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GLOBAL CELEBRITY ATHLETES AND NATIONALISM

Fútbol, Hockey, and the Representation of Nation

Lloyd L. Wong
Ricardo Trumper

Globalization scholars have pointed to a world of increasing transnationalism and deterritorialization that contributes to new meanings of identity and citizenship as the nation-state declines. Sports, and their transnational labor migration, play an important role in both undermining and strengthening nations and national identities. In this context, this article examines two superstar and global celebrity athletes in the sports of fútbol and hockey: Iván Zamorano and Wayne Gretzky. The article shows that although Zamorano and Gretzky are prime examples of transnational citizens and global business persons, living in both national and transnational spaces, it is ambiguous, paradoxical, and contradictory that in Chile, Zamorano represents and symbolizes the essence of Chileaness and that in Canada, Gretzky is usually offered as the symbol of a true Canadian. These two global celebrity athletes embody transnational cultural and capitalist business practices and, at the same time, willingly serve as national cultural icons for the formation and reaffirmation of national identities.

In an era of globalization, the nation-state is seemingly in decline. Economic and cultural globalization entails supranational organizations that are increasingly setting the agenda in terms of trade and the flow of goods, capital, and information. Many of these organizations (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, European Union, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) seek, along with coupled trade pacts (Maastricht, Schengen, and the North American Free Trade Agreement), to regulate and shape the global movements of not only capital and goods but also of culture and people. These organizations and trade pacts play a major role in influencing notions and policies of residency and citizenship in many nation-states. The globalization of economies and cultures has created new conditions that are transforming meanings of identity and citizenship, throughout the world. For the past decade, some theorists have been talking about a global civil society (Drainville, 1998; Oommen, 1997), a new cosmopolitan order of global governance (Held, 1992, 1995a, 1995b), and global citizenship (Falk, 1993; Turner, 1990). Thus, there seems to be a crisis of the role of the nation-state as the privileged site of mediation between the local and the global in a
world where the role of border is in flux. At the same time, some states, classes, and political movements seek the reaffirmation or the partial reaffirmation of the role of the nation and, concomitantly, of sentiments and symbols of nationalism and national identity that mediate in the existence of nations. National identity is but one of the many possible identities available; however, it is often given priority over others types (Poole, 1999, p. 74). Sports play an important role in both undermining and strengthening the uncertain character of today's nations and national identities. It is in this context that we examine two superstar and celebrity transnational athletes in the sports of *fútbol* and hockey: Iván Zamorano and Wayne Gretzky. It should be noted that these two sports and these two sports stars are not unique with respect to issues of transnationalism and citizenship. Other examples are Hideo Nomo in Major League Baseball (Hirai, 2001) and Martina Hingis in the Women’s Tennis Association (Giardina, 2001), to name a couple.

On the surface at least, Zamorano and Gretzky are prime representatives of a new kind of citizenry, of people who work and live borderless and bordered lives. Chiba, Ebihara, and Morino (2001, p. 203) referred to “borderless athletes” as those who transcend national as well as racial and ethnic borders in the world of sport. Although transnationalism is not new and existed in previous centuries, what is new is its extensiveness in recent times that has been facilitated by rapid jet travel and sophisticated telecommunications technology over the past few decades. These developments have intensified social exchanges, provided new modes of transacting, and have multiplied activities that require cross-border travel and contact on a sustained basis (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999, p. 219). Thus, Zamorano’s and Gretzky’s transnationalism and social citizenship is very different from migratory elite professional athletes in earlier times. In Zamorano’s case, the context was, until 2001, Chilean and European and in Gretzky’s case is Canadian and American. Through these examples, we show that it is ambiguous, paradoxical, and contradictory that in Chile, Zamorano represents and symbolizes the essence of Chileaness and that in Canada, Gretzky is usually offered as the symbol of a true Canadian. After all, as we shall show, both fit accepted definitions of transnational citizens and global businesspersons living in both national and transnational spaces, athletes who, in other words, navigate the complexity of the social relations both at “home” and in “foreign” lands. In this sense, these two athletes embody transnational cultural and capitalist business practices and, at the same time, willingly serve as national cultural icons for the formation and reaffirmation of national identities.

Zamorano, also known as Bam Bam, is not unlike many other Chileans, as he is an emigrant and part of the large diaspora that began in the aftermath of the military coup of 1973 and continued throughout the 1980s. Although many Chileans have eventually returned to their country of birth, large groups still remain in Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico, Canada, Sweden, and other countries. Zamorano remains outside Chile or, at least, “lives” and
works outside Chile. In 1989, he emigrated from a modest Chilean fútbol club, Cobresal, a club linked to the copper mine Salvador, about 4,000 meters above sea level in northern Chile, to Switzerland to play for St. Gallen. He was then sold to Sevilla, a team in the Spanish league, and found definitive stardom in Real Madrid, one of the wealthiest fútbol teams in Spain and in the world. Internazionale de Milano, perhaps the most renowned team in the Italian calcio, then bought his pass. In early 2001, at 33 years of age, Bam Bam was freed by Internazionale and hired for 2 years by América of Mexico.

Gretzky, also known as “The Great One” or “99,” was born in a small rural Canadian town called Brantford in the province of Ontario in the early 1960s. He is a third-generation Canadian, whose grandparents were vegetable farmers near the town of Brantford, Ontario, in the 1930s. They had immigrated from Russia (grandfather) and Poland (grandmother). Gretzky comes from a working-class background, as his father was a teletype machine repairperson who worked for the Bell Telephone Company. He played his amateur junior hockey in small-town Ontario before turning professional at the age of 17 with a U.S.-based team called the Indianapolis Racers in a fledgling league called the World Hockey Association. He played only eight games under a personal services contract to the owner of the team (Nelson Skalbania) before being sold to the Edmonton Oilers of the same league, along with two other players, for $850,000 (Davis, 1999, p. 51; S. Dryden, 1999, pp. 124, 126). In the following year, he was playing in the National Hockey League (NHL) as the Edmonton Oilers became part of the league. Overall, in his 21-year career as a professional hockey player, he played the first 10 years in Canada (notwithstanding his brief stint in Indianapolis) and then was sold, in 1988, to a Los Angeles team for $15 million and three players in exchange. Since then, he has lived in the United States and currently has homes in New York (where he finished his career as a hockey player in 1999), Los Angeles, and Thousand Oaks, California.

Thus, both Zamorano and Gretzky are engaged in professional, business, and personal practices that constitute forms of transnationalism and result in aspects of deterritorialization.

**TRANSNATIONALISM AND DETERRITORIALIZATION**

Since the early 1990s, anthropologists Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) have argued that transnationalism has replaced immigration as it was understood in the past. Instead of moving from place to place and adopting new or hybrid relations, migrants are establishing social fields that cross borders. Migrants, they argued, are understood “to be transmigrants when they develop and maintain multiple relations—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span borders” (p. ix). Under this perspective then, immigrants are seen to have multiple interconnections that cut across international borders. Their public identities are seen to be configured in relationship to more than one nation-state. In terms of human agency, these “migrants” are taking actions, making decisions, and developing identities through social networks that
simultaneously connect them to two or more societies (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton, 1994, p. 7; Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1995, p. 48).

