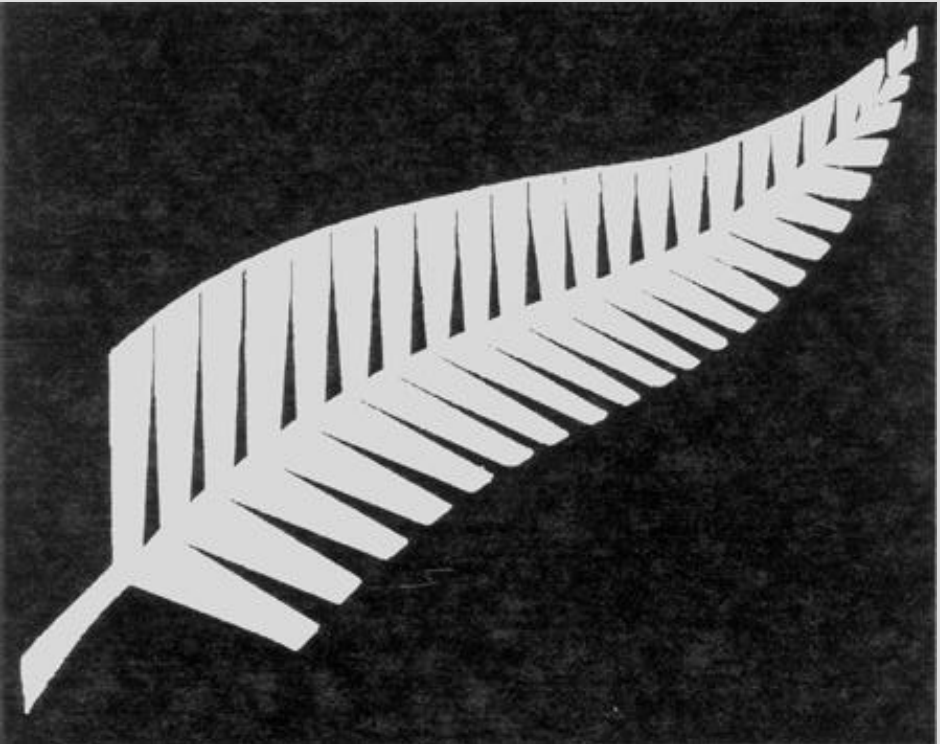


SPORT, POWER AND SOCIETY IN  
NEW ZEALAND:  
HISTORICAL AND  
CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES



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JOHN NAURIGHT, EDITOR

# Sport, Power and Society in New Zealand: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

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# Introduction

**John Nauright**  
**University of Queensland**

The disciplines of sports history and sports sociology have recently seen dramatic growth in New Zealand. Part of this has been due to the increase in academic positions, particularly at the University of Otago where Professor John Loy has been appointed to a recently established chair in sport and leisure studies. New Zealanders often think of themselves as a sporting nation, but serious study of how New Zealanders relate to sport and the part sport plays in society has only emerged in the past decade or so. This collection of essays serves to highlight recent research on sport and New Zealand society as well as to suggest areas where future endeavours may be directed.<sup>1</sup>

Much of the work on New Zealand sport has dealt with rugby union, the 'national' sport, at least for men. This collection does not seek to privilege rugby union over other sports, but reflects the significance given to the sport within New Zealand society. Scott Crawford's opening chapter examines the role of rugby in the creation of a national identity and explores some of the recent literature that discusses rugby. Crawford has called rugby New Zealand's 'secular religion' and many interpretations of rugby have followed a similar approach.<sup>2</sup> In his contribution, Crawford draws on recent research and suggests that a more nuanced approach to the role of rugby in the lives of New Zealanders needs to be taken. Work by Shona Thompson and Jock Phillips suggests that rugby needs much closer critical scrutiny.<sup>3</sup> 'King Rugby' has not developed in a vacuum and the process whereby rugby became, and then was sustained as, the 'national' game still requires much further research. For example, we still do not understand Maori involvement with rugby very well, though work like Greg

Ryan's excellent study of the 1888-9 New Zealand Native tour, *Forerunners of the All Blacks*, has given us a good start in exploring Maori involvement with rugby in the 1880s.<sup>4</sup>

Jock Phillips' *A Man's Country* published in 1987 is still one of the only studies of masculinity at a national level. Phillips charts the development of a white masculine identity over the course of post-European settlement New Zealand history. Within the study, he points to war and rugby as two of the key elements in defining New Zealand *pakeha*, or white, manhood. As he demonstrates, though, rugby did not automatically appear as a central cultural element in society, but was rather created and sustained by certain interests. He has shown, along with Crawford, Sinclair, Nauright and others, how the 1905 original All Black rugby tour of the British Isles was utilised in the establishment of a New Zealand identity that was firmly shaped by white men. This power of rugby, invented or not, came firmly under threat during the 1981 tour by the South African Springbok rugby team as Nauright and David Black discuss below. Perhaps no other sporting event has played such a central role in New Zealand history. By the 1980s, New Zealand was one of the very few countries still playing sport with white South Africa. Because of its racially-based policies of apartheid, many sporting and other organisations boycotted South Africa. New Zealand was caught in the middle of the international sanctions' movement as rugby held the same significance for many white South Africans as it did for many New Zealanders. Rugby came under attack within New Zealand as women and some men opposed to the high status of rugby and the values it promoted attacked the game and began to encourage their children to play other sports.

While rugby has been the 'national' male sport, netball has held virtually the same status among women. Netball has not been given the same wider social significance as rugby by

the male dominated hierarchy in the country, but it is widely popular as a participation sport and increasingly as a spectator sport on television. Nauright examines media portrayal of netball and how the framing of meaning in coverage has changed over time. Nauright and Jayne Broomhall have begun to explore the history of netball,<sup>5</sup> however, much more work needs to be done on a whole range of topics as Nauright suggests below.

Women have not only played netball but a whole range of other sports. Hockey was the most popular sport in the 1890s and remained very popular throughout the country, though netball replaced it in many areas as the dominant female sport. Clare Simpson shows in the second chapter how the bicycle provided an important outlet for female physical emancipation in the late nineteenth century though not without opposition and the imposition of certain social restrictions. Simpson's work is significant in detailing the process of social regulation and social resistance as women expanded their physical horizons.

Sport and physical activity have always been embedded in power relationship within New Zealand society. At times sport, most notably rugby, has been at the forefront of social change and resistance to change. Nauright and Black explore politics in sport and New Zealand's role in the major international debate over sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa. In addition, Tania Cassidy, Mandy Trevelyan and Steve Jackson show that sport and physical education are central issues in the media and within political structures. Cassidy firmly situates debates over the changing status of the physical education curriculum within wider political debates about New Zealand society and how it should be managed. Trevelyan and Jackson demonstrate the significance of the media in reinforcing dominant conceptions of violence and masculinity through their analysis of coverage of Rugby Union and Rugby League. Their study is only part of emerging work on the media and sport in New Zealand society. New Zealand, like Australia, has

undergone a myriad of changes in recent years with the rise of technocratic government and governments in both countries, be they labour or conservative, promoting global free trade and closer ties with Asia. The end result of these processes cannot be predicted at this stage, but they are affecting sport in dramatic ways with the incorporation of the Auckland Warriors in the Australian Rugby League competition in 1995 and the even wider issue of Rupert Murdoch's international super leagues of Rugby League which at this stage will include Auckland along with Australian, British and French teams.

This collection is offered as demonstration of the work being undertaken on sport in New Zealand society. It also points to many avenues for future research. While we hope this volume raises greater awareness as to the development of the history and sociology of New Zealand sport, we also hope that it inspires others to research the history and sociology of sport and leisure in New Zealand in future.

## NOTES

- 1 Some of the scholars working on sport in New Zealand society are discussed in John Nauright, 'Sport History in Aotearoa/New Zealand', *ASSH Bulletin*, no. 18, Apr. 1993, pp. 43-7.
- 2 Scott Crawford, 'A Secular Religion: The Historical Iconography of New Zealand Rugby', *Physical Education Review*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1986, pp. 146-58.
- 3 Shona Thompson, "'Thank the Ladies for the Plates": The Incorporation of Women into Sport', *Leisure Studies*, vol. 9, 1990, pp. 135-43; Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male: A History*, Penguin, Auckland, 1987.
- 4 Greg Ryan, *Forerunners of the All Blacks: The 1888-89 New Zealand Native Football Team in Britain, Australia and New Zealand*, Canterbury University, Christchurch, 1993.
- 5 John Nauright and Jayne Broomhall, 'A Woman's Game: The Development of Netball and a Female Sporting Culture in New Zealand, 1906-70', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 11, no. 3, Dec. 1994, pp. 387-407; Jayne Broomhall, 'A Feminist Analysis of the Development of New Zealand Netball', BPhed Hons Thesis, University of Otago, 1993. A special issue on netball is to be published by the *Journal of Physical Education New Zealand* in 1995.

# Rugby and the Forging of National Identity

**Scott A G M Crawford**  
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A decade ago the University of Canterbury's Gareth Cordery contributed an intriguing analysis entitled 'The Alpha and Omega of Rugby Football' to the *Journal of Popular Culture*. In this essay introduction Cordery underscored that the birth of New Zealand rugby was a direct transplant from the English public schools. Cordery made use of a *Daily Advertiser* (Wellington) advertisement of 11 May 1871 that alerted gentlemen to the fact that the Branch Hotel was the site of a special meeting. The objective was to form an association dedicated to 'football, paper hunts, and other good old English sports ...'<sup>1</sup> The fascination for sports historians continues to be reasons to account for a transplanted game, brought out as 'cultural baggage', that very quickly became the national pastime and, arguably, a symbol of nationhood and national identity in a far-off fragment of the Victorian British Empire.

In early New Zealand society the notion of sport as the embodiment of a 'character training' vehicle and thus a social agency which perpetuated the values of conformity, both in spoken word and action, manliness, and hard work, stood out.

But cricket, like football, has secured a firm hold and will probably during all time, tend to preserve and promote amongst the colonists the same manliness which is one of the commendable characteristics of the people of Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

Rugby with its 'primitive' folk-football heritage and the singular manner in which it was embraced within New Zealand both as a participant and spectator sport demands speculative reasons to explain the social importance of this activity. While artisan

endeavours were essential ingredients for survival, a common denominator was a feeling of shared purpose. There was the belief that if people pulled together they could survive, and succeed. Despite significant evidence of schism and social division, the overwhelming impression of the 1850s in New Zealand was of a common goal of 'making good'. These same work antecedents were to be so clearly expressed in rugby. No other recreational activity at that time (outside of work sports such as wood-chopping or ploughing matches) so clearly reflected labouring principles. By organised division of labour, a total physical commitment, and a unified approach, then, there might be mastery over another group of people who were of a like mind and mould. Team spirit and group solidarity were at the foundation of pioneer survival. These qualities found their outlet three decades later in all-action athleticism on the playing field. By the 1880s New Zealanders would have nodded wisely on a reading of Thomas Hughes' statement: Why did we beat them? ... Because we've more reliance on one another, more of a house feeling, more fellowship ... each of us knows and can depend on his next hand better ...<sup>3</sup>

Pierre de Coubertin, whose desire to create a singular reincarnation of the Ancient Olympics had been triggered by visits to Rugby School, saw the colonies as 'Old England'. He wrote that 'when one's a "squatter" in New Zealand' the first objects of necessity had to be 'muscles and character', and that these qualities would be created by a strong physical and moral education." Both in schools and in society, the admiration for, and acceptance of athleticism served to a greater rather than a lesser extent as successful agents of socialisation, of social control, and of social cohesiveness and integration. As J Bradshaw noted in observing New Zealand society in 1883:

Athletic meetings are often made the opportunity for giving private and public balls; and in bringing people



together as they do contribute, amongst other causes, to promote a countryside feeling and good fellowship, which without such assistance, might possible languish, and finally become extinct.<sup>5</sup>

Going to the rugby match was an experience interweaving many strands. These afternoons possessed a singular atmosphere—huddled humanity, contagious excitement, shared ritual and ‘tribal’ emotion. The hope was that something spectacular might emerge out of a terribly ordinary existence. The game created a team of heroes who, with their charging bodies, could articulate something of the unspoken feelings of hundreds. For New Zealand society the paradox was that a Calvinistic heritage, rigidly opposed to public displays and a recognition of emotional contacts, should discover its self image in the extravagant and dramatic and expressive contact sport of rugby. The search for a New Zealand identity was unquestionably given momentum by the opportunities of participating against Australian and English touring sides and, later on, in being able to actually beat the ‘motherland’. *The Otago Witness* observed in 1880 that ‘cricket contests help Englishmen and Australians to find out that they are really two separate people’.<sup>6</sup> Sir John Richardson, a zealous advocate of sport announced ‘the visitors [the Australians when they went to England] would show what the Colonies could do’.<sup>7</sup> With the success enjoyed by the New Zealand rugby team in Britain during 1905, the game emerged as ‘a vehicle for colonial cockiness’.<sup>8</sup> As of 1914, New Zealand national sides had played 123 Test matches against overseas teams and only lost seven games.<sup>9</sup>

In nineteenth century New Zealand cultural forms of expression such as music, art, drama and literature failed to produce an international figure that may have helped in the

development of a national feeling of identity. Rugby, as a dramatic form in colonial New Zealand, offered opportunities for people to play a significant part, and to communicate common experiences and shared meanings.<sup>10</sup>

There was a mood of utilitarianism in the New Zealand of the 1870s. Despite living conditions becoming less arduous there was not an expansion in cultural and intellectual pursuits. Graham makes the point that as the ration of immigrants declined in comparison with the increased working settler intake, the signs of 'gentlemanly refinement' in the early years of the colony decreased as the century progressed.<sup>11</sup> Affection for Dickens, Macaulay, Thackeray and opera in the 1850s and 1860s tended to be replaced in the 1880s by an enthusiasm for adventure yarns and the vaudeville stage. 'The mass of the population in colonial New Zealand read for entertainment, not for instruction, and they read literature which was secondary'.<sup>12</sup> Barclay feels that '[i]t was only on the sporting field that any notable indication of an emerging confidence within the people at large may be perceived'.<sup>13</sup> Before 1900 there were few public events which drew as many people together as did rugby.

In nineteenth century England, the life of the middle and upper classes were organised around the 'season'. The rituals and stimuli, which structured, excited and anaesthetised, were divided by the seasons of the sporting calendar. Late winter brought rugby competitions, giving way to the Grand National, the Boat Race, the start of the cricket season, Henley, the Derby, Ascot and the Open. In pioneering New Zealand there was no organised sport, and recreational opportunities were restricted to spasmodic eruptions of play and festivity in the form of Anniversary sports, national holidays and unstructured social gatherings. By the 1880s, however, New Zealand had

created its own type of sporting ritual. For rugby-as-ritual to succeed, to the extent that it did in New Zealand, more than regularity was required. It had to express and encapsulate things beyond itself in symbolic form. One of the most common symbolisms is combat. Add violence and individual competitive machismo in the melting pot in a game called rugby and there was the creation of a deeply appreciated motif for New Zealanders. The game was routinely and explicitly held up as a symbol of the desirable social order with its stress on captaincy, team spirit, not letting the side down and fair play. What made political and social appeals on the analogy of rugby so instinctively appropriate to those who voiced them was the material fact that the organisation of rugby itself (in the New Zealand of the 1880s) replicated the sort of regional and occupational class structure which they believed they existed. The Otago Rugby Union clearly expressed this philosophy of rational recreation: 'If employers of labor wish to keep good servants, it is their duty to provide means of recreation after the toils of the day are over ... and to patronise legitimate sports in every possible manner'.<sup>14</sup>

The soup, soap and salvation philosophy of the Salvation Army, despite clashes with vigilante 'skeleton armies', opposition by two councillors and court convictions for holding open air meetings, were potent ways of combating the social ills of the 1880s—drunkenness and gambling. A parallel can be drawn, however, between the attractions of rugby and the Moody and Sankey flavoured evangelical meetings. They both infused 'an element of colour and adventure into the somewhat disillusioned mood of many New Zealand town dwellers'.<sup>15</sup>

The agrarian environment of the late 1840s was replaced by an expanding industrial economy by the 1880s and the untamed freedom of the child at play was to be replaced by

adult supervision in the form of organised sports and playgrounds. While 'modern physical education' was to be a product of a twentieth century emphasis on health, happiness and self-actualisation, the notion of physical training in the 1880s demonstrated the influence of Social Darwinism, the hedonism and idealism of an educational ideology that promoted the games cult especially rugby as a value system, and a utilitarian concern of creating a fit labouring force. A Wellington educationalist in 1884 saw games such as rugby not as a process to make champion runners or wrestlers, but to produce 'vigorous men, with their physical faculties so developed and balanced they may carry on the world's work to the best advantage'.<sup>16</sup> Or, as Thomas Hughes might have perceived sport: '... something to try the muscles of men's bodies and the endurance of their hearts, and to make them rejoice in their strengths. Otherwise, they will fail or end in intellectual priggishness'.<sup>17</sup>

Not surprisingly, social reformer and doctor, Truby Ring, in a 1905 address to the Dunedin Froebel Society, advocated a life-style program to properly educate boys. This was to consist of a cold bath in the morning, exercise in the outdoors and evening work kept to a minimum.<sup>18</sup> Three years later, Baden-Powell's formula for achieving health, strength and character in the Scouting movement was citizenship training by means of team games and physical activities.<sup>19</sup>

Rugby may provide a hypothetical link between rural pioneer society and the later development of the town environment in New Zealand. The game combined traditional pre-industrial individualism with the new urban corporate identity. In the 1880s, membership fees for cricket and rugby organisations in Otago Province, for example, created class differentiation, but as rugby dues were minimal, that sport

attracted massive support from the working class. Tennis, a traditional sport of the upper classes in England and the United States, catered to a small number of people in the 1880s. Membership costs were higher than for rugby, and the cost of a racquet, balls and the imported custom of 'dressing up' for this activity meant that it attracted an economically secure middle class. Climbing in the mountains incurred greater costs such as mountain guides and hotel accommodation, and obviously attracted the well-to-do classes and the international tourist.

New Zealand of the 1880s reflected 'man's' wider pursuit of physical challenges. There was a drive to test the environment, an assertion of human freedom to choose some demanding vehicle through which would come an experience of self-actualisation quite unlike the routine experience of work. The Club Alpine Francais was founded in 1874 to promote physical energy and moral vigour,<sup>20</sup> but it was Englishman Edward Whymper, and his legendary conquest of the Matterhorn nine years earlier (four of his party lost their lives), who inspired the cult of the challenge sought in the outdoors. When Captain Matthew Webb came ashore at Calais in 1875 after nearly twenty-two hours in the water, his first crossing of the English Channel typified the hunger for a mastery of nature. In 1888 Nansen fought his way, month after month, across the blasted wastelands of Greenland. On a different dramatic stage and in a less demanding context there was the courage and stamina of the twenty-five New Zealanders who raised partial finance for their uniforms and fares and in 1888-9 circumnavigated the world and played more than a hundred games of rugby football.<sup>21</sup> Just as the physical prowess of Whymper, Webb and Nansen became headline news, the footballing ambassadors of New Zealand were shown on the front page of the *Illustrated London News*.<sup>22</sup>

The development of a business-oriented commercialisation in sport was in evidence, beginning with the Caledonian Sports of the 1860s, the New Zealand tour by a world champion billiards player in the 1870s, and the arrival of Donald Dinnie in 1883. While the promoting and packaging of sport-as-entertainment, the overseas 'native' tour of 1888-9 marked the apotheosis of the evolution of modern sport. The Marxist concept of labour as a commodity in essence transforms the athlete's achievement into a commodity and this is exchanged in the market place for its equivalent value, expressed in money. Thomas Eyton put up the considerable amount of £2000 as a security and arranged to guarantee the passages of the twenty-five players with the Orient shipping line. He then sailed to England on the 'Arcadia' and became manager, promoter, press agent, *chef-de-mission* and entrepreneur for the New Zealand team. The complexity of business details (travel, accommodation, entertainment, laundry, insurance, advertising) and the bewildering administrative and logistical minutiae that fell upon Eyton's shoulders, make the tour diary much more than a sporting travelogue. Eyton had a 'commodity', he 'marketed' what he had to sell and a detailed analysis of the tour yields a singular demonstration of business expertise.<sup>23</sup> Greg Ryan's excellent study, *Forerunners of the All Blacks* (1993), testifies to the stellar qualities of the 'originals'. They had more difficult opposition than anything encountered by the 1905 and 1924 All Blacks, particularly since they played a number of Yorkshire and Lancashire teams who were playing rugby league by the time the All Blacks began to tour. They were a hugely successful team who produced in their ranks, two future national team captains. They changed the style of New Zealand and world rugby for years to come. And, they carried the hopes of a colony, youthful yet eager to forge its sporting identity in the Empire.<sup>24</sup>

At the first Otago Anniversary Sports held in 1849 a few hundred pioneers at most came together to give thanks that they had survived a year of settlement. They drank English beer, watched some athletic contests, wagered on the horse races and enjoyed their first official holiday. Their identity was that of being Anglo-Scottish immigrants. Nearly forty years later, when Otago played in Dunedin against the first-ever visiting British team the local athletes aroused considerable patriotic ferment and pride, for the crowd of 8000 were New Zealanders, and the 'assertion of a colonial identity had begun'.<sup>25</sup> They delighted in the spectacle of seeing their province and their country come close to defeating the might of England. The match was a testament to a burgeoning national confidence and an emerging national dignity.

The inter-connection of New Zealand rugby and the establishment of a separate and singular national identity while it manifests itself in the 1880s, arguably, did not flower as a potent force until the New Zealand overseas rugby tour of 1905-6. It was this tour that saw the excited journalistic phrase of 'all backs' (referring to the quick, flowing style of New Zealand play) become in a sense, malaproposed into the label of 'All Blacks'. From this tour onwards excellence and athletic success was seen to be epitomised by New Zealand rugby. As Nauright has observed: 'The 1905 tour has been seen as an integral ingredient in the establishment of a 'national ethos' in which rugby became a dominant force in the formulation of a male national identity'.<sup>26</sup>

Olssen sees this tour as a vehicle that allowed rugby to transform itself into a key element in international relations. New Zealand won and won and won. 'Colonial cockiness'<sup>27</sup> via rugby became a substantial sentiment imbued with significance. While colonial inferiority was not eliminated, the concept of

possible parity replaced a mind set of a distant, awkward and not quite whole country.

Future studies are called for to rework and revise the juxtapositioning of rugby and New Zealand identity. Olssen notes that 'in a world of more rigid structures, impersonal forces, and sprawling cities, rugby reassured New Zealanders that man if not woman, was still the master of his fate; the captain of his soul'.<sup>28</sup>

What of the role of nationalism? *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport* makes the following comments on the important constituents of Australian identity: 'Nationalism's main use had been to persuade young men to go to war, to have consumers buy patriotically packaged commodities, and to canvas support for political parties and their platforms'.<sup>29</sup>

It is significant that Nauright in an examination of the 1905 tour incorporated these three constituents into his narrative. In his conclusion he made the case that British writers, describing the All Black successes, were extolling the virtues and singularity of the New Zealand way of life. The notion was one of a 'rural colonial existence on the frontier [providing] a far superior environment for developing "manly" characteristics'.<sup>30</sup>

There are myriad avenues for writers to follow on this theme of national identity and rugby. Shona Thompson's studies on participation patterns and the incorporation of women into sport are hugely important.<sup>31</sup> The issue of what a New Zealand identity meant for women needs much further research. Recently, Nauright and Broomhall have suggested that netball served many of the functions for women that rugby did for men in creating a sense of identity, albeit a gendered one in which boundaries were clearly defined in favour of males.<sup>32</sup> Nauright has recently reviewed a cluster of contributions on rugby and



‘national society foundation’<sup>33</sup> and takes research analysis into exciting territory with his discussion of myth and reality and nostalgia in terms of deconstructing rugby’s place and power in New Zealand society.<sup>34</sup> Such revisionist writing is to be welcomed. Then there are the thirteen rugby ‘contributions’ indicated by the index to a 1993 New Zealand volume entitled *Leisure, Recreation and Tourism*.<sup>35</sup>

In terms of fresh perspectives and innovative forays to explore rugby and national identity can anything be gleaned from the tapestry of baseball and American culture? In September 1994, American film maker Ken Burns released his 18 1/2 hour documentary entitled ‘Baseball’. Some critics have panned Burns’ work as being ‘ponderously pretentious’.<sup>36</sup> A central theme of this discontent has been the concern that Burns has endeavoured to make baseball a metaphor for the total American experience. His thesis is that the social history of America reveals itself, and can be unravelled, in the sphere of baseball. Nevertheless, the same critic who lambasted Burns because of his ‘hubristic humbug’,<sup>37</sup> goes on to describe Burns’ segment on race as ‘flat out brilliant’ with a focus on ‘the celebration of the exuberance—and nobility—of black culture’.<sup>38</sup> What would an in-depth analysis of Maori culture and rugby tell us about New Zealand society?

