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Consuming Football Celebrity: The Global Culture Industry, Interactive Media and Resistance

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Abstract

This thesis aimed to develop a new framework for exploring football celebrity. Drawing upon and developing Lash and Lury's (2007) model of the global culture industry, it critically explored the extent to which football celebrity can be conceptualized as a commodity image that circulates free from the human being on which it is based (Potolsky, 2006). A commonality and key weakness of studies in the area of sport celebrity is that despite evidence to the contrary, they continue to treat 'celebrity' as a human being with higher status, rather than the commercial entity that it is (Cashmore, 2002). Through the analysis of football celebrity representation and consumption, the study critically investigated the various ways in which the football celebrity commodity is drawn upon as a cultural resource. Amidst discussions about the democratisation of media and assumed levels of audience agency, it particularly interrogated how power is played out in increasingly complex ways in both online and off-line environments (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998).

In order to account for the contingency and ambiguity of celebrity, the study used a novel methodological approach, dubbed by Lash and Lury (2007) as 'tracking the object'. Given that this method has not been used previously in the sociology of sport, its use is considered to be a unique contribution to literature. Specifically, this methodological and epistemological approach involved a detailed and critical media analysis of football celebrity in both grass roots and corporate media, including: tabloid and broadsheet newspapers; the documentary *Being Liverpool*; the social networking site Twitter and alternative fan sites; and *Not Just a game* and *Kickette*. In critical response to Beer's (2008) assertion that it is also important to consider the intersection of mediated engagement and its integration into the socio-scape, the researcher also conducted four focus groups in order to explore the ways that football celebrity is drawn upon to make sense of salient social issues and debates.

In line with trends within the third generation of audience studies, the thesis aimed to investigate the place of football celebrity in everyday life. This focused specifically on the ways in which the audience drew upon football celebrity as a cultural resource and to what extent their consumption could be considered a form of resistance to dominant discourses of capitalism, gender, race and sexuality.

It was argued that there were contradictions in both the representation and consumption of football celebrity. It is demonstrated that, characteristically, it is these contradictory elements that constitute an important aspect of the appeal of the football celebrity resource. It was evident that in the analysis of corporate media in particular, there were clear examples of audience labour as the audience were co-opted to create content that could be used for various corporations to make a profit. The analysis of grassroots media did however highlight instances where the audience were clearly active and capable of creating potentially culturally resistant texts. It was suggested that future research should therefore seek to critically analyse texts produced by both grassroots and corporate media.

Chapter 1-Introduction

This thesis aims to develop a new framework for exploring football celebrity. Drawing upon and developing Lash and Lury's (2007) model of the global culture industry, it critically explores the extent to which football celebrity can be conceptualized as a commodity image that circulates free from the human being on which it is based (Potolsky, 2006). Through the analysis of football celebrity representation and consumption, the study critically explores various ways in which the football celebrity commodity is drawn upon as a cultural resource. Furthermore, amidst discussions about the democratisation of media and assumed levels of audience agency, it will interrogate how power is played out in increasingly complex ways (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998).

Over the last twenty years, football celebrity has become ubiquitous, dominating the news and current affairs, as much as sports related features (Boyle and Haynes, 2004). Football celebrity has thus broken free of the confines of sport and merged into wider public discourse, taking on new significance in the process (Weiss, 1996). In response to this shift, there is a growing body of literature on football celebrity that explores the wide-ranging cultural and political significance of football players, beyond their ability to serve as role models. This literature has taken the analysis of football celebrity in a number of different directions and surpassed studies limited by latent functionalist assumptions, that football players necessarily inspire and motivate (Lines, 2002; Hughson, 2009).

Given his global prominence, David Beckham has frequently been used as a case study to explore the changing representations in football celebrity mentioned above (Cashmore, 2002; Gee, 2013). In line with definitions of celebrity that highlight an emphasis on the public sphere, it is suggested that the appeal of Beckham is his willingness to put his private life on display for public consumption (Cashmore and Parker, 2003). As such, his family, wedding and even his sex life have been turned into spectacles for public consumption. Where a number of studies have apportioned

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celebrity status to football players on the basis that it is 'achieved' (Rojek, 2001, Turner, 2004), trends to report on all aspects of their lives clearly bring this assumption into question. Although it is their football career that puts football celebrities in the spot light in the first place, it is the propensity of the global culture industry to turn players, their family and their lives into commodity form that keeps them in the public eye (Whannel, 2001). A significant consequence of this changing nature of coverage of football celebrity, towards the private sphere, is that it becomes increasingly intertextual and extends to being recognised and known by people who do not necessarily follow the game (Milner, 2010).

