interpreted as notational acceptance on a national scale. When *Les Bleus* perform well, they are a symbol of a positive France, when they do not perform well, they represent a France torn by racial and ethnic divides. Rémi Dupré of *Le Monde* described this phenomenon well: "a victory and it is successful integration; a defeat and it is the absence of binding, the rising communitarianism" (Dupré, 2018). Therefore, the acceptance of immigrant players is dependent on their performance and behaviors, with Zidane as an exception, and the acceptance of the team in its entirety as a symbol of a successfully multicultural France is also dependent on the performance of the team. It seems that France is a country under tension, willing to throw its weight behind highs and lows because they lack a comfortable and stable middle ground.

Brawn versus brains

The category "brawn vs brains" consists of racialized stereotypes present in French newspapers that mentioned the ethnicization or racialization of certain characteristics, specifically that Black athletes are described as successful because of their strength and physicality while white players are characterized as successful because of intelligence and/or hard work. Evidence for this pattern of representation is present in forty-six articles, with twenty-two of the articles utilizing the pattern in ways that reinforce the stereotype, twelve critiquing and condemning the stereotype, and eight articles offering specific counter examples.

The articles that re-enforce this stereotype of Black brawn and white brains make comments on the superior physicality of the French team, the early maturation of foreigners, Black players' advantages in "running fast," and minority players' inferior intelligence. One article quoted Bordeaux coach, Willy Sagnol: "The advantage of the typical African player…is a player who is ready for combat, who can be described as powerful. But football is also technique, intelligence, discipline" (Lepidi, 2014). This coach stereotyped the African player as powerful, a physical trait, and then used a qualifier to discuss other aspects of football—technique, discipline, intelligence—as qualities that this "typical player" does not possess. An implicit dichotomy that one cannot possess both physical capabilities and mental capabilities exists. In the United States, we see this dichotomy in the "dumb jock" stereotype. Another article defended that children with an immigrant background "have more maturity than our 'little French', who probably do not have the same physical qualities" (Jacquet, 2004). Another wrote of *banlieue* children being "quicker to put aside studies in favor of the football" (Talles, 2004), which reinforces the idea of a duality between the physical and the intellectual.

Brawn versus brains was brought to a head during the French quota affair in 2011. French news site Mediapart reported that the leaders of French football were proposing an unofficial quota on the number of African origin players allowed in training centers, with one of the reasons for the quota being that there were too many "big athletic Blacks and not enough little whites who have the intelligence of the game in French football" (Begag, 2018). A second article fully accepted the stereotype: "There is an African morphotype, a flexible player with exceptional physical abilities: Marius Trésor, Marcel Desailly, Lilian Thuram, Mamadou Sakho today" (Lesprit, 2011). There is nothing wrong with praising an athlete for their physical ability, the damage arises when physical superiority is associated with intellectual inferiority. A *Le*

Monde article discussed a survey carried out in 2010 where participants were asked what they believed were the specific qualities of Black people. The answers showed that 22% of French people selected physical and athletic qualities while only 3% answered intellectual capabilities (Davet & Potet, 2010). This duality between athleticism and intelligence is insidious when it is generalized and applied to race. The binary between mind and body is further damaging to minorities because the French have a tradition of valuing mind over body. For example, Enlightenment philosopher Rene Descartes discounted the body entirely when he said, "I think, therefore I am." Thus, not only is physical ability associated with intellectual inferiority, but French society values mental ability far more than physical ability.

I included references to *voyous* (thugs), *caïds* (gangsters/gang leaders), and *racailles* (scum) in this section. Politicians and the media have used these words to refer derogatorily to people from the *banlieues*. They have also been used to refer to specific players on the French team—those who come from the *banlieues* and/or are of foreign origin (often these overlap). While not a straightforward representation of body morphology linked to race or ethnicity, the three terms have connotations of strength and inferior intelligence. For example, *voyou* (thug) and *caïd* (gangster) generate an image of a big guy without complex thoughts who serves as the violent and intimidating lackey of someone else. *Racailles* (scum) refers to a worthless person, which can suggest low intelligence as well. That these terms are often associated with the idea of criminality is a comment on the *banlieues*. Still, the idea of a brawny man with low intelligence persists and contributes to this brawn versus brains dichotomy. Ten articles use these words to talk about specific players or groups of players on the French national team. One journalist says of the South African FIFA tournament that the management of *Les Bleus* let themselves "be

intimidated (and) walked over by thugs" (Thréard, 2016), suggesting the players were big, aggressive, and not very smart.

A subtheme among these articles is the reference to players who were "too little" to play for French Ligue 1. Two articles explained that Antoine Griezmann was too small for the French, so he went to Spain to play in their league. Another article asserted the same about Mathieu Valbuena. Once these players had proven their worth abroad, they were selected for the French national team. Other articles reinforced the desire for big, strong players. A *L'Humanité* article about Wissam Ben Yedder, who stands at six feet, four inches, wrote, "[Deschamps] did not take the Sevilla FC player (Ben Yedder) for his beautiful eyes but for his size" (Sugnot, 2018). An article about the six-foot, one-inch player Marcel Desailly described him as a "colossus" and wrote that he grew up to be "very large" (Reyrat, 2000). While white players are often dubbed too small, these two dark-skinned minority players are praised primarily for their physical size, which is in line with the brawn versus brains method of representation.

Twelve articles in this section presented the brawn versus brains dichotomy and then critiqued and refuted it. Sociologist Stéphane Guérard presented a professional French football player as "A deft one with his feet, from a disadvantaged background, if possible a difficult banlieue, most often first- or second-generation French, not really a light at school" (2008). Then Guérard refuted this narrative one by one, explaining that most professional players had successful athlete parents, some were from affluent families, most had stable childhoods, and football training centers made sure to educate their players as well as improve their football skills. Another article stated that, "our players are coached like racing cars whose driver is only an accessory" (Del Volgo, 2010). This is an interesting metaphor as the driver would be the brain and the car the body, so this critiqued how the players are *treated* as brainless, therefore refuting

the stereotype that the players *are* brainless, but simultaneously suggesting the coaches believed the stereotype. The 2011 quota affair where top FFF members, including coaches, utilized this one-dimensional brawn versus brains stereotype proves that many coaches, even at the highest level, embraced this stereotype. Another critiqued French football coaches' focus on recruiting powerful players over creative players (Asensi, 2011), thus lending further support to the idea that the coaches are to blame for the "lack" of intelligent players in French football. However, even this accusation suggests that the team at the time (made up of a large number of immigrant origin players) lacked intelligence, which in its own way perpetuated the stereotype.

While many articles contained critiques and condemnations over the proliferation of the brawn versus brains stereotype, one journalist wrote about Coach Willy Sagnol: "Willy Sagnol, then coach of the Girondins de Bordeaux, slipped by chaining the stereotypes relating to players of African origin" (Dupré & Le Duc, 2016). The use of the word *dérapait* (slipped) implies that Sagnol's problem was speaking about his beliefs about African players characteristics, not that it was problematic that he had these beliefs. This suggests that for some people this stereotype truly exists, they just refrain from voicing it in the current political and social context. Azouz Begag, former minister of equal opportunities and of Algerian origin, pointed out how the national football team unconsciously reinforced the brawn versus brains stereotype in France. Minorities tend to be accepted in sports before other sectors of society, the implication being, Begag wrote, that "when we look at the national football team or other sports disciplines, we can see that the dark skinned are confined to the muscular and aesthetic register. As if they did not have the intellectual capacity to be political leaders" (Venturini, 2003). Begag condemns this outlook and asserts the need for increased participation of minorities in local and national politics.