The literature that deals with transnationalism, centers on the assessment of migrants’ commitment to place of origin and current place of residence. Under this theoretical gaze, commitment can be measured by the migrants’ period away from their place of origin, nationality or citizenship status, socioeconomic status in the country of immigration (such as occupation, financial and productive capital, or investment patterns), and the number and level of social and financial connections with their place of origin, for example, financial transfers, remittances, and property ownership in the country of origin (Van Hear, 1998, pp. 242-244).

As such, transnationalism is likely to include forms of mixed commitment, and people’s allegiances may be very elastic. Of course, each one of the above measurements, in and of itself, may not necessarily provide an adequate measure of commitment. For example, citizenship status may have limited value in a situation where there is no ability to exercise choice in attaining it. However, if there is choice and dual or multiple citizenship is chosen, then this would be an indication of transnationalism and, as we will see later, a form of deterritorialization. Minimally, citizenship status defines the population who the state owes protection to and who owes the state loyalty (Jenson, 1997, p. 628).

The literature on globalization looks at people who transcend the 20th-century understanding of national allegiances and practices in a complementary form from a perspective of place. Throughout the globalization literature, there is concern with how production, consumption, communities, politics, and identities become detached from local places with the term deterritorialization being used to describe such processes (Kearney, 1995, p. 552). Globalization fundamentally transforms the relationship between “place” of habitation and cultural practices, experiences, and identities. Indeed, some scholars have gone so far as to argue that places are no longer the main supports of identity (Tomlinson, 1999), and this point is more likely to be the case with highly mobile urban businesspersons and workers living and working in cosmopolitan and global cities. The continuing development and advancement of microchip technology contribute to the disembedding of social relations and time-space compression that promotes deterritorialization. Thus, the assumed one-to-one relationship of state and territory is increasingly being questioned and challenged in a context of deterritorialization. For example, Appadurai (1996b, p. 48) pointed out that with increasing movements of people, legal and illegal commodity flows, and massive movements of arms across state borders, states are left with attempting to monopolize the idea of territory as the diacritic of sovereignty. What has happened is that the global “market for loyalties” is one in which states compete against nonstate actors and organizations and various forms of diasporic or multilocal allegiance (Price, as cited in Appadurai, 1996b, pp. 48-49).
The argument that has been advanced by the proponents of this position is that the deterritorialization of identity threatens the modern nation-state. Jacobson (1997, p. 122), for example, felt that globalization will increasingly engage people in multilocationality, which cross-cuts social, cultural, and territorial boundaries. As a consequence, membership in a nation and membership in a state are bifurcated, which calls into question the premise that a territory necessarily constitutes or defines a people as in a nation-state. He noted,

Under the impact of transnational migrations, the nation-state is being “unpacked”. Community, polity, and territory are becoming, rather than coextensive, discrete if overlapping spheres. Regional and transnational political institutions, transnational, subnational, and diasporic communities, and the state itself, now more an administrative entity that is increasingly being stripped of its primordial quality, occupy different (if linked and partly shared) spaces. Identities are being deterritorialized. (p. 123)

Some scholars have pointed to the implications of deterritorialization on citizenship, arguing that transmigrants are de facto citizens of more than one nation-state. The traditional conception of citizenship as a singular loyalty is thought to be fading as the moral tie between land and people becomes attenuated with the decline of civil society and the weakening of territorial identities intricately tied to each other (p. 125).

However, as Roche (1995, p. 726) suggested, we need to be reminded that citizenship is not reducible to “national citizenship” of the modern nation-state. Historically, citizenship has been defined in many ways outside the modern nation-state (from city-states to empires) with dual or plural structures of membership, legal identity, and rights. This has also led to the “post-national problematic,” where the study of citizenship, with emphasis on the social formations of rights, obligations, membership, and identity, could not be comprehensive or credible if it restricted itself to nation-statist assumptions (Roche, 1995, p. 717).

More than a decade ago, scholars, such as Brubaker (1989), were noting that classical models of citizenship needed to be modified. More recently, Bauböck (1994) revisited the relationship between citizenship and territorially bounded states and called for a conceptualization of citizenship that is transnational and recognizes membership in multiple communities. For example, Soysal (1994) presented a “post-national membership” model in her analysis of the limits of citizenship for migrants in Europe. Her analysis moves beyond the traditional and classical understanding of citizenship as belonging to a nation and challenges the traditional assumption that national citizenship is a precondition of membership in a polity. She pointed to the growing number of dual nationality acquisitions as a formalization of the fluidity of postnational membership and the multiplicity of membership (p. 141). The call for the development of a postnational perspective on citizenship and for the recognition of the theme of deterritorialization of
citizenship has been adopted by many scholars (Jacobson, 1996; Meehan, 1993; Oommen, 1997; Roche, 1995; Soysal, 1994; Weale, 1991).

Although there are current debates and theorizing of the postnational model, its logical extension is the notion of global citizenship. If citizenship is understood to be both formal, as a legal status, and substantive, as attitudes, relationships, and expectations that are not necessarily set but rather transforming and fluid, then territorial limitations and conditions are not imperative. This makes the notion of global citizenship feasible. Turner (1990, p. 213) suggested that one possible line of theoretical development is conceptualizing global citizenship as the political counterpart of the world economy, and Falk's (1993) recent work views the making of global citizenship as an emergent possibility. However, here we argue that deterritorialization must be contextualized to specific processes and to different levels of analysis. Throughout the world, only around 150 million people live outside of their countries of birth, although this number has doubled during the past 35 years (Martin, 2001), and many of them are asylum seekers. This is a very small percentage of the world’s population, but to some extent, unlike in the past, they maintain close(r) connections with both their homelands and other parts of the world. So, we want to problematize the notions of transnationalism and deterritorialization along with global and transnational citizenship. We approach this issue through the case studies of Zamorano and Gretzky, two late 20th-century global celebrity athletes. There are two caveats that we would like to place here. First, following Andrews and Jackson (2001), we recognize that celebrity is a “notoriously difficult concept to define” (p. 2), and as they do, we accept the vaguely demarcated notion of celebrity as “a descriptor incorporating various forms of public individuality (the hero, star, famous, leader, renowned, notorious) existent and operational within popular culture” (p. 2). Second, we recognize that they are "global" celebrities in a fluid, albeit geographically and temporarily limited, manner. Zamorano’s notoriety has to be placed within the reaches of fútbol and Gretzky’s stardom in the range of hockey and in both cases within the obsolescence of their images in the public realm. The most significant point here is that despite what seems an arbitrary choice of these two individuals as exponents of “global celebrities,” their differences serve to highlight even more the links between global sports figures and nationalism. Our choice of Zamorano and Gretzky is not limited to purely academic reasons. The authors’ backgrounds are intertwined with the respective sports. For Trumper, who immigrated to Canada in the 1970s, fútbol has been woven into his identity and his two sons’ identities, or as Anzaldúa (1987) put it, to living in tongues. For Wong, who is a fourth- (maternal) and third- (paternal) generation Canadian, hockey has been an integral part of his personal life, having played the game himself and spending many winter hours at the rink watching his growing son play the game and become a Gretzky fan. Thus, our interest in Zamorano and Gretzky; and the fact remains that both of them are part of a small group of elite migrants who have materialized since the last quarter of the 20th century.
In fact, the argument about a global citizen is construed around a fairly small group of people, among them, global sports figures. Maguire and Bale (1994, p. 2) pointed out that sports figures are part of the growing number of migrating professionals who have emerged from the process of transnationalization of capital that has intensified with the third wave of post-Fordist capitalism since the mid-1970s. Moreover, some authors sustain the line of thought advanced by Barber (1992) in the following often-quoted sentence:

