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## Seeking discursive spaces for peace in media-sport narratives

*Kurzfassung:* Friedenswissenschaftler haben unterstrichen, wie wichtig es ist, Friedenserziehung außerhalb der formalen Schulbildung bzw. der offiziellen politischen Rhetorik anzusiedeln und in den täglichen Umgang mit den Medien, mit Religion, Kunst, Musik oder Sport einzubeziehen. Der vorliegende Aufsatz erörtert, dass die internationale Sportberichterstattung trotz ihrer Betonung von Konfrontation und nationalem Wettbewerb/nationaler Konkurrenz das bieten kann, was Bruck (1989; 1993) *diskursive Möglichkeiten* bzw. *Räume* für Frieden nennt. Nach einer Untersuchung der Beziehungen zwischen Sport, Medien und Frieden identifiziert die Autorin fünf Eigenschaften bzw. Bedingungen, die es erleichtern, kooperative und gewaltfreie Beziehungen zwischen Gruppen aufzubauen *und* mit Sportberichterstattung kompatibel sind. Diese Eigenschaften, die aus der Literatur zur interkulturellen Kommunikation, Sozialpsychologie und Friedenswissenschaft abgeleitet/entwickelt wurden, beinhalten: kooperatives Framing, Humanisierung, Legitimierung und Gleichstellung der anderen sowie positive Erwartungen infolge von Ritualisierung. Beispiele für deren Vorkommen in der Berichterstattung werden angeführt, um zu zeigen, dass Friedensbotschaften, die in der Mainstream-Sportberichterstattung ausgemacht werden können, zwar subtil, aber dennoch bereits kontinuierlich vorhanden sind.

*Abstract:* Peace scholars have emphasized the importance of locating peace education outside of formal education or mainstream political rhetoric and into our daily interactions with media, religion, art, music, or sport. This essay argues that the context of international media-sport, despite its emphasis on confrontation and national competition, may offer what Bruck (1989; 1993) calls 'discursive opportunities' or 'spaces' for peace. After reviewing the relationships among sport, media, and peace, the author identifies five attributes, or facilitative conditions, that are known to foster cooperative and non-violent intergroup relations *and* are compatible with media narratives of sport. The attributes, derived from the literatures of intercultural communication, social psychology, and peace studies, include: *cooperative framing, humanizing the other, conferring status on international relationships, equalization, and positive expectations through ritualization*. Examples of how these attributes may appear as story elements are presented in order to demonstrate that subtle, yet persistent, messages for peace might be located within the dominant media narratives of sport.

### 1 Introduction

In 1999 the United Nations General Assembly formally adopted Resolution A/53/243 the 'Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace'. The vote came one year after the UN designated 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. The Declaration identified eight attributes of a 'culture of peace': the ability to resolve conflicts without violence, sustainable economic and social development, human rights and equality, democratic governance, open communication, gender equality, the promotion of tolerance and solidarity, disarmament and international security (UNESCO, 2002) and "asked the people of the world to help build that culture" (de Riveria, Kurrien & Olsen, 2007, p. 259).

At first glance, this declaration seems familiar. As long as there has been war there have been calls to promote peace. Yet in the post-Cold War 1990s, the world witnessed a succession of violent conflicts in the Gulf War, Angola, Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo. Far from routine, this UN declaration conveyed a sense of urgency about the "persistence and proliferation of violence and conflict in various parts of the world" reaching beyond traditional armies to terrorize unprecedented numbers of civilians and youth.

In addition, the articulation of tangible attributes of a culture of peace clearly embraces Johan Galtung's (1969) important distinctions between 'negative' and 'positive' peace and personal (overt) violence and structural violence (systemic inequities). Galtung argued that it is necessary to tackle the problems of injustice, discrimination, and poverty because such structural violence promotes personal violence. By addressing these issues, conflict-prone societies can move beyond conditions of 'negative peace' (defined as simply the absence of war) toward a more sustainable or 'positive' peace.

According to de Riveria et al. (2007), "Since [the UN Declaration], 20 Peace Prize Laureates, dozens of religious denominations, thousands of NGOs, and millions of persons have signed statements and held events that have supported its call. It is a unique social movement, the first to involve both governments and private citizens in an effort to create a more peaceful culture, the sort of culture that would promote caring rather than violence" (p. 259).

A few years before the UN Declaration, hidden within the pages of a book, Ronald Fisher (1990), a social psychologist specializing in conflict resolution, delivered a similar call to action to the scholarly community: "The problem of destructive intergroup and international conflict can be seen as the most significant issue confronting humankind....The immediate question for all disciplines...is what unique contribution each might make to the nonviolent and constructive resolution of such conflict" (p. 177). In particular, he suggested the importance of creating "communication mechanisms" to help shift conflictual intergroup relationships into more cooperative ones.

