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World Cup France '98: Metaphors, Meanings and Values

Hugh Dauncey and Geoff Hare (University of Newcastle upon Tyne)

The 1998 World Cup Finals focused the attention of the world on France. The cumulative television audience for the 64 matches was nearly 40 billion - the biggest ever audience for a single event. French political and economic decision makers were very aware, as will be seen, that for a month the eyes of the world were on France. On the night of July 12th, whether in Paris and other cities or in smaller communities all over France, there was an outpouring of joy and sentiment that was unprecedented - at least, most people agreed, since the Liberation of 1944. Huge numbers of people watched the final, whether at home on TV or in bars or in front of one of the giant screens erected in many large towns, and then poured onto the streets in spontaneous and good-humoured celebration. In Paris, hundreds of thousands gathered again on the Champs Elysées the next day to see the Cup paraded in an open-topped bus. For all, the victory was an unforgettable experience. An element that was commented on by many was the appropriation by the crowds of the red, white and blue national colours: manufacturers of the French national flag had never known such demand since the death of General de Gaulle. For social commentators and intellectuals, the impact on the French nation was as remarkable as it was unexpected (Poivre d'Arvor, 1999). Interpreting the impact on France of winning the World Cup reveals a complex interplay of sporting and cultural metaphors, meanings and values.

1. Introduction

As part of the first book-length analysis of France 1998 (Dauncey & Hare, 1999), a study of the French national team and national identity by John Marks used a framework developed by ethnologists and others who have tried to understand football as metaphor (Marks, 1999). One of these, Christian Bromberger, has talked about the “footballisation” of contemporary society and has argued that, from an ethnological point of view, football is intimately connected with the values of contemporary democratic societies, which see themselves as meritocratic (and so rewarding individual talent and achievement), but also recognise the importance of collective endeavour and teamwork (Bromberger, 1995). Football, given its contemporary prominence in society, can be used (Bromberger asserts) as a metaphor of a democratic-meritocratic conception of society. Marks, Mignon and others have pointed out that discussion of the French national team’s achievement was commonly and intimately linked to the general question of national identity, and particularly, in connection with questions emerging from immigration in post-war France (Marks, 1999; Mignon, 1999).

The 1998 World Cup, in the way it was mediated through press and television, as the Finals gathered pace and in the immediate aftermath of the French victory, came more than anything else to stand as a metaphor for the issue of integration, a social question that loomed large in France throughout the 1990s. Marks also points to a second, wider, metaphor, that he does not develop in depth, that of the World Cup as metaphor for French modernisation in general: the ability of France and the French to adapt and modernise in the post-war era. This metaphor was one developed, for example, by the French State and the French football authorities in the course of their organisation of the Finals, alongside the traditional French search for ‘grandeur’ and an international role. The State and public authorities in general were keen to show that telecommunications, television, transport, hotel accommodation, stadium architecture, and security measures in France were as good as anywhere else in the world, or better, as ‘la France qui gagne’ showed that France was no longer engaged in ‘catch-up’ modernisation, but had truly arrived. The World Cup was seen as an opportunity to showcase French hi-tech industrial achievements, its culture and its attraction as world number one tourist destination.

In footballing terms, whereas Zinedine Zidane as the son of poor North-African immigrants came to represent a successful example of the French model of integration, there is more ambivalence in the way modernisation was represented - indeed it was more the values of tradition that were picked out as characteristic of the other star of the competition, coach Aimé Jacquet. These two figures appear in counterpoint as metaphors for modernisation and tradition. A constructionist approach will be adopted to analyse these conflicting metaphors of French identity emerging as understandings of the World Cup. Reading identity as inherently a social phenomenon; a product of society, we see these meanings as a social and cultural process, influenced by the cultural environment that press, television, and cultural organisations fill. Identity is here seen as a “way in which people make sense of the self through affiliation and bonds with other people and the signs (the culture) that societies have created.” (Lillie, 1998). Within this perspective, it is useful to employ a categorisation proposed by Manuel Castells. He separates identity construction into three categories: (a) *legitimising identity*, which, he argues, is promoted by the dominant (or hegemonic) institutions of society to further reproduce and rationalise their own privileges, power and domination vis-à-vis social actors; (b) *resistance identity*, emerging from actors within cultures that are marginalised by dominant discourses and power relations; and (c) *project identity*, “where social actors, on the basis of whichever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by doing so, seek the transformation of overall social structure” (Castells, 1997). It will be suggested that a legitimising identity was created in the shape of Jacquet to offset the resistance identity that became a project identity represented by Zidane (Castells, 1997).

Further metaphors, meanings and cultural values that were attached to the World Cup and the French victory also gained currency. These will be reviewed below. They include other “official” interpretations, such as the inevitability (or taken-for-granted nature) of the role of the State (as opposed to the market) and notions of public service in the organisation of such a huge event in France; the interpretation of the Communist Minister for Youth and Sport, Mme Buffet, who spoke of the World Cup as a ‘fraternal coming-together’ and a ‘festival of youth,

citizenship and solidarity' (Buffet, 1998). For the footballing public and the football press the initial metaphor was the expectation of a certain traditional French style, which the team did not live up to, and that was replaced by the more compelling metaphor of 'une France qui gagne' - football as a metaphor for an upsurge of general national self-confidence and self-belief.