One effect of what Rojek (2001) calls the 'celebrification' of our culture is that it encourages the fantasy that we can become intimate with those we have never met. Schickel (2000:4) suggests that the relationship we have of celebrities is increasingly characterised by an 'illusion of intimacy', where we may feel we 'know' high profile mediated figures as if they were part of our social circle. In wider celebrity literature, the assumed relationships created between celebrity and the audience is treated as potentially problematic and indicative of cultural decline. Most notably, Adorno and Horkheimer (1979) perceived celebrity culture to be part of what they termed the culture industry, and alongside other forms of entertainment, a mechanism for keeping the audience passive. This however, overlooks the possibility for critical readings of information surrounding mediated images of football celebrity. Furthermore, these suggestions are based on theoretical assumptions, rather than empirical evidence. It is for this reason that there have been a number of calls for further work in this area (Redmond and Holmes, 2007; Turner, 2010).

The popular appeal of football celebrity imagery has also been analysed as a reflection of the commercialized game of football. Cashmore and Parker (2003) suggest for instance, that in a previous era, Beckham would have been recognised as a technically proficient athlete, but the celebrity status he is granted today, is unique to a media and consumer society. Beckham's rise is equated with the development and globalisation of the English Premier League, and his club at the time, Manchester United, which itself is a commercial entity, made possible through the money injected by BSkyB in the early 1990s. As Cashmore (2002:20) suggests, 'once the domain of film, television and the fashion industry, show business has

acquired a new confrere in the guise of sport, with football players being rewarded with lucrative salaries to match'.

As it has become more socially significant, football celebrity imagery is increasingly used to add value to a range of consumer products, both inside and outside the sport (Horne, 2006). The commercial value associated with football and its players has led to, the emergence and exploitation of image rights (Haynes, 2007). Clubs are increasingly not only paying for the talent of the player, but also the use of their image. The importance of the image making industry is illustrated by the fact that many players now earn significantly more from their commercial endeavours than their playing careers (Yu, 2005). In recognition of this trend Gee's (2014) analysis of Beckham is set against a backdrop of neo-liberal capitalism focusing particularly on his value as a brand rather than a football player.

The individual celebrity can be considered commercial property with a number of parties benefiting from the sale of associated imagery; image management has therefore become an increasingly important aspect of the celebrity industry (Haynes, 2007). Cultural intermediaries, including managers, image consultants and public relations advisors play a significant role in 'stage managing' celebrity and constructing the public presentation of personalities (Gamson, 1994; Switenberg, 1993). Football celebrity is cited as complicit in this process, making the most of the value attached to their image for commercial gain and public visibility (Haynes, 2007). Individual football celebrities are, however, increasingly susceptible to brand damage if they do anything to undermine the carefully constructed image they have created (Hughes and Shank, 2005). In 2010 for instance John Terry received widespread media criticism and punishment for an extra-marrital affair with his England team mate's ex-girlfriend. Given that he had previously built up an image as a family man, the exposure of the affair led to the unraveling of the constructed image.

It will be suggested throughout the thesis, that there has been a shift from panopticon to synopticon surveillance, where social control is increasingly achieved through seduction, rather than more oppressive means of authority Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004; Cashmore, 2006). Where the metaphor of the panopticon prison emphasised how in society the few watch the many in 'big brother' fashion, the synopticon

suggests that in contemporary times, the many watch the few. In its most simple application to celebrity, the audience is drawn to watch the few high status and successful individuals presented to us via the media. However, it is arguably more complex than this would imply. This shift for example is indicative of wider trends in how visibility is perceived. Rather than the fear of being watched, people now are more likely to desire visibility. It appears therefore that rather than being a straight forward articulation of power, the gaze can be thought of as simultaneously controlling and empowering. Following the model of celebrity culture more widely, confirmation of visibility appears to be an increasingly important aspect of everyday life.

