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# **Projecting European Glamour and Global Americana: The Monaco Grand Prix and Indianapolis 500**

## **Introducing Indy and Monaco: Motor-Racing Prestige, History and Tradition**

The Monaco Grand Prix and Indianapolis 500 (Indy 500) are globally renowned as pinnacle annual events on the international motor-racing calendar. Although one-off races within their larger series (Formula One and IndyCar respectively), they are revered as the stand-out events on their specific racing calendars. Indeed, to some degree, they seemingly operate as stand-alone events (particularly the Indy 500) given the prominence, pre-eminence and global attention they are accorded. For example, O’Kane (2011) asserts that:

In open-wheel racing the Monaco Grand Prix, which is the ‘jewel in the crown’ of the Formula One world championship, alongside the famous Indianapolis 500-mile race, held annually at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in the USA, represent the most desirable open wheel race victories in the world. (p. 282)

O’Kane (2011) continues by noting that, “arguably these races are viewed as being more important and prestigious than the ...separate racing series that they incorporate” and that to win either race “attracts fame, prestige, wealth and respect among drivers and motor racing enthusiasts” (p. 282). Of course, it is easy to overstate the relevance and significance of both races. Unravelling some of their mythical tapestry offers insights into these racing events.

In a literal and figurative sense, both races represent, reproduce and reify mythic projections around notions of tradition, glamour, prestige, history and grandeur. The sense of occasion for both races is immense, evoking grandiose histories that span 100 years for the Indianapolis 500 and over 85 years at Monaco (65 years for staging Formula One races). As

such, these histories have afforded the formulation and cementing of traditions that have endured, such as the winning driver drinking milk at Indianapolis.

Much of the prestige of the Monaco Grand Prix and Indy 500 as major events stems from the unique settings of their sites, which draws attention to their histories and to the surroundings that convey speed, risk and danger in contrasting ways. For Monaco, it is the narrow, tight, twisting street circuit that is instantly recognisable on Formula One's global telecasts that reach 500 million television viewers annually (Sturm, 2014). Reportedly, the Monaco Grand Prix has averaged above four million viewers in the United Kingdom alone since 2013 ("Monaco", 2015). For drivers, this allows no respite or margin for error as they race around the tiny principality inches from metal barriers and walls, and speed through the darkened tunnel into bright light. Despite its comparatively low speeds, it is generally regarded as the most dangerous circuit on the Formula One calendar due to its complexity. Former three-time world champion Nelson Piquet described racing at Monaco as "like trying to ride your bicycle around your living room" (Widdows, 2011).

In contradistinction, the Indy 500 offers 33 cars racing at full throttle for the majority of the race. At the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the cars consistently race in excess of 225 mph around the large four kilometre oval. Its 'megamediasport' event status is less assured. American television viewing figures have lingered around 4-6 million since 2013, almost half the reported 7-10 million viewers reportedly tuning in during the 1990s and 2000s ("Indy 500 TV", 2014). While global figures are notoriously difficult to access, evidence of less than 50,000 television viewers in the United Kingdom in 2015 suggests limited global popularity for the Indy 500 ("Monaco", 2015). Nevertheless, the size and scale of the facility, its reputed annual crowds of between 250,000-400,000 (O'Kane, 2011) and its long-serving legacy as one of the oldest and grandest races serves to reaffirm its status in American and global sport. Specifically, when combined with the Le Mans 24 Hour endurance sports-car race staged in

Le Mans, France, these three races form part of the unofficial 'Triple Crown' that is revered as the ultimate accomplishment in elite global car racing (O'Kane, 2011). Historically, only one driver, Englishman Graham Hill, has accomplished the feat of winning the Indy 500, Monaco Grand Prix and Le Mans.