2. World Cup as metaphor for the role of the State and public service values

The World Cup, like other global sports competitions, has inescapably become a massive commercial event. FIFA has used private corporate sponsorship and television rights to build itself into a billion dollar business (Tomlinson 1994). The whole of the financing of 1994 World Cup in America had been private, and public investment in Euro 96 in England (admittedly smaller than the World Cup) was limited to £100,000. However, France is a country where Republican and public service values have held back the growth of a fully commercial dimension in sport, and helped retain some of sport's autonomy from commercial and business logic. The French Republican state justifies high levels of intervention both by the need to 'ensure the general interest of sport prevails over the multitude of private interests that traverse it' (Miège, 1993: 68) and in the Gaullian tradition of using sport as part of a 'much broader project of restoring the nation's *grandeur*' (Dine 1998: 306). Dine (p.303) recounts how the General was furious at the paltry French haul of medals (five, none of them gold) at the Rome Olympics. From the Joxe-Herzog Plan of 1960 to legislation under Mitterrand in 1984, formally recognising sports federations' mission of public service, France established a partnership between the State and the nation's sporting organisations that was recognised by Council of Europe in 1993 as a uniquely French approach to the management of public service physical and sporting activities. While towns, departments and regions are, since the 1990s, taking over from the State in some public funding of sporting capital projects, the State has retained responsibility for major initiatives such as the Albertville Winter Olympics and the 1998 World Cup. As a 'middle way' between the former Soviet block's total State control and the 'Anglo-Saxon' preference for sport's financial autonomy and an increasing reliance on commercialism, the French State's firm grip on the building of major new national stadium and on the local bodies organising the World Cup was only

to be expected (Dine 1998: 308-310). It fitted the tradition established by President de Gaulle of the State's use of symbolic capital to assert France's place in the international order. An analysis categorising national models of sports administration has been put forward by Colin Miège (1996): he distinguishes between the 'Anglo-Saxon' (or Nordic) model and the Latin model, where voluntary involvement in sports clubs and federations in each model is differentiated by mode of appointment, the latter being much more democratic, and elective. The northern 'liberal' model is based on the idea of sport depending on the individual initiative of citizens, and its organisation is left to Federations and not the State; the interventionist Latin model sees the promotion and development of sport as a public service, responsibility for which is taken by the State. Sport is even mentioned in the Constitutions of Greece, Spain and Portugal, although not France. (Miège 1996: 16).

This public responsibility for the nation's sporting well being, when combined with a neo-Gaullist concern to promote national *grandeur* through international competitive sport (among other activities), gives a strong expectation that the State will spend whatever necessary on the successful hosting of major international events such as the World Cup. Decisions about the 1998 World Cup illustrated the way participatory and spectator sport has been seen in France as a legitimate concern of the public authorities and as a public service. The French state, local authorities and public sector companies subsidised France 98 by the equivalent of £525 million (Hopquin, 1998). The structures set up to manage France 98, in terms of the national organising committee and the co-ordinating committees linking it to the State, reflect the French model of promoting sport. As Bourdieu and others have remarked, sport in France has a particular relation to society and to the state involving issues of moral values ('l'éthique sportive'), public service, and anti-commercialism, all of which create tensions in the modern game (Bourdieu, 1998). Official recognition (*agrément*) by the Ministry for Youth and Sport allows, for instance, the imposition on sports governing bodies of model statutes ensuring democratic functioning and accountability, and in return for this state tutelage and recognition of the sport's public service mission as being of 'public utility', a sporting body or affiliated club becomes eligible for official grant aid (Miège, 1993: 48). Thus the Ministry for

Youth and Sport delegates to the French Football Federation (FFF) the monopoly of organisation, regulation and representation of football in France.

The French World Cup Organising Committee (*Comité français d'organisation de la Coupe du monde* - CFO) was set up by the FFF as a non-profit-making association (*loi 1901*) in November 1992. Co-presided by Michel Platini and Fernand Sastre (former FFF president) the Committee was responsible for preparing and organising the World Cup. Another public administrative instrument was used to help co-ordinate the interactions between the state, the CFO, host cities, and local and regional authorities. The *Délégation interministérielle à la Coupe du Monde* (DICOM), created in March 1993, was more directly answerable to the government. An 'interministerial delegate' worked with the Minister for Youth and Sport and answered to the Prime Minister's office. DICOM's responsibilities included co-ordinating the activities of the government bodies and public-sector companies involved, implementing investment and infrastructure development programmes for public amenities financed jointly by the state and the public sector, and providing liaison between government, regions, departments and cities involved in hosting games. This kind of interdepartmental co-ordinating structure is a commonly-used mechanism in France, where the State has a strong tradition of centralism and interventionism in all aspects of society. Thus the organisation of the World Cup implicitly promoted the inescapable role of the State and the public authorities in France, and the role of public service values was promoted both by the way the Ministry encouraged popular participation in the event, and through the debate over the redistribution of the profits emerging from the World Cup.

