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Laine, T.K.

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Shame On Us: Shame, National Identity and the Finnish Doping Scandal

Tarja Laine

This article deals with the media coverage of the Finnish doping scandal in the Nordic World Ski Championships in Lahti, Finland (2001) and the World Ski Championships in Val di Fiemme, Italy (2003). The focus of the article lies on the emotional underpinnings of national identities and particularly on the feeling of shame that is, as argued, deeply rooted in Finnish cultural and social life. The media debates about the doping scandal seemed to be related not only to the state on Finnish sports in the context of globalisation, but also to the Finnish national identity. Therefore, the media coverage of Finnish doping scandal exemplifies the way in which the discourses on national identity are profoundly embedded in collective emotions.

In recent years, the notion of ‘national shame’ has gained a wide discursive currency in the Finnish media, due to the infamous doping events in the Nordic World Ski Championships in Lahti, Finland (February 2001) and the World Ski Championships in Val di Fiemme, Italy (March 2003). In Lahti, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) caught six Finnish skiers, three long-time national heroes Jari Isometsä, Harri Kirvesniemi, and Mika Myllylä among them, using a plasma expander called *Hemohe*s. Two years later, the emotional wounds caused by the first doping scandal were opened again in Italy, as a Finnish skier Kaisa Varis was tested positive for using EPO (recombinant erythropoietin) hormone.

What is intriguing in the Finnish doping scandal is the way in which it was instantly framed as a case of national shame in the massive media coverage, especially in the light of another recent international doping scandal concerning THG anabolic steroids (tetrahydrogestrinone). In August 2003, several American athletes, some of them enjoying the status of a superstar, were tested positive for using these new ‘designer steroids’. Even though the THG scandal was internationally covered in the

Tarja Laine, University of Amsterdam. Correspondence to: T.Laine@uva.nl

media, it was hardly a nation-stopping media spectacle in the United States, where the media are known for chastising the use of performance-enhancing drugs among other nations' athletes while regularly diminishing American sports heroes' foul play. [1]

For better or worse professional sports have long been in the public and media eye—but, at least in the Finnish sporting history, their effects have never been so scandalous and longstanding. The Lahti doping scandal itself was the main news in the Finnish media for a period of approximately four weeks (running from 18 February 2001). Yet the backwash of the scandal (including reporting on the legal actions, police investigations, athletes' own declarations and appeals for shorter bans from competitions, as well articles dealing with the ethics in sports in general) lasted a whole year, only to be reopened in 2003 when another Finn failed a doping test in the World Championships in Italy.

This article seeks to contribute to the discussion about the connection between sports, emotions and national identity, taking as a case study the Finnish press coverage of the Lahti doping scandal and its aftermath. Data was drawn from the press coverage in Finnish newspapers, collected by the Ministry of Education. The data includes all Finnish newspapers, and all the items on the doping case—news, columns, editorials and letters to the editor—over the period running from the Lahti World Championships to the World Championships in Italy. The central question is: why did the doping scandal arouse so much media attention in Finland—and up to the point of invading people's daily life and being the most important 'talk of the town'—for several weeks? More importantly, why was the doping scandal in many accounts seen as a case of national shame? The focus of this article, therefore, lies on the emotional underpinnings of national identity and particularly on the feeling of shame that is, as argued, deeply rooted in Finnish cultural and social life. The debates about the doping scandal seemed related not only to the state of Finnish sports in the context of globalisation, but also to Finnish national identity. In particular, they were related to the Finns' long-lived concern of being somehow inferior to other (Western) Europeans. This article hopes to show that the media coverage of the Finnish doping scandal highlights the way that debates on national identity have a profound effect on collective emotions.