### **Origins of Formula One and IndyCar**

Contemporary motorsport not long predates the Indianapolis 500, beginning in France in the 1890s. Historians dispute whether the 1894 Paris to Rouen event was a race or mere reliability trial for the 1895 Paris to Bordeaux race (Hughes, 2004; Rendall, 2000). Nevertheless, two key aspects emerged from these events. First, as Frandsen (2014) reminds us, many sports were developed in unison with modern mass media, particularly as "newspapers would organise sports events in order to both build up interest in the sports and consumption of the papers" (p. 531). Owner of the *New York Herald*, American James Gordon Bennett, sponsored the annual Gordon Bennett Cup for motor-races staged in Europe between 1900 and 1905, a pre-runner to the first 'Grand Prix' of 1906 (Rendall, 2000). The history of motorsports would be shaped by media and commercial influences that became more pronounced in later coverage of Formula One and the Indianapolis 500.

Second, deaths to competitors and spectators during the 1903 Paris-to-Madrid race forced the French Government to ban road racing, a pattern replicated in other nations (Hughes, 2004). Yet motorsport remained popular. Europe focused on designing closed 'road-like' circuits to maintain a semblance of road racing. In America, where road-racing had never been permitted, the construction of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 1909 provided an enormous banked oval to race and test cars (Rendall, 2000). Collectively, the construction of ovals and circuits also revealed the commercial potential of motorsport; being able to accommodate and charge large audiences (Sturm, 2013).

The origins of both IndyCar racing and Formula One were steeped in amateurism. Based upon the European Grand Prix series of the 1920s and 1930s, the Formula One World Championship was established in 1950, with seven ‘official’ races that included the Monaco Grand Prix and Indianapolis 500 (Rendall, 2000). In America, with the Indianapolis 500 as its centrepiece from 1911, Shaw (2014) notes that “the American Automobile Association oversaw the majority of motor racing activities in the US from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (p. 20). A national championship ran intermittently from 1916 although, arguably, IndyCar’s origins were more pronounced when the United States Auto Club (USAC) took control from 1955 (Shaw, 2014). Collectively, both series comprised of ‘privateers’ or ‘enthusiasts’ during their formative years, competitors who would often manufacture and fund their own cars (Sturm, 2013). From the late 1960s, the advent of car sponsorship by large (primarily tobacco) companies, as well as the increased involvement of car manufacturers saw costs escalate, literally driving many privateers out (Sturm, 2013).

### **Monaco Grand Prix as megamedia sport event?**

In light of these historical developments, can the Monaco Grand Prix and Indianapolis 500 be considered ‘megamediasport’ events? Roche (2000) asserts that, “‘mega-events’ are large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance” (p. 1). The Monaco Grand Prix needs to be assessed in the context of the annual Formula One World Championship. Sturm (2014) posits that Formula One would appear to fit Roche’s (2000) criteria “through its sheer scale, global exposure, elite positioning, vast commercial and corporate interests, and the mass media attention that it garners” (p. 69). Whether Formula One adheres to Horne’s (2010) ‘first-order’ of mega-events, such as the Summer Olympic Games or Men’s Football World Cup, is debatable. Horne’s (2010) ‘second-order’ events includes other World Championships and World Cups in relation to international athletes, rugby, cricket and the

Winter Olympics. Arguably, Formula One would be best situated alongside these ‘second-order’ events on Horne’s (2010) typology.

The impacts and legacies of mega-events, in terms of cultural, economic and political significance for host localities, both pre- and post-event, is another salient factor (Horne, 2010; Roche, 2008). This also extends to the scope, scale and reach of the event (Roche, 2000). The ‘mega’ component to Formula One appears irrefutable. It is disseminated to over 500 million television viewers across 185 countries, cost over US\$2 billion per season in the 2000s (Sturm, 2014) and currently is staged in 21 global locations. Localities pay over US\$400 million annually to obtain host-nation status (Lefebvre & Roullet, 2011). The sport has also expanded beyond its European origins to Asia and the Middle East (Bromber & Krawietz, 2013; Silk & Manley, 2012). Arguably these orientations are ‘grobal’ rather than global; reflecting an imperialistic grobal ambition for Formula One to realize economic and media interests in non-traditional locales (Andrews & Ritzer, 2007). The localities also harness the assumed global prestige and reach of Formula One; using the sport’s media and marketing platform as symbols of progress, pride and to boost tourism (Bromber & Krawietz, 2013; Silk & Manley, 2012).