A key symbol and a real vector of mass public participation in the event were the big video screens in many towns and cities - erected at public expense. Although ticket prices in the stadiums were kept low, there were not enough seats to satisfy demand - especially since many had to go to FIFA and its participating countries, and, commercial reality *oblige*, to corporate interests. Whereas corporate interests had taken over many seats in the stadiums, the real support for the national team could be seen in urban France in front of the giant screens. Indeed, one of the official statements about what the World Cup was to be revealed some of the public service missions of football: for Sports Minister Mme Buffet, summer

1998 was to foster a 'fraternal coming-together' and a 'festival of youth, citizenship and solidarity' (Buffet, 1998). During the competition, the Minister seemed happier visiting local sports associations and the 'Ecrans du monde' (giant screens in poor areas) than with the protocol requiring her presence at all matches involving *les Bleus* (Hennion, 1998).

Public funding of French sport is the corollary of State oversight of its governing bodies. France is the European country in which state sports funding is most generous. The *Fonds national pour le développement du sport* (FNDS), financed by taxation of the State lottery, is intended to promote grass-roots activities, but has increasingly taken on the support of elite sporting activities (Bozonnet, 1996). Unsurprisingly, the Minister was determined to use the 280 million francs of profit emerging from the CFO more widely than simply putting more money into professional football clubs in the host towns. The State and the FFF signed an agreement one year after the Final: the committee dealing with bids for the money is presided by Mme Buffet, and has seven State representatives, seven FFF representatives, and one representative of the French Olympic Committee, and money is to go to grass-roots projects covering all sports. The agreement prioritised development of women's sport and amateur sport, recruitment of coaches, and local community sport as 'insertion sociale' (fighting against social exclusion). While the ten host towns would receive some priority, Mme Buffet's summarised her view: 'money generated by sport should return to the whole of sport'. This principle of redistributing profits from professional sport to amateur sport was developed in her Sports Bill where 5% of TV sports rights was to go to grass-roots sport.

All the above illustrates how planning, financing and organising the World Cup reflected the way sport in France, both participatory and spectator, is seen as a public service, and as a legitimate concern of the public authorities. For France 98, the public sector financed the necessary infrastructure; the Organising Committee, through ticket and sponsorship and advertising income, financed the strictly sporting side. However, profits made by the latter are regarded as public money to be used by the State in the public interest, just as the State would have accepted losses.

3. World Cup victory as metaphor for belief in French effectiveness

For the footballing public and the sporting press the initial metaphor of French participation in the World Cup Finals was the expression of a certain French style. Expectations of 'champagne football' were doomed to be disappointed, but were transformed finally into the more compelling metaphor of 'une France qui gagne' - France as a winner. Football became a metaphor for an upsurge of general national self-belief, a surprised and perhaps still fragile recognition that France was emerging from a long period of depression as the nation came painfully to terms with its war-time collaborationist past, decolonisation, loss of status in a world now dominated by "Anglo-Saxons" and the English language, and an economy and society bedevilled by high unemployment. All this had deflected attention from areas where France has been a winner: high technology, the fourth most successful economy in the world, the premier world tourist destination, for instance.

Just as in rugby there has long been an expectation that the French team should play in an attacking way, there has evolved a view of what French football style should be. As will be seen below, it was, partly at least, 'style' that bothered *L'Equipe* in their attacks on coach Aimé Jacquet. One of the myths commonly mediated through football relates to national styles of play. Such cultural constructions are seen by some as a discourse that maintains chauvinism and xenophobia (Beaud & Noiriel, 1990). For France such myths go back at least as far as the 1920s, when the French press demanded a national style to replace the tough muscular English game (Wahl, 1989: 205). A lasting impact on French style was made by the Uruguayans in the 1924 Paris Olympic Games (Thibert & Rethacher, 1991). Their style was described as combining artistry, entertainment, virtuosity, and the effectiveness and realism of professionals. The Uruguayan dialectic emerged in descriptions of French national styles in the mouths of successive national team managers, as the mood swung between power and solidity on the one hand and finesse, spontaneity and vivacity on the other. Albert Batteux, coach of the successful Reims teams, and successful national manager in 1958, and Michel Hidalgo, manager of the Platini teams of the 1980s, promoted an open, attacking style giving scope to the individual brilliance of Kopa and Fontaine or Platini and Tigana. On the other hand,

Georges Boulogne, national team manager in the 1970s was a partisan of 'football as hard work'. Both approaches appear to have at their base the same conception of French national character as undisciplined and individualistic, the one seeing it positively, the other negatively. Boulogne's response was to exercise total authority over the players, to instil solidarity and team-work in players whom he saw as naturally individualistic (Wahl, 1989: 297-299).

Boulogne took over the national team in 1969, aiming at an ethic of discipline and effort, a more rigorous game based on defence, therefore less entertaining and less spectacular. But France did not qualify for the 1970 and 1974 World Cups.

