

‘Here be Dragons, Here be Savages, Here be bad Plumbing’: Australian Media Representations of Sport and Terrorism

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Abstract

As 'Propaganda Theorists' argue, an examination of key discourses can enhance our understanding of how economic, political and social debate is shaped by mainstream media reporting. In this article we present content and discourse analysis of Australian media reporting on the nexus of sport and terrorism. Examining newspaper reports over a five-year period, from 1996-2001, which included the 11 September 2001 terrorist tragedy in the United States (9/11), provides useful insights into how public discourse might be influenced with regard to sport and terrorism interrelationships. The results of the media analysis suggest that hegemonic tropes are created around sport and terrorism. The distilled message is one of good and evil, with homilies of sport employed in metaphors for western society and its values. The reactions and responses of sport administrators and athletes to terrorist acts and the threat of terrorism to sport are used to exemplify these ideals, providing newspaper readers a context within which to localize meaning and relevance.

Keywords: terrorism, sport, media

Introduction

In this paper we investigate both quantitative variances and qualitative nuances in Australian newspaper articles covering the topic of 'sport' and 'terrorism', pre and post the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 (known colloquially as 9/11). Analysis is theoretically framed using Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model (1988) with an accompanying content analysis. As Turner noted, 'media texts offer especially rich opportunities to observe the cultural construction of meaning, locations where we can see the social production of ideas and values happening before our eyes'.¹ This is especially relevant in the current Australian context, where the response to terrorism continues to assume importance as a political platform.

It has been well established that the media, in general, are potent in their ability to create and maintain societal perspectives.² As key components of contemporary Western cultures, sport and media together provide 'a dynamic metaphor of contested power and protean forms'³ whose analysis provides us with a way to derive meaning and sense from cultural power. More specifically, 'when it comes to sport, the mass media assume an even greater importance since the overwhelming majority of spectators experience sporting events in their mediated version'.⁴ This media-sport nexus has resulted in a mutually reliant relationship. The media provides sport with publicity to attract spectators. The press, in turn, uses their coverage of sport as a marketing device to attract their audience.⁵ Thus, any consideration of newspapers as a sport information resource should take this relationship into account.

Critical to understanding this analysis is the prominence that sport coverage receives in the Australian media, and media's role in determining the shape, form and appeal of sport.⁶ As Rapley and McHoul⁷ pointed out, newspaper texts can be 'repertoires for the production of locally relevant meanings...the explication of the way in which social (and sporting) life is produced'. However, the localized unique dimensions of ~~Australian~~ sport media can be complemented by wider insights and implications about how we construct and often eulogize sport as part of social relations in a globalized world'.⁸

The global coverage attained by mass media has meant this medium was a significant mechanism through which people throughout the world found out about 9/11 and its aftermath, beginning with the live satellite television broadcasts of the ongoing drama. In evidence, both of the authors of this paper independently watched CNN live in Australia as the second plane crashed into the World Trade Center and saw the towers collapse. The dissemination of such information is one of the media's functions. But why and how selected information surrounding such events is chosen to be circulated, and other material is not, and the processes around the media's framing of public discourses, needs to be better understood.⁹

By their selection of 'newsworthy' material the media perform a gate-keeping function. 'They provide what is seen, heard, and read, along with the type and amount of coverage given'.¹⁰ It may not be that they totally suppress information. Rather, in choosing which material is published or broadcast, 'the main point is the shaping of history, the selection, the interpretation that takes place'.¹¹ According to the Propaganda Model this selectivity occurs because the media perform hegemonic roles which advance the economic, social and political agendas of privileged groups. 'The media serve this purpose in many ways: through selection of topics, distribution of concerns, framing of issues, filtering of information, emphasis and tone, and by keeping debate within the bounds of acceptable premises'.¹² One topic, which can be examined in this light, is terrorism.

Terrorism is still making headlines more than two years after 9/11. More recently, in another terrorist attack, three bomb blasts in Bali killed 88 Australians and injured over 100 more. According to The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: 'the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States and 12 October 2002 in Bali have been defining events. They have changed Australia's security environment in significant ways'.¹³ These attacks helped create a moral panic, centred on the possibility that future terrorist attacks may occur in Australia. Since 9/11 the threat of terrorism has also been linked by the federal government to: the ongoing and divisive issue of immigration; the growing number of Muslim asylum seekers trying to enter the country illegally by boat (people smuggling); and Australia's support of the United States in its 'war against terrorism'.¹⁴ In 2003 the Australian government joined the U.S. - led 'coalition of the willing' and, in this

capacity, sent troops into Iraq as part of the alliance's invasion force. This was the first time that Australian troops had launched a pre-emptive strike against another country. It is the media that has provided most Australians with their knowledge of these events. How and what information and 'expert' opinion the media has presented to the Australian public on issues such as terrorism can be explained by using the Propaganda Model.

The Propaganda Model and the Media

In 1988 Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky published *Manufacturing Consent: the Politics of the Economy of the Mass Media*. They advanced a functional theory of media the 'Propaganda Model', based on the premise that, in western capitalist societies, the dominant media are firmly embedded in the market system and thus mass media discourse is 'shaped by ownership and profit orientation'.¹⁵ Thus, the mainstream media serve as a propaganda mechanism for power elites. As such, Herman and Chomsky proposed that the media frame news and allow debate only within the confines of selected perspectives. Similarly, the media omit many important particulars and stories through a system designed to sift out material that falls outside acceptable socio/political boundaries.¹⁶ Five filters to the media's dissemination of information were presented in the model:

- (1) The size, concentrated ownership, and profit motives and orientation of the dominant mass media oligopolies
- (2) Advertising as the primary source of income
- (3) Reliance on information provided by government, business and 'experts', funded and approved by primary sources and agents of power
- (4) 'Flak' as a means of disciplining the media
- (5) 'Anti communism' as a control mechanism.