The Monaco Grand Prix remains elevated as Formula One’s ‘jewel in the crown’ (O’Kane, 2011). By offering prize money of 100,000 francs for the winning driver in 1929, the Monaco Grand Prix cemented its place on the European motorsport calendar (O’Kane, 2011). Monaco became a permanent fixture in Formula One from 1955 (Rendall, 2000). Associations with prestige, complexity and evocations of glamour have permeated its history. Discussing Formula One in the 2000s, Lefebvre & Roullet (2011) note, “this sport’s audience was mostly comprised of a western urban elite. A few emblematic urban destinations symbolized the entire sport, such as the Monte Carlo or the Monza Grand Prix” (p. 330). Monaco gets especial attention as the ‘event’ on the Formula One calendar. The scope and

impact of the Monaco Grand Prix as a mega-event is also evident in the global, non-western shift for Formula One. New circuits in Abu Dhabi and Singapore have imitated Monaco's prestigious components, with Singapore hailed for its 'glitz and glamour' as the 'Monaco of the East' (Silk & Manley, 2012). The Monaco Grand Prix showcases Formula One's notions of elitism, wealth and glamour; aspects that will be further developed later in the chapter.

### **Indianapolis 500 as megamedia sport event?**

Assessing the Indianapolis 500 as a 'megamediasport' event is more problematic. As a spectator event, it remains popular. The Indy 500 is touted as being the largest single day sporting event in the world, with crowds exceeding 400,000 (O'Kane, 2011). Contemporary attendance has stabilised at 250,000-300,000, due to recent seating reductions (Cavin, 2013). Historical divisions and exclusions have diluted its mega-event status. Shaw (2014) notes that the USAC's "one-dimensional focus on the Indy 500" (p. 21) was the catalyst for existing teams to form a rival Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART) series in 1978. A CART/USAC divide remained from 1983-1995. The USAC sanctioned the Indy 500; CART teams participated but ran their separate championship. This split became more divisive in 1996. Tony George, president of the Indianapolis Motorway Speedway, created a rival Indy Racing League (IRL) which excluded many CART teams from the Indy 500 (Shaw, 2014). Eventually, CART and the IRL re-unified as the IndyCar Racing series in 2008.

Arguably the Indy 500 has oscillated as a 'second'- and 'third-order mega-event' (Horne, 2010). Crawford (1999) asserts, "up until the 1960s the Indianapolis 500 remained the greatest auto race in America" (p. 195). Then, with victories by British Formula One drivers, "the Indianapolis 500 became the world's most famous car chase" (p. 196). Its mega-event status was further solidified in the 1980s and 1990s. Shaw (2014) observes that the inclusion of international manufacturers and increased transnational sponsors "led more international drivers to consider CART as a viable alternative to F1" (p. 21). High-profile drivers

competed in and won the Indy 500, such as Brazilian Emerson Fittipaldi and Canadian Jacques Villeneuve (Crawford, 1999). At its peak, the Indy 500 and championship offered a significant counterpoint to the supremacy of Formula One (O’Kane, 2011), with coverage televised in 120 countries (Shaw, 2014).

The IRL/CART division affected the contemporary status and impact of the Indy 500. IndyCar became more insular and American-focused (despite its international drivers) in terms of locations and sponsors. Domestically, stock-car racing surpassed its popularity. During the mid-2000s, Newman (2007) observes that, after American Football, NASCAR was “the second most popular spectator sport in North America (in terms of television ratings and per event attendance)” (p. 292). Although NASCAR’s television ratings and attendance figures may have plateaued, the series attracts greater commercial investment and media coverage than IndyCar (Newman & Beissel, 2009). This includes flagship events. The Indy 500 attracts a larger American television audience compared to the NASCAR Coca-Cola 600 staged the same day; with 2016 figures of 6 million to 5.7 million viewers respectively (“Indy 500 hits”, 2016). Comparatively, NASCAR’s major event, the Daytona 500, attracted 11.6 million in 2016 (“Indy 500 hits”, 2016). In light of steady if not declining television audiences, the Indy 500 arguably meshes with Horne’s (2010) ‘third-order’ events, which includes America’s Cup sailing and the Asian and Pan American Games. The future international scope, scale and impact of the Indy 500 as a mega-event remains uncertain.