Commercial pilots, computer programmers, international bankers, media specialists, oil riggers, entertainment celebrities, ecology experts, demographers, accountants, professors, athletes—these compose a new breed of men and women for whom religion, culture, and nationality can seem only marginal elements in a working identity. (pp. 54-55)

Barber is in fact sustaining the creation of a strata of workers who not only have fewer roots than more sedentary laborers but also for whom some of the usual markers of national attachment and the traditional signifiers of cultural belonging have lost importance. Thus, Barber and other writers such as Rosenau (1997) were not just pointing to the existence of workers who may be travelers who move from place to place, country to country, and job site to job site or who may move more or less permanently to countries different from their nations of birth. They are alluding to people who, they assert, are not simply deterritorialized and live an existence that supersedes the nation-state but who share a new culture that is developing mostly around values of professional life. These global citizens would find themselves comfortable in Berlin or New York, Buenos Aires or Johannesburg (Rieff, 1992), and are “jet-set riders” with “self-centered” citizenship, as their attachment to national communities decreases and become less salient (Rosenau, 1997, pp. 234-236). The global citizenry then would be formed by an elite of migrant laborers, some of whom are fútbol and hockey players, whose main values and allegiances turn around individual performance in their fields of sports practices. What is old and what is new here? What is old is that these types of migrants, who have particular forms of capital, have been around for quite some time as a global elite workforce. Take, for instance, the colonial bureaucracies that moved within empires or the so-called expatriates (a category deliberately created to differentiate White sojourners in positions of power from powerless permanent or transitory immigrants). As well, there were the sojourners who went to work in countries where they were not supposed to stay as citizens, and if we look carefully, amongst them, there were Latin American fútbol players who, beginning in the 1930s, labored in Europe and were destined to return “home.” Although transnational practices have existed in earlier times, what is new here is that transportation and communication technologies now permit people to move faster to the extent that these technologies allow a relatively small number of people to appear to “live” in several places simultaneously. What is also
new is that these transnational practices have been facilitated by increasing regionalization, as an aspect of globalization, that reflects political, economic, and cultural alliances of certain nation-states. To that extent, the movement of people is fairly free within the European Union once a passport has been gained, while the movement between Canada and the United States is burdensome, even with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) defining greater ease for specific technical and professional workers. Those who do move with relative ease are the highly mobile and transnational individuals described by Barber (1992), those who possess financial, cultural, and physical capital (human physiology) that makes them mobile and able to traverse borders.

**TRANSNATIONAL LABOR MIGRATION IN SPORT**

The pervasiveness of transnational labor migration in sport, and its interconnectedness with global sport development, has been described by Maguire and Bale (1994) and Maguire (1999). Thus, the globalization of the sports of hockey and fútbol has necessitated the international migration of labor. Both hockey players and fútbolistas have worked outside their home countries long before the words transnationalism or deterritorialization became common. However, it would be possible to argue that today’s internationalization of these labor markets is a stage in a historical process, as well as a stage that corresponds to a particular economic, social, ideological, and political time. As Miller (1997) suggested, the new international division of labor, which began in the 1970s, contains within it a division of sporting labor. More recently, these concepts have been integrated into what has been referred to as a new international division of cultural labor, which encompasses uneven processes of globalization, governmentality, Americanization, televisualization, and commodification (Miller, Lawrence, McKay, & Rowe, 2001, p. 4).

Over the past few decades in ice hockey, there has been an international labor migration of European players to Canada and the United States. This migration occurs at both the junior and professional levels, and conversely, there has been an international migration of Canadian players to European countries (Genest, 1994; Maguire, 1999). On the other hand, fútbol is a transnationalized spectacle with a much longer history of players moving to play in other countries, selling their labor power and their physical capital throughout the world, far from their countries of birth and sometimes of citizenship. There already was a migratory movement of players in the first part of the century. Indeed, Mussolini’s Italy attracted fútbol players with Italian surnames from Argentina to play for the Italian side in world competitions. The connections between Italy and South American fútbol migrants strengthened with the Fordist modernization of Italy after the war. They have even strengthened further with the transformation of fútbol into a major spectacle. Currently, Italy’s “national” league (the calcio) relies heavily on players from throughout the world. Also, France has
traditionally attracted fútbol immigrants, although again contemporary capitalism, decolonization, and the needs of capital have transformed the nature of French fútbol. Today, immigrant players are the backbone of the sport. In turn, some of the Spanish clubs have also depended on fútbol talent from other countries from early on. In the Franco era, for political reasons, the immigration of players to big clubs, in particular to Real Madrid, was encouraged and financed. Great names of world fútbol such as Argentinean Di Estefano, Brazilian Didi, and Hungarian Puskas are examples from the 1950s and 1960s. Today, Spain is a far more important economic power than 40 or 50 years ago. Fútbol is a spectacle and big business in contemporary Spain, and some of the Spanish clubs are very wealthy and import players from abroad to bolster their teams. In fact, the migration of fútbol players is not limited to these countries. Fútbolistas move from many countries in the European Union, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America to play in Western Europe. Latin American players also migrate to play in the national leagues within that region (Archetti, 1995; Darby, 2001; Mason, 1995).

In summary, from a certain perspective, it is possible to argue that historically there has been a skilled pool of workers who have sold their athletic abilities to play for teams who have been able to pay for their contracts, attracting them with promises of larger incomes and fame. In general, numerous elite athletes are international migrants as sports has become big business and a spectacle. Zamorano and Gretzky can be thought of as elite global athletes, but we wonder if they represent and typify this new brand of person that is theorized under the rubric of transnationalism and deterritorialization.

On the surface, both of these sports figures seem to fit the definitions, to confirm the existence of such new groups of citizens. Indeed, although Zamorano and Gretzky are on global paths as migrant labor, they are not typical international migrant fútbol or hockey players nor are they just merely professional athletes. From humble, modest backgrounds, they are now superstar global athletes who circulate socially among the global elite and capitalist class. Their friends are other celebrities, wealthy capitalists, powerful politicians, and the like. Zamorano and Gretzky are not only sport labor migrants, but as superstar athletes, they are corporations in and of themselves, and they sell themselves and their names commercially. They are extremely mobile geographically, usually jet-setting somewhere to conduct their business as they engage in hypermobility through transnational networks. Their hypermobility is similar in a sense to that of elite Chinese Hong Kong businesspersons who conduct business throughout the world (Chan, 1994, p. 320). They operate within complex transnational social networks where they create and solidify multiple identities that are grounded in multiple societies. At another level, this transnationalism and mobility, particularly involving Canada and the United States, is evident in census and immigration data. In 1990 (the latest U.S. Census data available), there were 750,000 Canadian-born people in the United States, and in the year
1996, there were 48,000 Canadians who were temporarily working in the United States (Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997). In comparison, there were 245,000 U.S.-born people in Canada in 1996 (Statistics Canada, 1996), and in 1997, there were 25,000 Americans who were temporarily working in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1999).