In terms of this last filter, the timing and context of when the propaganda model was developed need to be considered: *Manufacturing Consent* was written during the Cold War. A more current reading of the fifth filter now is acknowledged to be the identification of an 'evil' empire or dictator. Chomsky himself later accepted that the anticommunism tag was too narrow and that it should be:

a sub-case of something more general: for the system to work properly people have to be frightened, and they have to shelter under the wings of authority... So I think when we talked about the 'fifth filter' we should have brought in all this stuff—the way artificial fears are created with a dual purpose... partly to get rid of people you don't like but partly to frighten the rest. Because if people are frightened they will accept authority... But in order to maintain that when there's no actual threat requires concocting threats.¹⁷

So, the function of this ideological filter today is generalised to be the marginalisation of voices which are not sufficiently in line with the genomic view, and limiting of debate within controlled and conventional choices.¹⁸ The Propaganda Model argues that in order to achieve this, the media take the set of assumptions that express the basic ideas of a subject and then introduce debate within a limited framework, enhancing the strength of the assumptions by 'ingraining them in people's minds as the entire possible spectrum of opinion there is'.¹⁹ The choice of experts is similarly restricted. Chomsky argues that 'if you look at the sources reporters select, they are not sources that are expert, they are sources that represent vested interests'.²⁰

As a consequence, the nature of the information that passes through all five of these filters, and thus is widely available in the mass media, is:

material which reflects the interest of the ownership of the media source, does not offend advertising sources, relies on 'credible' sources from government, industry, and academia, does not offend prominent lobby groups or individuals in society, and which does not, at least, promote anti-capitalist views, though it is often better if it can manage to denigrate such views (or other marginalized ideologies) as well.²¹

This sifting of material raises reservations about the norms, values, and practices that govern the production of content in news-media organizations²² and specifically how sport journalism is presented beyond objective game results, statistics, and descriptions of play.

The Propaganda Model has its detractors, despite Chomsky's self proclamation that the model 'is one of the best-confirmed theses in the social

sciences. There has been no serious counter-discussion of it at all'.²³ In the main, criticism of the propaganda model's validity has been based on three criteria: that 'it sidesteps issues of discourse within the text, it uses comparison and dichotomy to support its central theses and it is unclear as to its intention in dealing with production, text, audience and the interplay between the three'.²⁴

Despite these arguments the model has utility for content analysis when examining media coverage. In its favour Klaehn²⁵ noted that the model does not seek to 'make predictions concerning agency and/or subjectivity. Rather, it highlights the fact that awareness, perception and understandings are typically constrained and informed by structures of discourse'. He also observes that there are 'clear methodological techniques with which to test the substantive hypotheses advanced by the Propaganda Model'.²⁶

Just as the model does not imply that media audiences have no agency, it also does not signify that they read media texts in simplistic ways, nor that they construct meanings in ways that have not been negotiated. 'What it does do is highlight the fact that perception, awareness and understanding are informed and constrained by the structure of the discourse in question'.²⁷ Thus, given that the media is a major determiner in shaping community attitudes and values²⁸, it follows that material regarding sport and terrorism that passes through the filters and the mass media circulates will, at least in part, shape public discourse.

In terms of the use of 'experts' Martin identified a three-tier categorization of sources used in the media. 'Primary' sources consist of those associated with 'the professional and managerial culture of society's chief political, economic, intellectual and control institutions', who, Martin asserts, 'basically define the essential aspects and features of a newsworthy event or issues; they are the ones who tell the media - and us - what the event is really all about'.²⁹ At the next level are two distinct sets of 'secondary news sources': 'one involves ordinary people who are featured in the news as a source of moral and emotional reaction to an event or issue... The other types of secondary sources are representatives of oppositional groups or social movements... who also play a reactive, role'.³⁰ Finally, Martin's³¹ third tier consists of: those who are excluded altogether from the news. These missing voices often come from the extremes of the class structure: at the bottom are those who lack the power to make their point of view newsworthy; at the top are those who have the power to conceal

their point of view from the news. This viewpoint too is in keeping with the Propaganda Model's selection and use of experts.

As public opinion, perceptions, and expectations have been a contributing factor in formulating policies and practices in Australian sport³² then an examination of the media's framing of sport and terrorism will provide better understandings of how its nexus has helped shape the current environment in which sport is practiced and managed.

Terrorism

Whilst the etymology of terrorism can be traced back to the Latin verb *terrere*, (meaning to arouse fear), the term only came into usage during the French Revolution (1793-94), although terrorism *per se* existed long before this. In terms of the mass media's relationship to terrorism, 'terrorism—... custom-made for TV cameras—first appeared on 22 July, 1968, when the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine undertook the first terrorist hijacking of a commercial airplane'.³³ Because of this connection scholars have conceptualised terrorism within the framework of symbolic communication theory.³⁴ In 1975 Jenkins³⁵ noted that 'terrorist attacks are often carefully choreographed to attract the attention of the electronic media and international press... Terrorism is aimed at the people watching, not at the actual victims. Terrorism is a theatre'.

From an operational perspective no single definition of terrorism has gained global acceptance³⁶ despite more than 100 definitions being proposed to international organizations³⁷, as attempts to gain consensus have 'proven impossible to satisfy fully the demands of either politics or scholarship'.³⁸ While some academics claim that a standardised definition of terrorism is necessary and a prerequisite to combating it, others believe that an objective and internationally accepted definition of terrorism can never be fully agreed upon, as any categorization of it is influenced by interpretation, personal perception and exploitation.³⁹ Because of these latter constraints, concurrence on an acceptable definition of terrorism has eluded the United Nations for over 30 years. Even before this, attempts to arrive at an internationally standard definition were begun under the League of Nations.⁴⁰

The absence of agreement on a specific, unequivocal meaning for terrorism has resulted in a number of far ranging consequences; from the fact that that legislating against it is problematic⁴¹, to the reality that people fighting oppression have been branded pejoratively as terrorist by their adversaries.⁴²

Despite the lack of a collectively acceptable definition, there is a range of functional definitions that serve the needs of the organizations that utilize them. 'Some of these focus on the special nature on the victims of terror; some stress the difference between the victims and the true goal of terror; other definitions focus on the violent act itself, its abnormal nature, or the unusual character of its perpetrators'.⁴³ For example, the United States' State Department, labels terrorism as 'premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetuated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience'.⁴⁴ Another, longer standing, designation is:

the use, or threat of use, of violence by an individual or group, whether acting for or in opposition to established authority, when such action is designed to create extreme anxiety and/or fear-inducing effects in a target group larger than the immediate victims with the purpose of coercing that group into acceding to the political demands of the perpetrators.⁴⁵

Semantic differentiations between definitions withstanding, according to Paul Pillar, a former deputy chief of the United States' CIA's Counter Terrorist Center, there are four key elements of a terrorist act. These are that it is:

- premeditated, rather than an impulsive act of anger
- political, rather than criminal, and designed to destabilise the existing political order
- aimed at civilians, not at military targets
- carried out by sub-national groups, not by the army of a country.⁴⁶

It is generally accepted that terrorism: has always been purposeful; is political in its motives; implies violence or threats thereof; is indiscriminate in its choice of targets; as well as being designed to have consequences beyond its immediate

target/s.⁴⁷ Thus, although the victims may not be preselected, there is a strategy behind terrorists' actions. The significant intent is that terrorism is politically motivated and it is this purpose that distinguishes it from other forms of violence such as murder or football hooliganism.⁴⁸

While terrorist acts have had a variety of goals, Selth⁴⁹ has classified them into four broad (but not necessarily mutually exclusive) typologies:

- domestic (actions by groups or individuals against others in the same country)
- state (terror used by authorities to maintain their position within a nation)
- international (terrorism directed at foreign nationals or governments)
- state sponsored (terrorist tactics used by agents of the state, or independent groups to pursue foreign policy aims.