A 1994 *Humanities* exchange between Sheldon Hackney, the current Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Ken Burns is a reservoir brimming with ideas and insights that strike this writer as being potentially invaluable as we search for elemental meanings in New Zealand rugby. For example, Burns says:

Baseball is a thousand morality plays. You have ancient heroes coming back for one last quest. You have young and potentially limitless talent destroyed

by greed or corruption or temptation. You have lives cut short by tragedy. You have those seemingly less fortunate blessed by longevity. You have almost every classic form of Aristotelian poetics play themselves out on the baseball field ... baseball remains a repository of our most trusted values and traditions and powerful emotions.<sup>39</sup>

In 1940, under the direction of the National Historical Committee the Centennial Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs produced a commissioned 'official' history for the New Zealand Government. Entitled *Making New Zealand* the volume on Winter Sports' is, to paraphrase Nauright, a blend of myth, reality and nostalgia. While there is a trumpet blast about rugby as a national icon at the beginning of this century, the absence of the role of the Maori, and women, reminds us the extent to which these richly worded canvases offer a slanted and imperfect picture that demands reinterpreting.

New Zealand was beginning to find it had leisure and a certain amount of wealth, and in that discovery became conscious of a national spirit which had to find an outlet in sport. The majority of those who now threw themselves into rugby with a zest never surpassed were the first real 'white New Zealanders'- young men born in New Zealand, sons of early families—and they were strong and full of fire.<sup>40</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 G Cordery, 'Tom Brown's Schooldays and Foreskin's Lament: The Alpha and the Omega of Rugby Football', *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 19, no. 2, Fall 1985, p. 98.
- 2 A speech by Sir J L C Richardson, *Otago Witness*, 19 Jan. 1878.
- 3 Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Macmillan, London, 6th ed., 1878, p. 121. A contemporary New Zealand playwright reiterates this credo—"This is a team game, son, and the town is the team. It's the town's honour at stake when the team plays, god knows there's not much else around here", Greg McGee, *Foreskin's Lament*, Price

- Milburn, Wellington, 1981, p. 48. The notion of togetherness seems central to an understanding of the socialisation process in early New Zealand sport. In the 1890s, for example, the Kaikorai rugby team had no club house, so after training they were hosed down by the Roslyn Fire Brigade! *Kaikorai Football Club Jubilee Souveni Ir: 1881-1934*, Dunedin, 1934, p. 4.
- 4 P de Coubertin, *L'éducation Anglaise*, p. 645, quoted by John J MacAloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981, p. 304.
  - 5 J Bradshaw, *New Zealand As It Is*, Sampson, Low, Marson, Searle and Rivington, London, 1883, p. 359.
  - 6 *Otago Witness*, 5 June 1880.
  - 7 *Otago Witness*, 19 Jan. 1878. Professor Keith Sinclair argues that a clear picture of national identity emerged later with 6500 'Silver Ferns' sailing off to fight in South Africa in the Boer War. However, the fact that these soldiers were so highly regarded for their bush-craft, horse skills and physical tenacity, reinforces the impression of New Zealanders' capacities to demonstrate unique athletic abilities. A paper on relations between Australia and New Zealand presented at Otago University, 23 Mar. 1983.
  - 8 Erik Olssen, 'Towards a New Society', in W H Oliver and B R Williams, eds, *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, OUP, Wellington, 1981, p. 258.
  - 9 W McCarthy, *Haka! The All Blacks Story*, A H and A W Reed, Wellington, 1968.
  - 10 John Hargreaves, 'Sport and Hegemony' in Hart Cantelon and Richard Gruneau, eds, *Sport, Culture and the Modern State*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1982, p. 124. 'As a form of popular theatre it [sport/rugby] gives people a part to play, or involves them meaningfully in performances that express and communicate, in organised form, collective experiences and meanings concerned the major themes of life' (p. 125).
  - 11 Jeanine Graham, 'Settler Society' in W H Oliver and B R Williams, eds, *Oxford History of New Zealand*, p. 131.
  - 12 Graham, 'Settler Society', p. 129.
  - 13 J Barclay, 'An Analysis of Trends in New Zealand Sport form 1840 to 1900', unpub. BA Hons thesis, Massey University, 1977, p. 70.
  - 14 *Otago Rugby Football Union Handbook* —1884, p. 64. A study on nineteenth century baseball (with a focus on the nature of the roles of its players) comes up with interpretations that clearly apply in our analysis of pioneering New Zealand rugby. 'The game's attraction lay in its congruence with everyday experience. It was popular because it was similar to, not because it was different from day to day life . . . In the game he experienced social relationships and psychological demands and by doing so was minimizing dissonance between this two aspects of

- life'. S M Gelber, Working at Playing: The Culture of the Workplace and the Rise of Baseball', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 16, no. 4, Summer 1983, p. 7.
- 15 C R Bradwell, *Fight the Good Fight: The Story of the Salvation Army in New Zealand: 1883-1983*, A H and A W Reed, Wellington, 1982, p. 13.
- 16 I F R Hutchinson, *Two Lecturers on Physical Education*, *New Zealand Times*, Wellington, 1884.
- 17 C L R James, *Beyond a Boundary*, Pantheon, New York, 1983, p. 166.
- 18 Erik Olssen, 'Moulding a Passionless People', *Radio New Zealand*, 25 Apr. 1979.
- 19 R S S Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, C Arthur Pearson, London, 1948, p. 287.
- 20 Eugen Weber, 'Gymnastics and Sports in Fin-de-Siecle France: Opium of the Classes?', *American Historical Review*, vol. 76, no. 1, Feb. 1971, p. 72.
- 21 Interview with Reg Maskell in Dunedin, New Zealand, 14 Oct. 1982.
- 22 *Illustrated London News*, vol. LXIII, no. 2582, 13 Oct. 1888.
- 23 G Ryan, *Forerunners of the All Blacks: The 1888-89 New Zealand Native Football Team in Britain, Australia and New Zealand*, University of Canterbury Press, Christchurch, 1993, p. 25; T Eyton, *Rugby Football, Past and Present: Tour of the Native Team*, Hart, Palmer&on North, 1896.
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# The Development of Women's Cycling in Late Nineteenth-Century New Zealand

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New Zealand women's cycling grew in popularity from the mid-1880s, when the few women who cycled rode tricycles. By the mid-1890s thousands of women all over the country were riding drop-framed safety bicycles. They provoked a great deal of public comment which centred largely on their behaviour and appearance. Debate about Victorian women's cycling developed in the context of the increasing social and political emancipation of women in the late nineteenth-century. Critics of women's changing social status attempted to preserve prevailing ideals of middle class femininity, ideals which cycling threatened to destroy. Women cyclists faced disapproval from all sectors of society, and regardless of their social standing, they encountered considerable hostility. Despite being criticised, jeered and hooted at, or sometimes knocked off their bicycles, such pressure and harassment did little to curtail the growth and popularity of women's cycling. This article concentrates on three significant aspects of women's cycling in the final decade of nineteenth-century New Zealand: women's cycling clubs, participation in racing, and their activity as travellers.<sup>1</sup>

## **Cycling Clubs**

There is strong evidence to suggest that most women who cycled, chose to do so in the context of a cycling club, particularly a single-sex one. All-female clubs purported to meet needs peculiar to lady' riders. Christchurch proponents, for example, felt that a women's club would unite female cyclists, providing them with both recreational and social opportunities. It would

provide them with a forum to discuss things which were of no interest to their male counterparts, particularly cycling dress: rational dress, cycling skirts, divided skirts, bifurcated garments, etc.<sup>2</sup> A second reason why an all-female club might have attracted members is that such single-sex groups were entirely consistent with contemporary social practices, where women sought the company of their own sex, forming strong female friendships. A cycling club was a logical extension of female social culture. Thirdly, all-female clubs offered a practical solution to the problem of finding others to cycle with. In the early 1890s very few women were interested in cycling, and most of their male counterparts were likely to be occupied in some kind of employment during the day.<sup>3</sup> Clubs provided opportunities to find cycling companions and to extend social networks.

There was also the consideration of 'safety in numbers', since street harassment was not uncommon. Women who cycled did so at considerable personal cost, risking their physical safety and their emotional well being. They were frequently assaulted or insulted by onlookers:

... every woman who cycles in the public ways creates a furore among the men of the vicinity. Larrikins chase her, well-dressed persons yell for her to 'get off and push', other women make spiteful remarks, and there is a wide-spread inclination to make the ride exciting.<sup>4</sup>

Women frequently reported being pelted by sticks, stones and food, boys thrusting sticks or caps into the spokes, or pulling at their skirts to make them to fall off.<sup>5</sup> The situation seemed particularly bad in Dunedin, where the issue was raised with the mayor and gained publicity in the Dunedin newspapers.<sup>6</sup> The most likely target for street harassment was the woman riding in rational dress. Mrs Cadwallader, a prominent

Christchurch dress reformer, was commended for her fortitude and courage in the face of harassment: 'Mrs Cadwallader ... persistently and at all times wears her knickers, defies the jeers of ribald men, and is not one of those who try to secure the comforts of the 'bockers while hiding them under a flowing skirt'.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, for a significant number of women who joined them, clubs represented a statement of female independence and solidarity. Many women viewed cycling as a symbol of women's socio-political emancipation, and of those, many were proponents of dress reform, taking every opportunity to advertise the utility of rational dress. This posed a problem for women who wore rational dress for convenience rather than for political reasons, since they were assumed to be pro-emancipation. It also caused friction within some clubs, notably the Atalanta Cycling Club, of Christchurch, which was seen as politically aligned with the emancipation movement.

Direct links with women's emancipation can be traced. For example, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, featured a regular cycling column in its periodical the *White Ribbon*. Kate Sheppard, the President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, was a keen cyclist, and subscribed to the *New Zealand Wheelman* from its first issue in October 1892. Biographer Judith Devaliant suggests that she probably used her bicycle for short recreational trips and for getting around the city on fine days.<sup>8</sup>

Little is reported about female suffrage in the pages of the *New Zealand Wheelman* until after the passing of the Suffrage Bill on 19 September 1893. 'Theta',<sup>9</sup> who compiled the regular ladies' page in the *New Zealand Wheelman*, devoted significant space to the issue on 14 October 1893.<sup>10</sup> She clearly saw the link between women's cycling and the achievement of the franchise:



... not ... as the cause of cycling girls or even as the result of them; but as being, along with cycling, a sign of woman's great awakening ... As the dainty wheel gives her a larger world to live and move in, so the wheel of progress has now given her a larger world to think in.<sup>11</sup>

The bicycle was seen as a symbol of, and a means for, expanding women's lives. Theta' rightly predicted that eventually, resistance to both women's suffrage and women's cycling would dissipate:

Every day now cools the ire of the anti-suffrage. This means that every day now sees fewer people who consider the cycliste a disgrace to her sex; and every day now sees fewer people who object to a woman dressing herself in the way she thinks best for work and exercise.<sup>12</sup>

A clear connection between cycling and emancipation was drawn by the American temperance leader Prances Willard, whose ideas and activities were frequently published in the pages of the *New Zealand Wheelman* and the *New Zealand Cyclist*. Willard wrote a book about her experience of learning to ride the bicycle at the age of fifty-three; she equated mastery of the bicycle with mastery of self and life. Persistence of will, patience and a strong spirit, qualities developed in her temperance work, were deemed essential for managing the bicycle:

That which caused the many failures I had in learning the bicycle had caused me failures in life; namely, a certain fearful looking for a judgment; a too vivid realisation of the uncertainty of everything about me; an underlying doubt—at once, however [and this is all that saved me], matched and overcome by the determination not to give in to it ... I finally

concluded that all failure was from a wobbling will rather than a wobbling wheel. I felt that indeed the will is the wheel of the mind ...<sup>13</sup>

Spiritual and moral lessons could also be derived from cycling. For example:

Once, when I grew somewhat discouraged and said that I had made no progress for a day or two, my teacher told me that it was just so when she learned: there were growing days and stationery days, and she had always noticed that just after one of these last dull, depressing, and dubious intervals she seemed to get an uplift and went ahead better than ever ... This seems to be the law of progress in everything we do; it moves along a spiral rather than a perpendicular; we seem to be actually going out of the way, and yet it turns out that we were really moving upward ...<sup>14</sup>

She also extolled the health benefits of riding, herself having given up an active existence in her childhood, to the passive culture of womanhood with its long shirts, restricting corsets and uncomfortable footwear.<sup>15</sup> It is no surprise to learn that she advocated rational dress in which to ride.<sup>16</sup>

Aside from the personal satisfaction that club membership offered, the formation of cycling clubs can also be seen as entirely consistent with the increasing desire to institutionalise and regulate recreation and sporting activities throughout the late nineteenth century. As sport became more formalised, it became subject to bureaucratic forms and practices which were part of prevailing beliefs about what constituted a rational society. In addition to formalising rules of play, infra-structures developed to support the existence of sport—clubs, media coverage, competitions at local, provincial, national and international levels, curriculum development in schools, mass spectator facilities, gambling and sponsorship.<sup>17</sup>

Recreational and sporting clubs adopted formal committee structures and procedures, reflecting bureaucratic practices which already existed in state and commercial institutions. For example, committee members and officers (such as chair, secretary, treasurer) were nominated and elected by the membership. Cycling clubs adopted similar procedures, and established club rules and administrative procedures based on the written word (constitutions, minutes, correspondence, accounts). A hierarchical structure of authority (e.g. captain and vice-captain; president and vice-president) was set in place, and committee members were delegated tasks (official duties).<sup>18</sup>

The rules devised for each women's cycling club varied, but were usually amended versions of all-male clubs.<sup>19</sup> Rules about racing were probably omitted because they were irrelevant to women. Their omission, however, left the issue of racing open to interpretation, as Alice Bum proved when she decided to race (see discussion below). Rules about dress codes, however, were not left to chance, for dress represented a public expression of club identity, and served to reinforce prevailing gender identities. Roberts (1977) argues that the clothes worn by women and men throughout the nineteenth century clearly express gender differences, performing the function of what sociologist Erving Goffman (1961) termed an 'identity kit'.<sup>20</sup> Her paradigm is consistent with Matthews' (1984) idea of a 'checklist', where each woman is publicly appraised according to a set of criteria of femininity, including appearance.<sup>21</sup>

At its outset each club detailed the particulars of its uniform. Women were to wear a cycling skirt (narrower and shorter than contemporary fashion decreed), a blouse, an Eton jacket, and a hat. Skirts and sleeves had to be narrow, hats small, minimal ornamentation was to be worn (e.g. furs, feathers, lacy trims, brooches, pins, etc.) and colours were to be 'quiet'.<sup>22</sup>

The whole costume had to be neat and tidy, and render the wearer as inconspicuous as possible. The question of dress was of great significance, because it was the public statement of a woman's respectability and social standing. An interesting dress code anomaly can be found: unless a club specifically outlawed the wearing of rational dress on club outings, there was nothing to discourage its members wearing such dress and thereby risk tainting the reputation of the club. As clubs grew in number, banning rational dress in association with club activities became common practice in order to attract greater numbers of members, especially those who did not want any association with either the dress reform or women's suffrage movements.

The Atalanta Cycling Club <sup>23</sup> was established in Christchurch, 18 August 1892, to unite female cyclists, providing them with both recreational and social opportunities.<sup>24</sup> It was the first all-women's cycling club in Australasia. The motion to form the Atalanta Cycling Club was put by Alice Burn, who became its first Secretary, and who was a strong advocate for dress reform.<sup>25</sup> Eighteen-year-old Blanche Lough<sup>26</sup> became Captain, Miss Keating, Sub-captain, and Miss A E Barker Hon Treasurer,<sup>27</sup> Members of the committee were: Mrs Shephard<sup>28</sup> (*sic*), Bertha Lough,<sup>29</sup> and Miss F Adams.<sup>30</sup> The [amended] rules of the Bicycle Touring Club were adopted but the matter of club uniform was postponed until a later meeting,<sup>31</sup> where it was decided to let women wear what they wished provided the club colour and emblem were worn.<sup>32</sup> A year later, however, because the club had suffered bad publicity from the report that *all* the members were in favour of rational dress, it was unanimously agreed that none of the members be allowed to appear in that costume.<sup>33</sup>

Among the members of the club were a number of 'New Women',<sup>34</sup> such as dress reformer Kate Wilkinson (*nee* Walker),<sup>35</sup> and Edith Statham, who was later a founding member of the Dunedin branch of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children amongst other worthy involvements.<sup>36</sup> It is impossible to say how many women belonged to the Atalanta Club since no records remain. Press reports suggest that it thrived,<sup>37</sup> however, and the *New Zealand Cyclist* likewise reported a flourishing club:

At the end of the first year the [Atalanta] club was in an extremely flourishing condition, there being thirty-one active and six honorary members, and the state of affairs was even more satisfactory at the completion of the club's next year's existence.<sup>38</sup>

Each year the cycling season commenced in October with a 'Run', at which all the local clubs would appear in uniform and proceed throughout the city, watched by thousands of spectators. During each season the Atalanta Club organised one- or two-day trips, and extended its collegiality to the local social scene, hostessing balls, card evenings, picnics, and 'At Homes' at its club rooms in the city centre. Women in this club frequently cycled together on long trips, usually accompanied by husbands or brothers. It was not uncommon to visit the West Coast or tour the South Island.<sup>39</sup> Despite its popularity, and that of cycling generally, the Atalanta Cycling Club ceased to exist somewhere between November 1897 and October 1898.<sup>40</sup>

The Mimiroladies' Cycling Club,<sup>41</sup> established in Dunedin in July 1895, was the second all-women's cycling club to be formed in New Zealand, and was the result of the initiative of a former member of the Atalanta Cycling Club in Christchurch, Edith Statham. Just one month after its formation the membership stood at eighteen. Like its Christchurch

counterpart, the committee of the Mimirol consisted of some well-known women. Mrs W A Scott became its first captain;<sup>42</sup> Miss Anderson, deputy-captain; Edith Statham, secretary; and Mrs Lewis, treasurer. The inaugural committee consisted of Mrs S R Stedman, Misses Dale, Bennet, Rigg,<sup>43</sup> and E Maxwell. The Mimirol Club modelled its rules on those of the Otago Cycling Club.

At its very first meeting the matter of dress was raised, and it was resolved that members should wear a skirt (colour unspecified) when riding, but that they could wear whatever they preferred when not with the club.<sup>44</sup> At its first ceremony marking the opening of the cycling season, a dozen women joined 200 men in the parade; three women wore rational dress. The dress issue seemed to be of less concern to members of the Mimirol Club than perhaps it was to the Christchurch women. By 1895 rational dress was commonly worn and accepted.

Of more pressing concern to Dunedin cycling women was the issue of harassment, which was said to be comparable to the situation in Melbourne, well-known for its censure of women cyclists.<sup>45</sup> Unlike Christchurch, Dunedin citizens had seldom seen women on bicycles until the mid-1890s.<sup>46</sup> Lovell-Smith suggests that since Christchurch was politically liberal, female cyclists were generally accepted; her research suggests a similar positive response in Christchurch to female suffrage, and this might explain why there was less newspaper coverage of both cycling and suffrage in Christchurch.<sup>47</sup> So many women complained of 'the great annoyance they were subjected to when out riding from larrikins etc.', that a deputation waited on the mayor to find out if there were any by-laws that the women could appeal to. The mayor<sup>48</sup> suggested they ask the editors of the papers to insert a small paragraph calling attention

to this annoyance. Several articles resulted, supported by letters from some of the male cycling clubs in the province.<sup>49</sup> The Mimiro Club obviously represented the means by which women could continue to enjoy their cycling in relative safety.

The issue of women's cycle racing arose early in the history of the Mimiro Club when, shortly after its inception, it was asked if its members were interested in competing in the forthcoming Labour Day sports. Unimpressed and somewhat taken aback by this gesture, the club responded negatively with the following comment:

Cycling among ladies as a means to the pleasant enjoyment of a few hours in the country and as a recreation has always had my strong support and has been universally upheld, but racing among the fair sex has received little or no support at the hands of the ladies, and is strongly discouraged by all true lovers of the sport. Therefore the letter from the Labour Day organisation, though no doubt written in kindly feeling, is surprising, and excites some comment.<sup>50</sup>

The club must have received other invitations to race, for a later news report shows that it was prompted to make a more public stand:

The ladies would like it to be generally known that the club was not formed to encourage racing amongst ladies, and therefore they would be obliged to the different societies in Dunedin if they would refrain from inviting them to take part in such unwomanly proceedings. No doubt it is kindly meant, but the ladies do not like it. However, they are sure that this fact has only to be known and their feelings will be considered in the future. Cycling with many of them has been taken up not only as a pleasant recreation but as a means of restoring health, and they will be

always pleased to welcome new members and give any assistance in their power to those who are only just entering the ranks of the cyclists. It is a great help and encouragement to a lady when just beginning to ride to find someone who is able and willing to give advice, and many of the Mimiro Club are well qualified to do this.<sup>51</sup>

The membership of the Mimiro Cycling steadily grew, according to the newspaper accounts of the Annual General Meetings.<sup>52</sup> Activities of the club consisted of monthly meetings in the club rooms, regular runs around Dunedin and further afield, socials, dances, picnics. Members of the other [male] clubs were frequently invited to the social gatherings. Occasionally a special event occurred to which the club was invited to contribute. For example, a Carnival was to be held in Dunedin in September 1898. Twelve women were to join twelve men in the Carnival parade, and there were competitions for female cyclists to enter: 'Neatest Cycling Costume', 'Egg and Spoon Race', 'Best Floral Decorated Bicycle'. This was to be the extent of Dunedin women's involvement in local competitive cycling.<sup>53</sup> On another occasion a number of women and men got together to perform a cycling gymkhana, which proved so popular that they were asked to repeat the performance twice more.<sup>54</sup> Despite its evident popularity, however, testimony to this which was given in its fourth Annual General Meeting in 1899, this club also failed to survive into the twentieth century, though the precise reasons for this are not known.<sup>55</sup>

By the mid-1890s all-female cycling clubs were springing up all over the country, including Wellington, Auckland and Greymouth. For some time during 1893 the *New Zealand Wheelman's* Wellington correspondent wrote of one or two solitary women cyclists braving ridicule and unwanted attention in order to ride their bicycles. It was over a year later when it



was thought that the presence of four women cyclists there would make the formation of a ladies' cycling club in Wellington feasible.<sup>56</sup> A small committee was formed to draw up some rules to present at the initial meeting.<sup>57</sup> The *New Zealand Wheelman* speculated as to whether the Wellington women would emulate the courage of the Christchurch women in suggesting dress reform.<sup>58</sup> Despite the long lead up to the idea of a club, it was not until July 1895 that the inaugural meeting was held.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately the names of the officers and committee are mentioned neither in the *New Zealand Wheelman* nor the Wellington paper, the *New Zealand Mail*. In addition to the formal procedures of establishment, a scheme was submitted for obtaining bicycles on 'satisfactory' terms, facilitating some women's entry into cycling. This was not necessarily a unique service that the Wellington Ladies' Cycling Club offered to its members, but it is the only explicit statement so far discovered of such a scheme in connection with an all-female club.<sup>60</sup> Evidently some of the women in the club were dress reformers, for the *New Zealand Wheelman* reports that a photograph of them in bloomers was on display at Kinsey's studio, and had attracted a great deal of attention.<sup>61</sup>

The Auckland Ladies' Cycling Club was formed in September 1897. Mrs A C Purchas and Mrs Greenaway occupied the position of Presidents; Vice-presidents, Misses Owen and Olgivie; Miss M A Reynolds, Captain;<sup>62</sup> sub-captain, Miss Mackay; Hon. Secretary, Miss May E Pierce; Hon. Treasurer, Miss Scherff; Committee, Mrs Ryland, Mrs Hyams, and Misses Edwards and White.<sup>63</sup> At the opening run of the Auckland cycling season on 2 October 1897 approximately fifty members joined the procession.<sup>64</sup> Runs were held weekly, usually on a Saturday, although this varied during the Christmas season.<sup>65</sup>

The Mawhera Cycling Club of Greymouth added an unusual twist to its organisation, allowing males to join as members and committee members, although it was formed as a ladies' club'. About twenty women and 'several' men met on 9 September 1897 to form a club, which they named the Mawhera Cycling Club. One of the objects of the club was to arrange regular club runs, 'so as to make cycling pleasant and sociable'.<sup>66</sup> Mrs Stace (a former captain of the Atalanta Cycling Club in 1895) was elected Captain,<sup>67</sup> Miss Dora Blackmore, Vice-captain, and Miss Wickes, Secretary. A committee of five was appointed, consisting of both women and men. The colours of the club were to be pale blue and navy blue.<sup>68</sup> Presumably males were admitted into the club because the population base of Greymouth could not support two single-sex social cycling clubs.