Hidalgo, an ex-player who became national manager in 1976, espoused Batteux's attacking style of 'le plaisir de jouer', rejecting military vocabulary, telling players 'to go out and enjoy themselves'. Win-at-all-costs was not the objective: style became as important as effectiveness, and style being one of the key objectives, success was to be achieved by playing with style. The French public seemed to agree. A reference for the footballing press and public has been the Hidalgo and Platini teams of the 1980s, playing 'champagne football'. Their spontaneity, improvisation and vivacity gave a sparkling passing game which was vulnerable and fragile, memorably seen in the semi-final defeat of the World Cup in Seville in 1982 against Germany (Nussle, 1986: 24-25).

As co-director of the CFO, Platini's desire to turn the 1998 World Cup into 33 days of 'fête' (festival or party) is in direct line of descent from Batteux and Hidalgo. However, Jacquet declared he was not out to entertain or please the press, but to win. Jacquet realised, that without the top-class forwards of the Platini era, but with internationally experienced midfielders and defenders he could not espouse the prettiness expected by the public and demanded by *L'Equipe*, whose editor declared that 'the type of football that they 'had been calling for with all [their] heart' had only been seen in the Final (Bureau 1998a). Jacquet had been criticised for the unadventurous play that saw France eliminated on penalties in the Euro 96 semi-finals, but in 1998 he maintained a workmanlike style, stress on "le collectif" - teamwork, and his use of his famous tactical note book, which of course stifled spontaneity.

If, as the Blues progressed to the Final, expectations of French style were disappointed, a new metaphor emerged to replace it: 'une France qui gagne'.

The French discovered they were not eternal losers. French football history abounds with accounts of heroic defeats (1958 and 1982), folk tales of clever individuals getting the better of the establishment, national coaches basing strategies on the essential individualism of their players. This recurrent national self-image purveyed through football equates to what has been called, in a wider social and political context, the Astérix complex (Duhamel, 1985). This refers to the expectation of inevitable defeat for 'les petits Français', just like the Gauls led by Astérix against the Roman legions, while, importantly, emerging with honour safe and some small victories of wily individualism against overwhelming odds. This complex has proved durable, especially since the 1982 and 1986 World Cup semi-final defeats by Germany.

A significant symbol of this Astérix complex was the World Cup mascot chosen by the French footballing authorities - Footix. World Cup mascots are chosen to convey an immediately recognisable, synoptic references to the host nation - to the point of cliché (see the English mascot of 1966, the lion World Cup Willie), therefore stereotypically traditional, in their nationalistic frame of reference. Footix is stereotypically French in so far it is a cartoon-like Gallic cockerel and an obvious reference to Astérix (Hand, 1998), and recalls the view of France as eternal runner-up, not quite in the big league.

However, club footballing successes in the late 1980s and the 1990s, especially Marseille's victory in the European Cup, confirmed a sense of France as a footballing nation coming of age. A major French soccer guide uses a related metaphor: 'At last France has lost her virginity.' (Rocheteau & Chaumier, 1997). Yet not even World Cup victory seemed durably to convince the public that France was a winner; or at least *L'Equipe*, whose headlines on the crushing defeat of England at Wembley a few months later suggested this was the confirmation that France had a world beating team. 'We are the champions', shouted the headline the following day (*L'Equipe*, 11.2.99). In a reflective piece the next day a journalist used words like 'historic victory', and claimed that it at last answered questions that had remained posed after the World Cup victory, such as whether the team could repeat its success outside France (Duluc 1999). However, just as France now expects a leading part in European politics and to play a world role, so most of the press of July 1998 talked of French winners - in

industry, in culture and beyond. The organisation of the World Cup itself was an official, public expression of new-found national self-confidence, that the French themselves belatedly started to realise. After the Final the respected (and controversial) editor of the influential weekly magazine *Marianne* identified this new and surprised realisation that France can be proud of its achievements and that the world can admire France rather than just seeing the country as a nation of 'whingers' (Kahn, 1998).

4. French victory as metaphor for successful French integrationⁱ

Since the two goals he scored in the World Cup Final on 12 July 1998, a balding French Kabyle named Zinedine Zidane is arguably the best known Frenchman in the world. He became, within France, the symbol of the new multiethnic society.

Zidane was an obvious example of successful integration. His family history is typical of many immigrants from North Africa: his father arrived from Algeria, in the Paris left-wing industrial belt in the 1960s, and moved to La Castellane in 1970, working as a warehouseman. In this poor Marseille estate his son learned to play football - becoming a local hero, and source of pride serving as a model of social integration in an area where unemployment is 40% (*Le Parisien*, 1998). In 1998, from La Castellane to the Champs-Élysées, second-generation North African immigrants ('les Beurs') chanted his name. Zidane's symbolic value in race relations and national identity was illustrated by the way a Beur acting as cheer-leader by the Saint-Denis big screen encouraged the mainly white crowd to chant 'Zizou', and thus recognise Zidane's contribution to the nation and the Beurs' place within it. On the Champs-Élysées Beurs waved Algerian flags alongside the French tricolour, thus showing their dual cultural identity. As historian Benjamin Stora remarked: 'This closes a chapter of French history because it shows one can remain faithful to an Algerian nationalist father and yet be for France, that one can be a Moslem and be fully French.' (Graham, 1998).