The Rise and Fall of Finnish Sports

The significance of sports' contribution to the production and reproduction of discourses of national identity has been addressed by several international and Finnish sports scholars. [2] At least in Finland, other means of national validation, such as a glorious history or a long tradition of fine arts, have been scarce. As early as the 1910s, therefore, competitive sports was regarded as an essential vehicle through which a small, peripheral and poor new nation was able to gain international prestige and to construct an image of itself as a viable nation. [3] This construction of national imagery in Finland was successful and, in fact, according to a treasured traditional

myth, Finland was finally ‘ran’ onto the world map: the runners in question were the victorious long distance runners Hannes Kolehmainen, Paavo Nurmi, and Ville Ritola (in the Olympic Games of 1912, 1920 and 1924, respectively). Furthermore, Finland was among the first nations to use sports intentionally in political debates as a kind of propaganda in order to increase national consciousness. Sports was supposed to secure the feeling of collectivity, especially among the farmers and the working class, in order to create a unified national community in a country torn apart by the civil war of the 1918. [4]

Keeping in mind Finland’s past as a ‘sports superpower’ with a deliberate nationalistic mission, it is not surprising to read what *Suomen Kuvalehti*, the biggest political weekly in Finland, wrote about the doping scandal. In the issue published right after the doping scandal on 2 March 2001, it looked back to the good old times when sports provided people with an opportunity for experiencing feelings of a shared culture and an identity in common:

Sports achievements and heroes have been building material for Finnish national identity ever since Hannes Kolehmainen and Paavo Nurmi. Their achievements supported the idea of an independent and vital nation both internationally and among the Finns themselves. National pride and the feeling of unity overflow when athletes bring victories: everyone feels that they are sharing the success.

For the Finnish sports journalists and audience, the Nordic World Ski Championships of Lahti was certainly *meant* to be one of those occasions when ‘national pride and the feeling of unity overflow’. Hopes were high, especially for the three popular male skiers—Jari Isometsä, Mika Myllylä and Harri Kirvesniemi—whose private and professional lives had been closely followed in the media for about a decade. But against all expectations, the Lahti Championships turned into a ‘blood-freezing’ event. [5] The doping scandal sparked off when Isometsä was caught using a plasma expander, *Hemothes*, after winning a silver medal in 15 km pursuit event. At the press conference Isometsä took full responsibility and denied that anyone else was involved in the incident. He explained that he needed the plasma expander in order to lower his naturally high level of haemoglobin because of the low limit set by the International Ski Federation (FIS), not in order to improve his performance. Isometsä’s story was by and large accepted in the Finnish media, which represented him as a flawed but at heart honest athlete. At this point the story was still about the struggle of one talented skier with a high haemoglobin level against the aristocracy of the International Ski Federation. [6]

The story became more scandalous and bizarre when a medical bag, belonging to the Finnish Ski Association (FSA), was found at a petrol station. This bag contained bags of blood plasma expander, used hypodermic needles and bloodstained balls of cotton wool. At the same time, another male Finnish skier, Janne Immonen, was caught using the same plasma expander in a random test after the men’s victorious 4 × 10 km relay. This intensified the feeling of impending catastrophe in the media. Isometsä’s case was no longer believed to be an isolated one, and media reports began

to doubt both the FSA and the entire Finnish World Championship team. For instance, the editorial of *Helsingin Sanomat*, the biggest Finnish national daily newspaper in Finland (on 26 February 2001), stated how:

The fundamental question here is the way in which the skier's performance is artificially enhanced ... by relying on the conviction that not even the most improved detection methods will be able to root out the offence. It very much looks as though such strategy has been employed within the Finnish Ski Association.

After these incidents, WADA decided to perform a surprise test on the whole Finnish team, all the head coaches of the Finnish cross-country skiing team were suspended, FSA lost its main sponsors and the criminal police started to investigate the actions of the association.