Although commercialisation of football is associated with providing benefits to the sport as well as the players, a number of studies have highlighted the assumed deficiencies of the contemporary game, lamenting celebrity culture as a presumed cause of such a decline (Wagg, 2010). Williams (2006) for example highlights how England players have been revered due to their celebrity status, although his work suggests that the interest they attract is disproportionate to the level of success they have achieved in sporting terms. Lines' (2001) study, in which she analysed the coverage of what she termed 'the summer of sport' in 1996, included the representation of certain football celebrity figures behaving badly, with the inference being that they were letting the England team down. Lines' (2001: 293) work made specific reference to the idea that 'England players needed to rediscover the virtues of modesty and discipline', perhaps alluding to a more 'golden' age in the sport.

In line with trends in wider celebrity studies (Furedi, 2010), football celebrity is associated with triviality and superficiality, as well as producing players who are concerned with celebrity lifestyles, rather than the love of the game. The analysis of celebrity culture within these studies has often been used to set up a comparison between a golden past and a corrupted present, with the poor behaviour and attitudes of contemporary celebrity often used to illustrate this shift (Lines, 2001; Whannel, 2001; Wagg, 2010). Celebrity might therefore be considered contradictory, in the sense that it is simultaneously celebrated, but derided (Rose, 2003). Eagleton's (2005) article about celebrity culture might be considered illustrative of this idea. In his own words Eagleton (2005: 16) explains;

'Celebrities are natural anarchists, but they combine the megalomania of being a law unto themselves with the glamour and prestige of the Establishment, thus gratifying our conformist instincts along with our dissident ones. They also allow us to indulge our vindictive impulses: if they fall from grace too theatrically, we can enjoy the Oedipal delights of savaging them like a parent who has let us down. Their relationship to their fans is thus more like that of a lion tamer to his faithful but secretly resentful beasts than one of a prophet to his disciples. One false move too many and their charisma can be bitten off at a single snap'.

Accounts of celebrity adopting psychoanalytical approaches therefore offer glimpses into the ambivalence of celebrity, and the propensity to take pleasure in the celebrity fall, however, they have not drawn upon empirical evidence to support their claims (Phillips, 2006). This thesis aimed to draw on psychoanalytical perspectives to analyse the way in which football celebrity was drawn upon as a cultural resource in both online and offline environments. In doing so it aimed to make a contribution to the literature.

It is not only as a commercial entity that football celebrity has become significant. It has long been recognised that football celebrity is a carrier of shifting and important cultural meanings (Dyer, 1986). To draw on Foucault's (1969) conception, football celebrity might therefore be considered a discursive formation, which allows for the analysis of ideologies including gender, sexuality race and class. Masculinity in particular, has been at the centre of a number of studies, tracking how it is indicative of wider cultural shifts (Whannel, 2001). The mediated football celebrity might therefore be thought of as a lens through which people make sense of their social worlds (Hopkins, 2002, Marshall, 1997, Rojek, 2001, Turner, 2004). Gee's (2012) work for instance, uses football celebrity as a case study to discuss 'flexible masculinity in the millennium', implying that football celebrity can be used as a vehicle to track changes in wider conceptions of masculinity.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the consideration of celebrity needs to be contingent of the society in which it is situated, the reader should not expect within this thesis to see a major treatise on the history of the game or celebrity status of players, this is available elsewhere, for example, see Woolridge (2002). It will however, situate football celebrity as bound up with new media developments which have had

significant implications in the ways that football celebrity is produced, circulated and consumed (Boyle & Haynes, 2004). Although new media is a contested term, in this thesis it is taken to refer to the increase of interactivity, user generated content, the ability to access media across a wide range of devices and the multidirectional nature of media.

Although it is acknowledged that extant studies have provided some useful insights into the topic area, they are however relatively limited in their scope. Whilst providing illustrative accounts of the intersection between football and celebrity culture, they have rarely moved accounts forward, theoretically or empirically. Furthermore, they do not adequately take into account the ambivalent and contradictory nature of football celebrity. A commonality, and key weakness of these studies, is that despite evidence to the contrary, they continue to treat 'celebrity' as a human being with higher status, rather than the commercial entity that it is (Cashmore, 2002). A number of studies have alluded to the notion of considering football celebrity as a commodity, although to date, this idea has not been fully developed, at least in an empirical sense (Cashmore, 2002; Cashmore and Parker, 2003; and Redmond and Holmes, 2007; Kellner, 1996; Walton, 2004). In response, this thesis will adopt an alternative approach, by treating football celebrity as a commodity created by the global culture industry; a product that is manufactured, circulated and consumed in increasingly complex and contradictory ways.