In fact, the UN 'Programme of Action' specifically calls upon the "educative and information role of the media" to contribute to a culture of peace through messages promoting mutual understanding, tolerance, active citizenship, human rights, democracy, and international cooperation (United Nations, 1999). Along these lines, communication scholars are actively investigating the ways in which media both prevent and promote peace. For example, there is a relatively small, but important body of work that investigates the role of media in peace negotiations and peacebuilding operations (e.g., Becker, 2004; Howard, 2002; McKay and Mazurana, 2001; Shinar, 2000; Spurk, 2002; Wolfsfeld, 2004). Other work explores whether monitoring media in areas of potential tension could serve as a type of early warning system, signaling third parties to intervene before violence erupts (e.g., Frohardt and Termin, 2003; Hunt, 1997; O'Neill, 1996). Still other communication scholars have joined forces with media professionals to promote practices such as peace journalism (e.g., Kempf, 2007; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005; Manoff, 2002; Tehranian, 2002). Many of these efforts focus on practical applications of media technology, journalism training, and the promotion of independent media organizations.

At the same time, scholars in the field of peace studies argue that to break current cycles of violence and war requires more than just media tools, but a significant philosophical shift; literally, a new way of thinking about conflict resolution (e.g., Barash, 1994; Eisler, 1993; Young, 2000). It requires confronting the 'logic' of war and violence that pervades the media and other institutions (Galtung, 1993). In this view, a 'culture of peace,' as promoted by the UN declaration, is one where violence would seem an inconceivable alternative when conflict arises. The communication mechanism for reaching this goal, according to Korten (2007), is to disseminate new cultural narratives--or ways of knowing the world--to guide our understanding of intergroup relations and offer credible alternatives to the logic of violence. Bruck (1989; 1993) calls this same idea finding "discursive opportunities" or "spaces" within a dominant discourse that introduce, over time, new ways of thinking.

The purpose of this essay is to identify spaces where new cultural narratives regarding intergroup and intercultural relations might be told outside the confines of hard line political rhetoric and to provide examples of what those narratives might say. Perhaps surprisingly, this article argues that the hyper-commercialized world of media-sport<sup>1</sup> may offer discursive spaces for peace within mainstream media. Media-sport content reaches unprecedented numbers of people the world over. While accepting critical scholars' indictment of the media-sport complex as one that supports, in many ways, global patterns of discrimination, cultural commodification, and intergroup confrontation, the argument made here attempts to underscore Bruck's (1989; 2003) point that it is within those dominant structures where 'dissident' messages should and do take hold.

To make the case, the article briefly summarizes key perspectives and research findings related to sport, peace and media relationships. Then it identifies a set of attributes, or facilitative conditions, derived from the literatures of intercultural communication, social psychology, and peace studies linked cooperative relations with international 'Others.' If present over time, these attributes are known to reduce the prospect of violence as a viable alternative for resolving conflict. While not exhaustive, the attributes selected are those that can be conveyed in media-sport narratives. They include: *cooperative framing, humanizing the other, conferring status on international relationships, equalization, and positive expectations through ritualization*. Finally, it is argued that these key attributes can, and on occasion do, exist as narrative devices used by sport journalists, suggesting that the promotion of peace is compatible with the dynamics of international media-sport.

## 2 Sport, media and peace

### 2.1 The rhetoric

"Sport is a universal language. At its best it can bring people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious, beliefs or economic status. And when young people participate in sports or have access to physical education, they can experience real exhilaration even as they learn the ideals of teamwork and tolerance. That is why the United Nations is turning more and more to the world of sport for help in our work for peace." (UN: Universal Language, 2004, ¶13 )

Then Secretary-General of the UN Kofi Annan presented these remarks to commemorate 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. There is nothing new or even provocative about this statement. This is the language of the Olympic Movement and much of the discourse surrounding the relationship between sport and peace. It embodies the belief that international sport not only offers a realistic venue for athletes to learn about cultural 'others,' but a viable model for pursuing peace within a conflict-prone world. More recently, the new UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, appointed Wilfried Lemke of Germany as Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace with the mandate to use "the power of sports as a tool for peace" (UN Envoy, 2008)

Others also claim a potentially positive relationship between sports and cooperative intergroup relations. As Kyröläinen and

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1. The term media-sport, now of common use in academic circles, generally refers to the past 50 years or more of commercial media and sport co-constructing each other into their present, inextricably linked, form. See, for example, Rowe (2004) or Raney and Bryant (2006) for excellent collections of works regarding the 'media sport cultural complex'.