On 28 February ('Black Wednesday'), the speculated and anticipated results from WADA came back, revealing that four more skiers (among which the multiple Olympic gold medallist Myllylä and Kirvesniemi, the 'grand old men' of Finnish cross-country skiing, as well as two female gold medallists, Milla Jauho and Virpi Kuitunen) were tested positive with *Hemohe*s. With a heading "All Hell Breaks Loose in Finnish skiing" *Helsingin Sanomat* reported the fiasco in the following manner (1 March 2001):

The diagnosis of the sport's health in the wake of the Lahti World Championships tells us that the condition of the patient is worse than we could ever have imagined. ... In Lahti, Finnish cross-country skiing deposited itself in the pillory, and it will require a great deal of effort to extricate it from this position of ridicule. On Sunday morning, we still had six World Champions in the national team. Just a few days later, four of them are dead meat, and the fifth one is looking very pale.

Sport, Shame and National Identity

As stated above, national identities have an important emotional dimension; competitive sports certainly provide a powerful opportunity for the emotional alignment of a community and the expansion of a 'we-feeling'. Sports offer a publicly accepted arena for the passionate waving of national flags and for the practice of other patriotic rituals. It would seem that in sports, and in sports journalism, one comes across a kind of nationalism that would be seen as unsuitable in other spheres of public life. [7] The connection between sports, emotions and national identity was evident, for instance, during the victory parade of England's rugby team in December 2003, when the streets of central London were filled with an overjoyed crowd waving St George flags and roaring the England anthem *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*. In the media coverage of sporting events, the way in which strong feelings of pride and joy relate to sports victories are often magnified by stereotypical comments about national identity and the use of metonymies. [8] It is 'we' who are the champions of

the world instead of individual athletes or teams. However, the positive feelings of community (a nation united by a ‘deep horizontal comradeship’, as Benedict Anderson describes the emotional dimension of national identity) [9] can be replaced by unpleasant or even violent feelings such as hate, anger, humiliation and shame, which, as seen often enough in the contemporary sports scene, can lead to ferocious (ethnic) conflicts. Emotions not only align individuals with others, but also against others.

This means that emotions are hardly a private matter, but that they work to engage individuals with nations, mediating the relationship between the individual and the collective. [10] What is intriguing in the Finnish doping scandal is the way in which it was instantly framed as a case of ‘national shame’ in the massive media coverage. This is exemplified, for instance, in the following editorial of *Suomen Kuvalehti* (2 March 2001), which, while envisioning a nation unified in its shame, clearly expresses the same feelings of disappointment and despair:

The doping scandal of Lahti Ski Championships touches all Finns—including those who are not a slightest bit interested in sports. It has become a matter of principle rather than a matter of some athletes guilty of dishonesty. International, especially Scandinavian, media have profited from the double-cross of the Finns. . . . However, the losing of face is only a minor disadvantage compared to the feeling of shame Finnish people are experiencing. The audience who has supported athletes feels that it has been humiliated, as the victory was achieved by cheating. The feelings of disappointment and despair were tangible both in Lahti and in the astonished comments of the media.

The editorial clearly insinuates that the shame does not concern only the skiers involved in the doping scandal, but that it concerns all the Finns. [11] But how can the actions of few individuals provoke such a strong sense of national shame? This is not merely a question of identification; it concerns the status of shame as a ‘frame’ in the web of Finnish psychosocial existence as a whole. According to Norman K. Denzin, ‘many of the feelings people feel and the reasons they give for their feelings are social, structural, cultural and relational in origin’. [12] Furthermore, cultures favour certain emotions, which may lead to the exaggeration and intensification of that valued emotion within a culture. National identities are *emotionalised* identities, as emotions involve an interweaving of the individual and the social. [13] As Carolyn Vogler states, national identities and discourses are rooted not only in political, economic and geopolitical processes in the external social world, but also in psychological processes and strong feelings. [14] Ruth Benedict talks about ‘shame cultures’ and ‘guilt cultures’; Japan, for instance, has historically placed a great deal upon the feeling of shame, while most European cultures regulate the activities of their members through guilt. [15] Yet, unlike most European countries, Finland has a strong reliance on shame in order to police and discipline. In Finland, shame as a cultural emotion, as a mode of social engagement, has a long history. In rather specific ways (as will be shown shortly)