Consumer society reflects a relentless drive to convert everything into commodities that can be bought and sold, like items on a supermarket shelf. Adopting a Debordian approach, Kellner (1996) suggests the human being is no exception to this rule. Like all commodities, celebrity is produced to be consumed. Cashmore's (2002) analysis of David Beckham appears to support this suggestion. In recognising the socially and culturally constructed nature of Beckham's celebrity, Cashmore (2002:192) argues that 'David Beckham is as much a construction as Bob the Builder or Tony Soprano – A product of imagination and industry, rather than exploits'. Read in this way, there is no access to the 'truth' of the celebrity, other than what is subjectively mediated (Theberge and Birrell, 1994).The appeal of Beckham is therefore not that he is a talented footballer, but rather, that he is a product that appeals to celebrity hungry, image conscious consumers (Cashmore, 2002). This is not to deny that the

physical Beckham exists, but rather to suggest, that consumers do not consume Beckham himself, only representations of him created by the global culture industry.

Cashmore and Parker (2003:215) define celebrity as 'the process by which people are turned into 'things', things to be adored, respected, worshipped, idolized, but perhaps most importantly things which are themselves produced and consumed'. The football celebrity commodity therefore consists of all the images and representations in subsidiary circulation as well as the individual on which these are based (Dyer, 1986; Walton, 2004). With this approach, celebrity has become ubiquitous largely because it does not rely on the physical presence of a human being. Rather, the celebrity image circulates free from its origin arguably taking on a wider range of meanings across different contexts (Penfold, 2004; Parry, 2009). Cashmore's (2002) suggestion that Beckham is deliberately marketed as a blank canvas is significant allowing him to appeal to a wide range of potential consumers. It will be suggested however, that the fact that the celebrity commodity is based on a human being, remains important in the way it signifies, allowing the audience to make connections between celebrity and their own lives (Dyer, 1986).

The consideration of both celebrity production and consumption, amidst the developments in new media, is a key issue for this thesis. In particular, extant literature in this area has been dominated by debated about social control and democracy. Such debates are premised on the notion that new media is more interactive, allowing users to generate content and actively contribute to media production (Cover, 2006; Leonard, 2009). Conversely however, critics have argued that new media constitutes a space where power continues to operate, only in more complex and covert ways. Although 'new media' is a contentious term, it is largely used to refer to the increased interactivity offered by specific media forms such as the Internet. It is a term also associated with the development of user generated content (Beer, 2008). As well as the technical dimension, it has been argued that new media has also impacted on our daily lives and social relationships. Wark (1994) for instance describes the proliferation of communication technologies and media systems within the quotidian rhythms of social life. These interactions with and via new media are therefore unique cultural practices and increasingly constitutive of social experiences (Cover, 2006).

A particularly significant development within 'new media' is social networking sites such as *Twitter*. *Twitter* has allowed new forms of interaction to occur, not only between fans, but also between fans and individual football celebrities. Social media is also increasingly used as a space by individual football celebrities to construct a particular image through the photographs they post, and the content of their tweets. The seemingly unguarded perspective might be also considered in keeping with trends across all forms of media, to reveal the 'real' celebrity. The development and increased use of social network sites by football celebrities, has also impacted on traditional channels of media communication, with mainstream media outlets drawing social media for their stories.

Engagement with new media, such as *Twitter*, also raises questions about how people engage with football celebrity when it is more contradictory than ever before but also when there are new and novel ways of interacting. Its use problematises a simplistic, top down, deterministic model of power and social control, particularly since it ostensibly allows the audience more agency. Conversely however, there are suggestions that power and social control operate in new ways in these spaces (Hutchins, 2011; Leonard, 2009). With this in mind, the thesis seeks, not only to explore how football celebrity is drawn upon and used by consumers, but also, to what extent consumption could be considered illustrative of democratic practices. Critical accounts of media do not assume that media representations merely reflect social norms, nor do they assume consumers passively accept representations as legitimate. Rather, they focus on the power of media industries to frame discourses about social relations and practices (Birrell and McDonald, 2000; Messner, 2012).