Of these categories it is the last, that is, state sponsored terrorism, which is believed to have killed the most people.⁵⁰ Selth's last three groupings can include members of the military as either perpetrators or victims, thus this model contradicts Pillar's requisites of a terrorist act.

Given the above variations in definitions and classifications, it stands to reason that the motivations that drive terrorists are also varied. These motivations have been classified into three spheres: rational, psychological and cultural⁵¹, although a terrorist may be influenced by a combination of two or more of these. The rational component involves weighing up possible positive and negative outcomes by making a cost-benefit analysis before deciding to act. Psychological motivation for terrorism derives from personal overwhelming personal feelings of injustice and frustration. In terms of cultural motivation, terrorism may be tolerated, or even condoned, in some societies where there is commitment to and perceived benefits from self-sacrifice for a suitable cause. Thus, any one of these motivations may result in terrorist acts occurring where people are playing and/or watching sport.

Sport and terrorism

While there have been several examples of terrorism in sport, which we will discuss later, the study of violence in sport has primarily examined player and/or spectator behaviour. Specialist literature on the relationship between sport and terrorism is rare

despite the fact that in recent times sport, like many other activities, has been acknowledged to be vulnerable to terrorist activities.⁵² Little work has been carried out on ‘actual or threatened acts of violence that may be associated with sporting practices and cultures, but not directly prompted by action on the playing field’, such as terrorism.⁵³ According to Atkinson and Young⁵⁴:

While sports may seemingly share few conceptual links with acts of terrorism... we cannot ignore how sports events may become targets of terrorism... or the contexts of terrorism.... For many reasons, individual terrorists or terrorist organizations might find suitable targets in athletes participating in games, spectators attending the events, or selected corporate sponsors of sports contests.

Because of the reach of television, the greater the viewing audience of a sporting event, the more ‘terrorism capital’ it possesses. Accordingly, the Olympic Games and other mega-sporting events have been considered to be prime terrorism targets since satellite broadcasts created real-time, global television audiences. The most notorious example of terrorism in sport occurred in 1972 at the Munich Olympic Games, when members of the Palestinian group ‘Black September’ infiltrated the Olympic Village and stormed the Israeli team quarters, killing a Israeli wrestling coach and taking ten other Israeli athletes and officials hostage. An ineffective rescue attempt resulted in the deaths of all of the Israelis, a German policeman and a number of the terrorists. Since this time security at the Games become more rigorous and is an essential and expensive part of the organising committee’s planning.

Other connections can also be drawn between sport and terrorism. Sport spaces have been converted to sites of state sponsored terrorism. For example, in Afghanistan, Kabul’s main sport venue, Ghazi Stadium, whose construction had been financed by the International Monetary Fund, was used by the Taliban to carry out public executions and amputations.⁵⁵ Also, physical activity has formed part of some terrorists’ preparation. Broughton⁵⁶ noted that ‘Islamic radicals ...needed a lot of training, especially physical training. The ways in which the media have portrayed these events and reported other terrorism and sport stories has implications for how we form our value judgements about the subject and is the focus of the current research study.

Method

The term content analysis applies to ‘a variety of research techniques, all of which are used for systematically collecting, analysing and making inferences from messages’⁵⁷. Later definitions have indicated further refinements, namely ‘a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context’.⁵⁸

This study used relational content analysis. This involved establishing the existence, frequency and nature of concepts, then quantifying and explaining their nature, and lastly exploring their relationships. In other words, the focus was on uncovering semantic, or consequential, associations. Individual concepts, in and of themselves, were viewed as having no inherent meaning. Rather, meaning was seen to be the product of the relationships among the concepts identified.

Shapiro and Markoff⁵⁹ contended that content analysis is only a valid and meaningful tool if related to other measures. Thus, the Propaganda Model can provide a legitimate point of reference to study selected sport media texts and draw inferences about the Australian sportscape. According to Rintala and Birrell⁶⁰, content analysis ‘assumes that people are influenced... by what they hear, see or read from the mass media... What the media chooses to cover and how they provide this coverage has an influence on who participates in sport, is recognized for that participation, and reaches a certain level of fulfilment through that participation’.

A search of the *Dow Jones Interactive* database using the keywords ‘sport’ and ‘terrorism’ indicated that there had been 522 newspaper articles, with both of these words included, published in the Australian media between January 1966 and December 2001, a period that included the September 11th tragedy. Three hundred and fourteen of these articles had been published since 9/11. The database included the major newspapers of the five states and the Australian Capital Territory, the major Sunday newspapers, a national newspaper and affiliated regional papers.

Every article was read and those that were not deemed germane were discarded. These discards included items that contained multiple news stories under one headline banner, or a summary of sport results followed by a different story about terrorist activity. The remaining 275 newspaper articles, which had been published in

13 major Australian newspapers and 36 regional papers, as detailed in Figure 1, were then used as the sample.

Insert figure one here.

As textual analysis attempts to investigate and expose ‘hidden’ meanings inherent in cultural texts, particularly those of the media⁶¹, for the analysis we focused on meanings that intersected with cultural representations of sport and terrorism. How particular messages were reinforced or marginalized, based on the structure and key messages of the text, required a close reading of each article at several different levels: as a singular text, in relation to other passages and articles, and to the wider context of Australian sport.

Data containing multiple meanings required interpretive coding that was subtle and flexible, but still reliable and valid. We aimed to construct and combine categories from the data, further refining and linking them as meanings became clearer. As our understanding grew, articles were revisited, and connections were drawn between data and theory. We used a software package (NVivo) that was designed to code complex data for multiple meanings and retrieve according to patterns of codes. Each article was coded with a base of four attributes: date, publication name, timing (pre or post 9/11) and type of article (fact only, opinion or mixed). Broad themes and sub-themes were identified and coded, segments ranged in scope from words, to sentences, paragraphs, passages and even entire articles. Figure 2 depicts the classification categories used and sub-themes.