### **Mediation and Mediatization**

Beyond being significant sporting events in their own right, the Monaco Grand Prix and Indy 500 are transformed as mediated events. Global mediations serve to inform, entertain and retain the socio-cultural and economic significance of the historical running of these two distinctive motor-races. However, Frandsen (2014) cautions against media-centric approaches that often treat sports as generic commodities. Citing “interrelation processes” (p. 529),



Frandsen (2014) notes “mediatization is a social process, where media exert a growing influence on society to the extent that they seem to play a role in the transformation of social and cultural fields” (p. 529).

Scholars have also highlighted the inter-dependence of sport, media, culture, commerce and politics (Horne, 2010; Hutchins & Rowe, 2012, 2013; Whannel, 1992). Specifically Wenner’s (1998) term ‘MediaSport’ points to the institutional interpenetration of media and sport in social and cultural spheres. Sporting structures and fields also have their own variations, complexities and nuances. Frandsen (2014) asserts,

Profound reflections on the specificities of the field of sport, of television, and on differences and historical changes in terms of media systemic and sports systemic contexts are therefore informative musts if we want to understand the role of media in relation to sports. (p. 530)

Historical distinctions in the organisation of the Monaco Grand Prix and Indianapolis 500 revealed some of their nuanced contexts. Both races are also infused with social and cultural interrelation processes that reflect their respective European and American origins. These localised elements and symbols are incorporated in the media representations. Specifically, television coverage projects a joint global spectacle of speed that encapsulates either European glamour for Monaco or ‘global Americana’ for the Indy 500. Each event will be given race-specific treatment later in the chapter.

Hutchins and Rowe (2012) suggest that as media technologies become more intricate, they provide profound changes to the contours of ‘real’ sporting practices and social relations. Technological permutations afford ‘new’ interactive capacities and innovations to sport; its representation, its consumption and within its own structures (Whannel, 2014). This includes experiences and expressions of fandom (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012).

Representationally, however, digital technologies often reproduce and supplement aspects of

the television coverage (Hutchins & Rowe, 2013). In an alleged ‘post-broadcast’ era, contemporary live televised sport still has the capacity for attracting global audiences, enticing sponsors and selling audiences to advertisers (Whannel, 2014).

Sturm (2014) suggests that Formula One was repackaged in the 1980s “as an event *for the media*” (p. 69). This included negotiating global television rights, currently valued at \$600 million per year (Sturm, 2014). Formula One has remained resistant to the encroachment of new media. The televised race broadcasts are privileged, resulting in non-sanctioned or fan-produced content forcibly policed and removed online (Sturm, 2014). The prime area of innovation has been the annual globally-released *FI* video games from Codemasters, which reproduce simulations of Formula One circuits with striking realism (Conway & Finn, 2014). The IndyCar series caters to both television and online viewership. Title sponsor, Verizon Communications, provides various live streaming options and promotes the series through social media platforms. Surprisingly, IndyCar has not released branded video-games since *IndyCar Series 2005*. In terms of television spectatorship, the sport has limited or cable access in some global localities. Domestically, IndyCar’s audience has increased, albeit averaging less than one million per race when compared to rival NASCAR’s estimated five million (Schoettle, 2014).

### **Re-Producing Mediated Racing Spectacles**

Reliant on traditional broadcast media forms for their global circulation and consumption, the Monaco Grand Prix and the Indy 500 are re-cast as televised spectacles of speed. Describing what is involved in the transformation of a live sporting event to television spectacle, Gruneau (1989) notes that “a wide range of processes of visual and narrative representation – choices regarding the images, language, camera positioning, and story line are required to translate ‘what happened’ into a program that makes ‘good television’” (p. 135). Such processes aim to inform and entertain the viewer; projecting the speed and drama

of the racing spectacle (Whannel, 1992). The televised spectacle also attempts to sustain an aura of liveness and immediacy for global audiences by rendering experiential elements of the 'live' first-hand event as witnessed by in-situ spectators (Billings, 2010).