Lash and Lury (2007) use the notion of the global culture industry to explain how mediated commodities are produced, circulated and consumed in a contemporary context. They suggest that commodities no longer circulate as identical objects determined by the intentions of their producers, but instead, spin out of control of their maker, as more control is given over to audience interpretation. What they argue is that other theoretical models; in particular Adorno and Horkheimer's (1979) culture industry theory, lacks explanatory power in a global context. Since theoretically, their approach has been dominant in studies of celebrity, these new theorisations are important in developing understandings of celebrity culture. The 'objects', or commodities of the global culture industry are indeterminate, compared

to objects of the culture industry, which were seen as determinate in their effects on social subjects. This is not to cut the consideration of power out of the equation, but rather to recognise that relations of power are played out in more complex ways than previously acknowledged. It does not, they suggest, mean capitalism is not reproducing on a global scale; it only means it is reproducing differently (Lash and Lury, 2007).

Lash and Lury's (2007) approach not only focuses on the omnipresent celebrity image but also the means through which it is represented, developed and consumed. In a contemporary sense this extends to grassroots activities and 'consumption' as well as corporate or mainstream media led information (Jenkins, 2006). This implies that it is important to situate the analysis of celebrity within media developments as well as societal shifts (Schickel, 2010). With the rising importance of new media, the consideration of football celebrity using this framework allows for further empirical research to explore the extent to which celebrity can be considered part of cultural democracy, or rather as an advanced mechanism of social control (Leonard, 2009).

Whilst their original analysis does not consider celebrity, Lash and Lury's (2007) framework has been used by Beer (2008) and Beer and Penfold-Mounce (2009) in analyses of Jarvis Cocker and Miley Cyrus respectively. Furthermore, this work explores the social significance of these mediated personas using concepts more frequently used within audience studies, such as, para-social interactions and identification. It also illustrates how the breakdown of public and private spheres encourages new forms of interaction and attachment, allowing the audience to befriend the celebrity. In Beer and Penfold-Mounce's (2009) study in particular, the findings stress the importance of how celebrity imagery and stories might be used for exploring moral boundaries. This work is significant in that it considers this interaction with mediated celebrity personas as part of everyday interactions, both electronically and with people in our actual social circles.

Drawing on approaches developed within audience studies, it will be suggested that it is the pervasiveness and types of coverage have taken representation of football celebrity in a number of different, and sometimes contradictory directions, allowing it to be consumed in a wide variety of ways (Millington and Wilson, 2010; Weiss,

1996). As Cohen (2001) suggests, interactions with mediated figures extend from identification to dis-identification, love as well as hate and a whole manner of associations in between. Contemporary coverage is particularly well equipped to put this contradiction on display, focusing on a number of themes, including lifestyle, ordinariness and similarity to consumers, as well as gossip and scandal. Moreover, with the growth of 'grassroots' media, such as blogs, fan forums and social media, including Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, consumers are increasingly able to engage in debates around such issues and contribute to discourses around football celebrity (Sanderson and Hambrick, 2012).

Where previous studies on this topic have tended to focus on representation or consumption, this thesis aims to bring the two together (Napoli, 2010). In doing so, it explores how football celebrity representations are drawn upon as a cultural resource. Similar to the work of Crawford (2004), it advocates a move away from a linear model that works in simplistic stages of production, text and audience. This has both theoretical and methodological implications for how celebrity is made sense of. Crawford (2004) points out, that consumption is not only a person-thing relationship, but is also a person-person relationship. Crawford's (2004) work highlights that, 'individuals may 'consume' the actions and performances of others'. Whilst in this instance Crawford is referring to the consumption of action at a live sporting event, the same could be said for the way football celebrity is 'consumed', via the vast range of mass media outlets increasingly available. In these spaces however, it is not strictly speaking a person that is being consumed, but rather the *representations* of the celebrity.