Insert Figure 2 here

Data were then exported to a statistical package (SPSS) for further analysis and data reduction procedures. For example, the date values were used in analyses of the longitudinal dimension of the newspaper reports. Thus, we were able to classify the articles for quantitative exploration as well as for qualitative discovery and interpretation of meanings. Scoping of searches, using a range of combinations of

documents, nodes, and attributes, was utilised to seek relationships in the articles' source (by newspaper), date of publication, type of article and the framing of intersections of sport and terrorism. We worked with several reiterations of the results, shaping and reshaping ideas and trying different ways of looking at the key concepts.

Findings

Of the 275 sport and terrorism related articles in Australian newspapers between 1996 and 2001 inclusive, only 20 of these articles (7%) were written before September 2001; this immediately indicated the escalation of interest in the topic post 9/11. A further cross-integration of the eight other categories, indicated above in Figure 2, with the four designated attributes, resulted in four key groupings: (1) reporting voice, that is the tone and orientation of the article; (2) relationships drawn between sport or sportsperson and 9/11; (3) direct impact on sport events; and (4) flow-on effects on sport post-9/11. The first two categories explore indirect and intangible consequences whilst the latter two are essentially direct and tangible effects.

Reporting voice

Each article was ascribed to one of three reporting voices: 38 were written as factual (reporting with no judgement or opinion offered), 128 mixed (inclusion of 'facts' along with the author's opinion or interpretation) and 109 were principally opinion-based (the focus of the article was to offer the author's judgment with little, if any relevant factual material included). There were no significant statistical differences found between different newspapers and the range of voice used by the writers. That is, each newspaper contained articles written in each of the three different voices.

In terms of chronology, articles written in the period before 9/11 (20) were either in the opinion or mixed voice categories. Of these, 72 percent appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (48%) or the Melbourne paper *The Age* (35%). From 9 September 2001, and for two months following, articles in all three voices were published, however, after that time, articles were again more likely to be mixed or

opinion (70%). This was despite the fact that the increasing number of articles also contained material listing sporting events and tours that had been cancelled. The writing voice used by the author in these categories was further sub-classified according to its emotional dimension, that is, its tone. This sub-grouping category encompassed humour/irony, critical, supportive and fear-related sentiments. Some 90 articles (33%) connected sport to fervent expressions of nationalism, defiance. The counterview, the 'irrelevance' of sport in the face of major loss of human life, also featured, but less prominently. The bulk of these articles (53) were cries to use sport as a tool to counteract and to stand up to terrorism and to deride selected sportspeople who did not do so:

'In their terrible aftermath, America and its friends have defiantly gone on with their lives, refusing to allow the terrorists the victory of closing down our way of life...That is what makes the cancellation of the Kangaroo Rugby League tour to the United Kingdom so disappointing. In this confrontation between terrorism and something our society values and enjoys the terrorists have won'.⁶² Reflections about the place of sport in the Australian psyche (15 articles) also appeared but were less prevalent. 'After the horrific events of September 11, I started to wonder about the relevance of sport. ...It was so hard to think of a sporting event in any sort of context after that tragedy'.⁶³

There were only a small number (3 articles) that used irony, including:

Osama bin Laden has stopped the Kangaroo tour to Britain. Allah be praised. It has taken years of careful planning, of course. FBI sources in Washington say there is intelligence now which proves the destruction of Australian rugby league has been a prime bin Laden objective for at least a decade, with highly trained sleeper agents long ago planted at the heart of the game. 'Bin Laden chooses his targets well; the American embassies in Africa, the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, and now rugby league, the world's most widely loved international sport. They will stop at nothing'.⁶⁴

It was not only articles based on the effects of 9/11 that linked sport and terrorism through irony. Articles that appeared about sport and the Afghan regime, the Taliban (8), were generally cynical: 'The Taliban supported cricket in the hope of

tricking the Western World, particularly the British, into thinking 'look we are ready to compromise. We're even playing cricket'.⁶⁵ Others were even more pejorative:

Once home to soccer and basketball games, Kabul's Ghazi Stadium is now used for public executions ... ``But now," he said, ``the place is a religious concentration camp. I always thought that sports was a great leavening tool, but the Afghans' lives under Taliban rule are kind of like HL Mencken's description of a Puritan, living in mortal dread that somewhere someone is having fun'.⁶⁶

Relationship drawn between sport or sport person and 9/11

A substantial number of articles (114) were written about the decisions of sportspersons whether or not to travel and compete in events during the period immediately post 9/11. These included descriptions of how 'brave' sport persons were who continued to compete (ski aerialists Alisa Camplin and Jacqui Cooper, swimmer Brooke Hanson, tennis star Lleyton Hewitt), and how other sport persons pulled out of competitions (golfer Robert Allenby, archer Simon Fairweather). Such withdrawal was written about as both courageous (11 articles) and cowardly (28 articles), depending on the sport and the athlete. The reports in this category were generally wide ranging, covering a number of different sport persons and team. However, three concentrations did emerge. These included 16 articles about Tiger Wood's decisions about travel to overseas tournaments; 21 articles on the decision of the Kangaroos (Australia's National Rugby League team) to postpone, and subsequently reinstate, their tour of Britain late in 2001; and 51 articles on Indigenous Australian boxer Tony Mundine's public comments about the 'cause' of 9/11. Tiger Woods was the standout non-Australian sportsperson quoted and referred to in relation to 9/11. For example:

Woods yesterday announced he had withdrawn from next week's tournament in France, seen as a Ryder Cup warm-up for many players. 'Due to the tragic events over the past few days, I have decided not to compete in next week's Trophée Lancome in Saint-Nom-la-Breteche GC,' Woods said in a statement released on his website. 'I don't believe this is an appropriate time to play competitive golf. I feel strongly that it is a time

to pause, reflect and remember the victims.’ According to Woods' agent, the world's No1 golfer had not even thought about the Ryder Cup.⁶⁷

The articles on Tiger Woods reported his withdrawal from tournament play with no hint of disapproval and in many cases respect was given to his decision. This endorsement was in marked contrast to the almost total condemnation of the Kangaroo's initial decision not to tour. Questions were raised about the team's lack of courage.