The Monaco Grand Prix and Indy 500 share many overlapping representational strategies. Both races (and series) are framed via the highly mobilised fluidity discernible in Formula One (Sturm, 2014). Representationally, the coverage adheres to Whannel's (1992) "highly mobile ideal spectator" (p. 98), affording a 'perfect view' for television viewers via continuous trackside transitions and perspectives that are not available to live attendees. The use of frequent cuts, transitions and the juxtaposition of camera angles and perspectives, seeks to maintain interest in what, at times, can become monotonous motor-racing events. For example, barring a crash, driver error or technical issue, the Monaco Grand Prix tends to be processional. With the drivers often unable to pass on this narrow and twisting circuit, by-and-large they usually run in the same race order for most of the 78 laps. In turn, while the Indy 500 facilitates more regular over-taking, in reality watching cars continually circulate around four banked turns for 200 laps arguably also can have a limited appeal. However, these representational techniques vitiate against rendering the 'real' speed experienced trackside by live event attendees (Whannel, 1992).

To combat this, regular transitions from stationary wall-mounted cameras to the driver perspectives are used to show how close the cars are running to barriers at Monaco or to the other drivers at Indianapolis. Providing these perspectives attempts to convey the immense speed at which drivers must operate as they nimbly negotiate the swimming pool complex in Monaco or race in excess of 230 mph in close formation down long Indy straights. Additionally, the sense of occasion is heightened by using frequent long shots and dramatic angles from elevated cranes or helicopters. Such shots continually reinforce the glamorous setting for the Grand Prix as we see historical buildings, the harbour and the wealthy of

Monaco. At Indianapolis, on one hand, the long one kilometre straights are foreshortened through using telephoto lenses with zoom techniques to easily follow the racing action. On the other hand, helicopters flying above the speedway render and reinforce the immense size and scale of the facility, as seemingly tiny cars circulate before zoom techniques or other transitions return viewers to close views of the race.

Collectively, these techniques reflect and reinforce the duality of informing and entertaining the televised viewers. The techniques afford ‘pleasure points’ that focus on the racing action, allowing the viewer to take in dramatic moments and provide intimacy with star drivers to frame the races as marketable televisual commodities with attributes attractive to delivering large audiences (Whannel, 2014). The use of informative and entertaining production techniques underpins the representations of both races. However, production for the Indy 500 is less focused on Formula One’s emphasis on glamour and reliance on special “high-tech” effects (Sturm, 2014). Rather, producing this race builds on traditions and pageantry that idealize American values. Both events interplay with representational techniques that evoke their historical and prestigious mantle within global motorsport. A closer analysis of these distinctive spectacles of speed is now provided.

### **The ‘Jewel in the Crown’: The Monaco Grand Prix as European Glamour**

Frandsen (2014) reminds us that “as staged events sports games are forms that communicate certain meanings, which are powerful forces in the relationship. They have their own cultural value” (p. 533). The Monaco Grand Prix projects notions of European ‘glamour’ and sophistication through an assemblage of iconic global images that are suggestive of wealth, prestige, elitism and symbols of excess (for example, celebrities, yachts, fashion, jewellery and stereotypically beautiful females). It is difficult to not resort to a series of clichés to account for the ‘glamorous’ images and excessive displays. O’Kane’s (2011) description of the significance of Monaco is imbued with such sentiments:

The Monaco Grand Prix has long been viewed as the ‘jewel in the crown’ of the Formula One world championship and one of the most prestigious motor races in the world...The Monaco Grand Prix is the most important race in the Formula One calendar due to its history and prestige and also its glamorous location... Monaco is famous for its conspicuous consumption, its wealth as well as its gambling centre of Monte Carlo. The fact that the principality is a tax haven makes it the playground of the rich and famous and for many the perfect venue for the high-octane sport of Formula One motor racing. (p. 287)

Monaco, as a location, re-affirms the glamorous and elitist underpinnings of Formula One. Monaco also represents and reifies what Giardina (2001) labels an ‘aura of Europeanness’, with this aura being “a cross between old world, nineteenth-century charm and its twentieth century counterpoint: the high-tech, jet-set glamour that exemplifies London, Paris and Milan” (p. 210). An ‘Europeanness’ of character also pervades, with a “‘worldly’ image, cultured tastes, and fashionable image” providing “a powerful signifier of sophistication” (p. 210). As a harbinger of ‘Europeanness’, transmitting images of Monaco’s wealth, luxury and ‘glamour’ dovetails with Formula One’s socio-cultural structures that evoke expense and elitism, promote a jet-set lifestyle and utilize localities as extravagant backdrops for hi-tech racing projectiles (Sturm, 2014).