Aims

The aim of the thesis is to explore the football celebrity commodity, a product created and circulated by the global culture industry. It therefore explores how football celebrity is represented, circulated and consumed across a diverse mediascape, characterised by the intersection of both corporate and grassroots media. In recognition of the social significance of new media, it seeks to explore how football celebrity is used as a cultural resource and what functions it fulfils for the audience. In line with other critical accounts, it will also investigate the extent to

which engagement with football celebrity in these spaces might constitute a form of cultural resistance.

Objectives

The thesis explores both grass roots and corporate media forms in order to analyse how the representation allows the audience to get to know football celebrity. Of particular significance is the changing relationship between the football celebrity and the audience brought about by developments in social media allowing direct communication to occur.

The thesis also explores online fan activities that use football celebrity and assesses the extent to which these fan activities might constitute resistant practices.

Previous accounts of celebrity have drawn on psychoanalytical approaches to highlight the contradictions in both the representation and consumption of celebrity. The thesis seeks to explore this aspect of football celebrity empirically exploring the pleasures taken in celebrity scandal.

The following section outlines how the thesis will be structured. It provides an overview of the chapters and the key content that the reader can expect to find within them. Furthermore, it shows how the thesis will make unique contributions to the literature, most notably in sport sociology and audience studies.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter Two considers the extant literature around the topic of celebrity and its relevance in a football context. Since the analysis within this thesis is concerned with contemporary formations of football celebrity, the literature contained within specifically focuses on this particular period. The chapter situates the growth of celebrity culture as part of wider developments associated with the commercialization and intense mediation of football. It is argued, that changes that have occurred in the professional football industry, most notably the development of the English Premier League, have changed the social significance and visibility of both the sport and individual celebrity players.

The chapter critically analyses trends in contemporary football celebrity representation, including the breakdown of public private boundaries, which has in

turn led to the commodification of players' private lives, including the birth of their children, their home lives and their weddings. The increased use of football celebrity imagery in advertising has risen with the levels of cultural capital now associated with football and football celebrity. Although the increased visibility of football celebrity has financial benefits for individual players; it does however leave them vulnerable to brand damage, if they do anything to undermine the carefully constructed image created by cultural intermediaries. The same media that put particular football celebrities on a pedestal, are equally capable of bringing them back down to earth, as they turn them into entertaining features for the public to consume. In recognizing the complexities of the football celebrity commodity, it suggests how pleasure is not only taken in escapist imagery that emphasizes glamorous consumer lifestyles, but also, it might be the pleasure taken in celebrity downfall that is key to its success. Of key relevance to this chapter are the contradictory representations that surround celebrity and how these might impact on the way in which they are consumed

Chapter Three offers a critical review of literature around audience studies, particularly drawing attention to the potential for its use within the study of football celebrity. The introduction highlighted that a significant gap in the literature is a lack of consideration of how football celebrity is used. Furthermore, it was suggested that concepts and frameworks developed within audience studies offer a potential way of developing this area. The need to consider this area of study has become even more pronounced with new media developments that have arguably changed the relationship between the producer and consumer, as there are more opportunities for the audience to produce their own content. This trend has led to optimistic accounts of the media, particularly in terms of the level of interactivity it now affords.

The review is structured by 'generation' to clearly illustrate important changes that have occurred, not in the way the audience is not only theorised, but also studied empirically. The movement of studies through the generations represents a shift in starting to recognise the audience as more active in their consumption of media, it is also evident that there is a greater consideration of the context in which media is used in the third generation, compared to the first. It is suggested that Jenkins' (2006) notion of convergence provides a useful way of exploring contemporary relationships between grassroots and corporate media, as well as the relationship

between the media producer and consumer, particularly with regard to how power is played out. The issue of exploring power in new media environments and within the media content created and circulated by the audience is currently a significant gap in the literature.

Chapter Four provides an overview of the methods used to collect and analyse data. It also considers the epistemological and ontological approach taken in the thesis. It is suggested that the methodology in this thesis is particularly aligned with the notion of the changing relationship between production, representation and consumption of football celebrity. It is also argued, that football celebrity in its current formation, can be considered a mediated 'cultural object'; a product of what Lash and Lury (2007) term the global culture industry. Given that previous empirical studies of celebrity have tended to adopt positivistic tools as a way of producing credible results, this thesis argues that to adopt such a position misses the point of celebrity. As an alternative, 'tracking the object' (Lash & Lury, 2007) allows football celebrity to be explored across a range of media outlets both 'corporate' and 'grass roots' as well as seeing what the audience actually do with it.