One aspect of the brawn versus brains stereotype that I found very little evidence for is that white athletes have more discipline and work harder. In fact, several articles refuted this facet of the stereotype by representing minority players as extremely hard workers and very disciplined. Zidane, Henry, and Benzema were presented by journalists or coaches as working hard to achieve their positions. A coach said of Henry, "he was neither the most talented nor the most technical, despite his exceptional speed. But he loved the ball, was the last to leave practice, and kept motivating his teammates" (Talles, 2004). So, while Henry is characterized by the physical quality of exceptional speed, the coach also grants that he was the last to leave practice, which implies dedication and hard work. Nicolas Anelka, Franck Ribéry, Hatem Ben Arfa, and Lilian Thuram are also quoted speaking about how hard they have worked. Ben Arfa said, "I worked, worked, worked ... I work a lot despite the image that people give of me, that of someone who relies only on its technical quality" ("Hatem Ben Arfa, la marque jeune," 2007). Ben Arfa mentioned this stereotype of being depicted as undisciplined yet talented, but he refuted it by speaking of how much he worked for his position.

Minority players are often accepted first in the world of sports, probably because of these one-dimensional stereotypes that depict them as physically superior and more inclined towards aggression. However, this early acceptance into a physical element of French society before any other sectors of society only reinforces the brawn versus brains stereotype. Therefore, while any acceptance of the minority by the majority can be deemed progress, this form of acceptance perpetuates negative stereotypes at the same time.

Orientalism

Media representations of minority football players are intertwined. Just as the word *voyou* was used in the pattern of notional acceptance to mark a player as "other," it also has an association with the brawn versus brains stereotype. Similarly, Orientalist discourse is linked to brawn versus brains. The idea that foreigners from the Middle East and Africa are physically superior and intellectually inferior arises from the Orientalist dichotomy of the West as a cultured civilization and the East as savage peoples, yet Orientalism manifests with a different slant than brawn versus brains. Articles that represented minority players as irrational, quick to anger, or animal-like were coded as Orientalist language. Eighteen articles included at least one of these references.

Portraying players as irrational or savage was the most common subtheme in this category. A theater stage director interviewed by *La Croix* said of Zidane's headbutt: "'Zidane responded to this violence of speech with another violence, dragging, by his immediate visceral reaction, his whole camp with him towards disaster. Instead of postponing revenge until later, he did not find the strength to control himself'" (Pannac, collected by Merouze, 2006). This representation of Zidane implied that he got carried away by his visceral need for revenge, that he was unable to prevent himself from headbutting Materazzi. The article reinforced the racial stereotypes of North Africans as having savage or barbaric behavior, such as letting base instincts and emotions drive one's actions. This theme continued in short phrases and single words deployed here and there throughout these Orientalist articles.

A *La Croix* article from 2006 referred to Zidane as "hot-headed" (Talles, 2006). In an article about Zidane as a child, a recruiter said, "'he had the warrior side of inner-city children'" (Constant, 1998). The recruiter called Zidane a warrior like other inner-city (mostly second-

generation immigrant) children, thus generalizing all immigrant children using Orientalist discourse. Another article characterized *banlieue* children possessed a "rage" to succeed (Talles, 2004). One article dubbed an amateur player of Arab origin as "a ball of muscles, often unrestrained violence" (Davet, 2002). A *Le Monde* article from 2018 called Nicolas Anelka and his generation "more rebellious" (Krug, 2018). A different article characterized Anelka in his youth as "touchy, angry, and impulsive" (Caussé, 2007). Journalist Alain Duhamel called the French team in 2010 vulgar and ignorant of values (Labro, 2010). Two articles referred to *Les Bleus* as savage (Bégaudeau, 2010; Rioufol, 2010). All of these terms are reminiscent of Orientalist discourse and colonial histories characterizing the "other" as uncivilized and violent in contrast to the cultured civilization of France and the west.

Only one article used animal imagery to describe the players without condemning the practice. Using animal language and comparing "Easterners" to animals is another common Orientalist tradition because of the idea that indigenous people are more closely connected to their bodies than their minds, like animals. The journalist wrote, "And man becomes a Zidane bird, sweating, foaming with breath and water, striking the hoof in the arena, black and humiliated with vapors ... And the man becomes a bull. Small, winged feet, pawing and crossing the stadium like lightning ... And the man gallops" (Kriegel, 1998). The journalist seems to mostly be praising the players for their skills, however the use of animal language for minority players is very connotative of colonialism and of brawn versus brains rhetoric as minorities are presented as beast-like—physically strong and capable, but mentally deficient. Thus, it is easy to see how Orientalist and colonial discourse led to the pervasive modern one-dimensional stereotype of brawn versus brains.

Several articles mentioned the common practice of spectators directing monkey cries toward black players. In every instance this practice was condemned by the journalists because of its overt racism and its long legacy of use. But it also shows the commonality of comparing minorities to animals as monkey cries have been heard during football games across Europe for years, not just in France. This is clearly Orientalist in nature as it employs calling minority players monkey, suggesting that, on the evolutionary ladder, minorities are closer to monkeys than to Europeans, which bolsters the idea of an uncivilized and inferior East.

Orientalist discourse is insidious in that it continues to reinforce ideas that Muslims and minorities are inferior to the French, as was the narrative during colonialism. Additionally, language referencing the irrationality, savagery, and beast-like nature of Muslims and minorities marks these minorities as incompatible with French society, and, in fact, suggests that including these "barbaric" people in society may ruin or sabotage the civilized, rational, and enlightened nature of French society.

Clash of Civilizations

Orientalism also presents the East and the West as different and opposing cultures, however because of the inherent antagonism in portraying France and the "East" as in opposition, I included those articles in a separate category called clash of civilizations. There are thirty-five articles that included some form of clash of civilizations rhetoric. It was not surprising that this pattern of representation was present because sports, especially team sports, are often framed in war-like terms. One journalist wrote of football: "Club versus club, team versus team, country versus country, winners versus losers. Pushed to its limits, the logic of mechanics turns to chauvinism and racism, even pitched battles" (Charrier, 2002). If football is already discussed

like a war with slang words such as *canonnier* (gunner) to mean a top scorer and *assauts* (assaults) for drives to score, it is not hard to stretch the concept to clashes of other kinds, such as those between players, between supporters, and between groups within the country.

Zidane's 2006 headbutt against Marco Materazzi was one instance where journalists applied clash of civilization rhetoric between the two players. In a 2006 article by Olivier Talles, Zidane was portrayed with Orientalist discourse as a hot-headed player who "blew his fuse." Materazzi is presented as "a villain in the Italian league," but it was Zidane who was blamed for "falling into his (Materazzi's) trap." These two players were presented with Orientalist rhetoric: hot-headed Zidane from the "East" and calculating Materazzi from the "West," and they were pitted against each other in a clash of civilizations. However, not all articles about this event were portrayed with this racialized language. This is probably partially due to the somewhat unconditional acceptance of Zidane by some of the French media.