Finnish national identity has been shaped from the 19th century onwards around notions of shame. [16]

Like guilt, shame is an emotion most inevitably embedded in a sociocultural matrix. Shame has a strong cultural salience with an obvious social function: it motivates norm-conforming behaviour. In complex ways, shame frames discourses about social relations and events. Furthermore, both shame and its obverse, pride, are related to the evaluation of individuals' actions, feelings or behaviour. [17] The difference is in the feeling: in pride we feel 'puffed up' while in shame we feel that we are no good, inadequate, unworthy. Shame is a fear of disgrace, but it also implies an attitude of awe or respect regarding the values central to culture. Shame arises out of the tension between how the individual wants to be seen and how she or he is. [18] This tension can be clearly seen in the way the Finnish media dealt with the Lahti doping scandal. Almost in an obsessive frenzy, the media reported on how the foreign press were covering the Finnish doping case, and speculated how Finns would be regarded by the outside world after the scandal. Suvi Lindén, the then Minister of Culture, was concerned that Finland was now regarded in badly: it was 'a model country of how to mess things up'. [19]

Not only pride, then, but also shame is an emotion that drives social discourses; it occupies a significant position in the construction of national identity. Shame is a socioculturally constituted emotion which indicates the strength of social bonds, both within and beyond the nation, as it is a mode of consciousness that returns to the society and sensitises the individual to the social world. In England, the scenes of English football hooligans rioting in Brussels during the European Football Championships in 2000 not only provoked a strong sense of national shame, but also refuelled the introspective debate within England itself about what it is to be English in the modern world. [20] This incident shows that national shame can paradoxically function as a unifier of the nation, as it may trigger the citizens to rid themselves of bad internal objects and destructive impulses by projecting them onto commonly shared and accepted external enemies. [21] Shame, then, can actually serve group cohesion by the repair behaviours that it motivates.

This shame discourse was the reason why the doping scandal invaded everyone's life and why, for a while, it was the most important 'talk of the town'. The media took advantage of even the smallest details of the mess—and beat all their old sales records. For instance, the live press conference of FSA (held right after the WADA test results were made public on 1 March 2001) was viewed by two million viewers, a figure hardly ever reached in a country of five million inhabitants. The media coverage around the Finnish doping scandal can be classified into the following two categories.

First, there was the news that reported on how the Finnish scandal was being covered in the foreign media, and speculated on how the Finns were now regarded by the outside world. *Helsingin Sanomat* (27 February 2001), for instance, wrote how:

Newspapers in Sweden and Norway were once again highly critical of the situation, comparing Finland to the former East Germany. The newspapers wrote that Finland deserves all the shame it now gets, and suspected that the entire Finnish skiing team is corrupted. We will perhaps learn more of the scale of the corruption tomorrow, when the results of the WADA mass testing carried out last Thursday are due.

Comparisons with the former East Germany were made by others too; *Suomen Kuvalehti*, for instance, wrote that Finland had now lost her reputation, after which the Finns would be again associated with the old Eastern block that experiments on athletes. [22] This fear was not entirely groundless, as comparisons with the old DDR were indeed being made, especially in the Swedish and Norwegian media. The Swedish conglomerate RagnSells even published an advertisement in a Swedish financial newspaper that portrayed Mika Myllylä with a caption: “Obviously, there are waste that even we are not able to manage”. [23] As the editorial in *Helsingin Sanomat* (26 February 2001) put it:

Those who have been caught—and those who are behind them—will carry a heavy burden in having brought the shadow of doubt over some impressive sporting careers by their former colleagues. It may be odious to draw comparisons with East Germany, the doping superpower of former times, but they are by no means without a foundation.