One wonders what Australia's SAS troops preparing to go into Afghanistan made of the Kangaroos' decision, or the sailors on HMAS Sydney who left port yesterday for a hazardous assignment in the Persian Gulf. Military forces are putting themselves in harm's way so that Australians can continue to enjoy freedoms often taken for granted. It does rugby league no credit, particularly at a moment when its international credibility is already in tatters, for its showcase team to be seen to be cowering in the face of evil. How sad that players who have built their reputations on never surrendering have handed Osama bin Laden such an easy victory.⁶⁸

Even more disparaging was the article that condemned the Kangaroos by comparing their decision to similar options taken by marginalized Australian groups. ‘In criticising the Kangaroos, some callers cited the fact that ballerinas, Aboriginal singers and theatre actors decided to go ahead with a month-long Australian artistic tour of New York only weeks after the September 11 attacks, but the Kangaroos wouldn't’.⁶⁹ The *Australian* newspaper took comparisons a step further, pointing out that the popular, skivvy-wearing, children's band, *The Wiggles*, were leaving shortly for concerts in New York and Washington, thus showing more courage than the league players.⁷⁰

Leading newspapers used their editorials to also criticise the sport's national governing body, the Australian Rugby League, suggesting a new team should be selected made up of players who wanted to tour. The *Daily Telegraph's* cartoon featured a picture of the Australian test jersey, with a caption, ‘The latest in big girls’

blouses'. Its front page included a digitally altered official team photograph of the players who did want to tour the UK and 'still beat Great Britain'.

Australian sportsmen have been criticised in London's *The Times* ... *The Times* suggested Australia and America tended to see the world outside as a benighted wilderness: 'here be dragons, here be savages, here be bad plumbing'.⁷¹

Only a limited number of articles were supportive of such Australians who cancelled sport appearances.

What is wrong and contemptible is the branding of late or non-starters as wimps and cowards. Good on the skiers and swimmers for going. Good on the golfers and cricketers for taking five. Good on the league players for not going at all, and if some change their mind, good on them as well. And shame on anyone who does not respect their free choice.⁷²

When the Kangaroos eventually reversed their initial decision and rescheduled the tour to the United Kingdom, the press opined that the team had 'suddenly gone from villains to heroes ... they are to be congratulated for facing these issues, dealing with them and agreeing to come'.⁷³

Articles dealing with boxer Tony Mundine's public comments about 9/11 were nearly all opinion pieces. Mundine had offered his opinion as to the root cause of 9/11 on a television show: 'they call it an act of terrorism but if you can understand religion and our way of life it's not about terrorism. It's about fighting for God's laws, and America's brought it upon themselves (for) what they've done in the history of time.' - Anthony Mundine getting himself into all sorts of bother.⁷⁴ Columnists condemned him and the letters and editorial sections bitterly criticised him.

The trouble with speaking too quickly is one's mouth is likely to say something one's brain hasn't thought out yet. That, regrettably, appears to be the fate that has befallen Anthony Mundine, a swaggering braggart of a boxer whose mouth, like his fists, seems to operate in a different time zone from his tardier thought processes. His remark this week that the Americans brought the September 11 terrorist attack on themselves was,

on one level, nothing more than a young man's unthinking comment: an ignorant response to a question for which he had no scripted answer. Yet there is a line beyond which stupidity and inexperience cease to be a defence for offensive behaviour. Mundine didn't just cross over it; he somersaulted over it, just as he regularly used to do as he celebrated crossing the tryline during his rugby league career.⁷⁵

However, while there was widespread disapproval of the content of his comments, there was also a smaller number of articles supporting his right to voice an opinion, however unpopular or ill intentioned it may be.

American boxing writers have come to the defence of Anthony Mundine and accused the World Boxing Council of hypocrisy over its decision to indefinitely drop the outspoken Australian from its ratings. ...'You don't have to approve of what Mundine said to defend his right to say it.' ESPN.com boxing writer Tim Graham also defended Mundine's right to speak his mind 'however addled it might be', though he labelled the Australian a 'dunce' and a 'dunderhead' for his comments.⁷⁶

Let me get this straight. Anthony Mundine said WHAT?!?! You mean to tell me that instead of expressing the standard-brand white-bread view on the New York atrocities ``it was an attack on liberty and the flame of freedom etc." he put forward a different perspective entirely?!?!? Just what can he be thinking of? The worst of it, of course, is he calls himself a ``former rugby league player"! Did he learn nothing in their ranks? Did no-one tell him: ``Whatever else, Anthony, speak only in bland cliches that can never offend anyone. Just roll 'em out, saying absolutely nothing along the way, and then we can all get some sleep".⁷⁷

Sports personalities were brought in to comment as 'experts' on the Mundine issue and contributed to the debate. 'Former world boxing champion Jeff Fenech said the remarks were in bad taste and made Mundine a poor role model for younger boxers. 'This is a scary time for a lot of people and we all have to stick together, so

comments like these are absolutely stupid,' Fenech said. A bit below the belt for even The Mouth.⁷⁸

In other articles (68) sports or sport persons were shown to join together in support of Americans in the aftermath of 9/11.

Surfers worldwide had already indicated they would back the Americans in any decision they made after the terrorist attacks and not compete without them. ASP president and CEO Wayne Bartholomew expressed sympathy and support for the US surfers. 'The ebb and flow of this decision has been an agonising and harrowing process,' he said. 'However, at the end of the day, this situation represents an unprecedented emergency and the sport stands behind the American surfers.' Although disappointed by the truncated tour, Australian Luke Egan, who is all but out of contention for this year's title, conceded safety was the No1 priority for everyone. 'I'm deeply disappointed at the decision, but we all said last week that we would leave it up to the Americans and support them in whatever they decided,' he said.⁷⁹

The Dubai sheiks have been unequivocal in their condemnation of terrorism. 'We are 100 per cent against it and 100 per cent with America to get these people to justice,' said Sheik Mohammed immediately after the September 11 atrocities. And to prove it, the Godolphin stable will donate all prizemoney won between September 11 and the end of this year to the relief appeal a sum which could top \$US20 million (\$39.3m) and Sheik Mohammed donated \$US5million to the Red Cross immediately after the attacks.⁸⁰

Sport as a panacea and a place of escape from the world's ills was another theme found in the media reports (41 articles). Headlines such as 'Football transports us to a place where real tragedy and heartbreak don't exist'⁸¹ reflected the sentiments contained in these pieces. The counter viewpoint, that sport is unimportant (36

articles), was also a prominent theme. ‘There is no event, no sport, nothing can come close to being discussed or even considered when it comes to what happened’.⁸²

Impact on sport events

In terms of sport events, 370 passages were classified as having content related to the direct impact of 9/11 on the staging of sport. Of these, 241 were about the cancellation or continuation of events, 181 covered the withdrawal of an athlete from an event and 58 discussed the new security measures which would need to be implemented. Sport administrators were the most frequently appearing ‘experts’ (129 citations) who were called on to discuss this, closely followed by athletes (114 citations). Conspicuously absent were terrorism experts, who were not represented in the articles sampled.