Official promotion of the 'football team = nation' metaphor came from both right-wing President Chirac and his cohabitationist socialist Prime Minister Jospin, who, after the semi-final with Croatia, each emerged from the dressing rooms with a player's shirt as a memento. Chirac brandished his number 23 as

everyone celebrated victory in the *Stade de France* on July 12. The symbolic inclusion of the Head of State as an extra member of the national squad marked the solidarity of the French nation from highest office to poorest immigrant children in Marseille worshipping Zidane. There were dissenting voices from the extreme-right amidst general enthusiasm for the multi-coloured national squad, but on the Left Prime minister Jospin stressed the multi-racial composition of the team: 'What better example of our unity and diversity than this magnificent team?' (Buob, 1998).

The racial makeup of the national side had raised political debate during Euro 96, when far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen (*Front national*) declared the French team to be 'artificial'. He claimed certain players had chosen their nationality as a matter of expediency and that several 'visibly did not know the words of the *Marseillaise*', and later reiterating his point, drew attention to numbers of players who were sons of immigrants.ⁱⁱ The 1998 squad contained many of these players, and was often described as reflecting the 'cultural mosaic' of contemporary France. Several players were born outside metropolitan France: Lama in Guyana, Karembeu in New Caledonia, Vieira in Senegal, and Desailly in Ghana. Several were born in France of parents born outside of metropolitan France (Guadeloupe, Algerian Kabylia, Armenia, Mongolia, Argentina). Patrick Mignon has pointed out the presence of players of diverse origin is nothing new for the French team, and that as French football professionalised, it was immigrants more than any other members of the working classes who saw football as a means of social promotion (Mignon, 1999: 86-87). The 'ethnic diversity' of the French side has simply reflected different eras of immigration in a country that for economic reasons (post-war reconstruction) and ideological choice (political asylum) has welcomed foreigners and attempted to assimilate or integrate them into the Republican melting pot.

During the Finals, spectators experienced a rise in solidarity among French people from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Discussion of the multiracial nature of the side moved from the sports pages to the front pages and was even covered abroad (Lichfield, 1998; Desporettes, 1998). Debate following the victory endlessly rehearsed the basic issue: 'une France fracturée' (a socially divided France) needed a 'prétexte fédérateur' (an excuse to come together), and the

football celebrations were celebrations of national unity. The phrase 'black-blanc-beur' was created on the pattern of the national colours (bleu-blanc-rouge) to describe the special Frenchness of the team and the nation's unity in diversity. In the centre-Right daily *Le Figaro*, writer and ex-Gaullist minister Alain Peyrefitte declared that France was a multiracial country and would remain so. Only a few voices on the extreme-right disagreed, and even Le Pen appeared wrong-footed. Laurent Joffrin's editorial in the centre-Left *Libération* two days before the final portrayed the French team as a shining example of Republican integration (Joffrin, 1998). Commentators such as Joffrin were preoccupied with the capacity of France and the French to adapt to a changing world. Now, the team was seen as a symbol of the nation: teamwork was equated with the tasks facing the nation. The victory offered a moment of grace to a fundamentally 'depressed' nation.

The view that France was changing was expressed by demographer Michèle Tribalat, interviewed in *Libération*. She saw in the gusto with which the multicoloured team sang the *Marseillaise* and in the joyful nationalism of supporters from all backgrounds a moment of identification with the nation. She compared the result of French republican integration of ethnic minorities with the German team of all white faces and blond hair and no players of Turkish origin, concluding that the French system visibly opts for 'universalism' with an open nationality law whereas Germany's ethnic concept of the nation means Turkish children remain Turkish (Simonnot, 1998). For Tribalat, France 98 showed that nationalism can be positive and elevated, but there were still those who did not assume integration would henceforward be perfect: 'Children of foreigners who help France win are accepted as French, but when they go to prison, it's always mentioned that they are of immigrant origin' (Desporettes, 1998; Buob, 1998; Bertrand, 1998).

Since the oil crisis of the 1970s and the economic difficulties of the early Mitterrand years in the mid-1980s, racism has increased in France, along with alienation and exclusion of children of first generation immigrant families. Social problems of housing and schooling, rising inequalities, petty crime and anti-social behaviour, feelings of insecurity, and disillusionment with orthodox political parties' failure to solve the problems have been seized upon by the extreme-

Right. The *Front National* has gradually given a kind of respectability to racist attitudes and has set a political agenda where nationality laws have made it more difficult, for the first time since the Declaration of the Rights of Man two centuries ago, for children born in France of foreign parentage to become French. Right and Left differ over reforming nationality laws in the direction of 'le droit du sang' (the nationality based on blood rights or parental lineage favoured by the *Front National* and others on the right) and 'le droit du sol' (the French Republican ideal of nationality coming from the land in which one is born). In the pre-World Cup climate orthodox right-wing parties (and particularly ex-Prime Minister Edouard Balladur) called for a national debate on policies of racial discrimination ('*préférence nationale*') in housing and social security. The traditional French republican approach to integration of foreigners into a single model of citizenship, as opposed to a multicultural society, was being called into question, and the 'immigration issue' was defining a key ideological and political divide. The World Cup winning squad conveniently provided a ready metaphor to discuss it, either by presenting the multiracial national team as proof of integrated cultural and ethnic diversity contributing to a shared national project, or by emphasising the solidarity of successful teamwork as evidence of assimilated 'Frenchness' on the part of ethnically diverse players.