Second, there was news about the death of heroes. In this context it should be borne in mind that not all sports are considered equal in the process of nation-building, as some sports have a more important role in the national imagery than others. [24] Cross-country skiing (and other winter sports) is the sport in which the Finnish media has traditionally put its faith. This is not only due to the victories Finns have gained in international skiing championships; it is also because skiing is symbolically related to the Winter War and *sisu*, the ‘Finnish quality’ which stands for a philosophy that what must be done, will be done, regardless of cost. Finnish *sisu* is inherently connected to the other key myths of Finnishness: the Finnish wars and Finnish sports. It is often said that *sisu* sustained the Finns when they were in war against the Soviet Union, and it is also used in describing the ‘special’ Finnish self-discipline needed in winning gold medals in sports championships. Furthermore, cross-country skiing played an important role in the war between Finland and the Soviet Union. The Finnish history books contain images of the heroes of the Winter War, skiing in their white snow camouflage costumes. In recent years, images that embody the idea of Finnish *sisu* have been circulated in the media through the images of top-skiers like Myllylä, who is shown training in the middle of a large swamp. He is ‘swamp-running’, totally exhausted, sometimes in a deep water through his waist. Myllylä and two other all-time favourite skiers, Isometsä and Kirvesniemi, had named themselves ‘karpaasis’—the nickname which the media lovingly had adopted and used when creating a serial narrative of their achievements. They were icons; true,

honest, tenacious Finnish heroes representing the Finnish ideology: ‘through difficulties, to victory’.

In the beginning of the doping scandal, Isometsä still showed apparent honesty by taking full responsibility for his actions. He created a false pride of his shame: he had broken the rules, yes, but the rules were wrong. After the five other skiers were caught the myth of (the nation of) *karpaasis* broke down. In the midst of events, *Suomen Kuvalehti* (23 February) published a cover with a close-up of the unhappy face of Jari Isometsä, a Finnish skiing hero, accompanied with simple one word title: shame. The skiers’ shame was given a collective and national dimension by linking it to the Finnish sense of national identity. The skiers had failed to live up to Finnish cultural standards, and all Finns were now to be seen by the outside world as having lost face. Of course, feelings of despair and disappointment are common in the media of all small countries when their sports heroes have in one way or another failed to live up to the expectations of the nation. [25] For the Finns, the worst thing about the doping scandal was not, however, the scandal itself. The worst thing was that, along with the façade of honesty in sports in general, the myth of the honest, hardworking Finn came crashing down. (This myth has its origin in the Finnish shame discourse. The Finns might then be more ‘primitive’ than other Europeans, but at least they are honest and hard working; quite different from the ‘bad boys’ of Southern Europe.)

Why this emphasis on myths and stereotypes? National stereotypes, as well as national self-images, are longstanding cultural representations supported by the media. While national stereotypes are typically negative depictions of other nationalities, national self-images tend to create more flattering pictures of nationalities. Interestingly however, the Finnish national self-image has been exceptionally belittling, to the point of ‘self-racism’, at least when compared to other European nationalities. [26] In the value-laden comparisons between Finland and other European nations, made on the mythical and stereotypical level, the Finnish ‘backwoods culture’ has been represented as uncultured, uncommunicative, impolite, culturally and biologically pathological (just look at the statistics for alcoholism and suicide), too straightforward and far too serious compared to the civilised and well-behaved urban cultures of other European nations. As a result, the Finns are often discontented with their nationality, ashamed of themselves and their fellow countrymen. There seems to be a tradition of self-stigmatisation in Finland, resulting from the fact that ‘Finnishness’ has long been defined as being inferior to the rest of Europe. Ever since the Finnish National-Romantic movement in the late 19th century and the civilisation process of the common people, the Finns have been regarded by the ‘European elite’ as separate, mentally colonised ‘others’.