Varis (1981, p. 68) suggest, "the world of sports can be regarded as an ideal model for international relations...it's non-violent and bound with commonly agreed rules." Seppänen (1982) adds that there is a special 'ideology of sport' that emphasizes fairness, justice, and competition on equal terms. Referring to the increasing presence of multicultural sports teams Malone (1994, p. 1) states, "Sports can teach us a spirit not only of cooperation, but also of self sacrifice, where we subordinate our individual interests for a greater good, for the good of the entire team....Sports is built on structures, rules, tradition and it seems ironic – but true – that people from vastly different backgrounds and perspectives can come together on the playing field."

While the Olympic Movement is the most well known promoter of peace through sport, a multitude smaller scale events and programs also encourage friendships among the youth of different nations. For example, the Institute for International Sport organizes the World Scholar Athlete Games brings together 2000 high school age scholar-athletes from 175 countries every four years to compete in sports competitions, as well as attend discussions on leadership, ethics, peace, and a variety of global issues. Its goal is to create friendships between future world leaders using sports as a means of communication. The Youth Friendship Games Holland offers a similar experience to young athletes from over 75 countries in order to promote knowledge and understanding about other cultures. The Peace and Sport Organisation targets governments, international sports federations, private and public companies to convince leaders in these various arenas that sport can be used as a vehicle for peace. It also sponsored a variety of activities in this regard. A Sports Peace Corps initiative, proposed as a cooperative project between the UN and IOC, is another effort being promoted by the World Taekwondo Federation (Xiaohuo, 2008). Bilateral or regional exchanges, such as the International Sport Exchange (Canada – Asia), Jordan's Peace through Sport initiative (West Asian region), or Tiger Woods and Ernie Els' Friendship Cup (US – South Africa) also exist with similar goals ("Woods, Els," 2006). There are also one-time events such as the Greek and Turkish swimmers who chose September 1, 2005, The International Day of Peace, to swim the eight miles stretch between their countries, symbolically meeting halfway ("Turkish, Greek," 2005). Finally, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of international sporting competitions over the past 25 years which, in theory, would offer increasing opportunity for the intermingling of international athletes (Bell, 2002).

Most people, however, do not experience international sport as athletes, volunteers, or even on-site spectators. For most people sport is a mediated experience--whether through print, broadcast, or internet channels. Before addressing media-sport content, in particular, what more generally do the media offer, or not, to the promotion of peace? Similar to the rhetoric of sport and peace, the language of international diplomacy clearly considers the media as a variable in the pursuit of war and peace. Frederick (1993), in his careful review of the language embedded in a long list of international treaties and declarations found that media are not only forbidden to promote war, but are specifically called upon to promote peace. He found that these international documents embodied one main message regarding media and peace:

"Media should play a positive role in educating and enlightening the public toward peace. Throughout international law, media are repeatedly called on to promote a better knowledge of the conditions of life and the organizations of peace. Media activities should incorporate contents compatible with the task of the preparation for life in peace. The mass media must contribute effectively to the strengthening of peace and international understanding and to the promotion of human rights" (p. 239).

## 2.2 The reality

Despite the rhetoric neither sport nor the media have, either separately or together, an empirical association with peace. As Crowther (1999, p. 2) points out, "none of the ancient Olympic games ever stopped a war...[in fact] the association between the ideals of sport and war in Greece was indeed strong...[Sports] were a preparation for war." The ancient Olympic Games were a national event to which 'foreigners' were rarely invited. In modern times, there is still no clear relationship between peace and sports although the idealization of the relationship persists (Seppänen, 1982). In fact, Gunter (2006) writes of the integral role of violence in much sporting activity--whether in the actions of players or fans. Kyröläinen and Varis (1981, p. 78) suggest that, "it must...be emphasized that people have a stronger belief in the peace-promoting effect of sports than objective, verified scientific results would tend to indicate."

Focusing solely on the media, the record is even worse. Research clearly demonstrates that throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century the mass media have been effectively utilized by governments for the purposes of nation building, maintenance, and public mobilization during times of war (e.g., Anderson, 2006). Even without heavy-handed government influence, Galtung (1993) writes that the media have a "fascination with power...they amplify the sound of the guns rather than muting them" (p. xi). And, when called upon by governments, the mass media have the powerful ability to construct an enemy. As Keen wrote, implicating the mass media's critical role in public mobilization for war, "We first kill people with our minds, before we kill them with weapons" (cited in Roach, 1993, p. 10).

Without question, the basic components of modern journalism--news values, reliance on official sources, production routines, organizational structures, need for audience and profits--make it easier to create discourses of conflict and war than of cooperation and peace. From the perspective of any global media conglomerate, the values of products and profits carry

far more weight than those of justice and peace. As Shinar (2000, p. 91) so bluntly puts it, for most commercial media outlets, "peace is boring."