The media also applies clash rhetoric to supporters. A *L'Humanité* article discussed the "clashes" that occurred in Marseille after the Algerian national team passed the group stage of the World Cup in 2014 (Bussone, 2014). The verb "invaded" was used in three different articles to describe the actions of those at the 2001 France-Algeria game who came onto the field while the game was going—mainly second-generation immigrants and minorities. The crowd of minority spectators during the 2008 France-Tunisia game booed the French team (Kessous, 2008). Football games naturally pit one team against another, and one group of supporters against another. French society seemed surprised with the crowds' choices during these games against former colonies, and the language used in the reports is semi-warlike because it reflects this unease French society felt at the discovery of this divide between the majority and the minorities.

Yet, the French should not be surprised by this because France has failed to accept immigrant children as French. For example, an article in *Le Figaro* on the 2001 France-Algeria game wrote, “the tone is gladly apocalyptic” (Revah-Levy & Szafran, 2001). The journalists discussed the choice put before these young people of immigrant origin: “an impossible choice and without reason to exist between the world of 'inside' and the world of 'outside'. The result was assured: we forbade them in advance to build a coherence that was difficult to build” (Revah-Levy & Szafran, 2001). When the second-generation immigrants were forced to choose between France and Algeria during that 2001 game—they were not allowed a hybrid choice—they experienced an internal clash that led to this external show of emotion and violence that so frightened French society. The journalists defended that these two cultures *must* clash because France offered no middle ground. In another article, a second-generation immigrant youth in France named Malek told *Le Monde* that he considered himself one-hundred percent Tunisian (Kessous, 2018). Malek felt so disconnected from France that when asked about Hatem Ben Arfa, he said, “‘He's a harki, a traitor who has chosen to play for France and not for Tunisia, his country’” (Kessous, 2018). *Harki* is a reference to Algerian soldiers who fought for the French during the Algerian war of independence. Clearly, this division exists, and football is a realm where minorities can express their dissatisfaction. However, division—communitarianism—is the last thing the French want.

As a result, communitarian fears plague this group of articles. Azouz Begag, former minister of equal opportunities and of Algerian origin, wrote of the 2010 South Africa disaster: “It was a critical moment of split among the Blues. There was talk of war between the new converts [players] and the real French, of the Lebanonization of the team between the blacks of West Indian origin, those of African origin, whites, and Muslims” (2018). Begag used clash of

civilization rhetoric when he referenced war between the ethnic religious groups of the French team. He then drew the same lines across the country. Additional articles made the same assertions about the French team. One article from 2010 wrote that "the players split up according to their membership in Islam (Ribéry, Anelka, Abidal) or their skin color, by rejecting the too French Yoann Gourcuff" (Rioufol, 2010). Another characterizes Gourcuff as a "little white man lost in a foreign land" (Bégaudeau, 2010). These examples presented France in opposition to the minorities through the lens of the relationships and ethnic lines of the national team.

Another article reinforced the idea of a clash between these two cultures: "The France of Euro 2016 is a country on its knees, battered by disconnected castes, selfish corporations, revengeful communities" and "Between the millions of Muslims living in France and the Republic, there is now a risk of rupture" (Rioufol, 2016a). Rioufol blamed society's quickness to embrace the "black-blanc-beur" myth as their reason for forgetting the inherent dualism of East and West, Islam and Christianity. He wrote, "The blind opening of France to cultures that are difficult to assimilate is the primary cause of this conglomerate of clans" (2010). It was Islam and the cultures of other minority groups that Rioufol presented as "difficult to assimilate." He did not assign any blame on France, except for critiquing the politicians who let in these immigrants with other cultures. The stage of football is a natural one to discuss the communitarian fears present in France because of the presence of many minorities and its inherent martial tenor. This opposition of cultures is Orientalist discourse and the clash predicated by many journalists reinforced the clash of civilizations idea of incompatible cultures as a cause of conflict.

As a consequence of the fears of communitarianism, the French try to keep their football as secular and integrated as their country. The French Football Federation condemned FIFA's authorization of the veil and turban in football matches, declaring that it "threatens the neutrality of a football protected from religious and political quarrels" and stated that the ban on the wearing of all religious symbols would be maintained in France ("La FIFA autorise le port du voile," 2014). In 2016, the Île-de-France region applied a charter of secularism that will force subsidized sports clubs to abide by the new rules or lose their funding (Rioufol, 2016b). A similar charter was applied in Nice. It is likely that these secularism charters were partially inspired in response to the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015. Terrorism is another facet of clash of civilizations and has some connections to communitarianism, though they are not the same thing. Communitarianism is when distinct social or religious groups form within society. The French believe that such groups will create discord within the nation by making specific demands that will challenge the equality of all of French society and lead to citizens whose first loyalty is not to France. Terrorism contributes to fears of communitarianism because these jihadists clearly prioritize religious ties and loyalty before French loyalty. Both communitarianism and terrorism also reinforce the notion of the East and West as opposing cultures that are inherently incompatible. Cultures that are incompatible are more likely to form distinct minority communities and terrorism is also more likely as the differences between these communities result in violent clashes. Therefore, Orientalism, terrorism, and communitarianism are tightly intertwined but are not all the same thing.

Terrorist concerns and fear of political Islam characterized many of these articles about the clash of civilizations. Several articles discussed the increased security at stadiums after the 2015 attack on the Stade-de-France (Rioufol, 2016a). The dangerous slant to these terrorist fears

was the linkage of the jihadists who have attacked France to the Muslims living in France. A 2016 *Le Figaro* article drew a picture of an insidious web of Islam: "the 'inclusive' Republic discovers, bewildered, the extent of Islamism in prisons, cities, businesses, associations, and the permanence of the links maintained between delinquency and jihad" (Rioufol, 2016b). The journalist presented Muslims living in France as part of a network of political Islam, which plays on communitarian fears. This is another way that communitarianism, Orientalism, and terrorism are mixed as the far-right links radical Islam to the French Muslim community and presents it as inherently incompatible. Rioufol praised the 2016 French football team for their number of Christian players. He wrote in 2016 (when the team did *not* include Muslim players Benzema, Ben Arfa, and Nasri), "The time has passed…'when you walk into the locker room of the France team, (and) it feels like a mosque.' To the Muslim visibility of yesterday even responded a new Catholic affirmation" (Rioufol, 2016b). The journalist praised a French team devoid of Muslims in a year when there had been extreme controversy over the non-selection of three prominent Muslim footballers. More importantly, he presented Islam and Christianity, Islam and France, as opposing, as clashing, and he used the fear of terrorism to do so. An example of the effect this can have is shown in regard to Benzema. One article mentioned that after Benzema's scandal went public in 2015, Benzema received letters accusing him of being a terrorist (Dupré & Mestre, 2015). Benzema's lawyer believed this happened because of the deep fears of terrorism the French have as a result of the many attacks that occurred in 2015, but it was also most likely a result of the perceived linkage between the Muslim community in France and jihadists. As soon as Benzema was accused of being a criminal, some people took it to the next step and considered him a terrorist.

A small number of articles asserted that the clash in France was not actually taking place between cultures, but between economic groups. William Gasparini critiqued that "only ethnic origins are highlighted by the press, and public debate is confined to questions of race or nationality" (2010). He compared the team of 1998 to that of 2010 and saw more economic division in the 2010 team between players who grew up in the *cités* and players from the middle class. However, in France most of the children from the banlieues are children of immigrants and most of the middle and upper class are *Français de souche*, so ethnicity and culture are difficult, if not impossible, to separate from economics in France.