The Finnish shame discourse, then, is closely related to the fact that the ‘construction’ of Finnishness took place from above to below. Finnishness was seen by the national elite as an opposite of Europeanness (particularly Swedishness), Finnish language was seen undeveloped, and the Finns themselves were seen as lazy children of nature, living day by day, with a tendency towards drinking—this in



Figure 1 The cover of *Suomen Kuvalehti* from 23 February 2001 with the face of Jari Isometsä accompanied with simple, one word title: shame (häpeä)

opposition to other Europeans, who have enjoyed a long tradition of urban culture. As a result the Finns had to be tamed; their positive attitude of life, their own forms of sociality, sensuality and sexuality had to be rejected. On the other hand, the Finns were eventually granted positive traits too, but given the lack of admirable ancestors and other national heroes, the place of the Finnish 'ego ideal' was defined by the features of a sports hero and a courageous soldier.

As Satu Apo argues, the characteristics that the Finns themselves attach to Finnishness are not radically different from the characteristics of Finland's

neighbouring countries. Instead, what is typically Finnish is the negative evaluation of these national characteristics—whether they are imagined or actual. For instance, what the others regard as Finnish honesty, the Finns themselves regard as Finnish stupidity, compared to the craftiness that can be found among southern Europeans. If others appreciate Finnish industriousness and conscientiousness, the Finns themselves call it work-alcoholism. Modesty and unassuming behaviour among the Finns is, by the Finns, generally considered as a lack of civilised mannerisms (but not necessarily by the others). In a similar manner, the Lahti doping scandal (which in the other countries would have been entirely regarded as a fault of the athletes alone) provided the Finns with a perfect opportunity for more self-lashing. The way in which the doping scandal was dealt with in the media, then, brought the discussion of Finnish national identity back to the old concern of it not being ‘good enough’ to be (Western) European, and brought the age-old shame discourse and self-loathing to the Finns’ minds. But how was this shame discourse coped with and how was the Finnish national pride restored in the media?

Coping with Shame

As has been stated throughout this article, the way in which Finnish media dealt with the doping scandal was saturated with the emotion of shame. The media supplied deliberately symbolic images of the disgrace of the nation in order to evoke the desired emotional response (shame) in their audience. The main theme was that whereas in the past ‘we’ were proud because we had true, honest and tenacious athletes, now ‘we’ should be ashamed, because our athletes turned out to be dishonest and indolent. This is the reason why the Lahti doping scandal was experienced as painful, humiliating and shameful. This national shame, however, easily turned into anger—and this was directed towards the globalisation and commercialisation of sports. The athletes were accused of trading fair-play and Finnish national pride for greediness and money-grubbing. But what was the function of the shame discourse in the media? How was the national unity restored in the Finnish media after the doping scandal, and what kind of far-reaching effects did it have in the Finnish sports culture?

First, the athletes were punished. Isometsä, Immonen, Myllylä and Kirvesniemi all lost their medals and got a two-year suspension; Kuitunen and Jauho were suspended for three months. Several other people were also brought to book for the scandal, such as Kari-Pekka Kyrö, the head coach of the Finnish team, who was banned for life from taking part in the organisation of skiing events. Several directors as well as physicians of the Finnish Ski Federation were forced to quit. After Kaisa Varis got caught in Val di Fiemme, the biggest tabloid journal in Finland, *Ilta-Sanomat*, wrote overdramatically that it would stop covering the sports news on cross-country skiing. Some found this a hypocritical decision, as it was the tabloid journals in particular that benefited financially from the doping scandal. *Ilta-Sanomat* would continue

covering the doping news, even when it would not cover the cross-country skiing news in general. In addition, the governmental subsidies, as well as many independent sponsor subsidies enjoyed by *The Finnish Ski Federation*, were frozen and cut. This is how the logic of national shame and individual punishment works on the collective level: the ‘sins’ of the whole nation were shifted to the cheating skiers, and their punishment was followed by purification and a sense of communality. [27]