In general terms, research on international news patterns reveals that media tend to offer little substantive information about other countries beyond images of conflict. Instead, news framing tends to focus on how the actions of other countries impact the home nation rather than explaining events in terms that might increase intercultural understanding. In regard to media coverage of war and peace, the preponderance of empirical research reveals that in coverage of international relations media are highly susceptible to government news management and demonstrate clear patterns of nationalistic bias in times of international conflict (e.g., Bruck, 1993; Entman, 1991; Reese, 2004). Research has also demonstrated that western news media readily marginalize those who speak out against war (e.g., Bruck, 1993; Hackett, 1991, Reese, 2004). Even when covering peace negotiations, Shinar (2000) found that news media prefer the discourse of conflict. In his analysis of media presentation of peace talks in Northern Ireland and the Middle East, Shinar found that the media tend to frame peace coverage in three ways. The first, and most common, is through a 'discourse of war' where the terminology of violence is maintained (e.g., focusing on conflicts within the negotiations; government officials 'fighting' and 'struggling' to find peace). Second, the media at times apply a 'discourse of trivialization' where the emphasis is on more personal aspects of peace talks--removed from the substance of any peace resolutions (e.g., focusing on what officials' wives are wearing; describing personalities; noting personal gestures of friendship or rebuke). Third and, in Shinar's view, the only discourse amenable to promoting peace was that of 'ritualization' where the focus is on the symbolic, ceremonial, and ritual elements of peace talk proceedings.

Wolfsfeld (2004, p. 23) labels these and similar findings as reflecting the "principle of unintended consequences," referring to the fact that few journalists intend to support violence, war, and a general ignorance about the rest of the world, but the 'system' of media production overwhelms the best of intentions and tends to support, rather than defuse, conflict in international relations. Critical media theorists, however, are less kind. They point to the close business connections between corporate media enterprises, which report on conflict as news, and the military-industrial complex, which benefits from conflict--creating a structural barrier for the effective promotion of peace (Bruck with Roach, 1993; Roach, 1993, p. 17).

### **3 Media-sport as host to discursive spaces for peace**

Despite the discouraging realities to date, this essay suggests a closer consideration of sport journalism as a communication mechanism in support of peace. First of all, media or sports, as institutions, do not cause wars any more than they carry the sole responsibility for the promotion of peace. In fact, many scholars and peace activists insist that while the news media, in particular, present numerous barriers to the pursuit of peace, other forms of media content can provide 'spaces' to assist in the promotion of peace. As noted above, Bruck (1989; 1993) calls these 'discursive opportunities' or 'spaces' within the media that allow for dissident messages to be heard. In this case, the 'dissident' message is the advocacy of peace. The 'space' identified here is within the narratives of sports.

Why sport when for most audiences, sport is about competition: the more dramatic and fierce, the better? According to Fisk (2000) one cannot ignore the power of the mundane. He argues that messages of peace should be actively channeled into the power of religion, art, music, or sport because they touch people, in some way, on a daily basis (see also, Eisler, 1993). Rowe (2004) suggests that sport, in particular, is a powerful venue to focus on because it is so connected to 'everyday life' and many of the political, ethical, and social issues we face. He also notes the incredible reach and popularity of sport worldwide. With sports programming appearing in multiple channels for many hours, there are more 'opportunities' for a variety of messages to appear. Manoff (2002) places sport among several types of entertainment media, including soap operas, children's shows, and cartoon programming, that have the best potential for promoting multicultural perspectives and de-mystifying foreign 'others'. He argues that entertainment media venues, such as sport, are not bound by the same journalistic norms nor linked to the direct influences of government news management. Instead, such cultural vehicles allow for a broader expression of feelings and desires perhaps more conducive to the development intercultural understanding and empathy (Aharoni, 2000). Further, in terms of international reach, sports are not as burdened by barriers of language and literacy; sports programs easily cross international and intercultural boundaries (Bellamy, 2006). One might recall that the 1998 resolution, described in the introduction, purposefully targeted youth in the promotion of peace. Bryant and Holt (2006) cite polls that show today's youth to be interested in more, and more diverse, sports than were their parents. Today's youth are more likely to attend and watch sporting events and, in an internet age, more likely to connect with other global youth based on a common interest in sport, making sport narratives an ideal means to talk to young people. Finally, there are those who suggest that there is a predisposition by audiences to think of international sport in idealistic ways. For example, Simson and Jennings (1992) cite Ron Pickering, a former broadcaster, coach, and teacher: "Sport is the only human institution that is based on idealism. It's survived thirty-three centuries because of that. If it was simply competition it wouldn't have lasted thirty-three weeks" (p. 2).