Concluding Thoughts on the Newspaper Content Analysis

The content analysis found seven distinct themes. First, there was significant evidence for the existence of a perceived link or relationship between the multicultural French football team and a multicultural French society. Some journalists defended this link, purporting its truth, while others called it a myth yet defended the continued presence of this myth today. Still others asserted that the myth had "shattered" because of the actions of some minority players on the French team and/or because of societal incidences like the 2001 presidential election, 2005 *banlieue* riots, and terrorism. Further, the use of "black, blanc, beur" in 159 of the 440 articles shows the pervasiveness of this narrative or wish. However, as mentioned, for many journalists and French people, the use of "black, blanc, beur" and the nostalgia for the 1998 victory is not indicative of true multiculturalism. Certainly, some of these journalists may use this catchphrase because of true hopes for multiculturalism, but for most, "black, blanc, beur" remains a wish for assimilation and integration disguised as a celebration of multicultural diversity. This helps to explain why the French can simultaneously praise and adore their national football team and its

minority players while denying expressions of multiculturalism, like the headscarf, and continuing to discriminate against Muslims and other minorities.

The theme of representations of minority players as symbols of integration and assimilation also supports the societal dissonance of anti-Muslim sentiment among the French with synchronous acclaim for the French team. Zinedine Zidane is the ultimate symbol of integration for the French as he led the 1998 team to victory, yet never challenged the state and its policy of assimilation by speaking up about the treatment of minorities or attempting to affect societal change in favor of minorities. One aspect that other researchers have found for the theme of minority players being presented as symbols of integration is "white washing" or ignoring certain aspects of a player that mark them as different in order to emphasize their assimilation. The content analysis did not provide support for this aspect of the theme; however, I theorize that this is because of my chosen search terms. I only analyzed articles that used terms such as "Muslim," "beur," or "immigrant" in order to narrow down the thousands of football articles available. Therefore, I only chose articles that overtly referenced players as other. Future research into media discourse of a single player may reveal the presence of this phenomenon of "white-washing" minority players.

The content analysis also supported the idea that French sports, particularly football, are used as a tool of integration by the French government. Additionally, it was found that politicians capitalize upon elite sport victories to improve their image and, sometimes, use sports for political aims. The French-Algeria game is an example of this.

In regard to racialized discourses and stereotypes, the content analysis found evidence for four themes within this broad category: notional acceptance, brawn versus brains, Orientalism, and clash of civilizations. These racialized themes are present in 107 articles, with many of those

articles utilizing more than one pattern of representation. Clearly, these racial discourses exist, though their reach is unknown considering the limitations of this content analysis. However, with nearly a quarter of the articles studied using racist language, it is reasonable to conclude that these themes are pervasive and intrinsic elements of French society. Colonial representations of indigenous African people as intellectually inferior, uncivilized, physically strong, and irrational became common sensical representations, and in post-colonial French society, these patterns of defining and understanding have remained the normative or objective way of thinking. An additional problem with these representations is that they erase diversity by characterizing all Muslim or Maghrebin minorities within the same stereotypes, which denies minorities of their complexity. Certainly, most French people are not racist, and of those who are, most of them likely do not intend to be. However, in many ways, the unintentionality of this language makes the presence of these stereotypes and practices even more insidious because it means that these ideas are unconsciously rooted in French society.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire asked five open ended questions. These questions were:

1. Why do you choose to consume these news sources? Are there any sources you intentionally choose not to read?
2. Do you think the French national football team is culturally representative of France? Why or why not?
3. Do you feel that the *Fédération Française de Football* (FFF) encourages religious expression? Do you support their choice? Is their policy in line with *laïcité*?
4. Do you feel the French media pays too little, too much, or the right amount of attention to a player's religion? Does being Muslim make a difference? Why or why not?
5. In your opinion, how does the media represent Muslim football players or Muslim athletes in general?

The following section is organized with each question addressed under a separate subheading. For the complete questionnaire including demographic information and instructions see Appendix C.

News Consumption

This first question was asked to learn how pervasive newspaper consumption is among the French because the focus of my research is the analysis of four French newspapers. The 52 questionnaire respondents were found to get most of their news from social media, *Le Monde,* France TV, and Radio France. Reasons for their news selection most often revolved around credibility, alliance with values, and quality journalism. Twenty people regularly read *Le Monde,* six people regularly read *Le Figaro,* five read *La Croix,* and two read *L'Humanité*. This shows that the newspapers present in my content analysis were consumed by some of the questionnaire respondents. Further, this question reinforces that newspapers are still significant among French society and that the study of them is relevant.

Cultural Representativity of French Team

The purpose of this question was to investigate how the French national football team is perceived by the questionnaire participants. Over half (31) of respondents replied "yes" to this question. Twenty-five of those defended that the team and France were multicultural and multireligious. However, four argued that while the team was culturally representative, it had an uneven representation of cultures and ethnicities. Three respondents wrote that including an Asian on the team would make the team truly representative. Three respondents replied that the national team was culturally representative only in terms of all people across France who played

football, as it is more popular among children of immigrants and the working-class, and two answered that the national team is culturally representative of the *banlieues* where football is the most popular sport.

Fifteen respondents declared that the national team is not culturally representative. Six gave reasons of uneven distribution of ethnicity, race, and/or religion. Unlike the four respondents above who said unequal quantities of representation was still representation, these respondents thought the gulf was too wide. Three took the approach that the children of immigrants were over-represented. One graduate student from Nouvelle-Aquitaine wrote about the inequality of religious distribution, stating that one third of the 2018 team was Muslim while research indicates that there are only 10-15% Muslims in France. A professor from the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region addressed the races and cultures missing from the French team. Two other respondents supported her approach. She wrote, "The team includes players who are *Français des souches*, players of Maghrebi origin, and others of sub-Saharan African origin. There are more races, cultures and origins in France than these three."

Of the fifteen respondents who said the team did not culturally represent France, one third of them asserted that the team is not supposed to represent France culturally. A graduate student from Île-de-France wrote, "It remains a sports team and, for me, not a diplomatic delegation." Finally, six respondents answered that they did not know if the team was culturally representative of France. A man from Nouvelle-Aquitaine wrote, "I don't know and I don't know if it's important."

These answers are interesting for several reasons. First, two and a half years ago the French team won the 2018 FIFA World Cup. The Euro 2020 was postponed due to the Covid-19 virus until June and July of this year. Thus, the France team is still the best in the world. As

shown after France won the 1998 World Cup, the French are more willing to look upon their team positively and assert the success of multiculturalism when the team performs well. Nearly 60% of questionnaire respondents responded positively to this representation question with several participants employing exclamation marks as they asserted how multiple and multicultural France is. This praise reflects the theme of notional acceptance where praise and acclaim are granted to minority players, and teams full of minority players, who perform well for the glory of France.

Yet, as seen with the newspaper analysis, some respondents critiqued these claims of multiculturalism and some questioned that a connection between football and French society be drawn at all. Other French sports teams are not viewed as a mirror of French society or given the same amount of social and political weight as the football team. Several journalists in the content analysis also defended this point, that drawing connections between French society and the national football team is going far beyond what the national football team should represent. Therefore, the questionnaire respondents shared the multiple views of the journalists.