Chapter Five explores how mediated representations of football celebrity allow the public to 'get to know them'. It offers a critical analysis of three separate forms of media that encourage the breakdown between public and private spheres and seemingly offer access to backstage areas that are not usually available. The three case studies in the chapter are the documentary *Being Liverpool*, The Secret Footballer Column from *The Guardian* Newspaper and the *Twitter* profiles of four high profile football celebrities. It is the contention within this chapter that although each of these examples ostensibly offers an insight into the backstage of football celebrity, and therefore presumably a more authentic view of both the football industry and individual football celebrities, each of these examples might also be thought of as ideological projects designed to promote the commercial interests of those involved. Each of the examples highlighted above offers examples of what Jenkins (2006) refers to as convergence culture, in that it brings together grassroots and corporate media, or problematises, to some degree at least, the relationship between media producers and consumers. This has rarely been explored empirically; therefore the analysis within the chapter makes a unique contribution to knowledge. Furthermore, it also offers a unique contribution to the literature in the way it

explores how individual football celebrities are using new media, both as a way of communicating with fans and as a platform for self-presentation.

In the context of the rising social importance of new media, Chapter Six explores how online fan sites provide a place where fans can 'poach' mainstream media content and transform and change it into something meaningful. Although the notion of textual poaching has been used within fan and audience studies, it is a concept that has not been used to date within the analysis of football related media and football celebrity. The inclusion of empirical work in this area is therefore a unique contribution to knowledge in both sport sociology and audience studies. Since textual poaching involves the manipulation and transformation of mainstream media material, it again might be considered representative of Jenkins' (2006) notion of convergence, illustrating the often complex and unpredictable power struggles between producers and consumers. In this instance however, the focus is specifically on how the power of the media producer and consumer is played out in online environments as there is an ongoing struggle for control of the text. The chapter is split into two sections to consider two separate forms of fandom. The first part of the chapter provides an analysis of the fan site *Kickette*. This is a fan site that declares itself as a site for females who enjoy the men as much as the game. Resources produced by sports fans have rarely been at the centre of academic analysis thereby making this analysis unique. Furthermore, with females perhaps being traditional considered as 'outsiders' to football fandom, female fan practices are worthy of attention. Moreover, in line with suggestions in wider fan literature, it explores the extent to which fan activity may be considered a form of cultural resistance. This might be best illustrated through the analysis of slash fiction site *Not Just a Game*. It will be suggested that slash fiction has been considered as a form of cultural resistance in fan and audience studies. It has not however, been considered in relation to stories written about prominent sporting figures, in this instance individual football celebrities. The analysis of this genre in relation to a culture that might be said to perpetuate patriarchal hegemony is therefore a useful contribution to the research area.

In Chapter Seven, the discussion turns to how football celebrity becomes the location for discussions around salient societal issues, including sexual infidelity, celebrity lifestyles and economic inequality. Although the media frequently lament the bad

behavior of particular players, they are happy to turn it into a commodity in the form of scandalous stories. The chapter draws on mainstream media coverage of football celebrity, in particular, stories about Ashley Cole and John Terry who, at the time of data collection had been featured in the media for extramarital affairs. The thesis explores the complex responses to scandalous stories about football celebrity and considering a psychoanalytical dimension to consumption, draws particular attention to the contradictions evident within consumption. It also illustrates how stories involving scandal are poached, allowing the public to poke fun at the misfortune of celebrity athletes in new ways.

Summary

The thesis offers unique contributions to both sport sociology and new media literature. Firstly it aims to offer empirical insights into the consumption of the football celebrity commodity. It has been frequently suggested that research should consider the social significance of celebrity, in particular how it is used. In the context of the current thesis, the consumption of football celebrity is explored across different forms of media. It draws influence from models developed in audience studies to take into account media consumption in the place of everyday life and how mediated stories about football celebrity are used as starting point for fan practices, fan creativity and cultural resistance. It also adds significantly to the literature on new media and sport for its consideration of fan texts and the way in which corporate media and football organisations are drawing on audience productivity in more complex ways.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline and critically discuss literature around the development of the contemporary game that has arguably led to the proliferation of celebrity culture within football. Key developments, most notably the launch of the English Premier League, are highlighted as significant for transforming football into the global enterprise it is today. It will be suggested that the boom in media industries, in particular satellite television and more recently the Internet, has situated football in the cultural mainstream, creating what might be termed a 'footballisation' of culture, where football and football celebrity has expanded into new consumer markets, as well as public consciousness (Haynes, 2007). Furthermore, technological developments have been instrumental in expanding football into a global market place, attracting consumers from across the globe, potentially changing the meaning of terms such as fandom and community (Anderson, 1991; Giulianotti, 2002).