Here again, critical media theorists would respond, and rightly so, with a harsh critique of the media-sport complex. Investigative journalists Simson and Jennings (1992) offered a searing indictment of the transformation of the Olympic Movement into a "professional, show-business spectacle" (p. 260). In their book that rocked the world of Olympic sport, they detail a behind-the-scenes culture ruled by greed, marketing plans, secrecy, and most critically, the power of television networks. Sullivan (2006) describes TV sports as 'confrontainment'—the packaging of confrontation as entertainment. Lenskyj (2006) and Maguire (2006) are highly critical of the 'Olympics industry' and the commodification of sport which, through marketing and sponsorship programs, effectively support companies that engage in the kind of discriminatory practices that can contribute to injustice and conflict. Intergroup conflict and commodification, and even violence, are the dominant narratives of the media-sport world.

If even the Olympic Rings have lost their tarnish to commercialism, how can one suggest that mediated sport, in any way, could offer values pertinent to peace? Yet it is exactly within such a dominant narrative that Bruck (1989) argues subversive messages can thrive. Applying his argument to media-sport, certainly not all of the commercial attraction of sport is based on fierce competition or enmity between teams. In fact, as will be suggested below, some of the messages that support peace have commercial appeal. Nor is peace the 'opposite' of sport competition. That is, competition is not the same as violent conflict so there is no reason why attributes of peace cannot co-exist with the excitement of sport. Finally, one cannot assume the dominant media-sport narrative translates into how individuals choose to think about intergroup or intercultural relations.

Even several of the scholars, cited above, justifiably critical of the sport industry acknowledge that within the confines of media-sport practices are 'places' for activists to challenge the dominant system (Lenskyj, 2006; Maguire, 2006) or for multicultural messages to appear without a political framing (Sullivan, 2006).

#### **4 Attributes conducive to peaceful relations**

If these discursive spaces for peace were to offer alternative or 'new' stories within the flow of dominant, media-sport narratives, what would they look like? Here it becomes necessary to identify a set of attributes or conditions requisite to the prospect of peaceful relations between diverse groups of people that could be expressed in media stories. A review of literatures in social psychology, peace studies, and intercultural communication offers up a compelling short list of attributes—and one that is surprisingly consistent across disciplines in regard to encouraging peaceful intergroup relations.

While neither exhaustive in scope nor concerned with specific peace processes (such as conflict resolution or peace negotiations), this list instead offers a modest set of 'pre-requisites' to lasting peace—without which a culture of peace could not take hold. These include: 1) the presence of [a] *shared network(s)* and the perceived need to work together in functionally important activities directed toward common goals. That is, a cooperative intergroup relationship is perceived as both salient and beneficial (Gudykunst, 1990; Kim, 1986). The existence of a shared network membership also allows distinct groups to think of themselves at a "higher level of category inclusiveness in ways that reduce intergroup bias and conflict" without denying their original group membership (Brewer and Gaertner, 2001, p. 459); 2) *humanization* of individuals within a rival group to show both variety of perspective within the group (differentiation and de-categorization) as well as identify key similarities ('mirror-image') in terms of human needs and desires across groups (Brewer and Gaertner, 2001; Brewer and Miller, 1988; Kennan, 1982; Stephan, 1985); 3) *legitimatization* of the other's right to exist, to participate, and to have a different point of view; 4) treatment of the other as an *equal* despite unequal circumstances (Bar-Tal, 2005; Fisher, 1990); and 5) a high degree of confidence, or *positive expectation*, that the other will behave predictably and in good faith to contribute to a satisfactory outcome (Gudykunst, 1990; Shinar, 2000). In intercultural or intergroup relations, this often occurs by engaging in ritualized behavior (that is, behaviors that conform to established rules or norms shared across social groups and are repeated over time).

#### **5 Media-sport narratives for peace**

It is argued here that the dynamics surrounding international sports competition not only embody the aforementioned attributes, but if one looks at sports journalism beyond the play-by-play coverage of individual matches, some of these attributes already emerge as narrative devices or story themes.

##### **5.1 Cooperative framing: identification of shared networks**

Although the most exciting sports coverage is that which focuses on the intensity of each particular competition, international sport requires a significant amount of functional cooperation in order to succeed. A complex network of athletes, governments, sponsors, media, organizing committees, sports organizations and other international specialists (e.g., in security) must work together in order to achieve their common goal: exciting sports competitions. Of course, the incentive

to cooperate is as often motivated by profits as by the love of sport. Even so, in the context of media-sports, internationally cooperative relationships are, in fact, not exceptional, but routine, necessary, complex and interesting.