English cricket faces possibly its gravest and certainly its most expensive crisis on the eve of the tour to India, *The Sunday Telegraph* of London reports. While several key players are on the brink of pulling out for their own safety, the ICC is insisting tours to India must go ahead and the hosts are threatening financial reprisals if England withdraw. A cancellation of the tour, due to start on November 14, would cost England at least \$20million and could bankrupt the ECB.⁸³

The event which received the most coverage in this category was the Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games, with a total of 33 passages. These reports outlined the International Olympic Committee’s commitment to proceed with the Games (as panacea) and also the strict security measures which would need to be put in place to deal with threat of terrorism.

Metal detectors will be installed in central areas and radiation checks will be made by aircraft seeking signs of nuclear terrorism. Mail to Olympic participants will be closely supervised, if not suspended. Contingency plans to fly athletes into the city in case of another US flying ban are in place. The airport will shut down during the opening and closing ceremonies. Large supplies of medicines, including antibiotics, have been

brought in, as have portable decontamination units. F-16s and helicopters will patrol overhead while 1,000 FBI agents will trawl the crowds.⁸⁴

Flow-on effects on sport post-9/11, such as security and insurance issues, were a further theme (219 articles) that received substantive coverage. The bulk of these (201) reported security concerns surrounding sport events and/or travel to sport events: 'the latest sporting fallout from the global security crisis, defending champion the United States withdrew yesterday from the Fed Cup final scheduled for Madrid for November 7-11. "The situation created by terrorist acts made it inadvisable for elite American athletes to compete abroad as a team representing the United States at this time," the US Tennis Association said' was indicative of articles within this theme.⁸⁵

The events of 9/11 created intense media discourse which spilled over into many areas of society, impacting on a range of institutions, including sport. Newspaper stories linking sport and terrorism were abundant, conveying messages of dismay, defiance, deference, and derision. The four classifications used above are offered as one way of interpreting the relationships the media drew between sport and terrorism, and the resulting presentations and characterisations of sport, its players and administrators. Whether these relationships are authentic or manufactured can be explored through the framework of the Propaganda Model.

Discussion

Propaganda campaigns can occur only when the message to be conveyed is consistent with the interests of those controlling and managing the media filters.⁸⁶ There can be no denying that many of the stories connected with 9/11 were extremely newsworthy and the topic deserved attention. However, in the articles classified as 'opinion' or 'mixed' in their tone, the interrelationships between 9/11 and sport were almost exclusively cast to either highlight the stoicism of athletes who demonstrated 'patriotism' through their on field-actions and opinions, or criticise sportspersons who were not supportive of the US stance on terrorism. As Whannel⁸⁷ noted, 'the media narrativises the events of sport, transforming them into stories with stars and characters; heroes and villains'. The framing of these characterisations created tropes

that reinforced the government's anti-terrorism policy and fuelled the growing moral panic about Australia's safety, multicultural problems in the community, the danger of accepting illegal boatpeople from the Middle East as refugees, and the central role of sport in reinforcing the Western way of life and its accompanying ideals.

For example, stories about sport and the Taliban were only newsworthy if they reinforced the popular view of a repressive and violent regime. In the Anthony Mundine case, further propaganda points could be scored against Muslims, and additional concern could be expressed for his perceived insensitivity to the victims of 9/11. As the reporting of his battle to retain his world boxing ranking demonstrated, the sport community, business interests and government ideology were united in their desire to protect the commercial sport product, rather than supporting of the democratic notion of free speech.

The review of the themes that emerged from the content analysis can be related back each of the Propaganda model's filters, although it is beyond the scope of this investigation to ascertain the degree of 'flak' the federal government applied to newspapers which did not agree with their policy direction on the issue, and also the effects of the coverage on the relationship of mainstream media organizations with their advertisers.

The first filter, ownership, has become an important aspect of the Australian sport/media complex. There are only two major newspaper organizations in Australia. The first, News Corporation (owned by Rupert Murdoch), has a market share of: 68 per cent of the capital city and national newspapers; 77 per cent of the Sunday newspapers; 62 per cent of the suburban newspapers; and 18 per cent of the regional newspapers. The second is John Fairfax Holdings, an Australian publishing group, with no single dominant shareholder. Fairfax papers account for: 21 per cent of the capital city and national newspaper market; 22 per cent of the Sunday newspaper market; 17 per cent of the suburban newspaper market; and 16 per cent of the regional newspaper market.⁸⁸

Because of the variety of markets that these two commercial holdings target, they seek to maximize their profits with economies of scale. One such outcome is that

the professional autonomy of regional journalists to pursue unique or independent storylines has been reduced, demonstrated by the repetition of core story lines in the articles analyzed. Stories first appeared in a major city newspaper owned by one of the elite owners, such Fairfax, and were recycled in slightly different formats in their syndicated newspapers.

The third filter, sourcing, was also evident as a mechanism of elite influence. There were only a small number of key sources, many of which were international syndicated news agencies such as AAP and Reuters, which provided original copy, especially involving foreign events and athletes. This further accentuated repetition of the same headlines, story lines and bylines appearing over and over in regional papers. Such repetitive headlines included: ‘Mundine to learn from mistakes’⁸⁹, ‘Fighting For The Right To Be Stupid’⁹⁰, ‘Mundine warned belt up or else’⁹¹, and ‘The trouble with shooting from the lip’⁹².

The fifth filter, the former anticommunist ideology, was obvious through an almost religious adherence in the mainstream political stance, painting terrorism as encroachment on the Western way of life. By making Australia and the US seem utopian, writers adopted an ideological/moralistic position from which to comment on sport and the actions of sportspersons. The perceived poor quality of life for those living in countries such as Afghanistan was also used as a heuristic tool, serving to accentuate differences between political and religious ideologies. All newspapers evidenced this approach.

This is not in keeping with the conclusion of Whitlam and Preston⁹³, who found considerable differences in subjectivity between the broadsheets and the tabloids in their coverage of sport. They found that tabloids provided a brief overview of the popular sports, along with speculation designed to ‘provoke conversation in the workplace or pub’. In this study we did not find any significant differences between the styles of coverage provided in the tabloids (for example, *The Daily Telegraph* and the *Sun-Herald*) compared with the broadsheets (for example, *the Age* and *the Sydney Morning Herald*). Similarly, there did not appear to be variations in the ‘expert’ sources the newspapers quoted (for example, Tiger Woods and Jacques Rogge) and the focus of their pronouncements.