The exacerbated projection of glamour contributes to the aura of Monaco. Racing fast cars through affluent city streets provides an idyllic setting; further furnished with the stunning background of historic buildings and an expensive array of yachts in the harbour. Moreover, the rich and celebrated are also shown in attendance, facilitating a mediatised cocktail that mixes celebrities, fashion, corporate sponsors, luxury yachts and beauty in a way that complements and often supersedes screen images of fast cars racing. The treatment of the

sport seems meant to facilitate heroic understandings of these racing men as the noble drivers who ‘vanquish’ opponents and ‘conquer’ Monaco’s narrow streets through the exceptional display of skill, replete with a royal reception from Monaco’s monarchy for the victorious. Kennedy (2000) observes that the Monaco Grand Prix is particularly reliant on heroic depictions of the male driver as a “knight going into battle” (p. 65) with the beautiful women, symbolically at least, included in the ‘spoils of victory’ for the winning driver via their explicitly sexualised representations dismissively codified as ‘glamour’ (see Sturm, 2014).

Beyond gendered notions of the heroic driver demonstrating his skill and bravado to supposedly ‘tame’ the circuit, much of the aura of Monaco takes place off the challenging race track. Indeed, much in the Monaco Grand Prix’s ‘jewel in the crown’ reputation does not come from racing per se but from its symbolic linking of glamour, wealth and luxury in association with Formula One. In tandem, Monaco Grand Prix features many opportunities to facilitate commerce. Many of the teams use the event for publicity, as an opportunity to ‘schmooze’ significant clients, and advance business deals. Indeed, the Monaco Grand Prix is the only Formula One event that conducts practice on a Thursday (Friday is officially a ‘rest day’), primarily to furnish greater commercial opportunities, while catering to other off-track activities, promotions and events across the race weekend. Throughout, fashion shows, designer jewellery displays and sponsor-intensive functions are staged and teams participate in corporate tie-ins that have included placing diamonds in driver helmets (e.g., Lewis Hamilton in 2007 and 2008) and mounting them in the cars (e.g., Jaguar Racing in 2004).

With Formula One fundamentally Eurocentric in design and financed by major transnational corporations, the sport disseminates a highly mediated, commodified and consumable homogenised spectacle for its global audience (Sturm, 2014). Media representations make glowing reference to Monaco’s significance, history, tradition and prestige on the calendar. Accordingly, Monaco provides the extravagant template for

projecting a myopic, global ‘vision’ of Formula One as affluent and aspirational. Monaco’s impact and legacy is evinced by emerging localities buying-in to these characteristics.

Despite lacking either the history or tradition of Monaco, newer circuits in Singapore and Abu Dhabi have adopted and replicated elements of its setting to provide explicitly self-referential promotional techniques. By-and-large successful, both localities produce idealized images of what Silk and Manley (2012) refer to as a “stylized global exotic” (p. 475).

Singapore stages races at night against a brightly-lit materialistic backdrop of city landmarks and skyscrapers to produce its global media spectacle. For Abu Dhabi’s “galactic vision” (Bromber & Krawietz, 2013, p. 200) futuristic hotels and expensive yachts are prominent on the purpose-built artificial island that houses the track.

As a mega-event, the Monaco Grand Prix retains its global pre-eminence and ‘jewel’-like status in motorsport. The venue and race embodies, encapsulates and emboldens Formula One’s prestige, history and tradition as its original, highly-complex street circuit. O’Kane (2011) observes,

The Monaco Grand Prix is representative of everything that attracts drivers and spectators to motor racing – speed, glamour, excitement and prestige...Monaco is the one Grand Prix that every driver wants to win above all the rest of the races on the Formula One calendar (p. 292).