In summary, Zamorano and, to a lesser extent, Gretzky are transmigrant celebrity athletes whose professional and business practices entail the general processes of time-space compression and distanciation typical of globalization. This makes their presence felt in both Chile and Canada, although the time of their actual physical presence in these countries may not be very lengthy. Their transmigration is likely to have important implications for their national identity. For global superstar athletes, such as Zamorano and Gretzky, national borders are relativized and decentered in their personal lives and in their business practices. Their businesses include adventures such as trademarks, endorsements for commercial products and services, clothing lines, Web sites, and ownership of professional sports teams. The transnational business practices of Zamorano and Gretzky may also be described in terms of “translocality” (Appadurai, 1996a, p. 192) and “multi-locality” (Brah, 1996, p. 197). In other words, their business operations are in culturally heterogeneous places that are largely divorced from their national contexts and straddle formal political borders (Hyndman, 1997, p. 153). Thus, we might speculate that their identities are always plural and in process (Brah, 1996, p. 197). We may also speculate that what might be emerging with them is a singular hybridized transnational identity or separate multiple identities that simultaneously link them to several nations. Is this really true? To what extent do Zamorano and Gretzky herald a new world where nation-states and national identities will be weakened, a postmodern planet of Thatcherite individuals with allegiances to themselves and their careers, with no territorial roots? At the micro level, these are important questions; however, the focus here is at the macro level and on how these two athletes, through their sports, are claimed by their nations of birth and how they have come to symbolize their nations despite their apparent transnationality.

REPRESENTING THE NATION

ZAMORANO

In a recent conference workshop at the University of California at Berkeley, one panelist proclaimed that after Pinochet, the only other name of a Chilean who would be recognized by an international audience is that of Bam Bam Zamorano. For many millions of fútbol fans, Zamorano has been a well-known name. Thanks to television, Bam Bam—the center forward, the striker—has played and still plays for audiences worldwide. As a player with Real Madrid and Internazionale de Milano, he has been seen on television screens in many countries, in Spain and in Italy and also in Chile and
many other places. Is he a deterritorialized transnational, or is he, like other emigrants or other sojourners, just another Chilean who works outside Chile? Is his difference with the other 800,000 Chileans who live outside Chile simply based on technology and the wealth that allows him to take advantage of quick travel, instant telecommunications, and a business-created passion for the consumption of fútbol?

It is always difficult to ascertain where Zamorano really lives. He has lived in Chile, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, and Mexico. He worked in Europe from 1989 to 2000. His biographer and propagandist, Chilean journalist Pedro Carcuro (2000), pointed out that when he lived in Italy he had a home in Milan as earlier he had homes in Switzerland, Sevilla, and Madrid. In this biography, Bam Bam is portrayed as living close to the categories of transnationalism and deterritorialization discussed above. Carcuro emphasized that Zamorano lived like a wealthy person in Europe, drove expensive cars, held several passports and nationalities, had sworn allegiance to the King of Spain without losing his Chilean nationality, worked in Italy, and played in the Italian calcio and all over Europe. Although he was not fluent in Italian, he lived and worked in Italy. There is no doubt Zamorano is a professional futbolista dedicated to his profession, so much so that he has been able to use and invest his physical capital in two of the most market-oriented clubs in the world, Real Madrid and Internazionale de Milano, and even at the time of his recent decline as a fútbol star, he was able to remark himself to play for a salary of $1 million a year for Club America, a club owned by the Televisa conglomerate in Mexico. He typifies the ideal type, in a Weberian sense (Weber, 1947), of transnationalism: a professional whose main dedication in life is his or her work. However, Zamorano’s life seems to run counter to this ideal type of transnationalism. Irrespective of where Bam Bam lives and whatever he is constructed to be, both in Chile and to some extent outside Chile, he is perceived as a Chilean. More important, he has become a core element in the making and remaking of the edifices of Chilean identity and also in the construction and reconstruction of a strong Chilean patriotism that pervades all social groups and serves as a central hegemonic pillar in the reproduction of the nation.

In fact, for a Chilean, it is difficult to perceive Bam Bam as not being Chilean. Television and newspapers have played a definitive role in the making of Zamorano. For many years, many of the games in Europe in which he played were broadcast to Chilean televisions, and the public followed them in far greater numbers than the audiences who watched fútbol involving just Chilean competition. When Zamorano was playing in Europe, it was difficult to perceive him as not being in Chile. When he played in Internazionale, as part of a multinational group of players, he was still playing in Chilean living rooms. It is this ambiguity, which owes its existence to the globalization of communications, that makes possible the Zamorano phenomenon. He played simultaneously in Chile and Europe, he was simultaneously a performer and a fútbol player, he played at the same time for
Internazionale and, by being a Chilean, for Chile. At one level, fútbol is a transnational enterprise. There are some multinational teams in a few countries, and there are international rules under the powerful presence of the Federation of International Football Associations, interconnected with large transnational companies of sportswear, communications, public relations, beverages, and fast food, among others (Bromberger, 1994). At another level, fútbol is largely a national sport and a national entertainment that occasionally sees intranational confrontations as part of an industry that produces entertainment at a world scale, larger than North American spectacles such as baseball, ice hockey, and basketball.

Moreover, Bam Bam seems to commute often. It is a long commute but not an impossible one for someone with the wealth to do so. How can he be perceived to be non-Chilean when he is seen in Chile so often? He is continually interviewed by Chilean television. He makes frequent physical appearances in Chile and recently has been seen on Chilean channels visiting his family. Journalists and the general public waited with expectation to see if he would show up to vote in a recent election, and he was seen watching a Davis Cup match with a famous Chilean model. His launching of a charitable foundation in Santiago was a major event where invited presidential candidates attended and even some who were not invited crashed the party. Many of the most important Chilean personalities, including the president of Chile, Ricardo Lagos, showed up for a game between the Chilean and French national teams, played in 2001 as homage to Zamorano’s retirement from the Chilean national team. Perhaps the most intriguing show of Zamorano’s presence in Santiago was one of his numerous appearances on television. On December 22, 1999, one of the most popular shows in Chilean television called “De Pe a Pa” aired a segment that featured as guests the then president of Chile Eduardo Frei, his wife Marta Larrechea, Zamorano, and a few other guests. It was apparent that in this segment, Zamorano was slated to play a far more prominent role than the president or his wife (who was not only the first lady at the time but a prominent politician). Frei and Marta Larrechea left the program early, while Bam Bam remained throughout the whole program to receive praises, tell jokes, sing with a professional singer, and advance opinions on fútbol, violence against children, and Chilean politics. He even turned down a job that Frei offered him on the air.