Most small towns seemed to happily admit females to their clubs, at least for the purposes of participating in club runs and social activities. Examples of such clubs included the Napier Wanderers' Bicycle Club (twenty female members in 1897),<sup>69</sup> the Gore Cycling Club; Vincent Cycling Club, Cromwell Club (twelve female members in 1897);<sup>70</sup> and the Alexandra Cycling Club.<sup>71</sup> Like men, women were not guaranteed right of entry into a club, even as associate members.<sup>72</sup> They had to be nominated by an existing member, and voted in by the committee. The Nelson Amateur Athletic and Cycling Club, although lobbied to admit females, decided not to after lengthy debate. Unfortunately no reason for this is recorded in their minutes.<sup>73</sup>

The New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club (NZCTC) was founded in June 1896 to encourage and facilitate touring in all parts of New Zealand, and it published handbooks, maps, and its own gazette, to give reliable information about roads, hotels, repair facilities and places of interest.<sup>74</sup> The structure and

prospectus of this club emulated the Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) of England, appointing consuls throughout the country to assist members in their cycle touring plans and journeys, and to further publicise the club. The NZCTC acted on behalf of members involved in legal wrangles, and lobbied councils and government on issues that concerned cyclists, such as road conditions and rules. By March 1897, the club had amassed 740 members, more than its English predecessor had totalled in its first year.<sup>75</sup>

The *NZCTC Gazette* was first issued in September 1896, and it ran successfully into much of 1900.<sup>76</sup> Each monthly edition consisted of a list of recently joined members, articles on cycle tours, detailed reports of particular routes, a column for advertising for touring partners, club business and, from September 1897, a 'Ladies' Page'. The Ladies' Page for the *NZCTC Gazette*, like Ladies' pages in other cycling periodicals, similarly focused on riding, repairing bicycles, and in the touring context, hints about luggage, food, and clothing. The predominant theme addressed, once again, issues of appearance, both behavioural and sartorial. Women were encouraged to ride, but not to race.

### **Women's Cycle Racing**

Whilst men's racing in New Zealand was well established by the beginning of the 1890s, women's racing was slow to develop. It was considered unfeminine by middle-class standards, an inappropriate sporting activity for females unless the competitions were novelty races.<sup>77</sup> Racing for women was characterised by few opportunities for competition, events irregularly staged events, and few competitors.

It is difficult to say to what extent women's racing was considered as serious competition by competitors, coaches, or spectators alike. Women's racing drew the same mixed reactions

that it did in other counties, although it was better established in England, the United States of America, and France,<sup>78</sup> where there were larger populations of women cyclists. The types of races in which women could compete in these countries offered more variety than the New Zealand context: six-day races, centuries, and twenty-four-hour races were often available, whereas New Zealand racing (for males as well) was usually restricted to standard track and road events. Although there is little primary data about women's cycling, it is safe enough to speculate that women who enjoyed competitive sport generally, raced bicycles for the same reason. Alice Bum, however, raced for women's rights. In December 1892 she entered a race in Oamaru.<sup>79</sup> She was to race with males, but an injury sustained during training forced her to withdraw from the event. Despite the fact that she did not race, there were numerous letters written in the *New Zealand Wheelman* debating the issue. One of the strongest opponents was 'One of the club', a member of the Atalanta Cycling Club, who wrote on behalf of some of the other members. She stated that the club

does not in any way allow its members to take part in either road or track races, and that it was with no small amount of disgust that they read in the columns of the last issue of the WHEELMAN that their secretary had entered for a road race in Oamaru.<sup>80</sup>

These comments were countered in a subsequent issue of the *New Zealand Wheelman* by 'Another of the club', who criticised 'One of the club' [who was later censured at a club meeting for speaking out of turn] for assuming to represent the feeling within the Atalanta Cycling Club. The issue, according to this correspondent, was a political battle between 'Conservatives and Liberals' within the club.<sup>81</sup> Alice Bum's racing intention provided some with the ammunition they needed to extol

conservative values.<sup>82</sup> Burn herself responded to ‘One of the club’, pointing out that the rules of the Atalanta Cycling Club neither encouraged nor discouraged women’s racing, and submitted a copy of the rules to the editor. She also testified to having received many congratulations from within and outside the club on the grounds that her actions helped ‘to assert a woman’s right to do exactly as she pleases in spite of the strictures of a conventional majority’.<sup>83</sup> A correspondent under the pseudonym of ‘Developist’ wrote in support of Alice Bum, lamenting the lost opportunity for her to advertise the use of knickerbockers. ‘Another one of the club’ was denied publication of her letter, the editor commenting ‘Bather too hot. Can’t you tone it down a trifle?’<sup>84</sup>

There is no evidence of women racing again until March 1896, when the first Ladies’ Cycling Carnival was held at Lancaster Park in Christchurch. Five events were held on each of two consecutive Saturdays, four of these in rational dress. Mr Horace Thompson, husband of Atalanta’s first captain, Blanche Thompson (*nee* Lough), was the secretary to the organising committee.<sup>85</sup> The *New Zealand Wheelman* reported the results of the races, liberally interpreting the events of the day. A ‘grand open handicap’ race, in which women and men competed together, was declared ‘one of the mistakes made by management ... the six men who took part in the mixed race must have felt very uncomfortable as they had to meet the chaff and laughter of the jeering crowd ...’<sup>86</sup> The reporter observed that if the men won, they were hissed at and if they were beaten by the women, they were laughed at.<sup>87</sup> Ensuing discussion reported in the *New Zealand Wheelman* indicated that generally women’s cycle racing was considered unfavourably by everyone except the [non-cycling] public, who enjoyed watching the racing for entertainment, and the racers

themselves, who presumably entered to race, rather than to deliberately make themselves objects of ridicule. One racer wore her Atalanta club badge; the magazine's gossip column reported that she was to be asked to resign from the club, but there is no substantiation of this assertion.<sup>88</sup> From then on, lady racers were called 'cyclodonnas', a derogatory term coined by the staff of the *New Zealand Wheelman* office.<sup>89</sup> Ironically the *Christchurch Press*, a conservative newspaper, reported both days of the carnival in detail, listing each event, the place getters and their times.<sup>90</sup> Races recorded after this event were usually incorporated into club recreation programs, such as the Amberley Druid's Gala.<sup>91</sup> A search through the remainder of the *Christchurch Press* and the *New Zealand Wheelman* reveals no more about ladies racing, at least in Christchurch. Elsewhere in the country, races were held from time to time. Fourteen year old Ettie Harvey, for example, excelled in the ladies' competitions during 1897, winning the first ladies' race held in Wanganui on 18 March 1897.<sup>92</sup> A feature article in the *New Zealand Cyclist* mentions three races in which Ettie Harvey competed between March and Easter of 1897.<sup>93</sup> Similar races were held for women in Wellington in 1898. For example, the Wellington cycling correspondent reported the following:

One mile, for girls under sixteen:

Miss A Johnson scr. 1

Miss Gardiner 30 yards 2

Miss Gardiner rode a diamond frame machine geared to 84 and did remarkably well. Time 4m55.5s.<sup>94</sup>

Although serious competitive cycling was considered inappropriate for women, it is surprising to find that the outcry was not as strident nor as sustained as that of women cycling generally. Newspapers and cycling periodicals scarcely mention

women's racing. Further searching amongst more diverse archival sources<sup>95</sup> may paint a more accurate picture of public opinion concerning women's cycle racing.

### **Women's Journeying**

Women's cycling activities were not just confined to urban sorties; many women undertook journeys of considerable length, enjoying the independence that the bicycle offered for touring the countryside. Weekend journeys into nearby countryside were most popular, but touring the entire country was not unknown. Alice Mitchell of Core, for example, attracted a great deal of interest as she toured throughout New Zealand. Mitchell is said to be the first woman to ride a bicycle in Dunedin, having taught herself to ride in 1892.<sup>96</sup> Being of poor health, she discovered cycling to be of great benefit, and embarked on a series of rides, initially near her home town of Gore,<sup>97</sup> and later throughout New Zealand.

During the Christmas of 1894, Alice Mitchell prepared herself for a tour to the North Island, by cycling with her younger sister from Core to Bluff and back in two days (about 120 miles), and included a boat trip to Stewart Island. In early January 1895, Alice and her brother George embarked on a long tour, travelling over 1000 miles in three months. It took them just seven days to reach Christchurch. Most of the journey was undertaken in thick fog, drizzle, driving rain, and head winds. Two rivers were waded, and at times the mud on the roads was so bad they had to scrape it from their bicycles in order to keep riding. From Christchurch they took a steamer to Wellington, and continued north after a week's stay in Petone. After a hard six mile walk over the Rimutaka range, they enjoyed smooth riding until their destination, Masterton. Their return journey was altogether a pleasanter trip, although they

still had headwinds to contend with on the Canterbury Plains. Throughout their journey they stayed at a series of inns or with friends. They carried very little luggage, having shipped a box of clothes to Petone. For much of her trip Alice Mitchell expressed gratitude for the numerous occasions on which they were able to dry their clothes and borrow replacement garments. The cost of the journey was just over £5, excluding the five shillings carriage fee for the bicycles on the steamer.<sup>98</sup> Alice and her sister Lizzie undertook another extensive journey in March 1896, this time throughout Central Otago.<sup>99</sup>

In similar style, Mrs Curtis and her husband undertook a 500 mile tour from Stratford (in the North Island) to Dunedin, via Nelson, the West Coast, Arthur's Pass, and Canterbury. The journey took two months. She was believed to be the first woman to take this route.<sup>100</sup> Dress reformer Alice Bum was also known for her interest in cycle touring. In January 1893 for example, she and her husband journeyed from Oamaru to Hokitika. The *New Zealand Wheelman* claimed her to be the first woman to ride 100 miles in a day.<sup>101</sup> Blanche Lough, one of Canterbury's early cyclists, rode from Christchurch to Ashburton with her fiance, taking just one day.<sup>102</sup>

Spurred on by the achievements of others, even novices attempted long journeys. In 1898, Mrs Ellis, for example, who had only been riding for a few weeks, rode from Waiiau to Christchurch (about seventy-five miles) in two days. Not only was she commended for her efforts, but comment was made as to the trip time given her model of bicycle.<sup>103</sup>

By the mid-1890s such journeys were no longer novelties, and they paled in comparison to the round-the-world trips that some Victorian women were making.<sup>104</sup> It was also not uncommon for women to undertake these journeys alone and they were not necessarily young women at the time.<sup>105</sup>



## Conclusions

This contribution has examined three significant aspects of women's cycling history in late nineteenth-century New Zealand: women's cycling clubs, participation in racing, and women's experiences as travellers. There is very little published research on women's cycling history, indeed on cycling history *per se*. Nevertheless a preliminary examination of some major primary sources<sup>106</sup> has revealed that New Zealand women shared experiences similar to those of their cycling sisters in Britain, Europe, North America and Australia. They embraced cycling with great enthusiasm, especially after 1896, by which time the pneumatic tyre had been added to the drop-frame, or ladies' model. They established clubs, endeavoured to race, and undertook journeys of all kinds. It seems that in many areas of the world, women endured similar strong negative reactions from the public, such as street harassment and censure through newspapers and other periodicals, although the nature of the criticism colonial women experienced may have been slightly different to that of their counterparts in Britain, Europe and North America. Cycling provided an outlet for female physical exercise and for women to occupy space in public areas which helped pave the way for future female sporting endeavours in New Zealand. Despite the relative success of women in some sports, restrictions on women's public participation and competition in sport remained strong well into the twentieth century.

## NOTES

- 1 Material is drawn from cycling periodicals and newspapers; it seems that few cycling club records have survived.
- 2 *Christchurch Press*, 17 Aug.1892. One might assume that women also wanted to be able to discuss matters such as menstruation and pregnancy, which were and are very much a concern for physically active women.
- 3 Although the passage of the Shop and Shop Assistants' Act in 1895

- allowed for a weekly half-holiday. W P Reeves, *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand*. vol. 2, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1902, pp. 181-90.
- 4 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 10 Aug. 1905.
  - 5 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 10 Aug. and 19 Oct. 1896; David Rubinstein, 'Cycling in the 1890s', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 21, 1977, p. 63.
  - 6 *Otago Witness*, 26 Mar. 1896.
  - 7 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 7 Sept. 1895.
  - 8 Judith Devaliant, *Kate Sheppard: A Biography*, Penguin, Auckland, 1992, pp. 86-7.
  - 9 Theta' was Mrs Wilkinson (*nee* Kate Walker), a prominent Christchurch dress reformer whose wedding party wore rational dress in February 1894. *New Zealand Wheelman*, 8 June 1897; *New Zealand Graphic*, 3 Mar. 1894.
  - 10 New Zealand women won the right to vote on 19 Sept. 1893.
  - 11 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 14 Oct. 1893.
  - 12 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 14 Oct. 1893.
  - 13 Frances Willard, *How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle: Reflections of an Influential 19th Century Woman*, Fair Oaks Publishing, California, 1991, pp. 28-31. First published in 1895.
  - 14 Willard, *How I Learned to Ride*, p. 37.
  - 15 Willard, *How I Learned to Ride*, pp. 73ff.
  - 16 Willard, *How I Learned to Ride*, p. 44.
  - 17 Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1978, pp. 6, 35.
  - 18 N Abercrombie, et al, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, pp. 28-9.
  - 19 The rules for the New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club, although manifesting bureaucratic principles, shed no light on the types of rules all-female clubs might have adopted. No other club rules have surfaced in New Zealand archives searched to date.
  - 20 Helene E Roberts, 'The Exquisite Slave: the Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman', *Signs*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1977, p. 555, citing Erving Goffman, *Asylums*, Doubleday and Co., New York, 1961, p. 20.
  - 21 Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: the Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth-century Australia*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1984, p. 15.
  - 22 Dark blue, brown, grey, fawn or cream were considered suitable.
  - 23 The club drew its name from the goddess Atalanta, a huntress who refused to marry any suitor except one who could beat her in a foot race. It was also used as the name for a model bicycle.
  - 24 *Christchurch Press*, 17 Aug. 1892. Previously, if women were allowed to belong at all, it was to ladies' branches' of male cycling clubs, whose activities were mutually exclusive.

- 25 J Malthus, “‘Bifurcated and Not Ashamed’: Late Nineteenth-century Dress Reformers in New Zealand’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1989, p. 41.
- 26 Clare Simpson, ‘Blanche Thompson, 1874-1963’, in C Macdonald, M Penfold and B Williams, eds, *The Book of New Zealand Women / Ko Kui Ma The Kaupapa*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1993, p. 674.
- 27 She was probably the daughter of local bicycle racer and cycle manufacturer, Arthur Rober Barker, of Brentford and Redbird Cycle Manufacturers, and appears to be no relation of Dr Barker of Canterbury. *Canterbury Cyclopaedia*, 1903, p. 313.
- 28 It is not clear whether or not this was Kate Sheppard of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and who was also a keen cyclist. Devaliant (1992, p. 86) suggests that it is unlikely, ‘as there is no mention of the club in the *Prohibitionist* where she would almost certainly have promoted it in the same way that she wrote about dress reform and the need for girls to have healthy exercise’.
- 29 Blanche Lough’s twin sister.
- 30 Daughter of a local cycle manufacturer. *New Zealand Wheelman*, 5 Nov. 1892.
- 31 *Christchurch Press*, 19 Aug. 1892.
- 32 It was ultimately decided not to make any hard and fast rule as regards cut or colour of the costume to be worn, provided that colour ‘cream’ was conspicuous in the dress, and that the Club colours were worn. *Christchurch Press*, 1 Sept. 1892.
- 33 *Christchurch Press*, 7 Sept. 1893. The motion was rescinded a couple of years later when the dress reform debate was less controversial.
- 34 Roberta J Park, ‘Sport Gender and Society in a Transatlantic Victorian Perspective’, in J A Mangan and Roberta Park, eds, *From ‘Fair Sex’ to Feminism: Sport and the Socialisation of Women in the Industrial and Post-industrial Eras*, Frank Cass, London, 1987, p. 67. It was middle-class women who were seen as ‘New Women’ and who predominated in cycling. Marital status did not seem to make any difference; both married and single women cycled.
- 35 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 11 May and 10 Aug. 1895.
- 36 Edith Statham was a noted worker in many welfare organisations (Obituary, *Otago Daily Times*, 15 Feb. 1961). On her arrival in Dunedin from Christchurch around 1895, she quickly organised the establishment of Dunedin’s all-female cycling club, the Mimiroladies’ Cycling Club and acted as its Secretary. For several years with her friend Emily Rigg, Edith ran a school to teach women to cycle. A community minded citizen, she was active in a number of causes throughout her long life. In Dunedin she was also on the committee for the St Clair Track (responsible for maintaining a major roadway). In 1899 she was Secretary for the newly formed Society for the Protection of Women and Children, working alongside Dr Emily Siedeberg, and Ethel

- Benjamin (*Stone's Directory*, 1900, p. 44). In Auckland she served on the committee of the Auckland Cycle Roads League, was secretary of the Victoria League, a prominent worker with the Navy League, and involved in the early days of the Girl Guide movement. She devoted fifteen years as inspector of soldier's graves and graves of historical interest throughout New Zealand, and worked on the women's branch of the Medical Services Corp. She died aged ninety-seven in Auckland.
- 37 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 11 Feb. 1893; *Canterbury Times*, 7 Jan. 1897.
- 38 *New Zealand Cyclist*, 26 June 1897.
- 39 For example, *New Zealand Cyclist*, 17 Apr. 1897.
- 40 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 1 June and 19 Oct. 1898. There is no evidence accounting for its demise.
- 41 'Mimiro' means 'to rush through the air quickly'.
- 42 Mrs Scott was married to W A Scott, cycle manufacturer. They were formerly of Christchurch, where Mrs Scott was a member of the Atalanta Cycling Club, and her husband was in the cycle trade, and then moved to Dunedin. *New Zealand Wheelman*, 11 May 1897; *Otago Witness*, 7 Feb. 1895.
- 43 Emily Rigg was Edith Statham's friend and companion. Emily shared the same lodgings as Edith, and worked with her both in Edith's business, and in partnership in establishing a cycle instruction school.
- 44 *Otago Witness*, 13 Aug. 1896. There were a few dress reformers in the club (e.g. Eleanor Home), and perhaps the Mimiro club sought to preempt the problems that their Christchurch predecessors had by making this explicit decree early in its history.
- 45 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 16 Oct. 1896; *Otago Witness*, 26 Mar. 1896.
- 46 *New Zealand Cyclist*, 11 May 1897.
- 47 Personal communication with Margaret Lovell-Smith, Christchurch historian, 1992.
- 48 Mr H S Fish, well-known for his anti-suffrage position.
- 49 *Otago Witness*, 13 Aug. 1896.
- 50 *Otago Witness*, 8 Aug. 1895.
- 51 *Otago Witness*, 31 Oct. 1895.
- 52 Over twenty members by Mar. 1896, forty-seven by Oct. 1897. No other precise numbers are reported. *Otago Witness*, 26 Mar. 1898; 7 Oct. 1897.
- 53 *Otago Witness*, 29 Sept. 1898.
- 54 *Otago Witness*, 26 May and 2 June 1898.
- 55 *Otago Witness*, 16 Nov. 1899. There is no evidence to date as to why the club ceased.
- 56 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 23 June 1894.
- 57 No details regarding specific dress code have emerged to date.
- 58 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 22 May 1894.
- 59 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 11 July 1895.
- 60 It was fairly common practice amongst men's clubs to acquire a fleet of bicycles to hire to members, or to facilitate purchase.

- 61 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 11 July 1895. Kinsey was a well-known photographer and cyclist. His daughter cycled.
- 62 Her brother was a prominent Auckland racing cyclist.
- 63 *New Zealand Graphic*, 2 Oct. 1897.
- 64 *New Zealand Graphic*, 9 Oct. 1897.
- 65 *New Zealand Cyclist*, 8 Jan. 1898.
- 66 *New Zealand Cyclist*, 25 Sept. 1897.
- 67 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 19 Oct. 1895.
- 68 *New Zealand Cyclist*, 25 Sept. 1897.
- 69 *New Zealand Metropolitan Cycle Show*, Christchurch, 6 and 7 Nov., Catalogue, 1897, p. 92.
- 70 *New Zealand Metropolitan Cycle Show*, Catalogue, 1897, p. 94.
- 71 *New Zealand Metropolitan Cycle Show*, Catalogue, 1897, p. 96.
- 72 Associate members had no voting rights.
- 73 Minute Books of the Nelson Amateur Athletic and Cycling Club. Nelson Provincial Museum.
- 74 *New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, Sept. 1896. Tourist guidebooks to New Zealand were by no means a new phenomenon, but they assumed travel by boat, rail, or coach, not bicycle. See for example E Ernest Bilbrough, ed., *Brett's Handy Guide to New Zealand*, Illustrated Jubilee edition, H Brett, Auckland, 1890.
- 75 If no objection were lodged regarding their suitability as a member, applicants were duly elected. To be eligible for membership, a candidate had to satisfy two criteria: a reference from another NZCTC member, and proof of respectability.
- 76 The last existing issue found so far is dated Aug. 1900. The eventual fate of the NZCTC is undetermined at present.
- 77 Novelty races were held at almost every kind of carnival or festival, such as church fetes, or agricultural and pastoral shows. Invariably there was competition between the sexes, which often included swapping roles (e.g. men thread the needles, women hammer nails into wood etc.)
- 78 French female professional racers earned significantly more money, enjoyed greater luxuries, and travelled more extensively than their male counterparts, principally because they attracted larger spectator crowds. *Hub*, 12 Sept. 1896.
- 79 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 24 Dec. 1892.
- 80 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 14 Jan. 1893.
- 81 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 28 Jan. 1893.
- 82 According to 'Another of the club', there was a balance of numbers between Conservatives and Liberals at the formation of the club, but as new members had joined, the 'Radical' element had become a minority, albeit a strong one. *New Zealand Wheelman*, 28 Jan. 1893.
- 83 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 28 Jan. 1893.
- 84 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 28 Jan. 1893.
- 85 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 14 Mar. 1896.
- 86 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 28 Mar. 1896.
- 87 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 11 Apr. 1896.

- 88 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 11 Apr. 1896.
- 89 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 1 June 1897.
- 90 *Christchurch Press*, 23 Mar. and 7 Apr. 1896.
- 91 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 20 Sept. 1899.
- 92 *New Zealand Cyclist*, 12 June 1897.
- 93 *New Zealand Cyclist*, 12 June 1897.
- 94 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 19 Oct. 1898.
- 95 For example, the Lancaster Park archives, which have yet to be searched for cycling material.
- 96 *Southern Standard*, 14 Oct. 1892.
- 97 *Southern Standard*, 14 Oct. 1892.
- 98 This was later refunded after a complaint was lodged to the steamer company, on the grounds that the travellers had no other luggage and stayed with their machines for the voyage. *New Zealand Wheelman*, 11 May 1895.
- 99 *Otago Witness*, 19 Mar. 1896.
- 100 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 23 Mar. 1895.
- 101 This is known as a 'century'. *New Zealand Wheelman*, 14 Jan. 1893.
- 102 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 14 Jan. 1893.
- 103 *New Zealand Wheelman*, 19 Oct. 1898.
- 104 For example, Miss Londonderry of England, Mrs McIlraith of Chicago. *New Zealand Wheelman*, 15 June 1895.
- 105 e.g. Isabel Homewood bicycled around the world at age sixty-six. When she was seventy, she visited New Zealand where she had previously cycle toured, to visit friends, cycle, and climb mountains. She commented that she could still walk and climb mountains with the same ease and enjoyment as her younger friends. G Isabel Homewood, *Recollections of an Octogenarian*, John Murray, London, 1932, p. 283.
- 106 New Zealand sources: *New Zealand Wheelman*, Oct. 1892–Sept. 1902; *New Zealand Cyclist*, Apr. 1897–Dec. 1899; *New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, Sept. 1896–Aug. 1900. British sources: *Bycycling News*, 1876-1899; *Wheeler*, 1893–7; *Cyclist*, 1881-99; *Cycling*, 1891–1900; *Wheel World*, 1881–6; *Wheeling*, 1884-99. British sources on women's cycling: *At the Sign of the Butterfly*, 1897–1900; *Wheelwoman*, 1895-9; *Lady Cyclist*, 1895–8; *Hub*, 1896-9.

# Netball, Media Representation of Women and Crisis of Male Hegemony in New Zealand

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While most foreign observers know that rugby is the ‘national [male] sport’ of New Zealand, few would readily name netball as the ‘national women’s sport’. Two more contrasting team games in form, style and content would be hard to invent. Rugby evokes notions of contact, force, strength and power, while netball evokes images of grace, agility and lack of contact. These two sports readily fit images of proper masculine and feminine behaviour in New Zealand society and for decades have shaped views about male and female public behaviour.

The general history of New Zealand netball has been recorded elsewhere, but a few background details are necessary to provide some historical context. Netball developed as a modified form of basketball in England in the late 1890s. By the first decade of the twentieth century it spread to Australia and New Zealand and taken up rapidly in these countries. By 1920, major cities in New Zealand had formed local associations and ran local competitions. In 1924 delegates from the major cities met to form the New Zealand Basket Ball Association. Before 1970 netball was called basketball, or outdoor basketball in New Zealand.