Staging the race amongst a backdrop of royalty and palaces, casinos and high-stakes gambling, luxury yachts adorned with the celebrated and the beautiful, and the principality as a moneyed tax haven in the sun-soaked south of France, the Monaco Grand Prix collectively projects and reifies lavish aspirational motifs of European glamour.

### **The ‘Greatest Spectacle in Racing’: The Indianapolis 500 as Global Americana**

In different ways, the Indianapolis 500 also attempts to project prestige and grandeur in presenting the race as a long-established historical event. The casting of the Indy 500

offers a global snapshot of Americana by painting an imagined and mediated portrait of America in its characterisation of event traditions. Much of the hue and grandeur associated with this event stems from its grandiose and history laden site. The sheer size and scale of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway (IMS) is striking. The colossal sporting facility is its own spectacle and this is amplified by cars rocketing around 60 foot banked ovals. Located in suburban Indianapolis, the IMS facility sits on 80 acres of land, comprising of a 2.5 mile (or four kilometre) four-cornered banked oval. The facility also houses a golf course, hotel and even a separate track within its infield. Its 235, 000 permanent seating capacity make it the largest capacity sports venue in the world (Cavin, 2016), and there is room for expansion.

Rituals buttress the staging of this event and contribute to its longevity as a predominantly spectator sport. 2016 featured the 100<sup>th</sup> running of the Indy 500, a prestigious and unprecedented milestone in international motorsport. With history permeating this iconic facility, the cyclic and repeated traditions continue to draw crowds back to Indianapolis.

O’Kane (2011) notes:

The race holds an important place in American culture and has become an annual pilgrimage for many American families...pre-race ceremonies and traditions take some time and help build up the atmosphere among the 400,000-plus crowd. This all plays a part in establishing the race as the cultural reservoir that it has now become within the American psyche. (p. 284).

This cultural reservoir hints at how sporting rituals can provide social functions and cultural connections for communities or, indeed, nations (Butterworth, 2005; Newman, 2007). The sense of occasion associated with the Indy 500 as a vicarious lived experience, as well as the IMS as a memorable site, are further underscored by its familiarity.



For in-situ spectators and televised viewers, numerous iconic moments have become folkloric traditions celebrated in association with the race. In turn, such iconic moments have become expected rituals trackside, while being framed as significant focal points for the event's mediation. For example, 'Gentlemen start your engines' has been an enduring feature of the Indy 500 (O'Kane, 2011), revised since 1977 to 'Ladies and Gentlemen start your engines' as more female drivers have come to compete. At the conclusion of the race, the winning driver also enacts a series of ceremonial performances for the spectators, sponsors and media. Notably recognisable is the drinking of milk by the winning driver, a ritual that dates back to 1936 where three-time winner Lou Meyer requested and drank buttermilk (O'Kane, 2011). Today, drinking milk in celebration has become a profitable marketing exercise, evidenced by the American Dairy Company paying the winning driver \$10,000 for the rights to associate its product with victory (Jenkins, 2015).

Other rituals and performances envelope the Indy 500. Many of these reveal the complexity of "interrelation processes" (Frandsen, 2014, p. 529) while pointing to the political and ideological undercurrents of the Indy 500 as a cultural institution. On race day, the prescribed set of rituals that take place are carefully framed by the media to further contribute to the Indy 500 spectacle and pageantry. Staged as it is on Memorial Day weekend, the race is situated to build on linkages to American tradition and folklore. Many of these ceremonies reek of American patriotism by linking church, military and the state.