Yet, the few glimpses that we get of his personal life in public documents tend to show that he is not really a citizen of the world. We hear that he thinks himself to be a Chilean, an ambassador for Chile (Carcuro, 2000, p. 131). Indeed, it could be possible to interpret Zamorano’s residence in the upper-class areas of Santiago, his personal attempts at presenting himself as a representative of Chile before the world, his frequent visits and public appearances and actions in Chile as nothing but the publicity stunts of a shrewd transnational businessman to promote his sponsorship deals such as selling phone services, his launching of an expensive line of clothing, and his other business enterprises in the country.
However, in many countries, national identity, nationalism, and even nation-state reproduction are partially dependent on sports. Sports have provided one of the metaphors for the invention and reaffirmation of the nation. In Chile, victories in sports have been celebrated as a vital part of national pride. Until recently, the image of Chilean sports had been historically linked to a construction of identity based on a sense of defeat and of meekness, attributed to the Chilean workers and peasants by the upper classes. However, after 1990, the Chilean economy grew at a quick pace. This economic growth was attributed to the implantation of a neoliberal regime during the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, after 1973, and continued after it relinquished power to a civilian government 16 years later. The economic growth of the 1990s served as a catalyst for the discursive deployment of a new Chilean identity where meekness and defeat gave way to aggressiveness, competitiveness, and pride (Trumper & Tomic, 1999). Sports have been articulated with discourses of politics and nation that emphasize a new concept of Chilean identity, an identity of a fierce and feline nation, a jaguar that will not shy away from confrontation. It has been somewhat paradoxical that the discourse of success of neoliberalism has been linked to the departure of fútbol players and, therefore, to the implied inability of the Chilean fútbol clubs to retain them. In fact, from the perspective of the notion of a power-geometry of migratory movements (Massey, 1993, 1999), the migrating Chilean fútbol players were hardly in control of the underlying forces behind their departures. Indeed, under different discursive deployments, these emigrations could have been taken rather as an indication of the dependent and peripheral status of a nation (Darby, 2001) and not of success. Yet, in the discursive deployments of neoliberalism, a few players are represented as the models of the new spirit of the nation and of Chileans, the example and symbol of Chile. Among these players, the emigrant fútbolistas have had a central place.

The major metaphor of this new Chile has been, without any doubt, that of Bam Bam Zamorano (Trumper & Tomic, 1999). For, as suggested at the beginning of this section, Zamorano is a central figure in his country of birth. In Chile, the successful player playing abroad in the major international leagues in the “developed” world is constructed not so much as the deterritorialization and transnationalism of the players but, rather, as a marker of the increasing improvement of Chilean commodities abroad, in this case, fútbol (Arbena, 1994, pp. 104-105). According to the neoliberal approach that prioritizes competition and economic openness, those who are perceived as the most successful (in the new logic of success) and who best fit a discourse of a triumphal neoliberal Chile are treated, analyzed, and constructed as national heroes. This positive view of the export of Chilean players—which ignores the geometries of power and the weakness of the Chilean fútbol league and its inability to retain its best players—is linked to the beneficial role attributed to exports by the predominant neoliberal social, ethical, and economic model. It has served to elevate the status of exported labor power to a symbolic role in Chilean society. In this sense,
fútbol players are perceived or constructed as one of the thousands of members of the Chilean diaspora. However, they are represented as very special Chileans. Zamorano’s ability to rise to the level of an elite international performer not only boosted his income but also made him, in Chile, a precious metaphor for the new country, an ambassador of the new Chile, capable of successfully competing in world markets. In fact, Zamorano, as much as fútbol striker Marcelo Salas, tennis player Marcelo Rios, and Chilean exports of fruit and salmon, has been transformed into the personification of the new Chilean: individualistic, capable of succeeding outside Chile, competitive, flexible, an embodiment of neoliberalism and its ethics (Trumper & Tomic, 1999).

Zamorano is one of the great entertainers in the popular arena. Although it is difficult to differentiate precisely his actual behavior and practices from his representation and signification in the media and popular discourse, his ambiguous territorial presence and citizenship are overlooked in the political deployment of his success. Chileans are aware of the ambiguity of his image as the foremost Chilean and as a promoter of a borderless world of transnational citizens. A short commentary in the Chilean magazine Rocinante serves to show that despite the equivocal position of the striker with respect to Chilean identity, neoliberal ethics, and globalization, he is still a symbol of Chileanness, a maker of the new nation:

Bam Bam is a national commodity of public use. He has the virtue of generating enthusiasm in everybody... whatever their social condition or class.... Even people who are totally alien to fútbol are moved by his goals and his achievements on the Italian grounds. Part of his appeal is the moderation that he shows every time he is interviewed and his ineffable Chilean demeanor, a personality that has not been corrupted or refined by the profits he gets from his dexterity now that we have been left with few heroes.... However by advertising for a Spanish telephone consortium [Bam Bam] is trying to convince Chileans that this monopoly would benefit all Chileans offering advantages to all the country, catapulting us beyond our borders making our frontiers so elastic that we do not stop [as a country] at the Andes mountains. (“Bam Bam,” 1999, p. 21)

Although Zamorano’s life and triumphs outside Chile have enhanced both his presence in Chile and Chilean nationalism, undermining concepts of transnational deterritorialization and globalism, Gretzky’s life and triumphs outside Canada have had a different road when intersecting with the regionalization of the entity of North America.