At the level of the game or match, Davison (1974, p. 56) wrote, "Sports reporting is unintentionally dishonest in that the focus on the context obscures the enormous amount of cooperation between the contestants: the acceptance of the referees' authority and the often complicated infrastructure of rules, prior arrangements, and sponsorship."

To more accurately portray the world of international sports, sport journalists could develop this story line further and in doing so underscore that sport competition is not truly conflict, but a dramatic and exciting arena of global cooperation. Existing examples of this narrative theme of cooperation include articles about Russian and Greek officials cooperating on security for the 2004 Olympics (Nerman, 2004); strong international security cooperation for the 2006 World Cup in Germany ("EU anti-terror chief," 2006); or Australia and Greece offering planning assistance and support for the Beijing Olympics ("Australia, Greece," 2006).

Another type of shared network is that of global fans that surround, follow, discuss, and share a love for each individual sport – irrespective of cultural or national origin. The size and reach of these transnational fan formations make them an intercultural phenomenon. Jerome (1999) suggests that the prevalence of these types of 'bottom up' formations, connected through media technology such as the internet, form the true building blocks of a more internationalist perspective. This sports phenomenon is a story of intergroup cooperation, technology, and passion largely ignored by mainstream media.

## 5.2 Humanizing the other

As noted above, one of the basic preconditions to a lasting peace is to humanize all sides of a conflict through education to counteract misperception. In the world of mediated sport this would require asking sports journalists to refuse to fall prey to stereotypes--thereby de-objectifying the protagonists (Manoff, 2002). A journalist who humanizes the other shows the other group as made up of individuals, each possessing human qualities, goals, and needs similar to that of her audience.

The language of commercial media knows this as 'personalizing' and it is a common strategy used to appeal to, and connect with, audiences. The best example of attempts to humanize, or personalize, from the world of media-sport comes from the video features created about international athletes shown on some Olympic Games broadcasts (e.g., these are especially common to the Olympic broadcasts of the United States). Often these 'up close and personal' style features visit the athletes in their homes and typically show the challenges and sacrifices they endure as they train for the Olympic Games, ranging from family illness to threats of political instability. While at times these stories can be overdone with sentimentality, making them the brunt of sport purists' jokes, they do put a human face on athletes from around the world. The narrative possibilities of these features could expand beyond the hardships of training to look, for example, through the athletes' eyes at their homes and cultures. This narrative strategy, if done without a condescending or trivializing tone, offers glimpses into aspects of other cultures and places rarely experienced by audiences through the nightly news.

Another example would be the human interest story about the 'everyday' person inspired to use sport for some larger purpose. Here is the example of Poupeh Mahdavinder who decided to become the first Iranian woman to ride a bicycle solo around the world in an effort to promote peace and friendship among women and youth (Nagappan, 2003).

## 5.3 Conferring status on international friendships

Bar-Tal (2005, p. 9) identifies the persistent 'de-legitimization' of the other in the Israeli and Palestinian conflict as one of the primary psychological obstacles to peace or what he calls the ability to imagine a "shared psychological state of coexistence." He states that, as a "primary building block for the construction of new relations" legitimization of the other is critical; it implies an acceptance that the other group has as much a right to "exist and live in peace as one's own group" (p. 9). Davison (1974) also mentioned how news media have the ability to confer status on, or legitimize, certain actors, groups, or relationships in the international arena by offering public recognition, combined with respect.

In international sports competition, legitimization of the other is already implied by their participation in the sports event. However, sport journalists also have the capability to highlight, or confer status on, the many friendships and positive relationships between athletes of different countries through human interest or feature stories. This narrative strategy is already used in a variety of contexts. These include stories about high profile friendships such as those of golf great Tiger Woods with Ernie Els ("Woods, Els," 2006) or with Annika Sorenstam (Hack, 2005). Another example would be the 'enduring' friendship of US ice dancers David Mitchell and Loren Galler-Rabinowitz with rivals Canadian Tanith Belbin and Ben Agosto despite the fact that Belbin applied for U.S. citizenship in order to compete in ice dancing against Mitchell in the US Figure Skating Championships in 2006. Despite criticism of the move in the United States, Mitchell was quoted in the article as saying, "We've talked with Ben and Tanith and maintained and continued our strong friendship" to which Belbin likewise

responded, "...we do feel close to them...It's silly to think something like this would come between us...Our friendship comes first" (Mihoces, 2006, p. 8C). Another example would be that of tennis doubles partners Aisamul Haq of Pakistan and Rohan Bopanna of India who are close friends "determined to prove that a little tennis diplomacy can help thaw relations between their two rival nations" ("Aisam, Bopanna spark," 2008). This narrative strategy not only humanizes the athletes, but acts to model international and multicultural relationships as more enduring than seasonal rivalries of sport.