5. World Cup victory as metaphor for traditional French values

If the adoption of a North African as a national hero symbolised new attitudes to the nation and to integration, then the simultaneous creation of another hero was a counterpoint to the modernisation of attitudes represented by Zidane. National team coach Aimé Jacquet had been heavily criticised by the footballing press, indeed ridiculed by the sports daily *L'Equipe* for his apparently out-of-date approach. As he stuck to his tactics and the French team won through, he found himself a hero of the national press, which presented him more and more as a representative of the values of French tradition.

L'Equipe had waged a two-year-long personal campaign against Jacquet and his unimaginative tactics, for *les Bleus*'s inability to play attacking champagne-football. They wrote polemical headlines such as 'Jacquet the disenchanter'

(5.5.98), 'What sort of match is that?' and 'Mourir d'Aimé' '*Dying of Aimé (love)*' (see McKeever 1999: 164-166, and Revel 1998). They criticised him for not immediately cutting his squad down to 22 ('Are we playing 13--a-side?' - 6.5.98), and for the allegedly insensitive way he informed the six who had to leave the Clairefontaine training camp in May when they were not retained in the final 22 (25.5.98). Just before the tournament, the deputy editor had summed up the team's prospects scathingly: 'It's no longer the national French team. It's a corner shop'. Jacquet felt the paper had overstepped the boundary between reporting and distorting and resolutely refused to forgive his critics, dismissing them as 'hooligans, dishonest and imbeciles' (Salles, 1998). After the Final, *L'Equipe's* editor, Jérôme Bureau, reluctantly had to admit that he had misunderstood Jacquet's methods, underestimated his personal qualities, and that Jacquet had been vindicated (Bureau, 1998a). When Jacquet refused to forgive and forget, Bureau gracelessly complained Jacquet had chosen "hatred over forgiveness" (Bureau, 1998b) Almost without exception, the rest of the national press (and television journalists, notoriously uncritical of the national team) suddenly saw in Jacquet a tragic misunderstood hero - a view he prolonged with his autobiography a year later, summed up by his phrase : « Je tenais à dire ma vérité » - his version of "I did it my way" (Jacquet, 1999). *Le Figaro* thought *L'Equipe* had used its monopolistic power irresponsibly. *Le Monde* and other dailies and weeklies produced glowing profiles of Jacquet before and after the final (Chemin, 1998).

After being the butt of French television's satirical *Les Guignols* puppet programme and *L'Equipe's* whipping boy in a cruel cartoon column, Jacquet suddenly found himself transformed in the press into an icon, responsible for the French victory. Having been mocked for his provincial accent and his inarticulacy, his refusal to play the communication game, and for generally being unfashionable, he now stood for virtues of hard work, modesty, humility, respect, honesty, rigour, simplicity, authenticity, competence, professionalism: all that was good in French tradition. His approach to football had worked: methodical, protecting his players, building teamwork, generosity, valuing character, willingness to work meaning more than natural talent, getting a result rather than being flashy. He came to represent all those unpaid volunteers who coach young

children in park football, but the term that best described him, for *Le Monde*, was not coach, or trainer, or manager, but the very French 'éducateur'. Indeed the role of such people was compared to that of the 'hussars of the republic' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the lay primary school teachers of the first universal free and secular state school system: transmitting Republican values to the youth of France, promoting a meritocracy, and creating the national unity that in the last decades had been eroded. The former skilled factory worker and then professional footballer had become a manager winning three championships and two French cups with Bordeaux before being sacked by President Claude Bez for being 'too straight'. As national manager, for some he symbolised a new era of French football, the opposite of the Tapie years when lucre and glitz were everything.ⁱⁱⁱ Jacquet's 57-year-old shoulders had to bear a heavier burden of symbolism: the team he created had become an analogy for the nation, supposedly tired, suffering from an inferiority complex, judging itself to be a mere middle-ranking country, fearful of the challenges of modernisation, and of social integration. For having inspired a multiracial team, in France's image, to all pull together successfully in the same direction, Jacquet was presented as incarnating the three integrative forces of old: not only the primary school teacher (method and hard work), but also the provincial priest (community) and finally the Saint-Etienne factory worker (solidarity, or 'cohésion'). If the Republic was once again threatened in its cohesion, its fraternity, in its troubled urban areas ('banlieues'), much of the French press saw Jacquet's "traditional values" and self-belief as the answer. (See *Le Monde*, Editorial: 'La parabole Jacquet', 14 July, 1998, p. 1 & p. 14 and also Haget, 1998; Chemin et al., 1998; Benamou, 1998; Bozonnet, 1998; Colombani, 1998.)