GRETZKY

The case of Gretzky is similar to that of Zamorano in that he also is an athlete who has seemingly left his country of birth and possesses multiple allegiances, at least as measured by legal citizenship. Many star Canadian hockey players who live and play in the United States acquire U.S. citizenship, which makes them dual American and Canadian citizens. Self-
admitted examples include Mario Lemieux and more recently Steve Yzerman. Although Gretzky has largely been silent on his legal citizenship, it is widely assumed by those knowledgeable about financial and tax matters (Ingram, 1996) and media sports reporters (Sheardson, 2001) that he has dual Canadian–United States citizenship. It is widely acknowledged that Gretzky’s children have dual citizenship as his wife is an American. Gretzky has not lived in Canada since 1988, although he is in the country often. He has played for several U.S.-based NHL teams in Los Angeles, St. Louis, and New York and keeps several residences in the United States while conducting business in both the United States and Canada. Recently, he was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame and is the general manager of the Canadian Olympic hockey team that won the gold medal at the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. He has a restaurant in Toronto (called Wayne Gretzky’s Restaurant) that contains some of his personal collection of souvenirs, trophies, and mementos from a variety of friends in a museum-like decor. The City of Toronto allowed him to change the address number to 99, which is his trademark logo known throughout the country and many other parts of the world. Like Zamorano he also has a line of fashionable clothing with the Wayne Gretzky label sold in Canada by the Bay department stores (Podnieks, 1999, p. 102). Yet, to most Canadians, Gretzky is not really considered an emigrant who has left Canada. The United States–Canadian border has been, and continues today to be, one of the most porous in the world relative to other nations’ borders. In particular, the major professional sport leagues of hockey (NHL), basketball (National Basketball Association), and baseball (Major League Baseball) include teams at least nominally located in both countries. Although Gretzky’s move from Canada (Edmonton Oilers) to the United States (Los Angeles Kings) was decried and grieved nationally (Jackson, 1994, pp. 438–441), it was an internal move within the same league (the NHL). So, in that sense, he continued to be very much in the Canadian public eye over the years. The penetration of these porous frontiers, via telecommunications technology such as cable and satellite television, makes Gretzky’s presence felt in Canada, much like Zamorano’s in Chile. There is also ambiguity in Gretzky’s case as it seems like he never left Canada because the images of him, via his advertisement deals, make him appear to be part of the Canadian landscape. Paradoxically, the commercials were likely made in the United States by global companies headquartered there; however, historically, many of these companies have traded in both countries. In the years 2000 and 2001, Gretzky’s apparent omnipresence in Canada was via his television commercials endorsing Bud Light beer, Folger’s coffee, Tylenol pain reliever, Kodak film, Goodyear tires, Johnson & Johnson, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, TransAlta Energy Company, and McDonald’s restaurants. Although Gretzky’s high visibility through his endorsements has been despised by some critics and he has had some public relations problems with the endorsement of Tylenol (Murphy, 1999), overall he has remained unaffected and untainted, and his commercial success continues to be carried by his iconic status.
The other side of Gretzky’s business is his evolving ownership in various business enterprises, which includes, or has included, junior hockey teams, a professional football team in Canada, hockey stick companies, race horses, stamps, coins, and collector sports cards, all of which put him consistently in Forbes’s top-40 highest paid athletes list in the 1990s. His recent business ventures include e-commerce, in partnership with two famous American basketball and football athletes, Michael Jordan and John Elway, in a company called MVP.com and part ownership of the Phoenix Coyotes (a professional hockey team in the NHL) as well as being the team’s managing partner in charge of all hockey operations. These last two examples illustrate that Gretzky’s business ventures have evolved to include more than just lending his name to endorse commercial products. He has become involved in businesses where he has purchased shares or equity positions in companies and become actively involved in the management of these companies. According to Forbes, Gretzky’s 1999 income was approximately $15 million, of which only one third came from his salary as a hockey player (Spiegel & Gallagher, 1999, p. 222). Overall, Gretzky’s endorsements, combined with his evolving ownership of various types of businesses, have provided him with a transnationalized public identity that erases the border between Canada and the United States.

What is important here is not so much Gretzky’s place of residence, or even his trekking back and forth between Canada and the United States to conduct business, or the porousness of the Canada-U.S. border. After all, Canadian nationalism is still a force in the Canadian political economy. What is important is that Gretzky has been reincarnated into a new packaged truth, that of a capitalist who, like other transnationalized businesses, offers the example of Canadian world success. Transnationalism and de-territorialization in their purest forms exist today with financial capital and corporations. Other “capitals” are still attached to people and people attached to nations, with their lives and identities remaining packaged into a national wrapping. The building of the Canadian nation is to some extent tied to hockey, and Gretzky is a powerful part of this nation building.

Many Canadians are passionate about ice hockey. The game of hockey was invented in Canada and emerged as an organized sport over a century ago as a reflection of Canadian society (Metcalf, 1987, pp. 61-73). Most Canadians claim ownership of hockey as their game; thus, hockey is quintessentially Canadian (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993, p. 3). Hockey is an “invented tradition” in Canada, which has a set of practices governed by accepted rules, ritualism, and symbolism and serves to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior and implies continuity with the past (Hobsbawm, 1983). The involvement of male youths in minor hockey and more recently female youths, the listening to and then watching professional hockey games on Saturday nights over the past century (called “Hockey Night in Canada”), and the following and adoration of hockey heroes by Canadians are just a few examples of this invented tradition. The discourses and practices of
hockey are deeply embedded in Canada’s national culture and identity. As Gruneau and Whitson (1993) noted,

The game can be understood simply as part of the way Canadians live and make sense of their lives. Hockey’s rhythms, meanings, structures, and contradictions can all be understood as a constitutive part of everyday Canadian experience. They are also an important part of the Canadian collective memory. Hockey acts both as myth and allegory in Canadian culture. The game has become one of this country’s most significant collective representations—a story that Canadians tell themselves about what it means to be Canadian. (p. 13)

The perpetuated myths in Canada are that hockey is “natural” and, that as a sport, it provides an opportunity for “making it” and upward social mobility (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993, pp. 132-133). Sports help define moral and political communities and are an integral part of society, which may be used as a means of reflecting on society (MacClancy, 1996). Canada’s history and social development include hockey as habitus. Hockey in Canada has been an integral part of the imagined national culture, identity formation, and identity politics, and in 1994, it was officially legislated as the national winter sport of Canada (National Sports of Canada Act, 1994). The formation of Canadian national hockey teams that represent Canada in international tournaments exemplifies the crystallization and organization around a common symbol that reinforces the supposed uniqueness of the nation. This is where the athletes not only represent the nation but also symbolize the nation in terms of their character and their skills. The elite Canadian hockey players who form these teams are celebrated as individuals with great skills in the game, but what is also celebrated is the nation that produced them (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993, p. 247). When national sporting teams win, there is an affirmation of the nation and its virtues. The English victory in the 1966 World Cup was trumpeted by the English press as a triumph of traditional English virtues, and Brazil’s 1970 victory was portrayed as a triumph for a powerful, disciplined, and technocratic military government regime (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993, p. 253). In hockey, the 1972 Challenge Series, between Canada’s best hockey players and the Soviet Union’s best, which Canada won in the last few minutes of the last game, was a triumph of Canadian virtues of individualism, flair, and character over the machine-like, mechanical Soviets. Moreover, it was proclaimed as a victory for capitalist liberal democracy (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993, pp. 253, 263). In many respects, not only is the nation an imagined community (Anderson, 1991), but it is also “a soul, a spiritual principle” (Renan, 1990, p. 19), and nationalism is a Western project involving nation building (Mackey, 1999, p. 16). Thus, sport, and more specifically hockey, has been a fundamental part of nation building in Canada. Hockey has always been part of the politics of Canada’s national identity, and recently there has been increasing theorizing on sporting nationalism and national identity (Bairner, 2001). Although it should be recognized that the politics of national identity in
Canada involve gender, race (Jackson & Meier, 1999), and region, these topics are not within the scope of this article.