This article explores reasons behind netball’s acceptance as the national game for women within the framework of hegemonic masculine public culture in New Zealand. Through media and other public pronouncements, netball was given validity as the most suitable team sport for women by the 1920s and has been promoted as the sport that New Zealand ‘girls’ should play. Despite this general encouragement, public

discourse has served to limit who could play and later depicted women as sex objects in the assertion of a wider masculine authority. The power of male definitions of proper female behaviour was so dominant that women writing on netball adopted them in attempts to reach a wider audience. While women controlled the game and centralised match venues were female dominated spaces, the wider society gave women little opportunity for public activity.

The timing of shifts in media and public pronouncements about netball reflects changes in the position of women in New Zealand society. When netball was originally encouraged as the women's 'national game', women were in the process of challenging earlier male-dominated conceptions of female frailty and the harmfulness of any strenuous physical activity. By the 1960s, many more women were entering the workforce and public life. It was at this time that the media began to sexualise players and reports concentrated on those deemed to be the most attractive to men, rather than on netball skill. In the 1980s and early 1990s, netball received unprecedented media coverage as women began to play many other sports, including those previously defined as male. Even worse, women were beginning to play rugby, the bastion of masculine culture in New Zealand. Thus, we can analyse the development of netball and media approaches to it in three distinct phases of female advancement which challenged hegemonic male dominance. As scholars examining the USA have argued, we can see these three periods as emerging crises of masculine hegemony in society.

I have drawn upon the work of a number of scholars who have examined media approaches to women's sport, such as Margaret Carlisle Duncan, as well as those who have studied medical and scientific pronouncements against women



competing too actively in sport, especially the excellent work of Helen Lenskyj, Roberta Park and Patricia Vertinsky.<sup>1</sup> Although media analysis of women in sport has demonstrated the context in which male-dominated views of women as passive and objects, much of this work has been done by sport sociologists concentrating on recent depictions. I hope that this article will contribute to the theorising of media, hegemony and women in sport through a historical analysis which takes a sociological approach to media coverage from the 1920s to the early 1990s.

Duncan's work is important in considering the visual portrayal of female athletes. She points out that:

photographs, like other mass media images, are politically motivated. Photography is a signifying system that works to legitimate interests of hegemonic groups. While those who produce photography (i.e., photographers, photo editors) are often unaware of the ideological significations of photographs, photos nonetheless serve to shape consensus, that is, consent to existing social arrangements.<sup>2</sup>

Added to this is that photographs present and reconfirm dominant notions about the way 'things are' in society, thus helping us to maintain a 'common sense' view of the world around us. Photographs can also challenge the way we see others and things around us, though this 'liberating' use of images rarely appears in mass media depictions of 'news' and 'sports'. Duncan also states that 'one characteristic that makes photography a particularly powerful ideological context for legitimation is its ability to project an aura of naturalness, realism, and authenticity'. Thus, when added to textual reports focussing on particular 'angles' photographs provide us with an image that assists us in deriving 'meaning from what we are being told. In the presentation of netball and women who have

played and run the sport in New Zealand press reports and photographs have served to present women in particular ways which have reinforced dominant beliefs about the proper role of women in society, especially at times when women increased their challenges to such dominant beliefs.

### **The 1920s: Women Challenge Attitudes to Female Physicality**

In the 1920s challenges appeared to earlier male constructions of female physicality emanating from female and some male doctors, social reformers and in women's literature. Alternative views developed against a backdrop of increased numbers of young women in the waged-labour force during and after World War I. More significantly, reformers worried about the future health of the Anglo-Saxon 'race', particularly if too many young women were in the workforce and exposed to the health risks posed by factories and urban living. Eugenicist concerns emerged throughout the 'white' Empire in the early twentieth century. In particular, the health of the 'mothers of the Empire' became central to saving the race from degeneration and eventual suicide. As a result, doctors and scientists promoted female health and exercise with an unprecedented urgency.<sup>3</sup>

In the process of saving the 'race', female morality and health were inextricably linked. Middle class reformers felt young working women needed organised activities to keep them healthy and on the high moral path until they fulfilled their ultimate destiny of marriage followed by motherhood. Groups like the YWCA actively promoted team sports for young working women to teach them fitness and cooperation.

Women also began to criticise male attacks on female sport during the 1920s. The *Ladies' Mirror* in 1922 ran a lead article on sports entitled 'In Praise of the Sports Girl'. The article discussed the importance of sport to female development

and condemned male attacks on women in sports. The article argued that it was not possible for women to 'overdo it' although certain sports like boxing and soccer were still viewed as off limits to women. Dr Maud Ferey, a Christchurch physician, tried to organise soccer games between Canterbury and Wellington women, although she said it was 'impossible' for women to play rugby. She stated that 'hockey is bad enough, but rugby football would be beyond anything'.<sup>4</sup> Thus, we can see that women were challenging male beliefs about female sport and physical activity, though women operated within a wider male hegemony which defined contact sports as masculine. Male 'experts' were more concerned about the future of the 'race' by the 1920s and also believed that some physical activity was necessary. As a result some moderate physical activity and non-contact sports were promoted for 'working girls' in particular.

Netball benefited from the new focus on female health and sporting activity, although other sports suffered. Most sports were still considered 'off-limits' to women, but netball emerged as the sport most suitable for women. During the 1930s and 1940s officials included netball within the girls school physical education curriculum. The majority of primary schools adopted netball as the winter sport for girls once the male-dominated medical profession recommended it. In reporting on the establishment of the Wanganui Basketball Association, the local press reported that 'basketball is regarded by the medical profession as a very suitable game for young women'. In addition, the organisers echoed broader concerns about the health of young women waged-workers; The aim ... is to provide a game for young ladies in shops and offices, who at present take part in no winter sport. The game is inexpensive, and at the same time provides very good exercise'.<sup>5</sup>

The first National Tournament was organised and played in Dunedin in 1926 as part of the Empire Exhibition. Teams travelled from five main centres to compete. Press coverage was minimal at this stage, but the *Otago Daily Times* carried news of the tournament. The paper supported the tournament and netball as a ‘game eminently suitable for every girl, especially the business and industrial girl, who gets practically no exercise during the week’. The article also reported that netball was played in every primary school and most secondary schools throughout New Zealand with 2000 registered senior players.<sup>6</sup>

The *Christchurch Sun* summarised public perceptions of netball in a lead article, ‘A New National Game’, just before the national tournament of 1929. The article is worth quoting at length:

What games should be played by women is a question still hotly debated at times, but golf and tennis—in both of which women excel—pass by unchallenged. Team games are not quite so easy to choose, but basketball is one which is rising in popularity ...

Basketball provides splendid exercise for those engaged in it, but it has the added charm of not being too rough. Science counts in it more than strength, and it is a fact which makes it so good a game for girls. Speed and general nimbleness are developed through it, and it also encourages team spirit ...<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the changes in the game from seven to nine-a-side also contributed to netball’s greater acceptance in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>8</sup> The *Auckland Star* reported in 1929 that netball had gone from a game for the ‘brawny’ to a game for the ‘brainy’. Initially only seven played in many areas and full-court passes were allowed. By 1929, the rules required players to touch the ball in all three areas of the court. With nine in the team, it was

thought that players had to ‘think and act [more] quickly’ to be successful.<sup>9</sup> Nine players on the court also meant that less running was necessary than with seven. Male ‘experts’ and the media then latched on to netball as the ideal game for New Zealand women as it promoted more ‘brainy’ and less ‘brawny’ traits.

In the 1920s newspapers began providing match results and short reports on inter-provincial matches and the national tournament. Most reports from that time until the 1970s, however, were contributed by netball officials keen to obtain at least coverage of local competitions. Feature reports produced by journalists have not always been favourable and often focused on players’ families and home life rather than on their netball prowess. In the 1920s and 1930s, the NZBA was even forced to pay newspapers in national tournament locations to run advertisements and coverage of the events.<sup>10</sup>

Newspaper articles debated the value of netball as a sport for ‘girls’ and did much to promote its standing as the national sport for New Zealand women. Although there were positive elements to press coverage in the late 1920s and 1930s, a patronising element appeared in reports and picture captions. The *Christchurch Sun* captions of pictures from the 1929 tournament reflect this. One picture of women in a team pose with players in a line was captioned ‘thirteen pretty maids, all in a row’. Another picture of the young women orange distributors similarly stated, ‘Oranges! Even sweet Nell Gwynne of Old Drury never got rid of her basket of oranges as fast as did these damsels among the players at the halftime interval ...’<sup>11</sup> Such language and depictions of players reinforced values which denied seriousness to women’s sports and stressed appropriate female behaviour. Women might be playing netball, but they were women just like any other in society and thus to be treated as different from and lesser than men.

Ian McKay in his study of antimodernism and cultural selection in Nova Scotia suggests that pictures can be ‘read’ in various ways. He argues that the ‘sense that we can make of a given photograph ... depends very much on the relationship between the photograph and the “frame work” performed by those who, working in a particular context, develop implicit or explicit stories within which a given representation makes sense’.<sup>12</sup> While the *Christchurch Sun* admitted in the caption of the Canterbury basketball team picture that the ‘value of the game for girls is surely confirmed by the athletic and healthy appearance of the players’, this comment was buried behind the lead caption in capital letters of ‘THIRTEEN PRETTY MAIDS, ALL IN A ROW’. The initial framing of reference for the onlooker then is to relate to the ‘girls’ as ‘pretty maids’ while an alternative reading might have been possible if the initial caption were ‘The Athletic and Healthy Canterbury Basketball Team ...’ While such an alternative ‘framing’ of the picture may not have even been considered in 1929, we still must see the context in which the ‘framing’ solidified dominant male conceptions about young women as ‘pretty maids’ (see illustration one).

Such presentations of women in netball continued through to the 1940s. In addition, the New Zealand national team experienced similar coverage in the Australian media during their first international tour there in 1938. While the media viewed the New Zealanders style as impressive, they resorted to comparing the ‘slim, agile girls’ to Australian Rules footballers with ‘their ability to mark the ball in the same spectacular style’ as male players.<sup>13</sup> Although the majority of images and reports remained similar to those of the 1929 tournament, here we see at least a small qualitative shift in the reporting of netball. Female athleticism began to receive more attention,

but as with science and other areas of wider society, female abilities were framed in comparison to male athletic ability. Such representation still frequently resorted to patronising framing of pictures, however. One picture of the tour showing the New Zealand team performing a Maori *haka*, was captioned ‘Members of the New Zealand basketball team in Sydney give a ladylike version of a Maori *haka* after their match against New South Wales on August 8’.<sup>14</sup> The team is depicted in a row stationary with only the hands moving at the side of the body. The viewer is drawn by the caption to the ‘ladylike’ nature of the movement rather than a number of alternative ways to ‘read’ the picture if it was uncaptioned or differently captioned (see illustration 2).

Precursors of the post-war period began to emerge by 1939, however, with advertisements of the ideal ‘trim figure’ for women. Ads in the *New Zealand Free Lance* with a picture of a women posing on a beach encaptioned ‘The 1939 Figure’ demonstrates this. The ad stated:

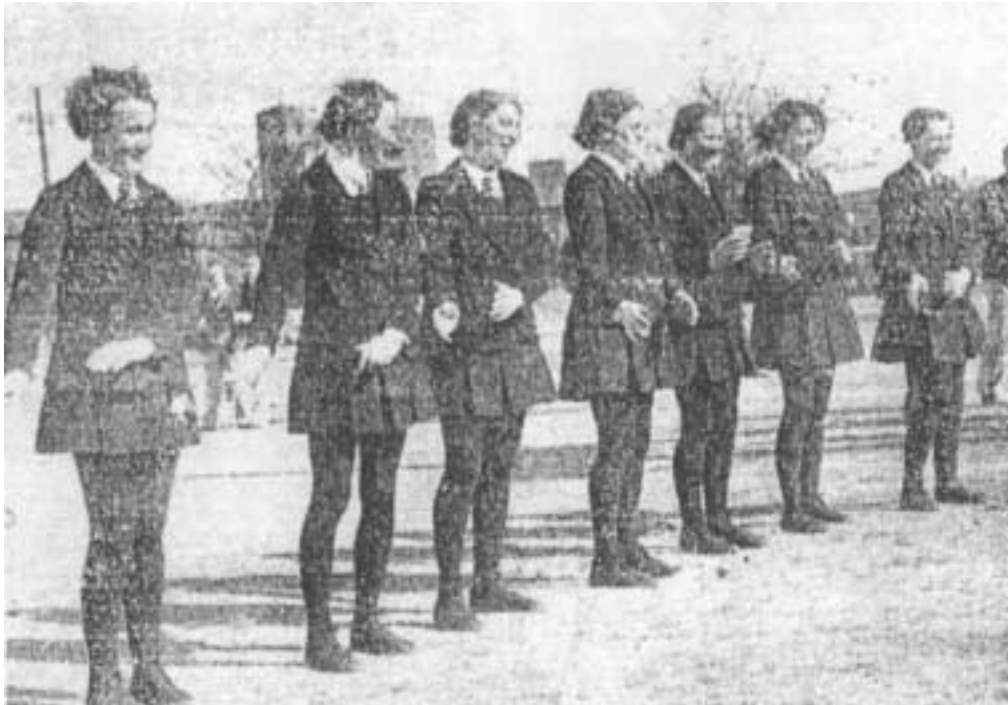
You’ve seen them on the beaches—those 1939 figures. Lithe, beautiful bodies with the attractive curves that Fashion has decreed. Will *you* be able to take your place among them, or do you need a little “trimming” here and there before women will envy and men admire your figure unreservedly?<sup>15</sup>

The concept of altering appearance and the body to satisfy the desires of others increasingly pressured many women into thinking about their bodies as entities for public rather than merely private consumption. While diversifying fashion provided possible avenues for liberation, the increasing return to the female body as object and object for desire served to maintain women within a dominant male-defined hegemony of gender positioning within society.



*THIRTEEN PRETTY MAIDS, ALL IN A ROW—The Canterbury basketball team, with its mascot, which won its first game yesterday in the Dominion basketball tournament. The value of the game for girls surely is confirmed by the athletic and healthy appearance of the players. The names of the players from left to right are: G Rankin, N Thompson, N Mahoney, M Little, J Craig, M Uprichard, V Flood, N Bella, N Smith, D Johnson, Z Crennell, K Duncan.*





*Members of the New Zealand basketball team in Sydney give a ladylike version of a Maori haka after their match against New South Wales on August 8. The New Zealanders won by 19 goals to 15.*

## **The 1960s and Beyond: Sexualising and Domesticating the Players**

While patronising images dominated coverage before the 1960s, the media in the 1960s began to focus on certain players' 'sex-appeal' to men, rather than on playing skills of top players. Some reports in the 1940s and 1950s had begun to report on playing skills of top women in netball, however, this trend began to reverse slightly in the 1960s. The sexualisation of some players attracted wider attention to netball, not in terms of drawing male support for netball as a sport, but rather the male gaze to females playing the game. Cartoons, like that published in the *Evening Post* during the First World Tournament in 1963, reflected the sexualisation of netball. The cartoon showed a man leering at two passing national netball representatives while his wife lamented to a friend about her husband's new support for the sport.<sup>16</sup> New Zealand representative Joan Harnett received unprecedented media coverage during the 1960s. She was described as 'a long legged beauty', 'the male's ideal sportswoman', and 'the essence of femininity'. The media paid much less attention to the fact that Harnett was the outstanding player of the mid- and late 1960s. Thus Harnett became a sex symbol for netball rather than respected primarily for her outstanding playing skill. The power of the sexualisation process was such that it appears Harnett eventually internalised media attention. She stated she was initially embarrassed, but got used to it as it gave netball publicity.<sup>17</sup>

Although terms used to describe Harnett in the 1960s have changed somewhat, the media still gives much greater exposure to players deemed to be attractive to men. In the mid- and late 1980s, Julie Townsend received much greater coverage in comparison to her provincial and national teammates.

Recently, journalist Joseph Romanos attributed Townsend's popularity to several factors. He argued that she received attention because she 'was good looking'. Romanos suggested that coverage based on 'attractiveness' should not be underestimated.<sup>18</sup> He provides no critique of this approach, suggesting that he sees nothing wrong with the sexualisation of female sports stars. A 1982 book, *New Zealand's Champion Sportswomen* demonstrated how little the situation had altered. The chapter on Harnett begins with a discussion of her beauty, even listing her measurements.<sup>19</sup> That the author of the book is a woman and a former national women's cricket representative, illustrates the hegemonic power of images of female beauty in presenting women players to the wider public.

Added to the sexualisation of players in the 1960s were articles on married players. By the 1960s it was more common for some women to continue playing sports after marriage. Married women were immediately cast in a domestic mould as articles focused their lives as wives and mothers or on the plight of their partners. The *Dominion* in 1969 reported on seven 'basketball bachelors' who would 'breathe great sighs of relief at the end of the national tournament in Wanganui next week'. These men were the husbands of the Wellington team at the tournament. These long-suffering men had for months been accustomed to late meals and dinners in ovens as the girls have trained several nights a week'. Again demonstrating the pervasiveness of these views of women, Val Aldridge, a Wellington netball administrator, penned the article.<sup>20</sup> While Aldridge points out that men's support was vital to the team's success, similar articles on men in sport were not published. One husband replied stating he survived the 'neglected household chores' by spending more time at the pub. Rather than attending the national tournament, he travelled from

Wellington to Napier to watch the Wellington against Hawke's Bay rugby match.<sup>21</sup> Although he supported his wife playing netball, it appears that support involved little more than acceptance of his wife's participation. It obviously did not involve any domestic servicing or even attendance at major matches if it interfered with rugby. When combined with sexualisation of players, domestication has been a powerful tool in promoting a proper place for female athletes who play netball and other sports. The focus on sexual attractiveness coupled with domesticity in family settings also enforces notions of compulsory heterosexuality prevalent in modern society. Just as women were breaking out of older restrictions which tied most women firmly to the domestic sphere, representing netball stars in their family and (hetero)sexual roles meant that women who played were now expected to become involved in stable heterosexual relationships if they wanted to receive favourable media and public attention. The media thus promoted top netball players in ways quite different to the period up to the 1950s when it was not expected that married women would play the game at a competitive level.

In addition to depictions of female sexual attractiveness and domesticity, the media in New Zealand has historically denigrated women's attempts to enter male-controlled areas. This approach fits the society's general belittling of women's activities and status. Socialisation from early life onwards is a major part of this process. The press has contributed to this in many ways. One of the most overt relates to women's relationships to sports. In large part, women are supposed to 'bring a plate' to male-centred social functions and supply other domestic servicing to sport, while males are not expected to reciprocate.<sup>22</sup> Any attempt to actually play or officiate in a male-dominated sport was treated as a joke.<sup>23</sup> In 1971, the

*Dominion* published a cartoon of a Wellington 'girl' who hoped to referee a rugby Test. The picture shows a woman being tackled at the corner of the picture while trying to escape a pursuing man. In the centre, what appears to be a woman is surrounded by a pack of players while they call out for the ball boy to get a pair of pantyhose, but to take his time.<sup>24</sup> Not only do images such as these promote violence against women, but they belittle any woman who even thinks to enter this male arena. Conversely, the media has never demeaned male referees or coaches in netball.

### **Netball in the Current Crisis of Hegemonic Masculinity**

During the 1980s, netball emerged as one of the four major team sports in New Zealand along with Rugby Union, Rugby League and cricket. These sports receive substantial coverage and sponsorship and do not have to pay for television time. Netball is the only women's sport on this list and may become even farther entrenched as *the* women's sport in the country. I suggest that we are seeing a further crisis of masculine hegemony emanating from a number of sources.

The first impetus in this crisis has been the threats to Rugby Union's dominance as the national (male) sport. Rugby suffered tremendously due to the debates over international contact with South Africa, particularly during and after the 1981 tour of New Zealand by the South African national team. One women's group, Women Against Rugby or WAR withdrew all domestic servicing of rugby for the duration of the tour 'challenging the hegemony, of rugby in society as Shona Thompson argues.<sup>25</sup> Many parents withdrew their sons from rugby and encouraged them to play other sports such as soccer. By the late 1980s, New Zealand rugby authorities actively

campaigned to bring children back to rugby with modified competitions and slick media campaigns. Girls were encouraged to play, at least at junior levels.

At the same time, some women began to play rugby competitively and competitions formed in the major centres. In 1992, the two top Dunedin women's sides played the curtain-raiser match before the New Zealand versus Ireland rugby international. While women's rugby has received some coverage, it is widely believed that real women would not consider playing rugby and that women's rugby is rife with lesbianism. In addition, a men's netball association was formed as men began to take up netball in greater numbers. The initial impetus to men's netball was the New Zealand Netball Association's promotion of social mixed netball leagues to encourage greater participation. Further research on the development of women's rugby and men's netball is needed before we can assess how these developments impact upon stereotypical gendered images of male and female sport in New Zealand society. The general trend has been to welcome mixed sporting practices such as mixed social netball and touch rugby, but to denigrate women who play rugby and men who play netball in single-sex competitions. The media has played its role in propping up netball and rugby as the national women's and men's sports respectively. The media has not treated men in netball without some degree of support, however, as reports in 1993 emerged of the troubles the men's netball association was having in obtaining enough funds for international travel, something that has plagued women's sports throughout history.

Netball in New Zealand, as in Australia, appears to be very healthy, though the international situation does not bode well for the game's future. While Australia and New Zealand often play competitive matches, the gap between them and the

rest of the netball playing world appears to be widening. Even the return of South Africa to international competition at a high level would leave only three competitive teams, but it is clear that the South Africans also are quite a distance behind. High ratings and attendances will be hard to sustain if attractive competition is not forthcoming. While New Zealanders love successful international level sporting teams, tough challenges are necessary.

Netball has been included within the male-dominated hegemony of New Zealand society, but at the cost of sexualisation of top players, the national association's loss of tight control over decisions which now have to be made in the interests of sponsors and television (male-dominated institutions). While the greater exposure has helped netball and women's sports in general, we must carefully analyse just how much this exposure will assist netball and the growth of other women's sports in future. Administrators and players may have less power to control their game and to fight the sexualisation of players and other forms of media attention.

This article only represents a beginning analysis of the social and cultural role of netball in New Zealand society and a vast number of topics remain which require greater research. Even on the issue of representation, images from television and the glossy magazines of recent years should provide a vast array of material for researchers. Local and regional histories are waiting to be written as are local studies on the culture of netball. Finally, several studies could be done on the role of Maori and Pacific Island women in the game. Meg Matangi, captain of the 1938 New Zealand team which toured Australia was the first Maori to captain a New Zealand team in any sport,

for example. There are more questions than answers at this stage, but plenty of material exists for all of these and other projects on the history and sociology of netball.

## NOTES

- 1 For example, see Margaret Carlisle Duncan, 'Sports Photographs and Sexual Difference: Images of Women and Men in the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol. 7, 1990, pp. 22-43; Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, Women's Press, Toronto, 1986; Roberta Park, 'Physiology and Anatomy are Destiny!?: Brains, Bodies and Exercise in Nineteenth Century American Thought', *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 18, no. 1, Spring 1991, pp. 31-63; Patricia Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1990; Patricia Vertineky, 'The Social Construction of the Gendered Body: Exercise and the Exercise of Power', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 11, no. 2, Aug. 1994, pp. 147-71.
- 2 Duncan, 'Sports Photographs', p. 22.
- 3 Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', in Raphael Samuel, ed., *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, Vol. I, 'History and Politics', London, 1989, pp. 203-36.
- 4 Quoted by Sandra Coney in *Every Girl: A Social History of the YWCA in Auckland 1885-1985*, YWCA, Auckland, 1986, p. 162.
- 5 *Wanganui Herald*, 18 May 1929.
- 6 *Otago Daily Times*, 8 Apr. 1926. There were six provincial associations in 1926: Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, North Otago, Otago and Southland.
- 7 *Christchurch Sun*, 27 Aug. 1929.
- 8 Debates about the number of players took place in the early years of netball, by the 1920s and the formation of a national association, the nine-a-side version of the game was adopted as women involved in the sport thought it gave more girls a chance to play. Seven-a-side was only adopted in the late 1950s so that New Zealand could come into line with other netball playing countries.
- 9 *Auckland Star*, 20 Sept. 1929.
- 10 Netball New Zealand (NNZ) Archives: Annual Reports of the New Zealand Basketball Association, 1931, 1932, 1933, lists money paid to local newspapers at the sites of national tournaments.
- 11 *Christchurch Sun*, 29 and 31 Aug. 1929.
- 12 Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston and Montreal, 1994, p. xiii.
- 13 NNZ Archives: Australian Press reports on 1938 tour, 'NZ Girl Basketballers Impress in Style', n.d. [1938].
- 14 NNZ Archives: 'Australian Press Reports on 1938 Tour'.
- 15 *New Zealand Free Lance*, 3 May 1939.