With the race run on a Sunday, a Roman Catholic religious invocation has opened the proceedings, blessing the military, drivers and event, since 1974. Next, a celebration of the military is championed through the rendition of 'Taps', a fly-by of military aircraft and a public address from a key military or government official as part of the remembrance and honouring for those who served. Fervent patriotism is further embellished by a series of celebratory songs, with local celebrity Florence Henderson (of *The Brady Bunch* fame) often

singing *America the Beautiful* and *God Bless America* before the National Anthem is sung by another famous American guest singer. The final song reflects distinctly Indianapolis origins, with *Back Home Again in Indiana* having been sung since 1946, most frequently by Jim Nabors (of *Gomer Pyle* fame) from 1972 to 2014. Drivers are then instructed to go to their vehicles, await the ‘start your engines’ command while a celebrity guest waves the green flag to signify the start of the race (O’Kane, 2011).

These performances arguably mesh with other American sports, notably baseball and NASCAR, in terms of their patriotic displays (Butterworth, 2005; Newman, 2007; Newman & Beissel, 2009). For example, NASCAR’s rituals appear more categorically patriotic by aligning Christianity, the Religious Right, the military and predominantly conservative, white and Southern values. Newman (2007) suggests that these pre-race rituals serve to “spectacularize the preferred, hyper-militaristic, neoconservative identity politics of NASCAR Nation” (p. 302). By privileging similar conservative values and ideologies, the Indy 500 ceremonies seem to be highly contentious. Nevertheless, they are represented in an unquestioned and unproblematic manner. Paradoxically, despite the American focus of the race (and series), the Indy 500 is explicitly international. Of the 33 race entrants, only 11 in 2014 and 12 in 2015 were American. This international dimension is neither acknowledged nor incorporated into the pre-race customs, despite comprising of past winners or series champions. While this is troublesome, increased ‘foreign’ driver participation may partially account for a recent downturn in American television viewing of the race, as occurred in NASCAR (Newman & Beissel, 2009). Alternatively, it may be that the reliance on proclamations about Americana and capitalist ideologies may partially account for reduced contemporary global television viewing figures for the Indy 500.

Despite being a significant global sporting event comprised of an international field, the mediated representations of the Indy 500 and its set of pre-race ceremonies idealizes the

ideologies behind an array of American traditions, proclamations and endless evocations of Americana. O’Kane (2011) asserts that “the traditions that have grown up around the race have contributed greatly to its popularity and enduring appeal. Many fans see the customs and rituals that the race generates as representative of a particular form of American spirit” (p. 283). In many ways, this is the essence of the Indy 500--even if its enduring appeal is becoming more questionable. Despite the need to grow a global audience, despite the international field of drivers and despite contemporary forms of multi-culturalism, the Indy 500 has retained an insular, durable, and almost singular focus on quintessential proclamations of Americana. The Indy 500 projects, protects and reifies these idealized expressions of American traditions and conservative ideals via its narrow preoccupation with American patriotic values.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As two of the most significant annual events on the international motor-racing calendar, the Monaco Grand Prix and the Indianapolis 500 collectively reify their heightened status by reinforcing unique rich traditions, distinct forms of prestige and legendary histories. In turn, these sensibilities are re-codified for global audiences through mediated processes that reproduce their aura and allure as ‘spectacles of speed’. Televisual technologies and representations draw upon highly-stylised and fluid forms to frame race competition at Monaco and Indianapolis, amplifying and flavouring the racing experience through an array of production techniques and a focus on the local. Conversely, while being framed through complementary techniques, distinctive versions of the ‘essence’ of the spectacle for these separate events are also being globally disseminated.

The Monaco Grand Prix imparts elitist, aspirational motifs of Formula One to its already global audience. European glamour is projected through an assemblage of iconic images and associated symbols that reiterate its status, privilege, luxury and conspicuous consumption.

Monaco's illusions of European glamour dovetail seamlessly with Formula One's prestigious global image and maintain its 'megamediasport' event status. Alternatively, the Indy 500 resiliently relies on an insular vision of Americana while attempting to build an event with global appeal. Through its pre-race pageantry, ceremonies and rituals, the Indy 500 projects, celebrates and retains a persistent and ethno-centric American emphasis built around idealized American values and fervent patriotism. Arguably, this remains enduring and endearing to a core domestic fan base, many of whom still attend in large numbers. However, its more recent television viewing figures indicate that this myopic vision of 'Americana' may be hindering the Indy 500's prestigious status as a global 'megamediasport' event.

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