Second, blame was placed to the globalisation and commercialisation of sports. The national shame and humiliation of the Lahti doping scandal quickly turned to anger towards the globalisation and commercialisation of sports. The scandal was seen as a symptom of the crisis of Finnish identity within the globalising world. Globalisation was seen as a context in which Finnish ethics such as honesty and genuineness lost their value. Instead, the individual is driven by market value—as sports is no longer a means to build up a national identity but global entertainment and business—and expected to reach his or her goal by fair means or foul. As *Suomen Kuvalehti* (2 March 2001) wrote:

Top sports have become distorted. The literal maximisation of profit that nothing can stop has replaced fair play—money-grubbing has won. . . . This kind of sports is entertainment. Television networks, betting, and highly paid top athletes dominate the overall view. The athlete him- or herself is turning into a monster, a chemically-laden gladiator, whose life has merely instrumental value. Money talks.

The reactions to this discussion were twofold. On the one hand there were voices that insisted that Finnish sports should turn its back on the demands of globalisation. Fair-play and ‘old-fashioned’ ethics in sports was called for. The aftermath of this debate even reached the University of Helsinki. The University, which had been suffering from a lack of funds, suddenly received funding for a professorship in sports law. The professorship was justified by The Ministry of Culture by the increase of issues related to sports legislation in public life. According to the Ministry, the doping scandal of the Lahti World Championships re-emphasised the need for expertise in sports legislation.

On the other hand, there were voices that accepted the demands of globalisation. The question was raised whether or not the Finns should consent to ethical flexibility in sports, as it is commonplace in other areas in society as well. A new term was coined, ‘the grey area’ that referred to the use of substances that in reality are permitted (for instance new drugs that are not yet taken in the WADA list of forbidden substances), but ethically can be seen as reprehensible. There were even voices that questioned the whole myth of honest Finns. In a newspaper interview, Jyrki Piispa, a cultural researcher in the University of Joensuu, suggested that the doping scandal was a healthy thing that forced the Finns to look into the mirror, and that broke the collective illusion of the Finns as ‘the chosen people’ and thereby also their collective shame. [28]

Conclusion

National identity and national discourses have interested scholars both in Finland and in other countries since the 1990s. In Finland, the reasons for this are several. First, the geopolitical changes (especially the collapse of the Soviet Union) have changed Finland's position in world politics. During the Cold War, Finland strove to appear as a politically neutral nation between the East and the West, but, due to the Treaty of Friendship between Finland and the Soviet Union, was often seen as a part of Eastern Europe. With her membership in the European Union since 1994, and after the worldwide success of Nokia, Finland has become more clearly attached to Western Europe. On the other hand, the cultural-political significance of East/West polarisation is today more obscure than before. As we have seen at the end of the 20th century, the increased processes of globalisation have made the world more interconnected, with new temporal and spatial qualities. The collapse of the Soviet Union, for instance, can therefore be seen as a strengthening factor of the growth of global market relations within and between Western and Eastern nations.

As Stuart Hall notes, the impact of globalisation on national identities has been widely discussed both in terms of cultural homogenisation, or weakening of national identities, and strengthening of national identities as a result of the resistance to globalisation. [29] Seen in this light, the doping scandal could have been a blessing in disguise, one that was needed in order to restore the feeling of national unity caused by the insecurity that the citizens may feel in the globalising world. The sports debate described here can be seen having a positive effect that supported a national identity under threat. What is interesting in this scenario is that the feeling of national unity was rebuilt through a similar kind of shame discourse when Finland was joined to Europe in the 19th century. What this article hopes to have shown is that the way the media evokes the emotions that underpin nationalistic sentiments (in this case, shame) has a far-reaching social and historical dimension. Furthermore, it hopes to have shown that the link between sports and national identity is growing stronger (instead of weakening, as often suggested) due to the increasing globalisation of sports. (Of course, this is not to say that the commercial values of globalisation would not be reshaping sports. In cross-country skiing, for instance, more spectator-friendly disciplines—which are more attractive for the advertisers—such as pursuit start and sprint have been adopted.) The doping scandal demonstrates that sports cannot only 'bring the nation together' by providing everyone an opportunity to form an opinion about what happened. It also demonstrates that globalisation does not necessarily diminish the role of sports as a forum through which the discourses of national identity are mobilised, even though the reasons why these should be mobilised may have become increasingly commercial rather than ideological. [30] The news coverage on the Lahti doping scandal, then, generated not only a sports debate, but also related debates of shame and Finnish national identity, calling the 'meanings of Finnishness' into question