- 16 Reprinted in Joseph Romanos and Gael Woods, eds, *The Big Black Netball Book*, The Sporting Press, Auckland, 1992, p. 95.
- 17 Joseph Romanos, 'Joan Harnett—A True Kiwi Great', in Romanos and Woods, *Big Black Netball Book*, pp. 46-9.
- 18 Joseph Romanos, 'Julie Townsend Calls It Quits', in Romanos and Woods, *Big Black Netball Book*, pp. 73-6.
- 19 Dorothy Simons, *New Zealand's Champion Sportswomen*, Moa Press, Auckland, 1982, p. 138.
- 20 *Dominion*, 22 Aug. 1969.
- 21 *Dominion*, 23 Aug. 1969.
- 22 See Shona Thompson, "Thank the Ladies for the Plates": The Incorporation of Women in Sport', *Leisure Studies*, vol. 9, 1990, pp. 135-43; and Julie Park, ed., *Ladies a Plate: Change and Continuity in the Lives of New Zealand Women*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1991.
- 23 Women have begun to play Rugby Union in competitions segregated by sex, though there would be no thought to a woman playing for the male All Blacks.
- 24 *Dominion*, 28 Apr. 1971.
- 25 Shona Thompson, 'Challenging the Hegemony: New Zealand Women's Opposition to Rugby and the Reproduction of a Capitalist Patriarchy', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1988, pp. 205-12.

# New Zealand and International Sport: The Case of All Black–Springbok Rugby, Sanctions and Protest Against Apartheid 1959-1992

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While acknowledging sport sanctions' role in leveraging limited changes in sport policy and practice from the South African regime, many political analysts are reticent about claiming broader political influence for them. Anthony Payne's assessment of the influence of the Commonwealth's Gleneagles Agreement on Apartheid and Sport is representative. Having noted the complex internal and external factors precipitating changes underway in South Africa since early 1990, he argues that:

In the circumstances, it is wise to be cautious: Gleneagles was part of a broader demonstration of external opposition to apartheid which unquestionably had an effect on the political outlook of the Afrikaner political elite. But, of itself, the abrogation of sporting contacts between the Commonwealth and South Africa cannot be reckoned to have counted for much and, certainly, some of the wilder claims made both on behalf of and against the boycott should be discounted.<sup>1</sup>

Without resorting to 'wild claims', we contend that a historically-grounded understanding of the significance of Rugby Union football in New Zealand and South African societies allows a bolder, more precise assessment of the role of sport in precipitating the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa.

Although all forms of international pressure on and isolation of South Africa had their supporters, sanctions

advocates were overwhelmingly concerned with *economic* (trade and financial) measures.<sup>2</sup> This preoccupation was reflected in the 1989 report of a 'distinguished group of (sanctions) experts and researchers' to the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa. *The Sanctions Report* argued that:

After a detailed study of the available data we conclude that there is a threshold and that sanctions must be greater than that threshold if they are to have the required impact. *We believe that a sustained cut in South African imports of 30 per cent is the minimum that would produce a fall in GDP that was sufficient to trigger an appropriate political response ... [The Report goes on] to be politically effective, sanctions would need to cut world-wide purchases from South Africa by at least one quarter.*<sup>3</sup>

Yet within months of this startling argument, and without the 30 per cent cut being approached, the process of negotiation and reform had begun.

The experts had discounted the great importance of other sources of pressure for change or, perhaps more accurately, misunderstood the dynamics of this process. Pressures and incentives from several sources as well as the bold, opportunistic calculations of the National Party (NP) government under F W de Klerk, all contributed to changes since 1989. Internal resistance, in particular, became vital. But given the overwhelming power of the state's security apparatus and the high, if stagnant, standard of living enjoyed by most whites, neither the limited external economic sanctions pressure nor the domestic unrest of the 1980s were sufficiently strong to force the government's hand in 1989. Bluntly stated, most Afrikaners and other white South Africans simply did not manifest the stubborn determination to defend their apartheid-

based 'way of life' which most observers had anticipated. Their vaunted will to resist all forms of external and internal pressure was weaker than estimated, and their desire for re-integration into the international cultural and economic affairs mainstream was stronger.

In the unexpectedly rapid erosion of white South Africa's will to resist exogenous pressure and the heightening of its longing to win re-acceptance into the international community, the impact of sport sanctions in general and rugby sanctions in particular was crucial. The significance of sport to white South Africans was demonstrated clearly by the government's use of it in the March 1992 whites-only referendum campaign on constitutional negotiations.<sup>4</sup> South Africa's cricket World Cup success and impending return to international rugby were key elements in the government's arguments for a yes vote.<sup>5</sup> Eddie Tonks, President of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU), was in South Africa immediately before the referendum vote to negotiate the dates for a New Zealand tour of South Africa for August 1992.<sup>6</sup>

The use of sport in the referendum campaign suggests that those who had long advocated South Africa's isolation from international sport were right in their assumptions concerning the potential effects of sporting boycotts on white South Africa. As early as 1971, Peter Hain outlined the effect boycotts would have on white South Africa. As pressure increased, the South African government and sporting officials would have to make concessions.<sup>7</sup> Despite those views, the weight of sport (especially rugby) sanctions in the years before the launching of the reform process was substantially overlooked by most sanctions' analysts. Even those who examined sports boycotts, such as Richard Lapchick, Bruce Kidd and Adrian Guelke, concentrated on Olympic sports or cricket, failing to

fully discuss the overwhelming significance of rugby to the dominant group of white males in South Africa. They also missed the point that New Zealand was the most important international rugby rival against whom white South Africans could measure their rugby power. Guelke, in particular, published a chapter entitled 'Sport and the end of apartheid' in 1993 that focuses almost totally on cricket and the Olympics.<sup>8</sup>

In order to understand the full political significance of rugby sanctions, it is necessary to explain the historical role played by rugby in the dominant power cultures in both South Africa and New Zealand. In both countries, rugby has been a crucial element in the forging of national male, and mostly white, identities throughout the past century. As such, its cultural and political significance has far exceeded that of 'just a game'.

### **Rugby and 'National Identity' in South Africa and New Zealand**

New Zealand and South Africa shared historical experiences as white-dominated settler societies and, within the British Empire of which they were a part, close relations were reinforced through sporting and other cultural links. Early rugby tours to the British Isles were vital in forging emergent national identities at crucial junctures.<sup>9</sup> New Zealand sociologist and activist Richard Thompson summed up the passion for rugby in both South Africa and New Zealand: both share 'not merely a passion for rugby, but a similar approach to the game, and the rugby rivalry is felt to be distinctive ... [T]o play it the hard way is to play it the man's way'. He continues, 'a defeat reflects unfavourably on the quality of New Zealand manhood and its way of life'.<sup>10</sup> Famous South African author and former Liberal Party leader, the late Alan Paton stated that 'white South Africans are madly enthusiastic about rugby, and especially

about playing New Zealand'.<sup>11</sup> And Donald Woods, former South African newspaper editor and confidante of Steve Biko, recalls from his childhood that:

Springbok–All Black rugby was full of tradition and lore. For us it was the greatest of international rivalries, and during World War II whenever South African and New Zealand troops encountered each other, whether in a Cairo street or a London pub, they would scrum down on the spot.<sup>12</sup>

For much of this century rugby was compulsory for white boys in South African schools, and the only winter sport offered in many New Zealand schools before the 1970s.<sup>13</sup> Most members of the dominant group in both societies, therefore, have shared a common cultural practice—rugby. Several New Zealand authors have called rugby New Zealand's 'secular religion'. Scott Crawford argues that to become an All Black represents a peak of social status which transcends all other categories.<sup>14</sup> A delegate to a 1970 conference of the New Zealand Race Relations Council suggested the power of rugby within New Zealand society: What can you do when we have a Rugby Union that is even more influential than the Government?<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, in South Africa, rugby has been described as 'the Afrikaner's second religion',<sup>16</sup> and 'the Afrikaner's *real* sport in South Africa'. It 'comes close to a religious zeal, from school level upward'.<sup>17</sup> Afrikaner whites transformed British concepts of rugby imbuing it with qualities like ruggedness, endurance, forcefulness and determination.<sup>18</sup> Games between English-speaking and Afrikaner teams became symbolic wars, however, they reinforced the notion of white male exclusivity by excluding all others from playing. Reporting on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the South African Rugby Board (SARB) in

1964, Board President Danie Craven stated that rugby ‘wielded you together as nothing else in our history; and it has been this game which has provided you with a sense of belongingness...’<sup>19</sup>

Although officials in both countries have attempted to downplay links between rugby and politics, it is clear that the two were closely intertwined from the early twentieth century onwards. In 1905, New Zealand Prime Minister Richard Seddon was labelled ‘Minister of Football’ after the press revealed he had match reports cabled out as government messages.<sup>20</sup> In both countries many international and first class rugby players have attained positions of power in government and business. In South Africa there have been close links between Springbok captains, the ruling NP and the secret Afrikaner Broederbond, formed in 1918 by Afrikaner nationalists, whose members controlled many positions of power in post-World War II South African society.<sup>21</sup> Since the NP came to power in 1948, all Springbok captains except one have been NP members, or members of both the NP and the Broederbond. The manager of the 1965 tour to New Zealand, Kobus Louw, a Broeder, was a Secretary in the Department of Coloured Affairs, and later became a Cabinet minister, as did tour Captain, Dawid de Villiers, also a member of the Broederbond.<sup>22</sup> Piet Koornhof and Gerrit Viljoen, Ministers of Sport in the late 1970s and early 1980s, have been Secretary and President of the Broederbond respectively. They have also been key players in the initiatives for constitutional change. In New Zealand former All Blacks also reached positions of political significance. Chris Laidlaw has held the position of Race Relations Conciliator and former captain David Kirk has been a special adviser to Prime Minister Jim Bolger.

In South Africa, the historic links between the Broederbond, the government and top level rugby cannot be

overemphasised. From 1949 the Bond was active in shaping South African international rugby. Having suffered the indignity of seeing a supporter of the opposition United Party appointed Springbok captain in that year and then worse, Basil Kenyan, an English-speaker, named as his successor, the Broederbond sought closer control over Springbok rugby.<sup>23</sup> Although the long-time President of the SARB, Danie Craven, was not a member of the Broederbond, many key positions of leadership in rugby circles, particularly in the provincial unions of the Northern Transvaal, Transvaal and Orange Free State, were controlled by Broeders for thirty or more years. Johan Claassen, a leading Broederbond member, was the national coach in the 1970s and the manager for the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand.<sup>24</sup> In 1980, a leading Natal referee quit rugby over 'internal politics' and the extension of the Broederbond's 'tentacles' through the South African Rugby Referees' Society.<sup>25</sup> The involvement of leading Broederbond members in the highest levels of rugby administration *and* in the South African Government meant that rugby relations and international relations were closely connected between the late 1940s and the early 1990s.

### **International Rugby and Mounting Political Controversy**

Rugby relations between South Africa and New Zealand have been a persistent source of debate since the 1920s, especially in New Zealand. These debates are rooted in two differing experiences of race relations. New Zealand's general policy approach since the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi has attempted to include Maoris within wider society, while pre-1990s South African racial policies were based on principles of racial segregation and white domination. On their 1921 tour the Springboks played the Maori All Blacks, winning by a point.



The emerging difference in racial and policy attitudes was summed up after the match by a South African reporter 'sickened' by the sight of white New Zealanders cheering Maoris against members of their own race.<sup>26</sup> The best New Zealand rugby player of the 1920s, George Nepia, was excluded from selection for the 1928 All Black tour of South Africa because he was Maori, proving that the NZRFU took South African attitudes into their selection process.

Exclusion of Maoris from tours of South Africa sparked little controversy in New Zealand before World War II. After the South African National Party came to power in 1948 and set about implementing its apartheid policies, sporting contacts began to be questioned by a few New Zealanders but no protest developed during the 1956 Springbok tour. Indeed, it seems that the whole country united behind the single goal of defeating South Africa to avenge the humiliating defeat of 1949. In those days, before television, awareness of South Africa was largely confined to its status as a rugby power, an ally in the British Empire and in World War II.<sup>27</sup>

When critical debate developed during 1959, it centred on the exclusion of Maoris from trials for the proposed 1960 All Black tour of South Africa and the NZRFU's complicity with South African requests that Maoris be excluded, rather than on the internal racial policies of the South African Government. The slogan was 'No Maoris, no tour', and anti-tour petition drives were organised in New Zealand by the Citizens All Black Tour Association or CABTA and by groups within South Africa including the South African Sports Association that organised and promoted non-racial sport.<sup>28</sup> Thousands of South Africans and New Zealanders petitioned the New Zealand Government to cancel the tour, with CABTA obtaining over 162 000 signatures out of a total population of under three million.

Prime Minister Walter Nash would not interfere with the NZRFU decision on the tour, confirming his Labour Party's then policy of 'non-interference' with sporting bodies.<sup>29</sup>

Protests in New Zealand increased sharply after the South African police massacred peaceful protesters at Sharpeville on 21 March 1960. In protest, the New Zealand Cargo Workers' Union strongly condemned the loss of life, and urged that the situation 'now makes it imperative that no New Zealand team at all should go to a country with such a black record of mass murder'.<sup>30</sup> Despite the growing domestic protests and emerging international opposition resulting from Sharpeville, the NZRFU went ahead with the 1960 tour.

From 1960 onwards, the South African Government realised the threat protesters in New Zealand could pose to future rugby relations. After South Africa was barred from the Olympic Games in 1964 and 1968 and expelled from the Olympic movement in 1970, the continuation of international rugby tours became a crucial element in South Africa's international sports and broader political strategies. Both the ruling NP and the opposition United Party rationalised expulsion from the Olympics as part of a Moscow-orchestrated communist onslaught. However, both parties viewed international rugby (and to a lesser degree, cricket) as an integral part of white South Africa's historical and cultural ties to European 'civilisation'.<sup>31</sup> As a result, New Zealand was targeted by both the South African Government, the international sports boycott movement and non-racial South African sporting organisations in exile as the key to successful sport boycott strategies.

Prime Minister Hendrick Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, kept quiet during the run-up to the 1965 Springbok tour of New Zealand, refusing to comment on whether Maoris would be excluded from future tours to South Africa. But

during the tour, Verwoerd stated in his famous Loskop Dam speech that all future teams touring South Africa would have to abide by South Africa's local custom'. It was clear to New Zealanders that this meant no Maoris. Prime Minister Keith Holyoake subsequently announced in Parliament that New Zealand could not 'be fully and truly represented by a team chosen on racial lines'.<sup>32</sup> As a result, the NZRFU called off the proposed All Black tour of 1967.

In 1966, Verwoerd was assassinated, and the less rigid John Vorster became Prime Minister. Vorster, a former rugby administrator in the Eastern Cape, understood the significance of international rugby to South Africa's international relations and to the domestic morale of whites. Rather than face the possibility of no further tours of South Africa by the All Blacks, in 1968 Vorster made a dramatic decision allowing the NZRFU to send Maoris on upcoming tours. Consequently, in 1970, the NZRFU sent a team which included three Maoris and one Samoan to South Africa. Vorster's move was the first real attempt by the South African Government to alleviate international pressure in the sports arena, and heralded a myriad of mildly reformist measures over the next twenty years. Vorster refused to relax restrictions in other sports reflected most notably in his 1968 refusal to allow Basil D'Oliviera, a 'Coloured' South African chosen for the English cricket team, entry into South Africa. Vorster also refused to sanction changes demanded by the International Olympic Committee that would have allowed South Africa back into the Olympic Games.

Despite South African concessions on the Maori issue, some New Zealanders were not satisfied while some sports officials were nervous about the consequences of close affiliation with South Africa. Protests against the 1970 tour in New

Zealand, and again against the proposed 1973 Springbok tour of New Zealand, were partly motivated by concerns that Christchurch might lose its bid to host the 1974 Commonwealth Games. These concerns arose, in part, from New Zealand's support for South Africa in international organisations. New Zealand's 1960s record on United Nations resolutions against South Africa was regarded by non-white Commonwealth states, and others, as 'unimpressive': it voted against or abstained on nearly every resolution that condemned South Africa.<sup>33</sup> New Zealand also staunchly defended South Africa at the 1970 International Olympic Committee meeting that expelled South Africa. After 1971, African Commonwealth leaders used Australia's new tough stance on sporting contacts with South Africa to pressure the New Zealand Government to take a similar stand against competition with South Africa until racial discrimination in sport was abolished.<sup>34</sup>

In 1969, South Africa sent one of its most senior diplomats, Peter Phillip, to New Zealand to serve as Consul-General. Phillip distributed pro-government information on South Africa, wrote newspaper columns and spoke to countless groups during his tenure which lasted until 1976. He also held numerous social functions to which many All Blacks and National Party MPs and Cabinet ministers were invited. Commentators pointed out that he was a very senior diplomat to be sent to such an unimportant country as New Zealand with whom South Africa's economic relations and strategic links were 'insignificant'.<sup>35</sup> Vorster's Government clearly thought the maintenance of rugby links with New Zealand was important both for white support at home, for international relations generally and attempts to combat growing sanctions' movements.

Despite its expulsion from the Olympic Movement in 1970 and banning from most other international sporting

organisations in the 1960s and early 1970s, South Africa remained firmly entrenched on the International Rugby Board (IRB) along with other white-dominated societies: New Zealand, Australia, England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and France. For the government and many white South Africans, sporting isolation could be tolerated so long as rugby was still played. Norman Middleton, President of the non-racial South African Council of Sport or SACOS, stated in 1976:

It has to be realised that to genuine Afrikaners—the NP is substantially Afrikaner from top to bottom—rugby of all sports has a mystical significance and importance. I don't think that the Government could care less about such sports as cricket and soccer. They don't really mean much to the true Afrikaner.

Therefore the expulsion of the country from international competition in these sports doesn't mean too much. But RUGBY IS DIFFERENT. RUGBY IS THE AFRIKANER'S SECOND RELIGION [His emphasis].<sup>36</sup>

Springbok–All Black rugby was threatened anew in 1973. A proposed tour of that year was cancelled by the newly elected Labour government headed by Norman Kirk. Kirk's initial policy was one of non-interference, but he commissioned a police report on possible levels of protest during a South African tour. The report stated that more than 10 000 demonstrators could be mustered in the major cities of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch if the Springboks toured. In addition, the police thought the tour would 'engender the greatest eruption of violence the country has ever known'.<sup>37</sup> This report, combined with threats from black Commonwealth countries to boycott the 1974 Commonwealth Games in Christchurch, forced Kirk's hand. The NZRFU left it to the Prime Minister to determine the fate of the tour calculating that he and not they would be

stigmatised by a decision to cancel. An attempt by the SARB to include token blacks in the tour party was exposed on the eve of the tour and Kirk called it off. In 1974 he reversed Labour's non-interference position, stating that any team representative of any sporting organisation that practised apartheid at any level would not be welcome in New Zealand.

The cancellation of the rugby tour proved politically damaging to the government. The new, populist National Party leader Robert Muldoon made rugby relations with South Africa one of several campaign issues in the 1975 election which National won handily.<sup>38</sup> Although the Springboks did not immediately come to New Zealand, the All Blacks toured South Africa in 1976. As international outrage mounted over the juxtaposition of the All Black tour with the Soweto student uprisings, twenty-two African countries boycotted the 1976 Montreal Olympics in protest against New Zealand's participation.

In 1977, to avoid a similar boycott of the 1978 Edmonton Commonwealth Games, again over New Zealand-South Africa rugby links, Commonwealth Heads of Government formulated the 'Gleneagles Declaration on Apartheid and Sport', which asked Commonwealth governments to discourage sporting contacts with South Africa.<sup>39</sup> Spearheaded by the Canadian Government and orchestrated by the Commonwealth Secretariat, it became the most important international landmark in intensifying the comprehensiveness of sport sanctions. Muldoon's agreement to Gleneagles facilitated the success of the Edmonton Games, but the Agreement was framed in such broad principle that considerable room to manoeuvre remained for the obstinate New Zealand Prime Minister.

New Zealand society was split by the 1981 Springbok rugby tour of that year. Many New Zealanders questioned

themselves and argued with others, including members of their own families, as massive demonstrations greeted each match. An opinion poll taken during the tour showed that 49 per cent opposed the Springbok presence, while 42 per cent favoured the tour.<sup>40</sup> On 25 July hundreds of protesters occupied the rugby stadium in Hamilton, forcing the cancellation of the second tour match. South Africans viewed this live on television, and many whites were shocked by the depth of animosity felt by protesters towards their boys. Images of the New Zealand police beating protesters and fortress-like rugby stadiums behind barbed wire 'shocked the nation' in South Africa.<sup>41</sup> Confronted with such dramatic levels of hostility for the first time, Springboks returned from New Zealand with 'more enlightened views on race' and began to question the necessity of many apartheid laws.<sup>42</sup>

The 1981 tour also caused political tension in South Africa as the liberal opposition party, the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), opposed the tour, making it an election issue. A related controversy in the early 1980s involved the inclusion of a 'Coloured' rugby team in the major schools rugby tournament, Craven Week, which threatened to split the NP.<sup>43</sup> Some Afrikaner schools boycotted the tournament, and the issue was a factor in the most significant split ever in the National Party. Transvaal NP leader and Cabinet minister Andries Treurnicht resigned from the NP and took several MPs with him to form the Conservative Party and protested the 'reformist' policies of the Botha Government.

There were no official rugby tours between South Africa and New Zealand between 1981 and 1992, and South Africa did not play any IRB countries between 1984 and 1992. In 1985, the NZRFU announced plans to mount another All Black tour of South Africa. The recently elected Labour government of

David Lange vigorously opposed the tour, although it stopped short of cancelling it. The tour was called off at the eleventh hour when New Zealand's High Court 'granted an interim injunction arguing that ... the tour would be contrary to the rugby union's statutory commitment to promote and foster the game'.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the cancellation of the 1985 tour, secret negotiations were held behind the scenes to arrange for top New Zealand rugby players to tour South Africa in 1986. Louis Luyt, head of the Transvaal Rugby Union, invited thirty New Zealand players to visit South Africa as individuals and then play South African teams.<sup>45</sup> The players left New Zealand secretly to the embarrassment of the government, the SARB, the NZRFU and the IRB, each body denying prior knowledge. That Luyt and some New Zealand players and officials would go to such lengths to arrange a tour provides clear evidence for the strength of South African-New Zealand rugby ties. Even the PFP supported the tour once plans were revealed, lamenting only the way in which it had to be arranged.<sup>46</sup>

This New Zealand 'Cavaliers' tour was significant in that the Springboks won the series by three matches to one. In 1987 the first rugby World Cup was held and the All Blacks, including several former Cavaliers, swept to victory. The success of New Zealand only a year after the 1986 tour precipitated commentaries on the relative strengths of the All Blacks and the Springboks, with many lamenting the fact that the 'true world champion' could not be decided in a subsequent match between the two teams.<sup>47</sup> Despite such assertions, SARB president Danie Craven argued that the effects of isolation already had eroded the Springboks' ability to compete against New Zealand, France and Australia.<sup>48</sup>



## **Sanctions, Rugby and Change in South Africa**

The anti-apartheid sporting boycott movement, in New Zealand and internationally, recognised the cultural and political significance of New Zealand-South Africa rugby links. Following South Africa's expulsion from the Olympics, these links became the symbolic centrepiece of the struggle between the boycott movement and South Africa authorities. Robert Archer and Antoine Bouillon assert that 'the real battle has been in rugby—and the crucial battlefield New Zealand'.<sup>49</sup> From the mid-1970s, the effort to sever New Zealand-South Africa rugby relations was the most important objective behind the extension of sport sanctions internationally. The boycott of the 1976 Montreal Olympics, the adoption of the 1977 Gleneagles Agreement, the dramatic and widely-reported events surrounding the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand, and the subsequent adoption in 1982 of the Gleneagles Code of Conduct by the Commonwealth Games Federation all originated in the controversy surrounding and struggle to stop Springbok–All Black rugby. It is fair to suggest, then, that the attention paid to breaking this rivalry was one of the most important factors in the popularisation and politicisation of the apartheid issue internationally.

A distinction must be drawn between the impact of sport sanctions generally and the loss of international, especially All Black, rugby ties specifically. Sport sanctions hurt sports-mad white South Africans. Nonetheless, they could rationalise their isolation from international table tennis, swimming, track and field and even the Olympic Movement itself. These sports were governed by authorities in which Communist Eastern Bloc and 'radical' Third World national representatives could together muster majorities, or force action through the threat of Soviet-led boycotts. Since these countries, in the South African Government's world-view, were part of the Moscow-orchestrated

'total onslaught' against South Africa, it was easy to explain away isolation in such sport.<sup>50</sup> Then white, and especially male and Afrikaner South Africans simply did not care as much about these other sports as they did about rugby.

Isolation from international rugby was serious in both sporting and symbolic terms. The dominant rugby playing nations were white, predominantly European in cultural origin and thus 'civilised' in white South African terms. They were the countries with which white South Africans' historical links were most intimate and whose company they most wanted to keep. Cultural isolation from the British Isles, Australia and New Zealand was much more keenly felt than isolation from 'run-of-the-mill' African and Asian countries.