Official endorsement of this metaphor was given by President Chirac, speaking at a Bastille Day garden party at the presidential palace at which the team were guests of honour. He said of Jacquet: "He stands for what is best in the French: serious, determined, human, close to people, understanding, tolerant but firm." A year later, as Jacquet's autobiography was published, television interviewers took up the same themes that had passed into the realm of received ideas: TV host Michel Drucker talked of Jacquet as principled, out of phase with the times where what is valued is profit and performance. He saw him as belonging to "la France

profonde” of the Fifties and Sixties, where hard work and loyalty were strong values. He too compared him to a village primary school teacher, to his own father’s worker customers, who wanted to be able to continue their studies (Achard 1999). Reporting Jacquet’s appearance on Drucker’s prime time chat show in June 1999, Agence France Presse also picked out his attachment to simple values of hard work and loyalty (AFP 1999).

The meanings associated with Jacquet as symbol are far from the metaphor of the World Cup as acceptance of modernisation, part of which is the metaphor of a new France comfortable with its definitive multiracial identity, a comfort symbolised by Zidane as emblematic Beur winning for France and by the multicoloured national team. In trying to understand what kind of construction of identity is at work here, we find that the two figures appear in counterpoint, in balance, perhaps even cancelling each other out, since they appear to represent two different understandings of French identity: the one the values of modernisation and the new France, and the other the values of French tradition, the old France, before large-scale immigration (or at least before black and Arab/Muslim immigration), and before the second industrial revolution and the modern deprived city suburbs, before mass unemployment.

The Zidane and Jacquet metaphors seem contradictory, or at least in tension. How do we reconcile the World Cup as metaphor for a victory for traditional values with the World Cup as metaphor for modernisation, and of a new France proud of its definitive multiracial identity? Mignon has concluded that talk of a victory for integration, of rediscovered national pride, and of a non-aggressive and non-exclusive nationalism, of a nation’s improved image of itself, a defeat for the *Front National*, and the emergence of new attitudes towards immigrants in the deprived suburbs was over-ambitious and over-interpreted (Mignon, 1999). The contradictions in interpretation of what the victory meant simply reflect the heterogeneity of the crowds on the Champs-Élysées or those who watched on television, the heterogeneity of the French population: “within them coexisted different understandings of what the victory of the French team means, as well as different understandings of what France means. Did we therefore have a celebration of a multicultural France, or the celebration of a France of integration, or even of assimilation?” (Mignon, 1999: 96). The potential contradictions in

these different visions of the new France could conveniently be overlooked in the euphoria of the victory celebrations. Mignon adds that the celebrations of July 12th were more symbols of a call for unity - precisely because that unity was far from real. To realise the promises (vague as they were) held out by the celebrations, he points to political action being needed - action regarding education, employment, racism, urban renewal, and also inside football. Whereas the minister Mme Buffet is attempting to put World Cup profits into grass-roots community sports activity, recent opinion polls regarding racism in France suggest mentalities have not improved. The same annual survey seemed to have shown, especially in 1998, some relaxing of attitudes on issues to do with immigration. However the November 1999 survey showed a hardening of xenophobic and racist attitudes: admitted racism is increasing. One note of optimism however is that 81% of respondents found that racial discrimination in employment is "grave" (69% re: housing). Positive discrimination is rejected by a majority of respondents - an attitude one may relate to the Republican tradition of equality that looks to assimilation rather than integration (*Le Monde*, 2000).

Using Castells's categories to understand these apparent contradictions, we might describe the identity represented by Zidane (as mediated by various national newspapers and dominant social actors and politicians) as moving from a resistance identity to a project identity. The survival or resistance identity Zidane held previously for socially marginalised young Beurs as a symbol of success becomes transformed through World Cup victory when the mainstream centre-Right and centre-Left media adopt Zidane as a project identity. The politico-social project in question is the promotion of a more tolerant, multiracial one-nation France (whether based on integration or assimilation), that as Mignon points out does not yet exist. Laurent Joffrin had seen this idea of a nation united in diversity as an illusion at the time. He wrote in *Libération*: "The evil ferments which are at work in a divided France will soon be back in place. For the neglected part of the population, the World Cup will have been just a brotherly illusion. But these illusions are useful. They change ideas." (Joffrin, 1998).

As this 'integrationist' metaphor was gaining credence as the dominant metaphor of the World Cup victory, a new conflicting metaphor suddenly began to vie for cultural space. This was the legitimising identity created around Jacquet, and this

metaphor has been reiterated since, for example in the media promotion of his book. Might one argue that, as its sources were the dominant institutions of society (*Le Monde*, French television, the President), its effect or even its purpose was to offset the resistance identity/project identity represented by Zidane? Talking about purpose is difficult and perhaps not useful. One might simply say it was a more palatable or natural metaphor to some (more conservative) social and cultural actors.