A similar example includes an article about the friendship of business and sport leaders Peter V. Ueberroth and Vitaly Smirnov, organizers of the Los Angeles 1984 and Moscow 1980 Olympic Games respectively, who couldn't "help but like each other" even when each was involved in successive Cold War boycotts of those events. The article focuses on how, despite circumstances and being involved in a new rivalry over Moscow or New York bids for the 2012 Olympics, the two powerful and competitive men forged a friendship based on trust and common interests (both were water polo players) that lasts to this day (Zinser, 2005). At the other end of the power spectrum, there is the bittersweet story of two young amateur hockey players Paul, a Roman Catholic, and Andrew, a Protestant, in violence-torn Northern Ireland whose deep friendship is only acceptable when playing hockey together for the Belfast Flyers (Atkinson, 2006).

#### **5.4 Equalization**

Bar-Tal (2005) argues that hand-in-hand with legitimization is the requirement of treating the other as an equal partner. In fact, without equalization there can be no meaningful interaction (in particular, negotiations) between rivals. Fisher (1990, p. 180) states that cooperative relations are further enhanced when the principle of equalization is institutionally supported and each group has sufficient autonomy, identity, and power in the interaction. Yet, along with fellow social psychologists, he would be among the first to agree that equalization is a much more challenging proposition than legitimization since one of the core principles of social identity construction is to rhetorically (and materially) position one's own group more favorably to others. And, as Rivenburgh (2000) argues, this ethnocentric urge remains a dominant pattern of media coverage of international relations, whether focused on governments, citizens, or sports teams.

Despite this ethnocentric tendency, when two teams enter the playing field of the same tournament equalization is, to some degree, forced upon a group when one's team or athlete loses, fair and square, in the competition. The discursive choice, however, is how national media explain the loss. Essentially, they have a choice of blaming the circumstances (bad calls, off day, injury) or complimenting the skills or strength of the other team (treatment as equals).

For example, US and Iranian news media routinely characterize each other's government as 'less than and not equal to' the home nations in morals, purpose, and action. In fact, the other is not 'equal' enough to warrant direct diplomatic dialogue. Switching to the world of sport, however, the US media have covered a series of visits of US wrestlers to Iran between 1998 and 2007. Outside the boundaries of government news management, US sport journalists chose a narrative theme that emphasized both the exceptional abilities of the Iranian wrestlers (treatment as equal to ... even better than!) and enthusiasm, knowledge, and hospitality of the Iranian fans. Hotly contested matches were routinely reported as ending with "hugs" and a "kiss on the cheek" between competitors regardless of who won and despite antagonistic governments. (e.g., Hoagland, 2006; "Iran and U.S.," 2007; Karimi, 2007; Michoces, 2007; "Wrestling with Tehran," 1998).

#### **5.5 Positive expectations through ritualization**

Another pre-requisite to sustainable and peaceful relations is the expectation, on the part of both parties, that the other will behave predictably and in ways that contribute to a positive outcome. In other words, when parties voluntarily engage in ritualized behavior (such as treaty signings, summits, or other public events) they communicate the seriousness of their intent and offer the public hope for positive outcomes. According to Fisher (1990, p. 181) the ritualization of interaction involves social norms and rules that help set expectations for "friendly, respectful, and trusting interaction."

Shinar (2000) emphasizes how the ritual aspects of global media events may also contribute to the processes of peace through their capability to capture the attention of a worldwide audience. Although rarely subversive or dissident in their overt intent or message, global media events encourage a discourse of ritualization that tend to express globally unifying themes, shared experience, and transcendent symbols--despite the national identification of their participants. In doing this they allow audiences to experience an event constructed by and intended to enhance international cooperation. In addition, ritualized events are, by nature, repeated. According to Fearon and Laitin (1996) the expectation of future interactions are important to the development of cooperation and trust between groups.

Sport offers the world's premier global media events in the Olympic Games and World Cup Soccer--events unparalleled in global audience attention. The Olympic Games, of course, offer the best example of the strategy of ritualization in sport. In it, national teams not only adhere to the rules of sport, but (with rare exception) willingly engage in the rituals prescribed by the Olympic Charter and return every four years to do so again. Despite the intensively competitive nature of elite sport,

all parties are engaged in a "cooperative task and reward structure" whose overarching goals are common (Fisher, 1990).