Furthermore, the loss of international rugby links was bound to have deep repercussions among Afrikaners at both the 'grass-roots' and elite levels. At the popular level, rugby isolation would shake the core Afrikaner electoral constituency of the NP. As a 1988 Australian Foreign Affairs Department report noted:

White teams and supporters nationwide, from major provincial organisations to the smallest hamlets, have seen the rugby country they firmly believe to be the greatest in the world increasingly excluded from the international game and, in the eyes of many, denied their rightful place at the top of the world league.<sup>51</sup>

Given the tight connections between South Africa's political elite (concentrated in the NP and the Broederbond) and the elite of South African rugby, this particular sanction was especially likely to undermine the collective confidence of this crucial, dominant social group.<sup>52</sup>

If rugby constituted a particularly important cultural and political pressure point, Springbok-All Black rugby was the breaking point, most clearly illustrated in the 1981 Springbok

tour of New Zealand. New Zealand-South Africa series were traditionally viewed in both countries and beyond as the pinnacle of international rugby—the unofficial world championship. New Zealand was the one other country in which rugby had a comparable cultural centrality to that of South Africa.<sup>53</sup> This semi-mythical rivalry, as well as long and untroubled historical links through the British Empire/Commonwealth, meant that New Zealand was regarded by white South Africans as among their oldest and closest ‘friends’. Yet in 1981, this old and comfortable friend, with its relatively isolated and placid society, was collectively traumatised by the Springbok tour. As South Africans watched developments live and uncensored<sup>54</sup> and read the press reports, there was a growing realisation that there could be no further international tours between these two great rivals so long as apartheid persisted. According to one South African correspondent:

Final decisions about whether the Boks will tour again have been thrown into the court of the politicians. Much will depend on changes taking place in South Africa over the next few years and, clearly, if an objectionable form of apartheid still exists in South Africa when a Springbok tour is again at issue, the Boks will not be seen in New Zealand, or Britain for that matter.

The traumatic events of the last few weeks have shown that a large body of New Zealanders, completely separate from the ill-informed, despicable group of violence mongers, will again rally to an anti-apartheid cause and I simply do not see a New Zealand Government, once all things have been considered, again allowing one.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, the 1981 tour was one of the last sanctioned international rugby series (as opposed ‘rebel’ or mercenary

tours) involving the Springboks, and the last significant overseas tour by a major South African sporting team before 1992. The 1981 tour and its aftermath surely fuelled a deepening sense of cultural isolation among white South Africans which, over time, weakened their resolve to resist major political changes. The continuing significance of this issue was illustrated by an opposition member in a 1986 Parliamentary debate coinciding with the rebel tour of the New Zealand Cavaliers:

... I am sure all members will agree with me on this... we all look forward to the day when we can welcome an AR-Black team, an Australian team or Welsh team, *inter alia*, as teams fully representative of their own countries, instead of their finding some clandestine way of coming into the country. How we long for that day!<sup>56</sup>

The significance of these developments lay not simply in South Africa's isolation from the highest reaches of international rugby, but also in the political controversy and struggle by which this outcome was achieved. Ironically, the New Zealand Government of Robert Muldoon made a key contribution to building international pressure for change in South Africa not by its leadership, but by its obduracy in defending the autonomy of its sportsmen and their right to compete against South Africa in rugby if they so desired. Every step forward in the extension of the boycott campaign from 1976 onward was hard-won from Muldoon and his government. Each time Muldoon conceded a round the sporting boycott movement in New Zealand and beyond, as well as the allied South African non-racial sporting movement, heightened their profile, politicisation and determination to push on towards the complete dismantling of apartheid, as the prerequisite for the elimination of racism in sport.

The spectacle of New Zealand society split by the 1981 South African tour and the subsequent sense that no further tours could be mounted safely had a significantly greater impact internationally and in South Africa than would have a quiet shelving of the tour. Furthermore, the impact of the severing of New Zealand-South African rugby links was stimulated sharply by the actions of the conservative New Zealand Government.<sup>57</sup>

### **Implications for the Study of International Relations**

The case of New Zealand-South Africa rugby relations and their role in the mounting pressure for change in South Africa holds salutary implications for students of international relations. The first concerns the way in which we think about sanctions and how they 'work', particularly when emanating from non-great powers. The bulk of the literature concerning sanctions against South Africa was preoccupied with the prospects for effective economic sanctions. It flows in part from the emphasis on the instrumental purposes of sanctions—that is, the direct effect sanctions have in modifying the behaviour of the target.<sup>58</sup> A concern with the instrumental purposes of sanctions implies the need for a measurable calculus: X amount of sanctions pressure is likely to produce Y change in the behaviour of the target. This approach is clearly illustrated by the findings of the *Sanctions Report* on South Africa.

Economic sanctions are easy to identify and measure, and lend themselves to rational (if usually inaccurate) calculations of probable impact. However, they require a preponderance of power on the part of the sender(s) to be directly effective in this instrumental sense. Consequently, one recent analysis of the sanctions' policies of non-great powers suggested that, given the limited power resources of such countries their sanctions are usually driven in reality by symbolic rather than

instrumental purposes. In other words, they are not really expected to have an instrumental effect on the target at all.<sup>59</sup>

The effects of the severing of New Zealand-South African rugby links suggest alternative conclusions. Although they are more difficult to measure and analyse, non-economic, notably sporting sanctions can also have a significant influence on the target society. In this case, rugby sanctions had a significant psychological impact on key groups within white South Africa, eroding their will to resist other forms of external and internal pressure and hastening the current process of change. Furthermore, the massive protests greeting the 1981 Springbok tour and the subsequent demise of Springbok-All Black touring were viewed as an important expression of solidarity by the non-racial sport movement in South Africa itself, and thus bolstered internal resistance to the policies of the South African regime.<sup>60</sup> While rugby sanctions cannot be regarded as a source of direct instrumental pressure on South Africa, they were a significant longer-term and indirect stimulus to change.

More generally, greater attention needs to be paid to cultural sources of vulnerability and influence in thinking about sanctions. When our analysis of the nature and efficacy of sanctions is broadened, we can see that sanctions emanating from non-great powers can have an instrumental rather than purely symbolic impact on the target society—as they did in the case of New Zealand and South Africa.

The second implication suggests that in certain discrete international contexts, small societies can occasionally play roles of substantial importance. Despite the general and understandable bias towards major powers in the study of international relations, influence is exercised on a contextual or issue-specific basis. Countries which are otherwise small or weak can be surprisingly influential where their specific

capabilities or characteristics allow.<sup>61</sup> To overlook the role of small societies in world affairs, as is often done in the international relations literature, is to risk misunderstanding or misinterpreting important international developments.

In this case, the potent cultural significance of rugby in both New Zealand and South Africa and in their bilateral relations made the former an important focal point for the international struggle against apartheid in sport. It also meant that the campaign to end New Zealand-South African rugby links were important elements in the steadily increasing effectiveness of external pressure for change in South Africa. In attempting to explain why the South African Government initiated the current process of change, most observers would not intuitively look to developments in New Zealand. Yet, because of New Zealand's status as a dominant world rugby power and South Africa's fiercest rival, the role of this distant, economically-insignificant country of little more than three million people was remarkably important.

Finally, a third implication from this case concerns the importance of non-governmental actors and initiatives as sources of influence across national borders. This is not a new point but it bears repeating given the tendency in international relations to emphasise activities and interactions at the level of the state. The initiative in the process of working to end New Zealand-South Africa rugby links lay with a coalition of domestic groups in New Zealand, in opposition to the state. These groups were based in New Zealand and, to a significant degree, were motivated by concerns embedded in their own society. However, they were also connected with a transnational network of anti-apartheid groups, including the non-racial sport movement in South Africa and in exile. Beyond this they were in harness with Commonwealth governments notably, but not exclusively,

from 'non-white' member-states, pressuring the Muldoon Government first to sign the Gleneagles Agreement and then to respect its intent.<sup>62</sup> The point to be stressed is that a politically-significant international development, the ultimately-successful campaign to sever New Zealand-South African rugby links, was driven by a broadly-based domestic social movement in opposition to the government of their country.<sup>63</sup>

## Conclusions

The importance of sport in general and rugby in particular in precipitating political change in South Africa should not be overstated. The effects of the loss of rugby links with New Zealand were indirect and longer-term in nature, enhancing the sense of international isolation felt by white particularly Afrikaner South Africans and weakening their resolve to defend their 'way of life'. The generally-unexpected decision of the de Klerk Government to launch the process of change in 1990 cannot be understood fully without an appreciation of the corrosive societal and psychological effects of steadily expanding cultural sanctions. Of these, the loss of international rugby ties, above all with New Zealand, were the most potent.

## NOTES

- 1 Anthony Payne, 'The International Politics of the Gleneagles Agreement', *Round Table*, 320, 1990, p. 428.
- 2 For examples of solid academic analyses, see Margaret Doxey, *International Sanctions in Contemporary Perspective*, Macmillan, London, 1987, Chapter Nine; and Douglas G Anglin, 'Ripe, Ripening, or Overripe? Sanctions as an Inducement to Negotiations: the South African Case', *International Journal*, vol. 45, no. 2 (Spring 1990).
- 3 *The Sanctions Report*, Penguin, London, 1989, pp. 114-15.
- 4 For example, see ads like the full-page one in *Rapport*, 1 Mar. 1992 asking for a yes vote for eight reasons. One of these was due to South Africa's 'sportsmen' being back in world competition.
- 5 While cricket articles and advertisements appeared almost daily, articles also discussed upcoming New Zealand and Australian rugby tours, see *Citizen* (Johannesburg), 26 Mar. 1992; *Beeld* (Pretoria), 5 Mar. 1992.



- 6 *Beeld*, 5 Mar. 1992, reporting on the upcoming tour of South Africa by New Zealand's national rugby team, the AU Blacks who would play a match in Pretoria at the Loftus Versfeld rugby ground on 15 Aug. 1992. This was just twelve days before the referendum vote. The article also reported on the upcoming visits of the rugby World Cup holders, Australia and the visits of Italy and Romania. Tonks announced the tour from New Zealand and then appeared in South Africa.
- 7 Peter Hain, *Don't Play With Apartheid*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1971.
- 8 Adrian Guelke, 'Sport and the End of Apartheid', in Lincoln Allison, ed., *The Changing Politics of Sport*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1993, pp. 151-70.
- 9 The 1905 New Zealand and 1906 South African tours are discussed by John Nauright, 'Sport, Manhood and Empire: British Responses to the 1905 New Zealand Rugby Tour', *International Journal of History of Sport*, vol. 8, no. 2, Sept. 1991, pp. 239-55 and 'Sport and the Image of Colonial Manhood in the British Mind: British Physical Deterioration Debates and Colonial Sporting Tours, 1878-1906', *Canadian Journal of History of Sport*, vol. 23, no. 2, Dec. 1992, pp. 239-55.
- 10 Richard Thompson, *Retreat From Apartheid: New Zealand's Sporting Contacts With South Africa*, OUP, Auckland, 1975, p. 2. The role of rugby in reinforcing patriarchal structures and gendered differences in both New Zealand and South Africa is significant and under-researched, see Shona Thompson, 'Challenging the Hegemony: New Zealand Women's Opposition to Rugby and the Reproduction of a Capitalist Patriarchy', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1988, pp. 205-12.
- 11 Quoted in Thompson, *Retreat from Apartheid*, p. 2.
- 12 Donald Woods, *Black and White*, Ward River Press, Dublin, 1981, p. 43.
- 13 For a recent discussion of compulsory rugby in South African schools, see Jenni Evans, 'Time to Kick Compulsory Rugby into Touch?', *Personality*, 16 July 1990. (My thanks to Cynthia Kros for this reference).
- 14 Scott Crawford, 'A Secular Religion: The Historical Iconography of New Zealand Rugby', *Physical Education Review*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1986, pp. 146-58.
- 15 *Sunday Times*, 15 Mar. 1970.
- 16 *Daily News*, 2 Sept. 1976.
- 17 Donald Woods, *Black and White*, p. 47.
- 18 Albert Grundlingh, 'Playing for Power?: Rugby, Afrikaner Nationalism and Masculinity in South Africa c.1900-1970', in John Nauright and Tim Chandler, eds., *Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity*, Frank Cass Press, London, in press.
- 19 Quoted in Grundlingh, 'Playing for Power?'
- 20 See John Nauright, 'Myth and Reality: Reflections on Rugby and New Zealand Historiography', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 6, no. 2, May 1990, pp. 219-30.

- 21 For more on Broederbond and sport in South Africa, see Ivor Wilkins and Hans Strydom, *The Broederbond*, Paddington Press, New York, 1979, pp. 239-62.
- 22 Robert Archer and Antoine Bouillon, *The South African Game: Sport and Racism*, Zed Press, London, 1982, p. 74.
- 23 Woods, *Black and White*, p. 45.
- 24 Woods, *Black and White*, pp. 46, 49; *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 26 July 1981.
- 25 *Sunday Express*, 20 April 1980. The article also reported on the involvement of Broederbond members in the highest levels of South African rugby. Breeders listed included Jannie le Roux, President of the Transvaal Rugby Union; Professor Fritz Eloff, President of the Northern Transvaal Rugby Union; Butch Lochner, convener of the Springbok selectors; rugby officials Piet du Toit, Mannetjies Roux and Willem Delpoort, former Springbok captains, Avril Malan, Dawie de Villiers, Hannes Marais and Johan Claassen; Steve Strydom, head of the *Orange* Free State referees (and later the Orange Free State Rugby Union); and Wouter du Toit, head of the Transvaal Referees' Society and formerly of the South African Rugby Referees' Society. The Secretary for Sport, Beyers Hoek was also a member of the Broederbond.
- 26 This incident has been extensively reported, but for effects on Maori New Zealanders, see George Nepia and Terry McLean, *I, George Nepia: The Golden Years of Rugby*, AH and A W Reed, Auckland, 1963, p. 26.
- 27 The 1956 Springbok tour of New Zealand has recently been associated with the end of the period of innocence in New Zealand society. For specific discussions of New Zealand and the impact of the tour, see M N Pearson, 'Heads in the Sand: the 1956 Springbok Tour to New Zealand in Perspective', in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan, eds, *Sport in History*, UQP, Brisbane, 1979, pp. 272-92; Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country: The Image of the Pakeha Mate, A History*, Penguin, Auckland, 1987, pp. 82-5; Warwick Roger, *Old Heroes: The 1956 Springbok Tour and the Lives Beyond*, Hodder and Stoughton, Auckland, 1991.
- 28 For a good concise account of emerging protest in 1959, see *Fighting Talk* (Johannesburg), Dec. 1959, 'The Rugby Tour and the Maoris', p. 16.
- 29 M P K Sorrenson, 'Uneasy Bedfellows: A Survey of New Zealand's Relations with South Africa', in *New Zealand, South Africa and Sport: Background Papers*, New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, Wellington, 1976, p. 53.
- 30 *Cape Argus*, 24 Mar. 1960.
- 31 For examples of this, see Republic of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates* (SA Hansard), 8 Feb. 1967, pp. 924-36.
- 32 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* (NZ Hansard), 7 Sept. 1965, p. 2527.
- 33 Sorrenson, 'Uneasy Bedfellows', pp. 39-42.
- 34 *Rand Daily Mail*, 12 Mar. 1973.

- 35 See Sorrenson, 'Uneasy Bedfellows', pp. 46-9.
- 36 Quoted in the *Daily News*, 2 Sept. 1976.
- 37 New Zealand Government White Paper, Feb. 1973, 5; Sorrenson, 'Uneasy Bedfellows', p. 61.
- 38 A cartoon in the New Zealand press during the campaign portrayed South African Rugby Board President Danie Craven as Muldoon's running mate and showed National's support of rugby ties with South Africa.
- 39 See Anthony Payne, 'The International Politics of the Gleneagles Agreement'; and Donald Macintosh, Donna Greenhorn, and David Black, 'Canadian Diplomacy and the 1978 Edmonton Commonwealth Games', *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 19, no. 1, Spring 1992, pp. 26-55.
- 40 *Eastern Province Herald*, 31 Aug. 1981.
- 41 *Eastern Province Herald*, 31 Aug. 1981.
- 42 *Sunday Times*, 11 Oct. 1981.
- 43 *Star* (Johannesburg), 7 Mar. 1980.
- 44 Payne, 'The International Politics of the Gleneagles Agreement', p. 426.
- 45 *Die Burger* (Cape Town), 15 Apr. 1986.
- 46 *Cape Times*, 16 Apr. 1986.
- 47 A good example of this appeared in the *Cape Times* on 5 June 1987, under the headline 'Let Springbok 15 sort out the real champions'.
- 48 *Cape Times*, 22 June 1987. Craven stated that 'We need overseas tours to maintain our high ceiling . . . We are losing out on international competition and it has affected our rugby'.
- 49 Archer and Bouillon, *The South African Game*, p. 296.
- 50 On the alleged 'total onslaught' of South Africa's enemies, and the 'total strategy' formulated in response, see in particular R Davies and D O'Meara, 'Total Strategy in Southern Africa: An Analysis of South African Regional Policy Since 1978', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, Apr. 1985.
- 51 'Race and Rugby in South Africa', Paper prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade drawing on information provided by the Australian Embassy in Pretoria, *Australian Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 59, no. 4, Apr. 1988, p. 140.
- 52 On the importance of international rugby to the South African political elite, it is both amusing and telling that reports state that Vorster arranged to be interrupted every 15 minutes during talks with U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to be given the score of an All Blacks-Springbok rugby match. See Archer and Bouillon, *The South African Game*, p. 2.
- 53 Rugby holds similar cultural power in much of Wales, but full tours to and from Wales did not occur as they did between South Africa and New Zealand.
- 54 The 1981 tour featured the first-ever live television coverage of Springbok matches overseas.

- 55 Dan Retief, 'Curtain is drawn on overseas tours', *Cape Times*, 12 Sept. 1981. This quote is interesting on a number of levels, not least in its reference to an *objectionable* form of apartheid—implying that a less objectionable form might still be sufficient to secure the re-acceptance of touring sides from South Africa. See also Barry Glasspool, 'Desperate Bid to Save the Tour', in *Sunday Times*, 26 July 1981.
- 56 M A Tarr, Progressive Federal Party (PFP) spokesman on sport, in *SA Hansard*, 16 Apr. 1986, p. 3449.
- 57 Although the much more positive anti-apartheid role of the subsequent Lange Labour government of New Zealand should be reiterated.
- 58 See, in particular, David A Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1985. For a good discussion of this tendency in the sanctions literature, see Rim Richard Nossal, 'The Symbolic Purposes of Sanctions: Australian and Canadian Reactions to Afghanistan', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 26, 1991, pp. 29-31.
- 59 See Nosaal, 'The Symbolic Purposes of Sanctions'.
- 60 See Archer and Bouillon, *The South African Game*, p. 301.
- 61 On the issue-specific nature of power, see David A Baldwin, 'Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies', *World Politics*, vol. 31, no. 2, Jan. 1979. See also David R Black, 'Australian, Canadian, and Swedish Policies Toward Southern Africa: a Comparative Study of "Middle Power Internationalism"', Unpub. PhD thesis, Daihousie University, 1992, esp. pp. 210-16.
- 62 See, for example, *56 Days: A History of the Anti-tour Movement in Wellington*, Citizens Opposed to the Springbok Tour, Wellington, 1981, pp. 80-1.
- 63 For a brief but illuminating account of the role of social movements in world politics, see Ralph Pettman, *International Politics*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1991, pp. 139-50.

# Politics, Policies and Physical Education: New Right Reforms<sup>1</sup>

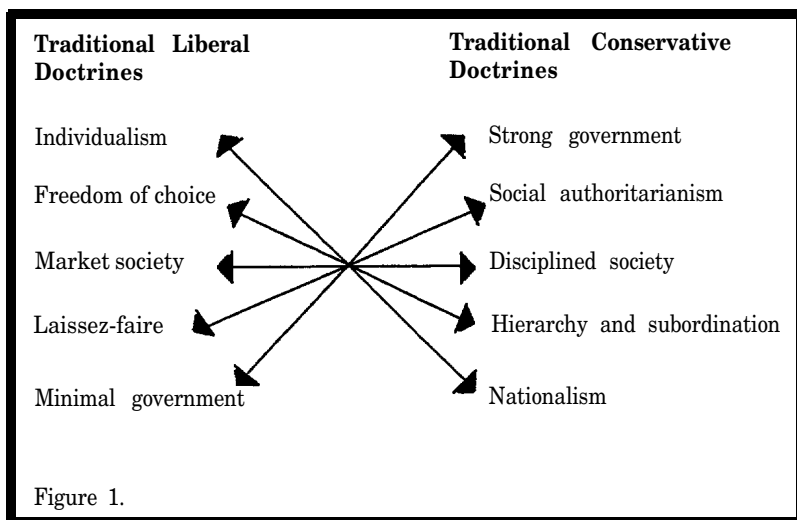
**Tania Cassidy**  
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On 20 June 1994 news of an alleged murder-suicide in Dunedin rocked New Zealand. Rumours immediately circulated about the cause of the tragedy. One rumour, broadcast on the respected Radio New Zealand, claimed that the alleged perpetrator, a primary school principal, had murdered four members of his family and then turned the gun on himself. According to this version, the principal acted under intense duress as a result of major changes in the education system stemming from recommendations made in an education policy document, *Tomorrow's Schools: The Reform of Education Administration in New Zealand* (1988).<sup>2</sup> Subsequent police investigations exonerated the principal. However, the fact that the rumour reached Radio New Zealand raises serious questions about the social consequences of education reform in New Zealand. While the attempt to blame the actions of a mass murderer on an education policy stretches the imagination to absurd levels, no one could deny that education reforms in New Zealand have had massive ramifications in all areas, including the curriculum and philosophy of physical education.

## **Politics**

Labour won the July 1984 general election. During the election campaign the Party promised a radical new administration.<sup>3</sup> Through circumstance and by design, Labour's policies changed New Zealand society irrevocably. While the education system did not suffer the full blast of radicalism during Labour's first term, the government signalled that change was imminent.

Once in power Labour espoused right-wing sentiments similar to those in vogue in numerous Western democracies. These sentiments attracted the popular epithet ‘New Right’. The term New Right embraces a wide range of philosophies and, like other schools of thought such as socialism and feminism, resists precise definition. In the 1980s different groups defined the New Right to suit their interests. Similarly, McCulloch reminds us that the term New Right is often applied in an ahistorical context.<sup>4</sup> Despite these problems the term is nonetheless applicable. Belsey describes the New Right as an amalgam of liberal and conservative philosophies and contradictory doctrines (see figure 1).<sup>5</sup>



Of course, Belsey’s ‘lines of contradiction’ are only suggestive. Such is the erratic nature of the doctrines that make up New Right thinking that contradictions exist at almost every turn.

*Tomorrow’s Schools* serves as an example of the contradiction between individualism and strong government. The document recommended the devolution of education

administration to individual schools in areas such as staff appointments, allocation of resources and staff training. It also granted schools authority to appoint locally elected Boards of Trustees.<sup>6</sup> Individual schools thus assumed more responsibility for day to day education, while the powers of the monolithic Department of Education were curtailed. At first glance this may not appear contradictory. However, while individual schools received greater autonomy, they also became 'contested frontal sites' which 'buffer[ed] the central state apparatus from whole areas of criticism'.<sup>7</sup> Devolution thus channelled dissatisfaction towards individual schools rather than the central education bureaucracy for which the government assumed direct responsibility. Hence devolution simultaneously promoted liberalism (i.e. individualism) and reinforced conservatism (i.e. strong government) and is consistent with policies that reflected New Right thinking.

## **Policies**

Labour primarily concerned itself with reforming the economy during its first term and its reforms in this area were decidedly New Right. For example, the government deregulated agriculture and abolished supplementary minimum prices which it had previously guaranteed to farmers.<sup>8</sup> While the economy assumed priority, Labour also introduced several education reports. *Learning and Achieving*, the second report of a Committee of inquiry appointed to comment on 'curriculum, assessment, and qualifications in forms 5 to 7' played a crucial role in the development of University Bursaries Physical Education (UBPE). The government gave the Committee three terms of reference to guide its work, of which one had particular impact on physical education. It involved the Committee considering 'methods of assessment for use in forms 5, 6 and 7'.<sup>9</sup>

*Learning and Achieving*, like the other reports, typified Labour's traditionally progressive approach to education. Progressive education emphasises individual needs and student centred curriculums.<sup>10</sup> Superficially, progressive education appeared to support the tenets of Labour's economic reforms. This is arguably the reason why Labour accepted them. However, if student centred curricula were taken to their logical conclusion then it would have meant the abolition of norm referenced external examinations. In the New Zealand education system norm referencing has played a major role in reinforcing differences between individuals. Olssen argues that the structures that exist to support norm referencing, including external examinations, streaming and grading, 'transpose the logic of market relations into the context of the school'.<sup>11</sup> It is doubtful therefore, whether the disciples of New Right would have sanctioned progressive education policies which abolished norm referencing.