According to Martin⁹⁴ and Herman and Chomsky⁹⁵, the nexus of sport and terrorism is reported from the perspective of those whose understanding of authoritative sources directs them to seek personalities and major events that link sport to the terrorism threat. Moreover, the lens they use to tie observation to explanation is shaped from afar, by those who are unlikely to ever have experienced terrorist situations first hand and whose reality reinforces the good versus evil discourse of the Propaganda Model's fifth filter. A fundamental issue raised by this analysis is the extent to which the media should even be regarded as a key source for more textured and complete portrayals of other sporting issue. Considering the media's global reach and multinational ownership concentration this raises questions, not only for sport academics, but also for sport management practitioners.

Conclusion

The historical significance of September 11, 2001 is unquestionable; the events of that day have changed the way in which many view the world. The media imagery of sport and terrorism, presented via the articles analysed, emphasize the centrality of sport and athletes as representative of the way Australians seek to understand world events. These stories reinforced the dominant constructions of social reality and were introduced and reinforced through sport narratives and the use of athletes and sport administrators (predominantly male) as experts, despite the fact that their knowledge of terrorism was often not demonstrated or explored and there was no evidence provided that they were physically present in New York city on 9/11 or at any other terrorist target.

A strong theme of the articles was the use of sport as a signifier of defiance against terrorism and its attempts to strike at the western way of life. Statements such as: 'We will not bow to terrorism. We will not cower and hide. Business will resume, sport will be played and harsh light will shine into caverns where evil flourishes',⁹⁶, exemplify this attitude.

Stories that exposed any possible racist undertones of the reporting, acknowledged the cultural complexities of terrorism, or were critical of the west, were rare. The sheer increase in the number of articles post 9/11 about sport and terrorism,

despite the fact that sport itself was not a direct target of the terrorists, demonstrates how the media create propaganda links. How these links are read is another issue. While the Propaganda Model filters information, it acknowledges that the media audience is not merely a passive receiver or necessarily believes that all that is written is accurate. Questioning of government and media sanctioned rhetoric is evidenced in the intense public debate which still surrounds Australia's responses to the threat of terrorism.

While there were parallels, tropes and metaphors drawn about the links between sport and terrorism, the indisputable centrality of sport to the Australian imagination was more immediately evidenced by one telling statistic: '*In the week of the hijacking crisis, Andrew Johns [the Newcastle rugby league captain] was the third most mentioned person in the Herald- behind George W. Bush and John Howard but ahead of Osama Bin Laden.*' *Newcastle Herald*, 25/9/01, p11. Andrew Johns was not withdrawing from an event because of terrorism. Instead he had a groin injury.

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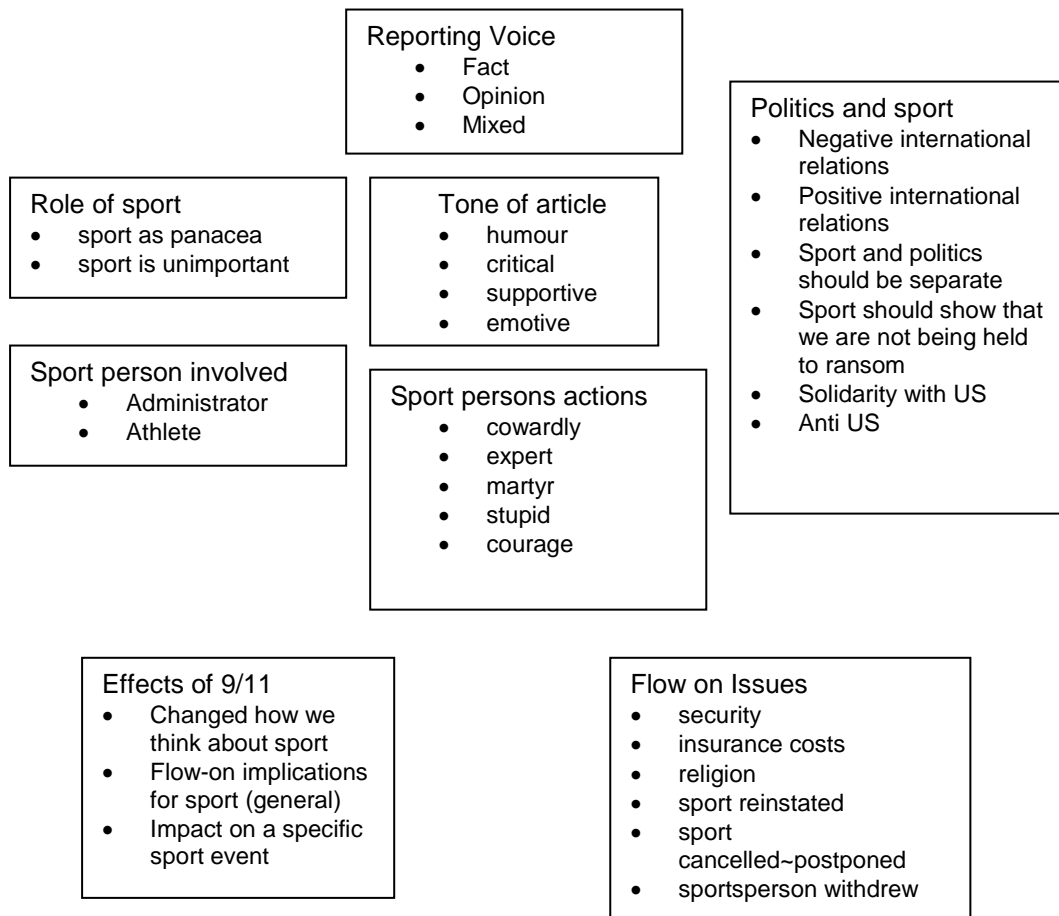
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Figure 1: Articles by newspaper

<i>Paper</i>	<i>No. Articles</i>	<i>%</i>
Daily Telegraph	48	17.45
Sydney Morning Herald	40	14.55
Illawarra Mercury	22	8
The Age	22	8
Courier Mail	19	6.91
Herald Sun	16	5.82
Adelaide Advertiser	14	5.09
Newcastle Herald	14	5.09
Hobart Mercury	12	4.36
Sun Herald	9	3.27
Canberra Times	8	2.91
Gold Coast Bulletin	8	2.91
Sunday Telegraph	7	2.55
Other	36	13.09
Total	275	100