and reviving the old concern of Finnish identity not being ‘good enough’ to be (Western) European. In the end, the Lahti doping scandal seemed to reinstate, rather than splinter, the sense of Finnish identity, as it provoked a debate that brought forward the discussion about ‘national identity under threat’, and was followed by attempts to restore and redefine Finnish national self-dignity in the context of the globalisation and commercialisation of sports.

Notes

All newspaper quotations are translated by the author.

- [1] Denham, “Hero or Hypocrite,” 167.
- [2] Blain et al., *Sport and National Identity*; Boyle and Haynes, “‘The Grand Old Game’”; Hargreaves, *Sport, Power, and Culture*; Pyykkönen, *Suomi Uskoi Urheilua*; Reinikainen, *Isänmaan sankarit*; Tervo, “Sports, Doping, and National Identity.”
- [3] Blain et al., *Sport and National Identity*, 13–14; Tervo, “A Cultural Community,” 153.
- [4] Reinikainen, *Isänmaan sankarit*; Tervo, “Nationalism, Sports and Gender,” 369; Virtapohja, *Sankareiden salaisuudet*, 43.
- [5] As formulated by Virtapohja in “The World Championships.”
- [6] Vahtokari, “The Sunday of Joy.”
- [7] O’Donnell, “Mapping the Mythical,” 354.
- [8] Blain et al., *Sport and National Identity*, 80–82.
- [9] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.
- [10] Ahmed, “Collective Feelings,” 27.
- [11] Writing on the Lahti doping scandal Mervi Tervo points out, quite correctly, that not all Finns accepted ‘being shamed’ by the media. See Tervo, “Sports, Doping, and National Identity.” A similar example of the way in which the actual public reaction can differ from the reaction constructed by the media is the death of princess Diana. There are several studies that demonstrate that despite the media rhetoric of a people ‘united in grief’ there were also many people who were not personally affected by the death of the princess. These studies make obvious that the rhetoric of the ‘whole nation is mourning’ or even the ‘whole world is mourning’ may stand in sharp contrast with the actual emotions and behaviour of the majority of the people. See Turnock, *Interpreting Diana*.
- [12] Denzin, *On Understanding Emotion*, 54.
- [13] Ahmed, “Collective Feelings,” 28.
- [14] Vogler, “Social Identity and Emotion.”
- [15] Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*.
- [16] Laine, *Shame and Desire*.
- [17] Lewis, *Shame*, 34.
- [18] Wurmser, “Shame,” 76.
- [19] *Keskisuomalainen*, 28 September 2001.
- [20] Pines, “Rituals and Representations of Black ‘Britishness’.”
- [21] Jacques, “On the Dynamics of the Social Structure.”
- [22] Ruokanen, “Rubbish.”
- [23] *Ilta-Sanomat*, 27 May 2001.
- [24] Tervo, “A Cultural Community,” 154.
- [25] Blain et al., *Sport and National Identity*.
- [26] Apo, “The Tradition of Stigmatisation,” 83–128.
- [27] Girad, *Things Hidden*.

- [28] *Iltalehti*, 10 March 2001.
 [29] Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 300.
 [30] Boyle and Haynes, "'The Grand Old Game,'" 550.

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