Just prior to the 1987 general election, the government created a task force to review education administration. Prime Minister David Lange personally invited Brian Picot to chair the task force. The report of the task force, was popularly referred to as the Picot Report after its chair.<sup>12</sup> Lange believed that the task force would address the concerns then expressed about education. In general terms education was developing into a struggle between the 'right' which wanted to free education from the state and the 'left' which wanted to retain 'traditional education' in the interests of the 'public good'. The language adopted by Picot, however, was vague and subjected to diverse interpretation. Despite Lange's intentions, the New Right thinkers within Labour appropriated the Picot Report when it was released in May 1988.<sup>13</sup> This appropriation became acutely obvious with the release of *Tomorrow's Schools* —the policy outcome of the Picot Report.



When Labour returned to the government benches after the 1987 election, Prime Minister Lange appointed himself Minister of Education. The outgoing Minister of Education, Russell Marshall, declared prophetically that Lange's move 'gives a statement to the country about the emphasis on education'.<sup>14</sup> The impact of New Right thinking on education concerned Lange but restructuring had gathered momentum. Moreover, restructuring became a site of struggle between opposing political and educational ideologies and generated conflict within the Labour government.<sup>15</sup> The Prime Minister openly clashed with the Minister of Finance, Roger Douglas, on the implementation of the latter's economic reforms commonly known as 'Rogernomics'. Lange wanted to thwart Douglas for fear that the 'market culture would triumph in the education sector'.<sup>16</sup> Despite his concerns, Lange, as the Minister of Education, released *Tomorrow's Schools* which transformed Picot's proposals into policy and action. The policy advocated five basic principles that became the foundations for restructuring: parent and community empowerment, efficient school based management, strong accountability, alternative special character schools and local determination of conditions of employment for principals and teachers.<sup>17</sup> *Tomorrow's Schools* reorganised education administration and strengthened 'crucial state powers at the expense of teachers' professional autonomy'.<sup>18</sup>

*Tomorrow's Schools* appropriated right-wing economic language. 'Market power', 'choice', 'accountability' and 'efficiency' were bandied about and they appealed to the community—of course, whether the public fully understood the ideas behind the words is another matter. Codd argues that in Labour's second term economic solutions were widely regarded as 'the only acceptable solution to various human problems'.<sup>19</sup>

His analysis helps us understand why the public accepted the solutions proposed by *Tomorrow's Schools*: only community action could protect education. This policy allowed 'the community' to determine the future direction of 'their' school. In a multicultural, class and gender differentiated, society, defining 'the community' remains difficult.

## **Education**

When Labour came to power in 1984 it painted a picture of crisis. As Hall and his colleagues remind us, all crises are socially constructed.<sup>20</sup> In any crisis, or struggle, there are groups who wish to define the nature of the problem and propose solutions that suit their interests. Quicke suggests that the intervention of the 'new right in education' was part of a broader hegemonic project which, like all hegemonic projects, used the language of crisis to persuade people that something needed to be done urgently.<sup>21</sup>

Education was a major issue in the lead-up to the 1987 general election. As one member of Parliament reflected afterwards, 'never has a sector of society been so maligned and abused for political advantage as were our teachers during the election campaign'.<sup>22</sup> Fueling the pre-election education debate, *Metro*, a popular Auckland-based magazine, published an article in April entitled 'The Lost Generation: Victims of the Great Educational Experiment'. The article criticised the 'educational standards and dubious ... [progressive] approaches to the curriculum'.<sup>23</sup> The National Party released its education manifesto, *A Nation at Risk*, in the same month. The manifesto argued that New Zealand's education system was in crisis. Reform was the only answer. The National Party chose to portray the education system in crisis to differentiate its election policies from Labour's.<sup>24</sup> Demands for educational reform mounted. The development of UBPE occurred precisely at this

time when the New Zealand education system was constructed as being in 'crisis'. *Tomorrow's Schools* played a large role in the development of UBPE: structural reforms and devolution of the central education bureaucracy were critical to its development.

### **University Bursaries Physical Education**

New Zealand students can elect to work towards the University Bursaries' qualification in the final year of non-compulsory schooling (seventh form). Passing three subjects with a minimum of C-grades (50-64 per cent) at University Bursaries level is one requirement for entry into a New Zealand university. Physical education has been one of thirty subjects available at University Bursaries level since 1992. The UBPE course consists of three modules, one of which is compulsory while two others are chosen from seven options. The compulsory module is Lifestyle Concepts; the optional modules include Te Reo Kori (the Maori dimension), Outdoor Education, Aquatics, Dance, Leisure Studies, Movement Education and Sports Education. Few schools, however, offer students a choice of optional modules due to limited resources, both staff and financial.

Two basic conditions facilitated the development of UBPE. Firstly, schools implemented some of the recommendations of *Learning and Achieving*. Two were crucial to UBPE: a wider choice of courses at form seven to accommodate the increasing numbers of students staying on at school, and the recognition of achievement based assessment in the seventh form. Achievement based assessment evaluates students against set criteria, rather than by comparison with others as happens with norm referencing.<sup>25</sup> *Learning and Achieving* advocated making the education system more flexible and its recommendations were among the last progressive education reforms implemented by Labour.

Secondly, the development of UBPE was facilitated by the apparent crisis in education. From mid-1987 the media and the National Party, as well as the establishment of the taskforce to review education administration, all contributed to the 'crisis' in education. A climate of crisis encouraged acceptance of change. Early in 1987, prior to the 'crisis', the University Entrance Board (UEB) met to discuss a report from the interim Board of Studies about new subjects for University Bursaries. (The UEB was responsible for the University Bursaries qualifications in the senior secondary school). From this date the UEB and the physical education profession used each other to satisfy their respective ambitions. For example, the UEB, and its secretary Mike Murtagh in particular, wanted a seventh form subject to trial an achievement based assessment model. The physical education profession, having successfully tested an achievement based assessment model at sixth form level, needed a powerful ally such as the UEB to help convince principals, parents and students of the viability and credibility of seventh form achievement based assessment. Assessment became an issue because the University Bursaries' qualification, which used a norm referenced system, was perceived as the best way of ranking students for limited places in tertiary institutions. Achievement based assessment proposed to turn upside down the traditional methods of determining students' worth and market value. Hence it became a contested issue for University Bursaries.

Mike Murtagh was a critical actor in the development of UBPE. He helped write *Learning and Achieving* which recommended that more subjects be taught in the seventh form and that achievement based assessment be recognised as a credible method of assessment. Murtagh made the initial contact with the physical education curriculum development officer

concerning subject development in the seventh form. As a result of his interest and knowledge Murtagh became the UEB representative on the physical education working party when it met to develop the UBPE curriculum and assessment procedure. Murtagh saw UBPE as a vehicle to implement reform. He claims, however, that it was the enthusiasm shown by Grant Jones (the physical education curriculum development officer) and Bevan Grant (the university representative) that was decisive in physical education being chosen to become a University Bursaries course.<sup>26</sup> Murtagh's support of the UBPE proposal at UEB meetings is generally regarded as crucial to the Board's acceptance of physical education. However, Murtagh's loyalty lay with the UEB.

The possibility of physical education becoming a University Bursaries' course excited the physical education profession. A physical education working party was established to develop a UBPE course statement and the assessment procedure. One of the aims of the working party was to develop a course that was student centred so it turned its attention to an achievement based assessment model which also complemented the course's large practical component. Because of the UEB's interest in UBPE, the physical education working party meetings mostly concerned themselves with assessment rather than course content. Hence the working party effectively reinforced the biases inherent in existing physical education programs.

Physical education programs have traditionally supported government policies. In the late nineteenth century military drill (the forerunner of the present day physical education) promoted strict discipline and obedient students. The Defence Amendment Act (1900) strengthened school cadet companies.<sup>27</sup> Drill contributed to the patriotic zeal of the times and assisted

the New Zealand Government recruit soldiers for the Boer War. In the late twentieth century the Minister of Education used physical education to support his politics.

A turning point in the development of UBPE was the secondary school Principal's conference held on 3–6 July 1988. From then on timing and politics played an essential role in the acceptance of physical education as a University Bursaries' subject. At the conference Prime Minister Lange, in his capacity as Minister of Education, announced that additional Higher School Certificate subjects would be offered in the seventh form at the beginning of 1989. Higher School Certificate subjects were not as academically rigorous as University Bursaries' subjects. Contrary to the UEB's objectives, Lange named physical education as one of the subjects. The UEB feared that more Higher School Certificate courses would create a tiered qualification system at the seventh form. Four months earlier, the UEB refused to circulate a seventh form physical education course statement to schools until assessment procedures had been refined. However, the fact that Higher School Certificate subjects fell within the jurisdiction of the Department of Education meant that it could ignore the UEB concerns and send physical education course statements to all schools.

What prompted Lange's announcement? Many of the new course statements were incomplete; even the Minister's own Department had to react quickly to the announcement. The Director of Qualification and Assessment wrote to the Director of Curriculum Development:

There may not be time for [the course statements] to be sent first in draft and then to await responses from schools. In fact my preference would be for them to be sent as finals with no opportunity for comment at all. They could be revised in 1989 or 1990.<sup>28</sup>

Was Lange under pressure to implement curriculum reforms? After all, Labour had promised to reform the curriculum four years previously. If, however, he had simply wanted reform for its own sake, surely it would have been better to adopt recommendations advocated by the recently released Picot report, or wait a month until the release of *Tomorrow's Schools*. Lange's announcement at the Secondary Schools Principal's conference bore no relation to Picot's recommendations.

Lange's actions appear to stem from tensions within Cabinet. Near the end of Labour's first term rumblings of discontent about the power of Treasury emanated from Cabinet. Concerns were expressed about proposed reductions in State spending in areas such as education, health and social welfare. After Labour's re-election in 1987, the Prime Minister reshuffled his Cabinet to reduce the power of the Minister of Finance, Roger Douglas. Lange appointed ministers critical of 'Rogernomics' to portfolios likely to come under Douglas's scrutiny. He even appointed himself Minister of Education. At this point the animosity between Lange and Douglas meant that the pair only communicated through colleagues or via written correspondence. Lange tried to remove Douglas from the Finance portfolio throughout 1988 and finally succeeded in December. But, although out of Cabinet, Douglas remained influential.<sup>29</sup>

In 1988 Lange fought Douglas over the commodification of education proposed by the Picot report and *Tomorrow's Schools*. There is no doubt that Treasury influenced the philosophy underpinning the Picot report.<sup>30</sup> Lange's announcement at the Secondary Schools Principal's conference thus stemmed from his struggle with Douglas. Announcing curriculum reforms based on recommendations made in

*Learning and Achieving* enabled Lange to redirect education reforms away from New Right influences. However, Lange did not remain Minister of Education for much longer.

Under the on-going restructuring and devolution of the education system stemming from *Tomorrow's Schools*, the Department of Education was to be disbanded and replaced with a Ministry of Education whose loyalty was to the minister of the day. Moreover, the *Hawke Report* (1988) on post-compulsory education, advocated restructuring the UEB and the Board of Studies.<sup>31</sup> One new body would regulate all national qualifications. The new body was the National Education Qualification Authority (NEQA), the forerunner of the present New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA). The imminent demise of the Department of Education and the UEB raised the possibility that the continued development of physical education would abruptly cease. If that had happened it is unlikely that physical education would have become a University Bursaries' subject.

The Department of Education ceased to exist on 30 September 1989. According to Jones (the physical education curriculum development officer), all work within the Department of Education stopped irrespective of its significance. Jones felt intense pressure to have the course approved before the deadline: 'literally two hours before we were out the door I received word from the UEB officially stating that the Bursary level proposal had been accepted and the trial would commence in 1990'.<sup>32</sup>

The final meeting of the UEB was also in September and UBPE appeared on the agenda. Some members of the Board voiced concerns regarding assessment but Murtagh allayed their fears and the Board accepted physical education as a University Bursaries' course. It is arguable whether UBPE would have been accepted as a University Bursaries course so quickly if it had not been the UEB's last meeting.



## **New Directions for UBPE?**

If the UBPE course has produced noticeable changes in secondary physical education, the content of the component modules suggests little has changed. It is doubtful whether UBPE is founded upon new values and beliefs. Real change requires an understanding of how physical education relates to the wider socio-historical and economic conditions in which it is enmeshed.<sup>33</sup> So how much real change has there been?

As mentioned, the physical education working party aimed to create a student centred physical education course in which teachers disposed of their traditional authoritarian and command approaches. This required significant changes in teachers' attitudes and the adoption of new pedagogical assumptions. As Sparkes points out, such change necessitates a 'major re-orientation of philosophy and self image'.<sup>34</sup> UBPE teachers were charged with ensuring that student centred teaching was not empty rhetoric and, as one practitioner acknowledged, this was extremely difficult.

I didn't expect, but then hadn't thought about the frustration of the whole student centred learning emphasis ... The kids have to get on with it, and some of them maybe aren't, and that is really difficult ... they sit there and they yak or do other work and Pm thinking God Pm not teaching ... I must say at times I've felt that I've lost control a tad ... But that's a definite change ... on how you teach, I've found anyway.<sup>35</sup>

However, contradictions abound in UBPE. For example, while teachers are more orientated towards students, the content remains the same. A student focused course may signify more democracy, but the traditional conservative values are still being taught. Ultimately the question is, does a more democratic approach to teaching open up space for students to challenge

conservative values? Maybe. As John Lawton, reflecting on the liberalisation of western education in the early 1960s' puts it, 'the freedom to look around is the freedom to be dissatisfied with what is found'.<sup>36</sup> However, the rise of the New Bight in the 1980s is a sober reminder that dissatisfaction in the 1960s did not produce lasting change.

Following the introduction of UBPE, enrolment in the course rose from 657 students in 1990 (the trial year) to approximately 3600 students in 1994.<sup>37</sup> But physical educators cannot rest: New Zealand's education system is once again undergoing massive change. The reforms presently capturing educationalists' attention are those associated with the National Qualifications Framework and the New Zealand Curriculum Framework. The National Qualifications Framework encourages private providers to deliver programs to secondary schools. It may not be long before schools contract private providers in the fitness industries to teach the Lifestyle Component of UBPE; perhaps registered sports coaches will contract their services to schools to teach the Sport Education module. The New Zealand Qualification Authority has proposed that from 1997 the University Bursaries' examinations will not be part of the National Qualifications Framework.<sup>38</sup> New Bight politics played an important role in the development and implementation of UBPE and the current political climate in New Zealand suggests that the New Bight will continue to influence the fortunes of physical education in the foreseeable future.

Physical education per se has disappeared from the New Zealand Curriculum Framework. It now resides under the umbrella of *Health and Physical Well-being*, one of the seven essential learning areas. If physical education is to secure its position in *Health and Physical Well-being* the profession must identify the subject's strengths. Traditionally sport has been

identified as the foundation of physical education but this is now problematic given the National Qualifications Framework's encouragement of private contractors and the Hillary Commission's move to subsidise the employment of sport coordinators in many secondary schools.<sup>39</sup> Will partly funded, non-teacher trained, sport specialists take over areas traditionally controlled by physical educators?

Physical educators throughout the country are reacting to their incorporation into *Health and Physical Well-being*. They express concern that physical education will lose its identity if the name is not retained. Surprisingly at a meeting of tertiary physical educators held before the 1994 South Island Physical Education New Zealand Conference the furore surrounding the name change did not emerge. Bather questions were asked about the role of physical education in the twentieth century. Interestingly, tertiary educators perceive the subject to be in crisis. But if all crises are socially constructed, who benefits from the crisis in physical education? Ironically the profession's own picture of turmoil creates the space in which lobby groups in the sports and fitness industries could move in arguing that they could deliver specialist services more efficiently and effectively than physical education teachers.

If physical education is to survive, the profession must adapt to permanent change. In the 1990s the body has become a legitimate form of study. There has been an explosion of literature on the subject covering all areas including philosophy, aesthetics, social construction, sociology, history and so forth. David Kirk looks specifically at links between the body, physical education and cultural production. He also analyses how physical education constructs the modern body.<sup>40</sup> Shilling extends Bourdieu's work and examines how educating the body produces social inequalities.<sup>41</sup> At a local level, the theme of

the 1994 South Island Physical Education New Zealand conference was *Bodies of New Knowledge*, and New Zealand's only School of Physical Education now offers a paper called *Body, Culture and Society*. The physical education profession could look to promoting healthy bodies through physical activity, recreation and lifestyle choices. Some in the profession may argue that this approach is tantamount to physical education being dictated to by passing fashions. However, physical education must be relevant to the present. Failure to react will mean the demise of the discipline. Physical educators should direct their energies into producing a curriculum which focuses on the body as a medium of general education and which is relevant to the students irrespective of age, ethnicity, class or gender. The furore over the name is a red herring. If the curriculum is relevant students will vote with their feet and the discipline will survive. If not, physical education will decline no matter what it is called.

## NOTES

- 1 I would like to thank Douglas Booth for his guidance. I acknowledge the financial assistance provided by the Sir Alexander Gillies Award, Physical Education New Zealand.
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- 5 A Belsey, 'The New Right, Social Order and Civil Liberties', in R Levitas, ed., *The Ideology of the New Right*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 167-98.
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- 22 *New Zealand Hansard*, vol. 483, 1987, p. 347.
- 23 Grace, 'Labour and Education', p. 173.
- 24 Grace, 'Labour and Education', pp. 165-91.
- 25 Of course, achievement based assessment always entails some degree of norm referencing.
- 26 The UEB requires a university representative to be part of any subject development under its jurisdiction. At this time Bevan Grant was a

- senior lecturer at the School of Physical Education, University Otago; Tania Cassidy interview with M Murtagh, 27 May 1994.
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  - 32 Interview, G Jones, 19 May 1994.
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  - 35 T Cassidy, *How Bursaries Physical Education has impacted on the Teacher and the Subject: A Case Study*, unpub. special topic, University of Otago, Dunedin, 1992, p. 40.
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  - 39 The Hillary Commission is a government sponsored organisation whose aim is to enable more New Zealanders to participate in sport, fitness and leisure activities.
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# Clash of the Codes: A Comparative Analysis of Media Representations of Violence in Rugby Union and Rugby League

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Two of the most popular spectator sports in New Zealand, Rugby Union and Rugby League, serve as important sites for the study of sport, power, violence and society. Within today's commercialised sporting environment these two codes have emerged as economic rivals contesting for audiences, player personnel, and sponsorships. Despite any apparent rivalries, however, Union and League do share some common attributes including their historical roots, and perhaps more importantly, specific features of their respective value systems. Increasingly, both Union and League have come to embody a value system which privileges commercial profit, masculinity, heterosexuality, professionalism and violence. While each of the previous values is intimately interrelated it is the last two, professionalism and violence, which are the focus of this study.

Historically, within Australasia, Rugby Union was the first code to be introduced, however, not exclusively the most popular by the early 1900s. In Australia Rugby League achieved regional popularity within New South Wales and Queensland after it split from Rugby Union from 1907, while its main rival to status as the 'national' winter game, Australian Rules, dominated Victoria, Tasmania, South and Western Australia. By contrast, Rugby Union's emergence as the 'national' sport in New Zealand was much more clear cut. And, whereas Australian Rugby League developed into a highly professional game with its roots closely linked to the working class, Rugby Union in New Zealand has almost exclusively, until recent years,

maintained amateur regulations, and is a sport which appears to penetrate throughout all levels of society.<sup>1</sup>

The more recent overall development of the two codes deserves some comment. Rugby League in Australia has become a major marketing success over the past ten years. The Winfield Cup and State of Origin series have incorporated a new entertainment focus which prioritises Tina Turner, cheerleaders, and the use of bodies as weapons in order to promote spectacle. League's success, however, is not limited to Australia. Since 1989, the same year that New Zealand television was deregulated, Rugby League has emerged as one of the 'Big Four', which includes: Rugby Union, Rugby League, cricket and netball. The Big Four essentially constitute those New Zealand sports which the media financially compensate for the rights to televise. Most other sports such as hockey and athletics must pay Television New Zealand to obtain air time and, in turn, public exposure.

Strikingly, 'Australian' Rugby League has made significant inroads into the New Zealand marketplace. Not only does it currently equal or even surpass the amount of television coverage of Rugby Union, its major competitions such as the State of Origin or Winfield Cup finals rival even the most important Union matches. To be clear, it is the Australian brand of Rugby League which has proven to draw the large New Zealand audiences. To date, New Zealand's domestic 'Lion Red' League competition has not proven itself as a major media spectacle. One likely explanation for the Australian League's popularity is its professional style which includes a higher skill level, better media coverage, and an overall better entertainment value. However, it is important to note that many of the stars of Aussie League are in fact New Zealanders and this has likely served to attract Kiwi audience interest. The 1995 entry of the



Auckland Warriors into the Winfield Cup competition could dramatically impact on the profile of Rugby League in New Zealand particularly if they are successful in marketing themselves as a 'national' team.

League success in securing a substantial New Zealand audience is but one reason why Rugby Union has found itself increasingly under threat in New Zealand over the past ten years. Sparked by the Springbok tour of 1981 and the resulting challenge by anti-apartheid, feminist, and other anti-rugby groups, the code has worked hard to reassert itself as 'New Zealand's Big Game'. Not unlike League, Union's renewed reification has been achieved in part through new marketing strategies. The new approach continues to embrace the construction of national identity but in some new and often contradictory ways. For example, Union highlights its inclusionary nature through television advertisements focusing on 'new age' rugby as well as a new reliance upon the diversity of both participants and audiences. Images of women, Maori, Polynesian and other racial/ethnic groups as well as various regional representations, occupations, and age ranges have become standard within the new promotional tactics employed by Union. At the same time there has been an increasing dependence on nostalgia within Union in what appears to be a romantacised rewriting of the game's past in order to articulate and naturalise its connections with the present.<sup>2</sup> However, despite its proclamation of becoming more inclusive, Union is also heavily steeped in a new professionalism as reflected in the 1993 formation and promotion of the 'All Blacks Club', whose purpose is to provide a financial base of support for elite Union players. The contradiction between Union's new inclusive image and the advent of professionalism is evident in its inaugural promotion. With the popular song 'Stand by Me' as a

background the All Blacks Club advertisement incorporated a young Polynesian busker along with images of New Zealand's cultural diversity in order to express a deep concern for its 'national' team. The commercial concludes with the young busker meeting his hero, Inga Tuigamala, once one of Union's most popular figures who, ironically, switched to Wigan in the British League this year after publicly stating he would never cross over.

Though British League continues to lure a few elite Kiwi players it is Australian Rugby League that has elevated its threat to Union by means of a recent ruling which exempts Union players from salary cap regulations within their debut season. Notwithstanding Australian Union players such as Garrick Morgan, now with the South Queensland Crushers, Tim Horan and Jason Little who have been identified as potential converts to League the list of New Zealand players being head-hunted is much longer and includes current All Blacks: John Timu (successfully signed by the Sydney Bulldogs), Jeff Wilson, and Jonah Lomu. Still, Rugby League is not the only threat to Union nor the only factor which has demanded new marketing and development strategies.

For example, in addition to the competition for personnel offered by rival code League, Union has also faced 'poaching' at the hands of foreign Union clubs in Europe, the United Kingdom and Japan, who have greater economic resources at their disposal. In combination with the entry of the Auckland Warriors into the Winfield Cup competition in 1995 these antagonistic interests have only served to escalate concerns about how to retain top Union players.

One consequence of Union's predicament has been a renewed debate about the feasibility of its amateur status. In one sense this debate simply centres around whether or not

Union players should receive financial compensation for what has quickly become a full-time occupation. When linked with the larger sport-media complex and its inherent economic imperatives, however, the implications are far greater. For example, as the two rugby codes seek to increase their popularity within the commercial mass media, there may be a danger that violence will become a central feature of the commodified entertainment package sold to the audience.<sup>3</sup> There are at least two facets to this process. First, sport becomes much more than just a game for participants when there are large sums of money at stake. Consequently, players' earning capacity becomes directly related to their ability to perform and survive from match to match. Second, the media incorporates (some would argue exploits) the increased physicality and violence of its athletic labourers within sporting contests as part of their broadcast package. Indeed, the gratuitous use of violence as part of the entertainment package in televised Rugby League has already been illustrated in one study.<sup>4</sup> At this point and in order to put the current study into perspective, a brief overview of the significance of violence and its effects in relation to the media is outlined.

Violence in the media in general has become a hotly debated issue. From cartoons to docu-dramas concern has been directed towards the 'effects' that such programming has on its audience, particularly children. Strikingly, there has been much less concern directed at the role of televised sport in constructing violence for the audience. Critics, sceptics and vested interest groups have aligned themselves on both sides of the violence and effects debate. Jay Coakley, for example, while acknowledging the need for further research, asserts that there is little indication that media coverage of sports violence has any effect on general attitudes, behaviour or on rates of violence

in society.<sup>5</sup> However, according to Young and Smith's review essay on the subject although the vast amount of research to date has not 'resulted in the conclusive establishment of a direct cause-effect relationship between media and real-life violence, the bulk of the evidence, especially that pertaining to television points strongly in this direction'.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, there is a basis for at least acknowledging the potential impact that the media has on the views, values, beliefs and behaviour of its audience. Moreover, commenting specifically on the implications of elite sport role models, Lawrence notes that the impact of the media is to transmit the violent behaviour of top level performers in a positive light and to larger and larger audiences so that ultimately it is copied at lower levels.<sup>7</sup> New Zealand and Australia are rife with examples of prominent sport role models whose violent behaviours are either condoned or overlooked. Current All Black Richard Loe's re-selection following a long suspension for eye-gouging is one of many examples which suggest that as long as a player is capable of helping the nation win, despite his/her violent actions, they will be recognised and rewarded.