Laïcité and Religious Expression

As there was very little on *laïcité* among the newspaper articles, this question was included in the questionnaire to determine feelings and opinions on the perceived legality of religious expression and links, or lack thereof, between *laïcité* and French football. The question also asked respondents about the policy of *Fédération Français de Football* (FFF) on religious expression. Several respondents answered this question with "I don't know" or stated that they were unfamiliar with the FFF's policy. Most people believed the FFF does not promote religious expression and defended that a lack of policy on religion was in line with *laïcité*, others simply

defended that religion was a private matter and made no comment on the FFF. Twenty-three respondents were in favor of *laïcité* in their answers, though not everyone interpreted *laïcité* in the same way. A graduate student from Nouvelle-Aquitaine wrote about players and religion, "in my opinion, they are completely free to say that they belong to a religious community as long as they do not practice it on the field." Five respondents mentioned Christian players making religious signs when entering the field or scoring a goal, and one mentioned Paul Pogba praying on the pitch before a game, but all six said it did not bother them and seemed to be in line with secularism. Another respondent wrote,

> if someone wants to manifest his religion he has every right to do so. Secularism is strictly regulated in France and the legal framework for non-religious manifestation is limited to public service workers and school children. No law legislates on the expression of religion in sport, there is therefore a legal and natural right of religious expression in sport.

These respondents seem to interpret *laïcité* in the sense that all religious are welcome and accepted in France. Some of them are more open to religion being seen and or practiced on the football field, while others prefer not to see manifestations of a player's religion.

Two respondents used *laïcité* to justify their belief that religion has no place at all on the football field. One respondent wrote, "I don't think so and I hope not" in regard to whether the FFF encourages religious expression. A retired gentleman from Île-de-France wrote, "No, it does not encourage religious expression and it is not its role and I approve their choice. I think that they are right to have a secular sports policy, moreover it is not easy to run in djellaba or veil when it is women who play." These two respondents believe the FFF does not encourage religious expression in football and support the federation's choice, stating that the inhibition of religious expression is congruent with *laïcité.* This opinion fits with the choice of several

municipal governments across France to ban religious expression on football pitches through the adoption of a secularism charter.

Several respondents challenged the choice of the FFF not to encourage or speak about religion. A business-owner in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur argued that, "the FFF, on the contrary, seeks to erase the religious traits of its players." This respondent opined that the FFF does not encourage religious expression, but unlike the above respondents, did not believe this was compliant with *laïcité*. A professor in Nouvelle-Aquitaine regretted that the FFF avoids the subject of religion because, with football's prominence in the media, he believes the encouragement of religious expression could start more conversations. A professor in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur wrote of the FFF, "based on what I have read, I got the impression that they have a double standard and there is sort of kind of racism behind the scenes in the sport world." Another respondent brought up the FFF scandal over racist quotas in 2011, which was over the proposal of quotas to limit players of a certain race rather than religion, but this answer suggests that, at least for this person, race and religion are somewhat linked. A man in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region wrote, "I do not think that the FFF encourages religious expression, whatever it is. Especially those which are not that of the dominant religion in France. We can see the players who make or wear the signs of the Catholic cross, but rarely those of Muslim players, for example. We do not show Muslim players who practice their worship." For the most part, these respondents who critiqued the FFF did so because of perceived inequality in the encouragement of religious expression.

Five respondents challenged the concept of *laïcité*. A professor in Pays de la Loire commented that, "the ban on the wearing of religious symbols such as the veil goes against secularism. Neutrality is imposed on officials or their relatives, not on ordinary citizens who are

sportsmen. Athletes want to be free to express their religious and political convictions." Another respondent also critiqued the common interpretation that religious expression is banned for all. He defended that, "there is a great misunderstanding about secularism: the state must be secular, but the people are not secular, the people are what they are! The FFF is not a public service and therefore does not have, in itself, the obligation to respect secularism (even if that may be desirable)." Lastly, a student in Nouvelle-Aquitaine outlines a change in *laïcité* from its inception to today. She wrote, "In any case, secularism as it is applied today is very restrictive and proceeds more from a "domestication of Islam" than from a real guarantee of the practice of worship (as it had been thought in 1905)."

Laïcité is a complex idea that seems to be interpreted in different ways by different people, but the consensus seemed to be more of a "don't ask, don't tell" approach to football players' religious beliefs. The meager mentions of religion among the articles of the content analysis seem to fit with the lack of respondents' desire to know about religion. Additionally, the absence of articles about *laïcité* in the content analysis suggests that with the national football team *laïcité* is not much of a concern while the implementation of secularism charters among city leagues indicates that the inclusion of religion in amateur football is much more of a concern.

Media Attention toward Religion and Muslim Players

This question was intended to determine respondents' opinions on the expression of Islam and potential inequalities that Muslim players face in the French media. Nearly half (24) of respondents said the religion of football players is rarely in the media and that is the right amount of attention. This reinforces the comments on *laïcité* above. Four respondents who answered this

way countered with declarations that while religion is rarely mentioned, the media instead paid too much attention to skin color. Other respondents did not view the media as framing the religion of football players as significant. A graduate student from Nouvelle-Aquitaine, after asserting that she'd never seen the media discuss a player's religions, wrote, "If they did, it's scandalous because they would never talk about a Catholic footballer."

Eighteen respondents wrote that the media pays more attention to Muslim players, and to Muslims in France in general. A graduate student in Île-de-France wrote, "It seems that the French media puts the religions of the players first except when they are Caucasian." She suggested that the French only pay attention to religion when the player is part of a minority group in France. Two respondents mentioned Benzema and Ribéry, both Muslims, as players whose religion has been written or talked about in the media. A woman in the region of Pays de la Loire wrote about Muslim players, "Currently being a Muslim always makes a difference in the French media landscape (…) It doesn't seem to me that the same attention is paid to very believing players on the Christian side." Another respondent wrote of the phenomenon where Muslims in France are connected to extremist Islam. He noted, "Being a Muslim makes a difference in the eyes of certain media, certainly linked to the attacks committed in recent years as well as to the stereotypes associated with this community." The majority of respondents who argued that the media does focus more attention on Islam found that extra attention to be negative. Four respondents wrote that the media is always searching for buzz words and sensationalism and writing about Muslims is one way to get more readers. A professor in Nouvelle-Aquitaine who held this opinion blamed sensationalist media for creating problems around Muslims that do not exist. These responses suggest that there is a tendency among the

media to emphasize Islam more than other religions when writing about players and this is because of the stigmatization or sensationalism that currently exists around Islam in France.

Multiple respondents referenced the notional acceptance of certain players. A woman in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur wrote, "The French media will be interested in a player's religion, especially when he makes a mistake…in the Benzema case, after his trouble with the law, the French media talked a lot about his membership in the Muslim community as if it discredited this player." For the opposing side of notional acceptance where a minority player is credited as French, a professor wrote, "when it comes to football, being a Muslim and/or an African gets marginalized as long as the French team wins. Ironically, when it comes to the Muslim/African football players, they are referred to as French not Africans or Muslims. For the French and French media, they are 'good Muslims/Africans.'" Three more respondents discussed the media's framing of notional acceptance of Muslims and minorities who do not play or act according to expectations. It is in those instances, they argue, that the media mentions the player's religion. One man also points out that Zidane is "the exception that confirmed the rule, his athletic performance going beyond prejudice and his origins." These comments reinforce what was found in the content analysis of newspaper articles about the pattern of notional acceptance.