6. Conclusion

France 98 spawned a series of metaphors expressing important aspects of the texture of everyday life in France. The French team overcame adversities such as sendings-off (deserved? - Zidane and Dessailly - or undeserved? - Blanc) and endured nail-biting endings (Golden Goal victory against Paraguay, penalty shoot-out to overcome Italy), finally defeating the ultimate adversary, the football nation of legend, Brazil. But what if France had lost the penalty shoot-out against Italy in the quarter-final, or if Ronaldo had not been ill before the Final and had 'played Zidane off the park'? Would the dominant metaphor have remained that of 'les petits Français' eternal losers, the Astérix complex? Probably, if les Bleus had not got past the quarter-final. The players knew what was going to be regarded as success and what would be seen as failure, when they agreed with the FFF to a zero bonus for elimination before the quarter-final and a million francs each for ultimate victory. If they had reached the final and lost, it is likely, since public and press discussion of the various metaphors was by then at such an advanced stage, that not much would have been different - losing to Brazil would have been a kind of victory for a multiracial team and for solidarity in the form of Jacquet's old-fashioned values. But the fervour would not have been there, and the Astérix complex would have been reinforced. Such speculation is vain, except to remind us that the width of a cross-bar can perhaps change society.

As it was, the national team's dramatic march to final victory was an increasing stimulus for the French to discuss the choices they face as they entered a new century. For a few weeks at least sport became a metaphor for society,

particularly regarding questions of ethnic and cultural integration, but also for issues of tension between modernisation and tradition, and of French values in other domains. It allowed the idea of French identity as defined by a sense of style to be challenged by an identity of France as a winner, as an effective participant in the global economy. This renewed national self-confidence accompanied reassertion of traditional French reliance on the State and public service values. The World Cup afforded the opportunity to ask whether France can, or must, maintain distinctively 'French' values, which may appear to be out of step with contemporary processes of modernisation and globalisation.

There are those who may see the political and ideological interpretations of the fervour of July 12 as an outdated view of French culture in the widest sense, the implication being that football fervour is football fervour and should not be given a wider significance. Since the Liberation in 1944, there have been few comparable spontaneous collective mobilisations of people in the streets. May 68 is perhaps the last example. Is the spontaneous out-pouring of emotion on July 12th, in a different register, simply comparable to the reaction in Britain to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales? Both cases are interpreted by the historian Michel Vovelle as a manifestation of the need to join with other people across generations and social class barriers (Schlumberger, 1998). It was to do with a need for interpersonal relations rather than a political statement, and as such, for Vovelle, popular rejoicing over the result of a football match was a sign of the depoliticisation of French society and culture.

Our analysis of the metaphors used to discuss the World Cup suggests that what might have appeared depoliticised was at a deeper level precisely political as it addressed issues central to contemporary French social tensions. The celebrations were widely portrayed as a festival of political theatre. One contributor to *Libération* saw the events as the first step backwards taken by the extreme-Right (Castro, 1998). Since summer 1998 the *Front national*, unusually quiet during the World Cup, perhaps because it was overtaken by events, has split and appears to have lost much political momentum. During the competition, Le Pen distanced the party from World Cup euphoria by denigrating the French team, criticising President Chirac and right-wing Euro-sceptic Charles Pasqua for having 'succumbed' to the 'effet mondial' in their talk of its significance for French

society, and was himself at pains to minimise the importance of the victory (Dely, 1998; Jedy, 1998).^{iv}

A senior British newspaper correspondent in Paris commented on the reactions to the World Cup victory from the President downwards as underlining France's hunger for good news (Graham, 1998). A sense of depression, he felt, had deflected attention from areas where France has been a winner. This change of national mood and purpose was shared both by those who saw the symbolism of Zidane as the central message of the World Cup and by those who took from it the necessary return to traditional values. Whether this common purpose can survive the contradictory social and cultural directions inherent in the two metaphorical versions of France 98 is another matter.

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- ⁱ The terms 'integration' and 'assimilation' are often used almost interchangeably in debate over the French Republican traditions of dealing with immigrants and immigrant communities. In the past, 'assimilation' has mostly referred to the cultural assimilation of ethnic minorities in a centralised, indivisible Republic, as opposed to the American notion of 'integration' meaning maintaining cultural difference yet still claiming a shared national project. The French notion assumed traditionally that everyone could be French, but only by losing their distinctive identities. Nowadays, especially in journalistic debate, 'integration' seems to be used more to reflect the necessity of recognising that France is a *de facto* multicultural and multiethnic society in which 'beurs, blacks et blancs' are learning to live together, helped by symbolic events such as World Cup victory with a multiracial team and successful immigrant role models such as Zidane. The issue of the wearing of the Muslim headscarf in French state schools, for example, was resolved in a fudge in relation to what previously might have been considered strict secular Republican nationalism. For a short treatment of these issues, see Lloyd, 1999.
- ⁱⁱ *Le Monde* reported the story in its sports pages on June 26 1996. Le Pen declared that it was 'artificial' to bring 'foreign' players into the French side. Le Pen followed up his remarks in an interview in *France-Soir* on June 25.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Bez was later convicted of corruption and embezzlement of funds at the *Girondins de Bordeaux* and imprisoned. Bernard Tapie was implicated in match-fixing for *Olympique de Marseille* and also served a prison term for financial and other irregularities in his football interests.
- ^{iv} Cracks already apparent inside the *Front national* in 1998 because of rivalry between Le Pen and Bruno Mégret widened into schism, lawsuits, the creation of the breakaway *Mouvement National Républicain* and a poor showing in the 1999 European elections.