Baron Pierre de Coubertain's core Olympic ideals--promotion of peace, breaking down barriers between countries, and fostering a transnationalist spirit--are most overtly symbolized in the rituals of the Opening Ceremony as all nations enter the stadium on equal footing and are re-visited in the Closing Ceremony when the athletes freely mix (note: this is an Olympic tradition that is not designated in the Olympic Charter). The Olympic ceremonials contain symbols of unity and peace that gloss over the contradictions and conflicts of daily life. Each Olympic Games adds to a sense of shared history and personages as global audiences experience the same memorable moments associated with each Olympics. Although it is an event under constant threat from excessive commercialism, drugs, and scandals (Rivenburgh, 2002), it still manages to captivate large audiences in nearly every country in the world. It also manages to retain its highly ritual nature. When media – through their coverage – demonstrate respect for such a ritualized structure around sport, they in fact present and endorse a model for cooperative interaction.

It is important here to note that not all 'sports for peace and friendship' events are presented by sport journalists as a positive message for peace. Journalists can be particularly cynical in their presentation when a sporting event is seen as little more than political strategy orchestrated by governments. Instead of parroting the rhetoric of peace through sport, in such cases they accuse governments of tampering with the purity of sport for political gain. An example of this may be found in articles about a series of cricket matches, arranged after a 15-year ban, between Indian and Pakistani teams in Pakistan. Rather than identify potential positive outcomes, journalists drew attention to, and trivialized, the event as pure political theater orchestrated by the respective governments (Ugra, 2004; "Win Hearts logo," 2004).

## 6 Conclusion: encouraging media-sport narratives for peace

It is easy to offer numerous examples of news media coverage, often under the influence of governments, contributing to a public mood supportive of international intervention and conflict. However, Davison (1974) suggests that, in much the same way, the media can be used to create a mood that peace is possible. Bar-Tal (2005, p. 10) refers to this simply as the "introduction of hope and acceptance" that a positive spirit and outcome will prevail. Most important, he and others suggest that this strategy is best developed during times of peace and in the 'mundane' aspects of our mediated lives beyond the nightly news. This essay suggests that the arena of international media-sport may provide just such a 'communication mechanism' to foster news ways of thinking about intergroup relations. Following Bruck's (1989) advice, this would be accomplished through the insertion of 'dissident' messages within the world of media-sport. These discursive spaces would offer sports stories that embody attributes that are known to be conducive to cooperative intergroup relations: cooperative framing, humanizing the other, conferring status on international friendships, and expressing equalization and positive expectations through respect for ritual. This approach echoes Tarrow's (2003) conclusion that peace education must adapt in function and format to each context. In this case, the context is mediated sport.

Also, it is important to note that none of the story suggestions given above will appear on the front page. As Bruck (1989) would likely point out, it is the accumulation of 'little stories' that create significant discursive spaces. Such stories would also not appear during sports competitions at times of heightened national pride or during matches characterized by a need for revenge. Discursive spaces are not found under the glare of the spotlight. Nor are the media a monolith. Each media channel – whether radio, magazines, Internet, television – is comprised of its own formats and 'grammar' which might favor, or not, the different themes described above related to sport and peace.

While sport journalists already do employ these narratives, as shown in the examples offered above, it is arguable whether they are routine or visible enough to make a difference. How does one convince sports media producers and journalists to pay more attention these narratives in order to encourage a culture of peace? Is it possible to enlarge, or give more distinct shape to, this discursive space within sports journalism? For those who write about current trends in the media the prospect for persuasion might seem remote.

Advocates of peace journalism would suggest that one place to start is with the training of all journalists – news and sports – about the role of journalists related to the coverage of war and peace. Young journalists should know about the history and destructive forces of 'hate radio' in Rwanda, as well as the ideals for media promotion of peace set forth in declarations of international law. Just as the education of journalists in many countries of the world includes learning about the critical role of media in the promotion of democracy, so might they learn about the critical role of journalism in the promotion of non-violent intergroup relations. Part of that education, of course, is for young journalists to understand more about the 'unwitting' ways in which media mold negative perceptions of intergroup relations or promote violence as a means to solve problems.

Of course, the business imperatives of media and journalism create institutional norms highly resistant to change. This is where activist and interest groups need to become involved. To date, peace organizations have not targeted sports as offering any 'space' for the development of a discourse of peace. Yet, given the increasingly cost effective and routine reliance



of media on external sources for story ideas and features--in news and sports--an excellent opportunity presents itself for peace organizations to develop sports-related stories that employ the attributes described above. Peace activists might enlist the support of international sports federations in this endeavor.

In other words, with some effort of the part of interested actors, there is an opportunity for media-sport to contribute 'new' types of stories that might influence how we think about intergroup relations. This is *not* to ask sports journalists to write fewer stories about drama, exciting sports rivalries, and intense competition, but to write *more* stories that contain the attributes of a culture of peace that already exist as part of the media-sport complex.

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