It is interesting to note that some respondents wrote about the way the media uses participation in Islam as a form of othering that is brought up only at strategic times. This is evident in the content analysis, as well, but what is interesting is that some respondents *noticed* this phenomenon enough to consciously recall it at the prompting of the question and to remark upon it. It is true that the majority of respondents did not remark upon this phenomenon, which does not come as a surprise. When one is not attuned to the topic or searching for specific

references, it can be difficult to identify them. However, framing theory suggests that the media can influence how audiences think about events or groups of people (de Coninck et al., 2019), and even if readers do not consciously notice the way Muslims or football players are portrayed, it may still influence their subconscious. In line with framing theory, the majority of stereotypes and racialized language identified in the content analysis exist below the consciousness of French society. Therefore, the multiple overt references to notional acceptance are significant. It shows that some of these racialized patterns of representation are leaving the subconscious and entering the conscious. The awareness and identification of these racialized discourses is the first step to truly combatting them within society.

Media Representation of Muslim Footballers

Thirteen people responded to this question, some guessing and some asserting, that Muslims athletes are treated by the media "like the other players." However, this is a difficult question for the average person, even for the average sports fan. Many people do not read or watch news with a critical eye, especially in regard to small details like how a specific person or group is portrayed. This is even more true for sports because is intended as entertainment and as such is not evaluated critically. Therefore, it is no surprise fifteen respondents answered "no idea" or "I don't know" to this question and two more choose not to answer at all.

Three respondents argued that the media does not choose to represent a player by his religion unless the player specifically uses his religion as an identifier, and one offered N'Golo Kanté as an example. A fourth person offered up the case of Franck Ribéry as the only mention of religion that he can remember, and it was because of Ribéry's atypical story of a famous Frenchman converting to Islam. Again, origin and skin color are mentioned by three respondents

as more significant than religion. Two respondents wrote that it is more common for female Muslim athletes to be discussed in the media because journalists have much to say on whether she is veiled or unveiled. These findings are consistent with responses from the previous questions.

Ten respondents said that Muslim footballers and/or athletes in general are treated differently in the media than white or Christian players. Five simply mentioned "a lack of respect" or being represented in a "slightly negative way." A woman from Île-de-France brought both religion and origin into her answer. She wrote, "we will easily indicate the country of origin of the player while he is of French nationality. We are only going to imply that he is a Muslim and this discourse on national origin and religion sets them apart as if they were different French people." To her, the media is much more direct about the origin of a player while journalists only "imply" the religion, but both religion and origin are used to set the minority player apart. Religion may be only "implied" because direct reference to religion could be perceived by some French as contrary to *laïcité*. The preference of some French people to *not* know a players' religion was expressed in Question Three.

Five respondents discussed the pattern of notional acceptance. A woman in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur wrote about the positive side of notional acceptance: "in general, and especially during the world cup, they are presented as French!" Another respondent mentioned the case of Karim Benzema and muses over how Benzema is an extremely popular player internationally, yet he does not have the same status in France, suggesting that religion is the reason. A researcher from Nouvelle-Aquitaine answered, "I read articles on sport too infrequently to have an opinion. But I can repeat a maxim: when a Muslim (or black) player wins, he is French! When he loses, he is a dirty Arab or a dirty negro." The researcher claimed to

pay little attention to sports, yet he is familiar with this adage. The pattern of notional acceptance, as the previous also showed, seems to be gaining recognition in France.

Concluding Thoughts on the Questionnaire

The questionnaire reinforced themes of notional acceptance both on a team level and individual player level. Respondents' assertions and enthusiasm about the multicultural quality of the French team and how it represents French society fit with the observed pattern from the content analysis that victory leads to increased praise of multiculturalism. Comments about the acceptance and othering of players during wins and losses were present within serval questions. It was also acknowledged by a significant number of respondents that the media tends to portray Muslims players differently and often more negatively than majority group players. The comments on *laïcité* were varied and complex, but suggest that *laïcité* is much more of a concern among amateur players rather than at the high level of the French national team.

Additionally, scattered across the answers to these four opinion questions, there were also references to sports as a tool of integration and social mobility, brawn versus brains, and clash of civilizations rhetoric. Three respondents referred to football, or sports in general, as a "vector of integration," a way "some classes can break out of their condition," and "a way of social promotion." A banker from Bretagne pointed out brawn versus brains. She wrote, "Some will say there may be too many people of color (descendants of the French colonies), others will say that athletes of color have better physical capabilities than whites (quota business). No matter what color, a true fan like me just wants to win!" She made no comment on the truth of brawn versus brains but did clearly identify the stereotype. Another respondent commented that the French team was probably below average in terms of intellectual representation of the country,

writing that, “Their job is to play football at a high level, not read books.” While it is true that devoting a significant amount of time to a single pastime leaves less time for other activities, intelligence is not necessarily linked to reading and, with the large percentage of minority players on the team, this comment has undertones of the brawn versus brains dichotomy. Therefore, brawn versus brains is mentioned once overtly, pointing out that, like notional acceptance, this stereotype is beginning to be identified among the French, and once subliminally, reinforcing the idea that for the majority of people these stereotypes and racial discourses exist on a subconscious level.

In regard to of clash of civilizations and Orientalist rhetoric, a man from the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes region presented Islam in opposition with secular and egalitarian France using the words “outraged” and “very visibly reactive clientele” to describe the Muslim community in France. These phrases are indicative of Orientalist discourse in that they portray Muslims as irrational and controlled by their emotions. He also described the Muslim football player of immigrant origin with a choice of claiming Islam as a public identity marker to appeal to the immigrant communities or choosing to downplay religion and let the whole country identify with him, implying that embracing Islam is counter to France and thus reinforcing the idea of an opposing East and West.

The presence of these patterns of representation—brawn versus brains, clash of civilizations, and notional acceptance—as well as the notion of sports as a tool of integration, lends some support to my findings in the content analysis. The questionnaire revealed that these social representations are present in the minds of some French people, whether overt or subconscious, and not just on the pages of the newspapers I analyzed.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine how the French media represents Muslim and other minority footballers at the highest level through a content analysis of four French newspapers—*Le Figaro, Le Monde, L'Humanité,* and *La Croix*—and a questionnaire answered by over fifty French people. This study was a very broad overview of twenty-one years of French football focused on how articles that included a reference to Islam, Muslim, Arab, immigrant, or *banlieue* presented French football and minority French footballers. Several of the 440 articles I analyzed made references to other articles that had been published about similar subjects that were not included in my sample, so I can say with great certainty that there are many articles involving the same big topics in French football that did not include those few keywords and thus did not make it into my limited study. Further research must be done on this topic on a larger scale.

Furthermore, several articles in my study parameters mentioned important articles in *L'Équipe*, the biggest sports newspaper in France. I regret that I was not able to access issues of *L'Équipe* from the timespan of the study as its status as France's number one sports newspaper surely would have revealed interesting findings. In fact, the limited number of publications analyzed is another shortcoming as many national and regional newspapers circulate in France. I studied articles from only four newspapers. In addition, as shown by my questionnaire, a significant amount of news in France is digested from non-traditional print sources. The four most popular news sources among the questionnaire participants were *Le Monde,* Radio France, France TV, and social media. *Le Monde* is the only newspaper publication of those four sources. Additionally, because of its pacing and action, sports especially are most often digested on TV. Further research should be done on other French publications and news sources.