The lack of attention to sport in the study of media violence is surprising given its pervasive cultural appeal and the fact that the 'degree of realism' has been cited as one of the key factors which is likely to influence subsequent behaviour.<sup>8</sup> In light of these concerns this study examines the production values embodied within televised sport with respect to violence in Rugby Union and Rugby League. More specifically, by focusing on the discourse emerging from League and Union telecasts in New Zealand we analyse: (a) the nature and extent to which violence is represented within the two codes; (b) the articulation of violence and its role in the construction of 'masculinity'; and, (c) the potential impact of professionalisation

through a comparison of the two codes and their respective representations of violence in the media. A brief overview of the literature related to each of these areas follows. It is suggested that by comparing a more amateur code (Union) with a more professional one (League) we may gain some insight into the assumptions and production values which are embodied within the sport-media complex's privileging of sports violence.

### **Media, Violence and Sports Production**

There is general agreement that the media do not simply reflect a sports event as it happens, but produce an entertainment package which is encoded with associated meanings and definitions.<sup>9</sup> Increasingly, violence has become a central feature in the production of specific media sports events. One assumption underlying the production values associated with violence is that it heightens the entertainment value of a broadcast, thereby assuring commercial viability.<sup>10</sup> Notably, the media are capable of simultaneously condoning and condemning violence to serve their own interests. On the one hand, violence is featured as an integral part of the entertainment package of network broadcasts of particular sports. On the other hand, the news and journalism departments of these same broadcast networks often condemn violence, albeit within the larger constraints of commercial programming, fighting for a market share of the audience. Consequently, violence is contained within a strategic, yet contradictory framework where 'the lines become blurred between the beauty of sporting excellence and the beast of violence'.<sup>11</sup> A key feature of this beauty and the beast' framework is the media's ability to articulate violence and masculinity.

## **Sports Violence, Media and Masculinity**

A growing body of literature addresses the media's approval of sports violence particularly in terms of its role in defining masculinity. It has been suggested that media representations of sacrifice, injury, and resulting respect attributed to aggressive sporting figures contribute to the construction of masculinity.<sup>12</sup> For example, the media's interpretation and portrayal of pain and injury serves to advance a dominant masculinity which naturalises bodily sacrifice. Moreover, media representations of violence in sport often bestow a sense of respect and admiration upon players who are seen to put their bodies on the line, thereby establishing their dominance on the field through physical force.<sup>13</sup>

In North America, Young's semiotic analysis of ten Canadian football and twenty Canadian ice hockey broadcasts confirms a relationship between masculinity and the representation and commodification of violence in sport.<sup>14</sup> Of the four general commentary themes identified by Young reference to player size and weight, violence approval, weaponry and war-talk, and finally, sacrifice, injury and respect, it was found that violence approval appeared to be the most prominent in televised coverage. Of course, the four categories are best viewed as interrelated rather than mutually exclusive.

Closer to home, Bassett explores the issues of masculinity, violence and the media in relation to New Zealand Rugby Union. He asserts that: 'male dominated televised sport reflects those prevailing characteristics of masculinity within our culture and reinforces these qualities as the natural expression of how men are'.<sup>15</sup> The overall effect of these representations according to Bassett is to construct a dominant, hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity, Lois Bryson argues, is a dominant form of masculinity whose principles and practices inferiorise

femininity and nonhegemonic masculinity.<sup>16</sup> In this way the representations embedded in televised sports such as Rugby Union and League, challenge both women and alternative male roles, such as homosexual masculinity. Among the dominant characteristics identified as contributing to the construction of hegemonic masculinity are skill, courage, physical strength, comradeship, success and, finally, aggression and violence.<sup>17</sup> While each of these characteristics is evident within both amateur and professional codes, the nature and degree of their expression is likely to vary. Hence, a brief discussion of the potential impact of professionalisation on sports violence follows.

### **Professionalisation in Sport**

The transformation of sport from an amateur to a professional model has several implications for the approval, legitimisation, and commodification of violence. Almost by definition, sport involvement at the professional level is transformed into a job. In essence, players themselves become corporate assets who are required to both manifest violent behaviour as well as play with injury. Expectations for the tolerance and perpetuation of violence become a taken for granted part of the professional athletic subculture as indicated by Young who suggested 'that gratuitous violence in the work of athletes is approved of and demanded by coaches, owners and sponsors, and that it assists in the sale of professional sport is widely recognised'.<sup>18</sup> Curiously there has been little acknowledgement of the irony involved in the fact that professional athletic labourers occupy the dual role of both perpetrator and victim of violence within a workplace which publicly condemns but privately condones their actions.

In Australia, the professionalisation of Rugby League appears to have assumed some of these characteristics. As Wilson notes 'no longer is it enough to win: clubs now have to

sell a product successfully'.<sup>19</sup> As a result we have now reached a point where some spectators appear to be more concerned with acts of heroism, daring and entertainment, rather than skill. Furthermore, the media reinforce this through an emphasis on the spectacle value of a sports event.<sup>20</sup> With increasing economic pressures in the form of rising salaries, contracts, sponsorship, and the demand for larger audiences, there is a danger that both professional sport and the media may become dependent upon the exhibition and gratuitous utilisation of violence as part of their entertainment package. The crux of the media-sports violence problem is underscored in the following observation:

Broadcast crews are required to embellish the drama of the game to create suspense, sustain tension and attract and retain viewers and listeners ... Aggressive acts provide more interest among the general public, and the incidents sell more newspapers and attract more viewers.<sup>21</sup>

The belief on the part of many of those involved in producing elite sport is that violence sells and therefore needs to be included or embellished for the audience. Having considered this brief examination of the media in relation to violence, masculinity and professionalisation, a comparison of the nature and extent to which violence is represented in Rugby Union and Rugby League is presented. As a preliminary step an overview of the process of the study including its methods is outlined.

## **Methodology**

Two basic research strategies were employed in this study: a content analysis and a critical textual analysis of televised Rugby Union and League. Content analysis provided an unobtrusive methodological rationale with which to explore



the amount or degree to which violence is represented in media coverage of the two codes of Rugby. Complimenting the content analysis a critical textual analysis located representations and significations of violence, providing insight into the nature of its embodied cultural meanings.

A preliminary initial analysis of the three Bledisloe Cup and three State of Origin games of 1992 was undertaken. However, due to logistics and time constraints the analysis reported here was restricted to the full televised coverage of one game for each code of rugby. These case studies consisted of the first game of the 1992 State of Origin series (6 May 1992) and the second game of the 1992 Bledisloe Cup series (7 July 1992).

The quantitative analysis component of the study involved the categorisation of the general commentary emerging from the broadcast producing descriptive, statistical findings. The specific categories of analysis utilised were constructed through the preliminary investigation into the two sports, and from past research.<sup>22</sup> These categories are presented in Table 1.

The critical, interpretive findings are discussed in terms of three dominant thematic categories established through the analysis of the relevant literature and preliminary investigations of Rugby Union and League. These themes were: *the approval of violence, the construction of masculinity, and representations of sacrifice, injury and respect.*

## **Results and Discussion**

Examination of Table 1 indicates that the quantitative analysis of violence in Rugby Union and League commentary appears to be very similar. After the basic 'play-by-play' which constituted the single largest category, commentary referring to violence rated either first, as in League (9.0 per cent), or second, as in Union (7.3 per cent). Yet, between the two sports, there was

only a difference of 1.7 per cent of commentary pertaining to violence. Reference to injury was somewhat greater in Rugby League (4.9 per cent vs 1.3 per cent), as was commentary related to toughness and dedication (4.0 per cent vs 1.3 per cent).

**Table 1**  
**Analysis of General Discourse in Rugby Union and**  
**Rugby League**  
**Percentage (%) of Total Commentary Time**

Commentary Categories      Rugby Union      Rugby League

**Descriptive:**

Play by Play Calls	55.4	49.8
Spectators/Conditions	2.9	1.2
Tactics	7.2	3.2
Violence	7.3	9.0
Injury	1.3	4.9
Skill—Team	1.6	2.5
Skill—Individual	8.5	6.0
Other	2.4	6.0

**Dramatic:**

Conflict	2.5	2.8
Pressure/Intensity	6.5	5.4
Toughness/Dedication	1.3	4.0
Size	1.0	1.4
Strength	0.3	0.5
Past/Future Games	0.8	1.5
Pain/Suffering	1.0	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0

These differences are minor however, in comparison to the differences found between the themes that emerged from the qualitative investigation. The following discussion concentrates on the differences in these themes which included approval of violence, the construction of masculinity, and sacrifice, injury and respect.

### **Violence Approval**

The approval of violence was observed in both Rugby Union and League. However, the techniques used to convey this approval were quite different. In Rugby Union, violence was seen to be trivialised, so as to appear natural and unrepachable to the viewer. Examples of this phenomena are easily found; for instance, ‘ ... now there’s some off the ball action’, and ‘ ... just a wake-up call’, refer to punching incidents. ‘Sam Scott-Young just lifting the leg there’, describes stomping, while ‘ ... always quite aggressive over that touchline isn’t he’, is the response to considerable pushing and shoving.

Another technique used to represent and imply the approval of violence was the subtle applauding of injurious action. Players who risk others’ safety with dangerous play are little short of congratulated for it as these examples show:

BANG go the All Black forwards ...  
... some mighty tackles there.  
... big hit from Walter.

In other instances, violence was rationalised and explained, until the perpetrator appears to have had no option but to commit them:

He slipped into that high tackle, oh he slipped into that.  
Well difficult to say isn’t it, Horan slipped, it was definitely a head high tackle, there was no real option for Frank Bunce.

Along the same lines was another commonly employed practice in Rugby Union: that of defending the honour or character of a perpetrator of violence. After the Prank Bunce head-high tackle of the previous example, the commentators proceed to say:

He (Prank Bunce) really has been one of the most outstanding players in this tour Grant hasn't he?

Likewise, Ian Jones' infraction is described as atypical and out of character following an incident:

Unnecessary sadly from Ian Jones who is not normally  
ah ... you can't normally accuse him of that sort of thing.

In this way, players who take violent action on the field are defended, and in turn, are attributed respect and status. In doing so, the commentary conveys a general acceptance of violence, for those who commit it are neither punished, nor criticised.

Finally, and perhaps most commonly, commentary simply ignored seriously violent acts on the field. The lack of attention paid to these incidents serves to naturalise the violence for the audience, who are left with the perception that violence on the rugby field is so normal it just does not warrant discussion. A classic example of this took place in the Bledisloe Cup match analysed, where All Black Richard Loe made a late charge on, and broke the nose of, Australian Paul Carozza who had just scored a try. The incident was brutal and malicious, and the post-match discussions became quite heated.<sup>23</sup> The interest raised by the public and media following the match highlighted the extent to which the commentary from the incident itself played-down, to the point of ignoring, the brutality and illegality of what was a very violent act. The following excerpt, was the only reference made to the nose-breaking tackle during TVNZ's

broadcast: 'Well I'll tell you what did get down and that was Richard Loe's forearm on him'. Any scrutiny of the incident is deferred by subsequent commentary, which questions whether the try itself ever took place. This was achieved by questioning whether the ball was legitimately 'touched down', across the try-line.

The Rugby League commentary also conveyed the approval of violence, but by somewhat different techniques and in a much more blatant, obvious fashion. First, violent, injurious action was seen to be applauded or redefined as these examples, all of which are in reference to 'violence', reveal:

but jeez, an absolutely massive hit.  
Some tremendous hitting.  
Well, Hughie, you're down on the sideline amongst  
all of this amazing defence.

Another technique commonly used was to trivialise violence, as seen in these examples:

... little push in the back as he tries to ... [refers to  
being thrust to the ground]  
Slight disagreement in the front row ... [describing  
pushing and swearing between players]  
... he cops one on the chin from Ledna [describing a  
punch]

Trivialising violent acts removes from them any sense of danger or illegality. It both redefines dangerous behaviour and conveys a message to the audience that violence is a normal, acceptable, aspect of the game.

The glorification of violence was another method in which Rugby League commentary contributed to its overall approval. Glorification was largely achieved by reference to military, war-talk and weaponry themes. In effect, a sporting match between two teams is transformed into a dramatic battle, as

the following dialogue shows:

The battle of Sydney, game one, plenty of casualties on both sides, the medical rooms working overtime.

Jackson, he gets crunched by three, and he's hurt badly, Jackson heavily concussed, I don't think he realises he's on Sydney territory.

Elias, with the New South Wales pack all fired up ... hasn't this match started the right way. Someone has lit the fuse.

By referring to the games in terms of 'war', the violence that takes place appears justified, and made more a part of the game's natural context. For example, if a sports event is a 'battle', it is only to be expected that there are 'casualties'. Furthermore, the use of war and military metaphors reinforce a dominant form of masculinity which embodies aggressive, violent behaviour.

In other cases the commentary goes so far in the approval of violence that it actually creates or constructs it. For example, in most contact sports there are specific, legitimate actions, such as a tackle, which are considered to be within the rules and which do not constitute violent or dangerous play. However, the media, in order to create excitement and drama often refer to these actions in terms which define them and glorify them as violence. This 'symbolic' violence increases the dramatic appeal of the game, but in doing so legitimates real violence for the viewers who may become desensitised to it. The following examples refer to normal, legal tackles, that is, tackles which in other areas of the game where the excitement generated by the match itself was sufficient, were not used to symbolise violence.

Bella, flying in on Lazarus.

Harragon the new boy gets crunched, Gilmeister

with a tremendous hit.  
Big wrestling match, on points a win to  
Queensland that one.

Finally the contradictory attitude shown by commentators to incidents involving extremely violent or dangerous play and their attribution of blame for such incidents also conveys a general approval of that violence by the media.<sup>24</sup>

In summary, the Rugby Union commentary, sanctioned violence through trivialising, explaining, rationalising and simply ignoring violent behaviour. By using these techniques, the overall impression portrayed was that violence was legitimate and acceptable. No attempt was seen to criticise violent behaviour nor to imply that the use of violence in sport is inappropriate. Consequently, the dominant and hegemonic perception that condones violence is represented through the media broadcast.

In contrast, the Rugby League commentary constructed the approval of violence through glamorous and sensational representations of violence. This tendency to glorify violent acts and players elevates violence to the 'main attraction'. This heightens the dramatic value of League, and in turn, increases the excitement and entertainment appeal of the game to certain segments of the audience.

It could be argued that the contrasting manner in which the media dealt with violence in the two cases studied, reflects the professional and amateur nature of the two sports. As a professional sport, Rugby League has as its primary function, the attraction of sponsors and large audiences. In order to meet these demands, media production of League emphasises aspects such as violence, which can then be used to increase the dramatic value of the game. In contrast, within Rugby Union, an amateur code, there is not the same need to promote sport

as a commodity to secure audiences and sponsorship. Violence in Rugby Union is explained and rationalised so that players appear not to have committed any inappropriate behaviour thereby retaining and reinforcing the amateur value system.

### **Construction of Masculinity**

In both the Rugby Union and League analyses, at least three-quarters of the commentary referred to traditionally masculine attributes. As Table 2 illustrates, there was a greater emphasis in League on strength (4.0 vs 0.3 per cent), and pain and/or injury (6.4 vs 2.3 per cent). This may suggest 'ideal' masculinity is more clearly reinforced and defined in the League broadcast although admittedly Rugby Union revealed a higher overall commentary related to 'toughness' when compared to League (1.3 vs 0.5 per cent).

**Table 2**

#### **Analysis of Masculinity Defining Characteristics in Rugby Union and Rugby League**

##### **Percentage (%) of Commentary**

Commentary Categories	Rugby Union	Rugby League
Skill	10.1	8.5
Violence/Contact	7.3	9.0
Strength	0.3	4.0
Toughness	1.3	0.5
Size	1.0	1.4
Pain/Injury	2.3	6.4
Conflict/Battle	2.5	2.8
Other	75.2	67.8
Total	100.0	100.0



The qualitative analysis revealed the general tone of the commentary portrays the players, who are heroes to many, as strong, aggressive, tactical, determined and in terms of many other qualities associated with masculinity. The following Rugby Union examples are illustrative:

Kirwan's always quite aggressive over that touch line isn't he.  
... the big strong man, look at him!

The treatment of violence and excessive contact in the Rugby Union commentary was approving. In turn, this influences how male behaviour is defined for the audience. Violence was intimately linked with what is culturally considered to be admirable and appropriate male behaviour.

Generally speaking, in the Rugby League commentary a similar process took place, however as these examples show, representations of masculinity went one step further to sensationalise male attributes in a way not seen in Rugby Union:

Tough stuff from Hancock to take the brunt of that and still stand, for so long he did that.  
The man they call cement, tough as nails.  
Jackson got hammered, but still got out.

In League, there was a greater reliance on the glamorisation of masculine characteristics. Comments such as 'Kirwan's always quite aggressive over that touch line isn't he' (Rugby Union), and 'The man they call cement, tough as nails' (Rugby League), both contribute to the construction of masculinity; however, the latter of these two comments does so in a dramatic, sensational, and glorified way. It is debatable as to whether or not the sensational portrayal of toughness and masculine aggression in League is due to a tougher nature of the sport, for

it is widely agreed the physical demands of Union were in fact a key to its popularity in New Zealand.<sup>25</sup> For this reason it is more likely that the treatment of masculinity in League is of a more glamorous nature because of the need to appeal to greater audiences, assumed to be predominantly male. In short, the media appear to regard violence as a primary means of attracting and captivating these audiences.

The construction of masculinity in the Rugby Union commentary, serves a hegemonic function of maintaining male dominance and subordination over women. However, there seems to be less focus on attracting sponsors and audiences in Rugby Union through this strategy when compared to League. In Rugby Union, 'ideal' masculinity appears to be constructed more subtly through the sanctioning and condoning of violence, as opposed to the glamorisation and sensational treatment of such behaviour. The discussion regarding violence approval and the construction of masculinity illustrates how these themes of representation are embodied in the general commentary. The media portrayal of bodily sacrifice, injury and respect make up the third and final representation theme.

### **Sacrifice, Injury and Respect**

This theme ran throughout the commentary and contributes to how both violence and masculinity are understood and culturally defined. Players putting their bodies on the line and sustaining injuries without complaint or question are generally accepted as the norms by coaches, commentators, players and viewers alike. Furthermore, violence, aggression and dominance on the field are the most effective means of gaining respect, second only to skill.

Quantitatively this theme is difficult to uncover, however a qualitative examination reveals how the commentary is replete with examples which perpetuate this concept.

Tuigamala's being used this time as the battering ram.

Old Inga's not going to stop for anybody is he? He's going to have a go, he's not going to chip kick you can be assured of that, he's going to take them all on, knock men over if you can.

This type of discourse, seen in the Rugby Union commentary, implies a toughness about players who sacrifice their bodies, redefining risk as admirable and courageous. These representations have an impact on definitions of both violence and masculinity, for they approve violence, and link toughness and strength to male behaviour. The commentary emphasises the idea of stoic acceptance of pain by trivialising the extent of injuries, as the following Rugby Union excerpt shows:

Oh I think Kevin Schuler is in some pain ... he doesn't look comfortable ... though ... trying very hard to stay on the field.

In this way a position of ultimate respect is secured for the player: he put his body on the line thereby sustaining a serious injury, yet was willing to endure the pain, if only he could return to the field. This type of representation of injury legitimates the violence which may have caused it and also contributes to perceptions of what is required masculine behaviour.

Rugby League commentary also places an important emphasis on injury. Glorification and trivialisation of injuries were common, and thus the violence or aggression which led to these injuries was condoned. In the following example a player is knocked unconscious in a tackle, and

... was absolutely hammered over the top ... some concern about whether he might have swallowed his tongue. He went low, he copped a leg or a hip there, and it was good-night for Daley.

... as we see, oh Laurie Daley I mean it's good-night Irene there, bring out the bedtime stories, he is in big trouble.

His eyes are rolling so it will be another stretcher.

The sensational treatment of this example reduces a potentially devastating injury to a source of glamour and excitement, condoning both the injury and the source of it. This example illustrates how injuries can be used in the same way as violence, to create drama and excitement in a sports event. The professional nature of League, requires that the sport be sold to sizeable television audiences and sponsors. As a result the media production tends to emphasise the excitement and thrill, to attract crowds and sponsorship deals. This analysis suggests, that this type of production value is met, in part, through the sensational treatment of injuries and violence.

## **Conclusions**

Comparative analysis of televised coverage of Rugby Union and League indicates some important differences in media representations of violence for the two codes. It is suggested that representations of violence in Rugby Union predominantly condone violence by rationalising, ignoring and trivialising its representations. By comparison, while professional League certainly rationalises and legitimates violence, it goes one step further to glamorise and sensationalise it.

The historical development of Rugby Union and Rugby League underscores some fundamental differences in the nature of the two sports with respect to their amateur and professional roots. The professionalisation of sport, it has been suggested, leads to a greater need to produce an entertainment package, so as to enhance sport's revenue making status. The differences in the representations of violence in the two codes cannot be assumed to be some 'natural' or 'inevitable' process. Rather, the

differences must be considered in relation to a combination of factors including (a) their respective historical roots; (b) the power of the sports-media complex to rationalise its production values in order to define 'good television'; and, (c) the role of sport, the media and violence in the reproduction of current hegemonies, particularly those associated with masculinity. The results of this study tend to suggest, that the differences found in the representations of violence in Rugby League and Union can be related, at least in part, to the amateur and professional nature of these two sports.<sup>26</sup>

There is a definite need for further research in the area of sports violence and the media in New Zealand and elsewhere. As Rugby Union approaches professionalisation, and the Winfield Cup incorporates an Auckland team, the pressures on Union to adopt a more glamorised promotional stance may increase. Research concerned with the nature and extent of media representations of violence in Rugby Union will be needed to gauge the implications of this pressure over the next few years.

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- 17 See Bassett, 'Screen-play and Real-play'; Lois Bryson, 'Sport and the Maintenance of Masculine Hegemony', *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1987, pp. 349-60; D Sabo and J Panepinto, 'Football Ritual and the Social Reproduction of 'Masculinity'', in Messner and Sabo, *Sport, Men and the Gender Order*, pp. 115-26.
- 18 Young, 'Violence in the Workplace of Professional Sport', p. 6.
- 19 B Wilson, 'Pumping up the Footy: The Commercial Expansion of Professional Football in Australia', in Geoffrey Lawrence and David Rowe, eds, *Sport and Leisure: Trends in Australian Popular Culture*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1990, p. 29.
- 20 Stoddart, *Saturday Afternoon Fever*.
- 21 B McPherson, J Curtis, and J Loy, *The Social Significance of Sport*, Human Kinetics, Champaign, Il, 1989, p. 154.
- 22 P Comisky, J Bryant and D Zillmann, 'Commentary as a Substitute for Action', pp. 150-4; and Kevin Young, 'Writers, Rimmers and Slotters'.
- 23 For example, Wallaby coach Bob Dwyer called for 'official action to be taken' describing Loe's actions as cowardly and disgraceful, G Growden, 'Dwyer furious over Loe incident', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 July 1992. However, All Black coach, Laurie Mains laughed off any suggestions of disciplinary action against Loe referring to Australian complaints as a 'red herring'.
- 24 For example, see Nancy Theberge, 'A Feminist Analysis of Responses to Sports Violence: Media Coverage of the 1987 World Junior Hockey Championships', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol. 6, 1989, pp. 247-66.
- 25 Fougere, 'Sport, Culture and Identity'; Phillips, *A Man's Country*.
- 26 It is interesting to note in 1994 that both the New Zealand Lion Red Rugby League Grand Final and the Australian Winfield Cup Rugby League finals ended with episodes of violence including brawls. Perhaps even more striking was the controversial Air New Zealand National Provincial Rugby Union Championship match between Auckland and North Harbour. No less than seven players were cited for violence (including New Zealand's rugby player of the year, Zinzan Brooke!) and the incident has put Rugby Union under the national microscope. All Black coach Laurie Mains has threatened to fine any national players involved but it has also been noted that major sponsors are threatening

to withdraw their support unless rugby cleans up its act. On the one hand the violence emerging in the NPC final may reflect the changing meaning of the game in New Zealand with an increased importance placed on winning and the competition for social and financial rewards. On the other hand the response made by official sponsors may indicate that they are aware and fearful of the bad public image currently surrounding New Zealand rugby and are willing to withdraw their financial support. Such action could provide an important system of checks and balances concerning increasing professionalisation and media production values concerning the use of violence.