As hockey is intricately involved in the construction of Canadianness, so is Wayne Gretzky. As the best player ever to play the game in the NHL (as measured by number of records he holds), he has long been recognized as an ambassador of the game, but moreover, he is a representation of Canada, claimed by the nation because hockey is the nation’s game. By the summer of 1988, Gretzky was a Canadian superstar and celebrity hockey player. He had completed 10 very successful years as a professional hockey player in Canada, leading his team, the Edmonton Oilers, to win league championships, as well as leading Team Canada in four international tournaments with wins in the Canada Cup, in 1984 and 1987, over Sweden and the Soviet Union. The summer of 1988 was a memorable one for Gretzky and for Canada. In July, he married Janet Jones, an American Hollywood actress, model, and dancer. The wedding was a mega-event with 700 official guests, many of whom were celebrities and politicians; 200 credentialed media journalists; television network coverage; 10,000 uninvited guests in the streets outside the cathedral; and massive security provided by the police and fire departments (Gretzky & Reilly, 1990, p. 156). The Canadian media referred to this wedding as “Canada’s Royal Wedding.” This was ironic in postcolonial Canada who had repatriated her constitution from Great Britain only in 1981. Canada’s national magazine, Maclean’s, described the wedding as “the union of a talented and gentlemanly sports hero who, for many Canadians, embodies some the nation’s most cherished values, and his glamorous American princess” (Redmond, 1993, p. 64).

However, less than 1 month after his wedding, Gretzky was traded to an American team in the NHL, the Los Angeles Kings. Although technically it was a trade of three mediocre Los Angeles players and cash for Gretzky, in essence, he was sold for $15 million to the owner of the Los Angeles Kings, Bruce McNall. This event shocked Canada, and when it was announced, television programming was interrupted all across North America to announce the trade, and local newspapers throughout Canada devoted their front pages to the news.

Gretzky’s marriage and trade must be contextualized in terms of the political economy of the NHL and an interrelated crisis in Canadian identity in 1988. A political economy analysis of commercial spectator sport reveals its necessity for expansion and growth of territories and markets to enhance capital accumulation (Kidd, 1979). The NHL is part of the “major league” sports industry (Whitson & Gruneau, 1997) and has become a big business, undergoing increasing commercialization since its inception in the early 1900s. Thus, it is like many other commercial enterprises, in that it has a history of expansion, which in this case is the number of teams in the league, and of seeking new sources of revenue (Whitson, 1997). The pressure and plan for the NHL’s sixth major expansion began in 1989 (Stein, 1997, p. 65), which was shortly after Gretzky’s trade to the U.S. Los Angeles Kings. Thus,

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the decade of the 1990s (1990-2000) saw the NHL expand from 21 teams to 30 teams, an increase of almost one third, with Gretzky’s marquee status spurring and facilitating this expansion mostly to the southern United States. As Jackson (1994, pp. 433-434; 2001, pp. 174-177) pointed out, Gretzky’s marriage and trade were interwoven in public discourse with the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (which was undergoing debate in the House of Commons at the time), concern over the threat of the Americanization of Canada, and a crisis in Canadian identity and cultural uniqueness. These events, along with the disqualification of Ben Johnson in the Seoul Olympics that same year, helped make 1988 a memorable one in Canada (Jackson, 1998b, pp. 23-24), and as Jackson (1998a) suggested, “The year 1988 was conceptualized as a conjunctural moment, that is, an intersection of specific political, economic, and cultural events which provide a unique contest for the emergence and interaction of new social structures, processes, and practices” (p. 230). Thus, the national symbolism of Gretzky’s marriage and trade was clearly evident (Podnieks, 1999, p. 96) as Gretzky “came to symbolize the fate of Canada, a seemingly victimized nation, trying to withstand the threat of ‘Americanization’” (Jackson, 2001, p. 166) all in the context of free trade.

In contrast to Zamorano, whose migration and success outside Chile are celebrated, Gretzky’s departure from Canada was viewed in terms of deathlike loss and mourning. Canadians viewed Gretzky’s international labor migration to the United States as different from the migration of thousands of other lesser known Canadians who follow the same path. The international labor migration of Canadian hockey players to the United States was, at the time, pervasive and still today the most common form of geographic mobility. Up until the past two decades, Canadian players dominated the NHL and comprised well more than 90% of the players, but American teams have always comprised the majority of the teams in the modern era. Over the past 20 years, there has been a globalization of the nationalities of the players. However, currently Canadians still constitute 61% of the players, and Europeans comprise 23%, and Americans 16% (Houston, 1998, p. A26). So, it was not only common but also expected that most Canadians playing in the league would play for American-owned and U.S.-based teams. In Gretzky’s case, however, as a Canadian superstar athlete who represented and symbolized the nation, this migration was viewed as a loss for the nation. A Canadian sports columnist described this loss in an article in *Sports Illustrated* titled “A Nation in Mourning”:

> The best hockey player in the world was ours, and the Americans flew up from Hollywood in their private jet and bought him . . . . It wasn't the Canadian heart that was torn, it was the Canadian psyche that was ripped by an uppercut to the paranoia. (Taylor, as cited in Redmond, 1993, pp. 52, 58)

Another Canadian sports writer stated,
The trade evoked a sense of national and cultural conflict, a sense that Canada’s most famous athlete, her most beloved ambassador with no political agenda, her most gracious competitor was, like so much else economic, creative, and intellectual under the imminent Free Trade Agreement, headed south of the border. (Podnieks, 1999, p. 96)

The gravity of this national event was evidenced by the pleas that were made by many Canadians to the Canadian government to prevent the trade. Two Canadian members of parliament addressed the House of Commons to pay tribute to Wayne Gretzky (House of Commons Debates, 1988), one of whom also issued a press release, in somewhat sardonic fashion, calling on the Canadian government to intervene and to stop the trade (Christie & Hynes, 1988, p. A2). As well, there was some public resentment of Janet Jones, Gretzky’s new American wife, as some felt that she was forcing her husband to leave Canada. However, the iconization of Gretzky continued in Canada throughout the 1990s. At an emotional and spiritual level, Canadians continued to feel Gretzky’s presence due to his widespread television exposure in Canada. Moreover, whenever hockey issues or controversies occurred, Gretzky would be approached to offer his view on the subject. As well, throughout the 1990s, Gretzky continued to play for Team Canada in international tournaments, culminating in his membership on Team Canada at the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympic Games. Thus, Gretzky’s representation of Canada continued and even accelerated after his departure to the United States.

In the ensuing years after Gretzky’s move to the United States, many financial analysts concluded that in strictly business terms, the deal was a lucrative one for the owner of the Los Angeles team, who saw the value of his team increase fivefold to $100 million 3 years later, but also particularly for Gretzky, the trademark and the corporation. The large and lucrative U.S. market was now more accessible as his name recognition skyrocketed because he played for a team in Los Angeles and Hollywood. The NHL expanded as Gretzky became instrumental in the selling of the game of hockey in the United States. His presence in the United States initiated and facilitated the expansion and reinvention of a new NHL over the past two decades to include many more American cities such as Anaheim, Columbus, Dallas, Denver, Fort Lauderdale, Minneapolis, Nashville, Phoenix, Raleigh, and Tampa. Shortly after the major expansion of the NHL to many of these new American cities, a certain ironic twist of fate occurred for many Canadian hockey fans and Canadian-based teams. Gretzky’s success in selling hockey in the United States made it more difficult for many Canadian teams to remain competitive (financially and on the ice), and this paved the way for the moving of two teams from Canadian cities (Quebec City and Winnipeg) to the United States. The difficulty remains today for many other small-market teams, such as Ottawa, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver, as they are under extreme financial pressure relative to most U.S.-based teams. The de-Canadianization of the NHL (Whitson, 1997, p. 313), or more specifically
the Americanization of the NHL, can be based on the geographic location of the teams. From 1942 to 1967, there was a 6-team league with Detroit, Chicago, New York, Boston, Montreal, and Toronto, with one third of the teams based in Canada. By the beginning of the 2000–2001 season, only 5 of the 30 NHL teams, or one sixth, were based in Canada, with many of them struggling financially.