Within this research I was the solitary coder and, though I strove to remain as unbiased as possible, there is the possibility that my personal experiences and expectations effected how I viewed the data. A second complication arises from the fact that I am not a native-born French speaker. I have studied French for years, spent several months living in France, and consulted dictionaries and native French speakers throughout this process, however the fact remains that I may have missed or misconstrued nuances and cultural parlance.

Regarding the questionnaire, my recruitment processes were convenience sampling and referral sampling. I emailed a network of acquaintances in France and asked them to complete the questionnaire and send it on to friends and family. As such, I cannot guess at the extent of representation of the respondents in terms of the total population of France, but it is likely not representative. Coupled with the small number of respondents, any patterns within the questionnaire answers are not representative of the entirety of French society, and may be biased to certain regions. However, the questionnaire does offer some insights and opinions into the area of study.

As I undertook this study to get a broad overview of a twenty-one-year span, additional studies ought to be done on single events or years to analyze more thoroughly all of the available articles from a time period. Several questionnaire respondents also made comments about debates and references to *laïcité* and Islam being more pervasive in women's football and amateur football. These comments are sensible as Muslim women are subjected to the veil debate and amateur players may face more discrimination as they do not have the status from money or fame that elite players receive. Therefore, research ought to be done investigating these other domains of French football.

However, this study revealed significant findings. Through the content analysis of four French publications, *Le Figaro, Le Monde, L'Humanité,* and *La Croix*, I found evidence of the French national team used a symbol of multiculturalism, individual players represented as symbols of integration, players experiencing notional acceptance depending on their behaviors and playing performance, and brawn versus brains, Orientalist, and clash of civilizations rhetoric.

In the questionnaire, the majority of respondents defended the republican value of *laïcité*, though interpretations of what *laïcité* really means and how it should be applied in the context of football varied. Many respondents also answered that Muslims are treated differently, often more negatively, in the media. There was some evidence for notional acceptance, brawn versus brains, Orientalist, and clash of civilizations rhetoric. However, a majority of questionnaire respondents were unaware of the phenomenon of notional acceptance despite my identification of it in the content analysis and other respondents also being aware of it. It is possible, as with any research on a sensitive topic, that respondents did not want to answer with their true thoughts or observations, and instead wrote what they believed to be the politically or socially correct answer. It is just as likely that these respondents truly believe what they wrote or forgot they have seen instances of notional acceptance in the media or have never encountered any of these patterns before.

The presence of these patterns of minority representation in both the news articles and the questionnaire responses show that these racist discourses operate in French society. That there are only minimal mentions of the brawn versus brains, Orientalist, and clash of civilizations discourses in the questionnaire compared to the obvious callouts of notional acceptance does not discount these stereotypes. The low number of mentions and the lack of overt remarks is because racialized language and subtilties like animal language and clash of civilizations rhetoric are less

likely to register with audiences reading for purposes of entertainment than the more obvious idea of notional acceptance. For example, Karim Benzema was quoted saying “If I score, I'm French, if I don't score, I'm Arab” (Begag, 2018), and he is not the only player to have comments like this. Quotes such as these really draw attention to the notional acceptance of minority players. Further, the one overt mention of brawn versus brains rhetoric also makes sense because of the 2011 quota affair that referenced brawn versus brains as one reason for the quotas. The other forms of representation, however, are more subtle. Therefore, the small number of mentions in the questionnaire reinforces the idea that these discourses mostly exist in the French subconscious.

The existence of these patterns of representation can also help to explain why the French are so reluctant to accept Muslims and minorities as French. Not only do the clash of civilizations and Orientalist discourse suggest an inherent difference between Europeans and those from the “East,” but these discourses also hold that Muslims and Blacks are less intellectual and easily succumb to animal passions and uncivilized behavior. The last thing the French—descendants of rational enlightenment thinkers—want is to be considered those things. In fact, to define is to differentiate. Thus, by marking minorities as uncivilized and intellectually inferior the French can identify themselves as rational and superior.

These findings are significant in multiple ways. First, the results from the content analysis confirm previous studies that discovered and identified these different patterns of media representations of minorities in the media systems of other countries, such as Billings and Eastman, (2002), Amara (2013), Massao and Fasting (2014), Hughey and Goss (2015), Deeb and Love (2018), Bradbury et al. (2018), and Shavit (2019). Second, these findings reveal the presence of these patterns of representations in the French media. This implies that some French

journalists have either made a conscious effort to represent minority athletes in different ways than majority athletes or possess an unconscious bias against minority athletes. Third, in line with the framing theory of media, these representations of minority footballers may influence reader's perceptions on minority athletes and minorities in general. The questionnaire has shown that some of these representations have come to the publics' conscious notice. Others seem to be operating in the subconscious. Further, the presence of several of these patterns of representation—notional acceptance, player as integration symbol, brawn versus brains, Orientalism, and clash of civilizations—in the articles and in the questionnaire show that these ideas are present among the media and among the general public. As such, this suggests that these patterns are present in much more than just the 440 articles I analyzed. Additionally, as these patterns of representation of minority footballers are present in both the media and in the minds of the general public, they will likely only grow stronger as the media and the public play off of and reinforce each other's beliefs.

Among the anti-Muslim sentiment of French society, the national football team is a place where Muslims and minorities are overrepresented and often given acclaim, something they cannot receive in other sectors of French society. This phenomenon seems to be a result of the surface level multiculturalism that can be applied to the French team. The players are of diverse skin colors and backgrounds, yet their lives are entirely given to football—an arena where values and cultural differences are not easily represented—and to France in such a way that they become the model of an assimilated minority. Yet even these national heroes are subjected to these racialized discourses and one-dimensional stereotypes of notional acceptance, Orientalist discourse, and clash of civilizations rhetoric.

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Appendix A - Player Bios

Adil Rami
Position: Defender
Mother: Moroccan
Father: Moroccan
Born: Bastia, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2010-2018
*2016 Euro second-place team
*2018 FIFA World champion team

Antoine Griezmann
Position: Forward
Mother: Portuguese descent
Father: German
Born: Mâcon, France
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2014-present
*2016 Euro second-place team
*2018 FIFA World champion team

Benjamin Mendy
Position: Defender
Ethnic origin: Côte d'Ivoire descent
Born: Longjumeau, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2017-present
*2018 FIFA World champion team

Didier Deschamps
Position: Midfielder
Ethnic origin: French
Born: Bayonne, France
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 1989-2000
Years coached national team: 2012-present
*1998 FIFA World champion team
*2016 Euro second-place coach
*2018 FIFA World champions coach

Djibril Sidibé
Position: Defender
Ethnic origin: Mali
Born: Troyes, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2016-present
*2018 FIFA World champion team

Eric Abidal
Position: Defender
Mother: Martinique
Father: Martinique
Born: Saint-Genis-Laval, Lyon, France
Religion: Muslim, converted in 2007
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2004-2013
*2006 FIFA second place team