Figure 2: Coding Schema



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- ¹ Turner, *Media Texts and Messages*, 326.
- ² Petersen, *Examining Equity in Newspaper Photographs. A Content Analysis of the Print Media Photographic Coverage of Interscholastic Athletics*.
- ³ Rowe, *Sport, Culture, and the Media: the Unruly Trinity*, 171.
- ⁴ Bernstein, *Is it Time for a Victory Lap? Changes in the Media Coverage of Women in Sport*, 416.
- ⁵ Whitlam and Preston, *Sports Journalism as an Information Resource: a Case Study*, 194.
- ⁶ Cashman, *Paradise of Sport: the Rise of Organized Sport in Australia*.
- ⁷ McHoul and Rapley *How to Analyse Talk in Institutional Settings: a Casebook of Methods*, p.278.
- ⁸ Toohey, K. and Taylor T. 'Sport and terrorism in the Australian media: the flow-on effects of September 11'.
- ⁹ Herman, and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*.
- ¹⁰ Rintala and Birrell quoted in Petersen, *Examining Equity in Newspaper Photographs. A Content Analysis of the Print Media Photographic Coverage of Interscholastic Athletics*, 303.
- ¹¹ Chomsky, *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky*, 29.
- ¹² Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 198.
- ¹³ The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Advancing the National Interest*, 3.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Klaehn, *Behind the Invisible Curtain of Scholarly Criticism: Revisiting the Propaganda Model*, 359.
- ¹⁶ Herman, *The Propaganda Model: A Retrospective*.
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- ¹⁸ Nelson, *Moral Agency in a Propaganda System*.
- ¹⁹ Chomsky, *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky*, 13.
- ²⁰ Ibid, 25
- ²¹ Nelson, *Moral Agency in a Propaganda System*, 6.
- ²² Beam, *Content Differences Between Daily Newspapers with Strong and Weak Market*.
- ²³ Chomsky, *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky*, 18.
- ²⁴ Lester, *Manufactured silence and the politics of media research: a consideration of the 'propaganda model'*, 49.
- ²⁵ Klaehn, *Debate: Model Constructions: Various other Epistemological Concerns*, 379.
- ²⁶ Ibid, *Behind the Invisible Curtain of Scholarly Criticism: Revisiting the Propaganda Model*, 366.
- ²⁷ Ibid, *Behind the Invisible Curtain of Scholarly Criticism: Revisiting the Propaganda Model'*, 362.
- ²⁸ Riffe, Lacy and Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*.
- ²⁹ Martin, *Communication and Mass Media: Culture, Domination, and Opposition*, 243.
- ³⁰ ibid
- ³¹ Martin, *Communication and Mass Media: Culture, Domination, and Opposition*, 243-4.
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- ³⁵ Jenkins, *www.terror.com: Terror on the Internet*, 318.
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- ⁴³ Tsfati and Weimann, *www.terror.com: Terror on the Internet*, 317.
- ⁴⁴ Freedman, *Superterrorism*, 9.
- ⁴⁵ Australian Institute of Criminology, In Selth, xxiv.
- ⁴⁶ Council on Foreign Relations, *Terrorism: Questions and Answers*.
- ⁴⁷ Freedman, *Superterrorism*, 10.
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- ⁵⁴ ibid.

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- ⁵⁵ Cascadia Media Collective, *War Times News*.
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- ⁵⁷ North, Holsti, Zaninovich and Zinnes., *Content Analysis: A Handbook with Applications for the Study of International Crises*.
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- ⁶¹ Lehtonen, *Cultural Analysis of Texts*.
- ⁶² 'Decision a free kick to terrorists,' *Daily Telegraph*, 24.
- ⁶³ Gandon, *It's All About the Game*, 55.
- ⁶⁴ Carlton, *League Tour Off: The World Can Breathe Easy*, 50.
- ⁶⁵ Canberra Times, *Afghan seeks matches in Australia*, 89.
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- ⁶⁷ Weidler, *FBI Warns Tiger to Play it Safe*, 88.
- ⁶⁸ Courier Mail, *Kangaroos Bow to the Pressure*, 16.
- ⁶⁹ *The Evening Post*, 3.
- ⁷⁰ Gihooly, *Wiggles Outshine League*, 2.
- ⁷¹ Daily Telegraph, *English Blast Roo No Show*, 60.
- ⁷² Baum, *Freedom of Choice is the Name of the Game*, 3.
- ⁷³ Mascord, *No James Bond on Their Tails but Security will Keep The Kangaroos Under Cover*, 42.
- ⁷⁴ *Townsville Bulletin*, 30.
- ⁷⁵ Courier Mail, *The Trouble with Shooting from the Lip*, 16.
- ⁷⁶ *Townsville Bulletin*, *American Writers Defend Mundine*, 36.
- ⁷⁷ Fitzsimons, *We May Dispute What Mundine Said, but Surely He Still Has the Right to Say it*, 48.
- ⁷⁸ Wilson and Phillips, *Anti-US Mundine Pounded*, 3.
- ⁷⁹ Adams-Smith, *World Tour European Leg Cancelled but Competition to Rise Again at Sunset*, 45.
- ⁸⁰ Magnay, *Security Boosted as Chill Descends on Winter Olympics*, 4.
- ⁸¹ *Sunday Telegraph*, 96.
- ⁸² Zachariah, *Let's Barrack for Life*, 96.
- ⁸³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29.
- ⁸⁴ Magnay, *Security Boosted as Chill Descends on Winter Olympics*, 4.
- ⁸⁵ *Hobart Mercury*, 92.
- ⁸⁶ Herman, *The Propaganda Model Revisited*.
- ⁸⁷ Whannel, *Individual Stars and Collective Identities in Media Sport*, 23.
- ⁸⁸ Jackson, *Media Ownership Regulation in Australia, Analysis and Policy*.
- ⁸⁹ *Cairns Post*, 9.
- ⁹⁰ *The Age*, 15.
- ⁹¹ *Sunday Telegraph*, 54.
- ⁹² *Courier Mail*, 16.
- ⁹³ Whitlam and Preston, *Sports Journalism as an Information Resource: A Case Study*, 194.
- ⁹⁴ Martin, *Communication and Mass Media: Culture, Domination, and Opposition*, 243-4.
- ⁹⁵ Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*.
- ⁹⁶ Gandon, *Gando*, 34.