In many respects, it could be argued that Gretzky became, over the past 12 years of playing hockey in the United States, more American and less Canadian, at least with respect to his business practices and family orientation. Most Canadians, however, are not cognizant of this due to Gretzky’s national iconic status as he is thought of as Canadian: representing, and perhaps transcending, the game of hockey. However, from a perspective of territory, Gretzky’s transformation and Americanization were very transparent as he chose to live in the United States in the off season and on the ice he switched hockey sticks: from his wood Titan, which was sculpted from a Canadian tree, to an aluminum Easton made via American high technology (Podnieks, 1999, p. 102). In an interview a few years ago, Gretzky was recalling a question his son Ty had asked him regarding what team he (the son) would play for. Gretzky stated, “Maybe in 10 years my kids will play for him [Glenn Sather, manager Team Canada, 1996 World Cup]. No. Maybe they’ll play for Team USA” (Morrison, 1999, p. 65). The dual, transnational, and evolving identities of Gretzky are clearly illustrated by this last quote.

In Gretzky’s recent retirement and induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame, Canadian tributes and adoration were illustrative of his cultural iconic status in Canada and his representation of the nation. In his last game, the words of the Canadian national anthem were altered to include a small tribute to Gretzky. In the anthem, sung by Bryan Adams, the second-to-last line was altered with the words “We’re going to miss you, Wayne Gretzky,” and it should also be noted that in the American anthem, sung by John Amirante, the last line was also altered to “O’er the land of Wayne Gretzky, and the home of the brave” (Podnieks, 1999, p. 129). The well-known Canadian hockey author MacGregor (1999) wrote the following:

For more than a quarter of a century his remarkable hands had been touching a nerve that runs straight into the heart of the Canadian identity. . . . The 18,500 fans representing their country rose to give thanks to a man who had over the years made Canadians feel more Canadian about themselves. An insecure country nose-to-nose with the United States, a small country of small town sensibilities if not realities, Canada had found in Wayne Gretzky the face they wished to put forward to the rest of the world: shy and polite, deferential to elders, not braggadily but capable, sly and resourceful and gifted with heart, a good-humored, good-looking, small town kid who always remembered where he came from, and who took his country to where the people wishes to be. . . . Canada may not be the world’s most important country, but when it comes to hockey, Canada not only gave the world a marvelous game, it gave the world the greatest player of all time, no matter what may become of the game in the years to come. (pp. 16, 18)
Ken Dryden (1999), a former NHL player, lawyer, and current general manager of an NHL team, wrote the following about hockey and Gretzky as a performer in Canada’s national theater:

On its frozen stage, life lessons get played out, and millions watch and learn . . . .
To get to the top in hockey you have to live a Canadian life, one of ice and snow, struggle and physical pain. Even if Wayne Gretzky never lives in Canada again, deep in his bones he is Canadian. With him, Canadians feel a bond . . . .
He is the champion we all could have been. Hard working, hard playing, skilled, knowing what he is and what he isn’t, what he can and cannot do, respectful and largely content, he is the face that Canadians would most like to present to the world. (p. 102)

In Gretzky’s recent induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame, the Canadian media portrayed him as Canada’s kid (“Canada’s Kid Is In,” 1999). Other recent honors bestowed to Gretzky include Male Athlete of the Century in Canada and All American Heroes Award in New York. As such, he is recognized on both sides of the border, but in the United States, he is only one celebrity athlete among many others, particularly in baseball and basketball. In Canada, Gretzky has no peer. He received the Order of Canada award bestowed to him by the governor general of Canada in 1998. During Canada’s recent 134th-birthday celebration in Ottawa on July 1, 2001, the prime minister of Canada and the governor general, along with Wayne Gretzky, delivered Canada Day messages, although Gretzky’s was via video (Schmidt, 2001). So, despite his lack of physical appearance in Canada, Gretzky’s public persona is one that many Canadians like to have of themselves, and this is what has contributed to his symbolization of Canada. In many respects, Gretzky will likely continue to be “a key figure within debates about sport, culture, and national identity” (Jackson & Ponic, 2001, p. 59).

CONCLUSION

Both Zamorano and Gretzky are international performers, celebrities, athletes, and businesspersons whose “space of flows” is transnational. Each of them has achieved a position that allows them to compress time and space in a way that few people in the world can. In this sense, it is ironic that Zamorano’s and Gretzky’s transnationality, and their temporalities in Chile and Canada, respectively, serve as powerful instruments to contradictory phenomena, the strengthening of the discourse of globalization and the hardening of national identities and nationalism expressed through a sense of belonging to national communities.

Indeed, Zamorano and Gretzky, as performers and businessmen, exist in a seemingly virtual space, contributing to the idea of porous borders and ease of travel. Yet, much of the permeability of the frontiers in this new era has been for goods and capital flows. The people who can cross them and reside in more than one country are but an elite, often because of their
capital, whether it is economic, physical, or cultural. For the rest, the task is challenging. Unlike Gretzky, for many Canadians, despite the era of NAFTA workers, to live in the United States legally is not an easy process. Although some of the provisions of NAFTA, designed to meet certain shortages in the U.S. labor market, have eased restrictions for many Canadians, it is indicative that in 1996 there were approximately 120,000 Canadians who were living illegally in the United States and that Canada was the fourth fastest growing country of illegal immigration in the mid-1990s (Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997). These illegal immigrants can hardly be considered binational, let alone transnational. Although Zamorano can move back and forth from Chile to the rest of the world, only a small elite, of the hundreds of thousands of Chileans who live outside the Chilean borders, can do the same. For Chileans living in Chile, to travel to Canada or the United States is not easy and requires visas, and emigration to North America is extremely difficult. Moreover, Zamorano can even flaunt his double citizenship, but it is illegal for most Chileans to hold dual citizenship. Yet, Zamorano and Gretzky serve as a metaphor for a globalized neoliberalism. After all, neoliberalism can only flourish in a world of global apartheid, where national borders are barriers to human migration, and at the same time solidify social class differences in Chile and Canada. What is even more ironic is that in spite of transnationalism and deterritorialization, which purports the existence of a special class of people who can move and think in new manners, the national origins of the people in question affect their impact in the globalized globe. A North Americanized Gretzky is the result of somewhat porous borders between the two countries. It is a different story for a Zamorano in Europe, a “Sudaca” who has to face social borders in a Spain where he is a new citizen. Yet, on the other hand, Gretzky and Zamorano inspire national pride in Canada and Chile, respectively, and help strengthen the existing concepts of nation in both countries. They are important symbols for the nations where they were born and, as such, help to reproduce the nation and make it strong.

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