Eric Cantona
Position: Forward
Mother: Spanish descent
Father: Italian descent
Born: Marseille, France
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 1987-1995

Emmanuel Petit
Position: Midfielder
Ethnic origin: French
Born: Dieppe, France
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 1990-2003
*1998 FIFA World champion team
*Euro 2000 champion team

Franck Ribéry
Position: Midfielder
Ethnic origin: French
Born: Boulogne-sur-Mer, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2006-2014
*2006 FIFA second place team
*Investigated in 2010 for involvement with an underage prostitute, but case was dropped

Hatem Ben Arfa
Position: Midfielder
Ethnic origin: Tunisian
Born: Clamart, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2007-2015
*Investigated in 2010 for involvement with an underage prostitute, but case was dropped

Karim Benzema
Position: Forward
Ethnic origin: Algerian descent
Born: Lyon, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2007-2015
*Investigated in 2010 for involvement with an underage prostitute, but case was dropped
*Investigated in 2015 for alleged participation in blackmailing fellow teammate Mathieu Valbuena

Kylian Mbappé
Position: Forward
Mother: Algerian
Father: Cameroon
Born: Paris, France
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2017-present
*2018 FIFA World champion team

Laurent Blanc
Position: Defender
Ethnic origin: French
Born: Alès, France
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 1989-2000
Years coached French team: 2010-2012
*1998 FIFA World champion team
*Euro 2000 champion team

Lilian Thuram
Position: Defender
Ethnic origin: Guadeloupe
Born: Pointe-à-Pitre, Gaudaloupe
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 1994-2008
*1998 FIFA World champion team
*Euro 2000 champion team
*2006 FIFA second place team

Marcel Desailly
Position: Defender
Ethnic origin: Ghanaian
Born: Accra, Ghana
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 1993-2004
*1998 FIFA World champion team
*Euro 2000 champion team

Mathieu Valbuena
Position: Midfielder
Mother: French
Father: Spanish
Born: Bruges, France
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2010-2018

Nabil Fekir
Position: Forward
Ethnic origin: Algerian descent
Born: Lyon, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2015-present
*2018 FIFA World champion team

N'Golo Kanté
Position: Midfielder
Ethnic origin: Mali
Born: Paris, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2016-present
*2016 Euro second-place team
*2018 FIFA World champion team

Nicolas Anelka
Position: Forward
Ethnic origin: Martinique
Born: Le Chesnay, France
Religion: Muslim, converted in 1995
Years played with Les Bleus: 1998-2010
*Euro 2000 champion team

Ousmane Dembélé
Position: Forward
Mother: French of Mauritanian and Senegalese descent
Father: Mauritania
Born: Vernon, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with Les Bleus: 2016-present
*2018 FIFA World champion team

Patrice Evra
Position: Defender
Mother: Cape Verde
Father: Guinean descent
Born: Dakar, Senegal
Years played with Les Bleus: 2004-2016
*2016 Euro second-place team

Patrick Vieira
Position: Midfielder
Mother: Cape Verde
Father: Senegal
Born: Dakar, Senegal
Years played with Les Bleus: 1997-2009
*1998 FIFA World champion team
*Euro 2000 champion team
*2006 FIFA second place team

Paul Pogba
Position: Midfielder
Ethnic origin: Guinea
Born: Lagny-sur-Marne, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2013-present
*2016 Euro second-place team
*2018 FIFA World champion team

Samir Nasri
Position: Midfielder
Ethnic origin: Algerian descent
Born: Septèmes-les-Vallons
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2007-2013

Thierry Henry
Position: Forward
Mother: Martinique
Father: Guadeloupe
Born: Les Ulis, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 1997-2010
*1998 FIFA World champion team
*Euro 2000 champion team
*2006 FIFA second place team

Wissam Ben Yedder
Position: Forward
Ethnic origin: Tunisian descent
Born: Sarcelles, France
Religion: Muslim
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2018-present

Yoann Gourcuff
Position: Midfielder
Ethnic origin: French
Born: Ploemeur, France
Years played with *Les Bleus*: 2008-2013

Zinedine Zidane
Position: Midfielder
Ethnic origin: Algeria
Born: Marseille
Religion: non-practicing Muslim
Years played with Les Bleus: 1994-2006
*1998 FIFA World champion team
*Euro 2000 champion team
*2006 FIFA second place team

Appendix B – Methodology Notes

Search Terms

I used the following search terms in conjunction with the Boolean keyword AND between each grouped phrase to find relevant articles.

Table 2
Search terms used in conjunction in Nexus Uni and justification

Term	**Justification**
football OR foot	In French, *football* and *foot* mean soccer
bleus OR équipe nationale OR FIFA	*Les Bleus* is the name of the French national team, the focus of my study *Équipe nationale* translates to national team I included FIFA as a precaution since it is the biggest football tournament in the world
musulman OR islam OR arabe OR beur OR immigré OR immigrant OR maghrébin OR banlieue	*Musulman* translates to Muslim Beur and Arabe mean Arab *Immigré* and *immigrant* are two forms of the word immigrant *Maghrébin* means someone from North Africa *Banlieue* refers to the neighborhoods that many immigrants to France live in

Elimination Process

This table shows the process of discarding articles that were duplicates or off-topic.

Table 3
Number of articles retrieved, process of elimination, and final number of articles

Reason for discarding	Le Monde	Le Figaro	L'Humanité	La Croix	Total
Initial search	504	202	111	104	921
Duplicates	126	4	9	0	139
Unrelated	184	88	31	39	342
Total remaining	**194**	**110**	**71**	**65**	**440**

Appendix C – Questionnaire

Complete questionnaire in English

Part 1: Demographic info

With these four questions, we want to learn a little bit about you. If you prefer not to answer a question, just select "prefer not to answer." There is no penalty for selecting this option.

How old are you?
a. 18-25
b. 26-45
c. 46-65
d. 66+
e. Prefer not to answer

What is your gender?
a. Male
b. Female
c. Prefer not to answer

What is your profession?
[textbox]

What region of France do you currently live in?
a. Auvergne Rhône-Alpes
b. Bretagne
c. Bourgogne Franche-Comté
d. Centre Val de Loire
e. Grand Est
f. Hauts-de-France
g. Île-de-France
h. Nouvelle-Aquitaine
i. Normandie
j. Occitanie
k. Pays de la Loire
l. Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

Select all the sources where you get your news or learn about sports.
a. TF1
b. BFM
c. France TV
d. Le Monde
e. Radio France
f. Le Figaro

g. L'Équipe
h. La Croix
i. L'Humanité
j. Social Media
k. Other _____

Why do you choose to consume these news sources? Are there any sources you intentionally choose NOT to read?

Part 2: Your opinions

The following are opinion-based questions. We want to know how you think and why you think the way you do. There are no right or wrong answers. If you would prefer not to answer a particular question, please type, "prefer not to answer". If you are comfortable, please explain why you do not want to answer.

Do you think the French national football team is culturally representative of France? Why or why not?
[Textbox]

Do you feel that the Fédération Française de Football (FFF) encourages religious expression? Do you support their choice? Is their policy in line with laïcité?
[Textbox]

Do you feel the French media pays too little, too much, or the right amount of attention to a player's religion? Does being Muslim make a difference? Why or why not?
[Textbox]

In your opinion, how does the media represent Muslim football players or Muslim athletes in general?
[Textbox]