The chapter explores the consequences for this shift, for both the ways in which football celebrity is represented and consumed. In a contemporary context, the social, cultural and economic capital attributed to football and its stars, has allowed them to become commercial icons and the face of numerous products, both inside and outside of sport (Cashmore, 2006). With this in mind, the chapter outlines the propensity of the global culture industry, to turn players into commodity images, across both their playing careers and their private lives. The ability to capitalise on image rights has become a significant source of income for players, with the money from endorsement and other forms of media deals, often dwarfing their salaries from playing (Haynes, 2007).

The review explains changes that have led to the breakdown of public and private boundaries, allowing the domestic sphere to be commodified, and thus creating seemingly more intimate connections between football celebrity and the audience. The chapter outlines the balancing act all celebrity figures are expected to perform, between displays of both extraordinary and extraordinary elements of their lives. It

will be argued that this allows a range of audience interactions to occur, from those based on fantasy lifestyles, to those defined by more familiar and everyday elements.

Although the increased mediation has resulted in many benefits for individual football celebrities, it will be suggested however, that in a surveillance society, intense media exposure, particularly into the once private sphere, can take a cruel turn. Negative media attention can transform individual football celebrities into objects of derision if they do something to disrupt their carefully constructed image (Kellner, 2002). Although this may have detrimental effects on the individual football celebrity, stories about the misbehaviour of players are valuable commodities for the media industries.

It is recognised that individual football celebrities can frequently adopt strategies to renegotiate their public image following scandal. This might include playing well, making a public apology, or confessing their sins through formats such as talk shows. What is clear however, is that in whatever guise the football celebrity appears, from being a vehicle to discuss consumer aspirations, to being an object of derision, it can be considered a socially significant and commercially viable commodity.

Psychoanalytical approaches have previously alluded to the ambivalence of interactions with celebrity (Eagleton, 2005; Rose, 2003). As Clark (2012) elucidates, the obsession with contemporary football is riddled with class confusion, latent aggression and barely concealed schadenfreude. This he suggests is partly encouraged by the build-up, knock-down treatment of the media. Whilst the majority of the celebrity literature focuses on the idolisation of certain celebrity figures, to overlook the more vindictive impulses people have towards celebrity might miss the point of its ambivalence.

Although the study of celebrity is a well-established field it will be suggested that there is a glaring gap in the literature exploring how it is consumed (Turner, 2010). This is particularly relevant with new media developments, where the audience arguably have more opportunities for interaction, as well as generate their own content for others to consume. Furthermore, developments such as social media arguably break down boundaries between the audience and celebrity potentially altering the interactions and relationships between them (Leonard, 2009).

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It is important at the outset of this chapter to explore wider changes in both football and society that have created the optimal conditions for football celebrity to emerge (Cashmore, 2002). Haynes (2007) points out how since the 1990s, the transformation of many sports, but particularly football, has been profound, leading to what has been referred to as a period of hypercommodification, where all aspects of the game are turned into a commercial enterprise. It is suggested that the elite end of professional football can now be considered a commodity managed by a new business class, in order to generate profit from exploiting as many avenues as possible (Andrews, 2006; Platts and Smith, 2010). A significant example of this can be found in the formation and development of the English Premier League.

The formation of the English Premier League: 'Disneyization', fandom and consumption

The formation of the new Football Association Premier League in 1992 was a pivotal point in football's merger with commercialisation and objectives more aligned with entertainment (Platts and Smith, 2010). In the period leading up to this development, it has been well documented that the league was plagued by hooliganism, impacting negatively on the game's reputation and affecting attendance figures at matches (Giulianotti, 1999). The mood of football at this time could be said to reflect wider social malaise running through society. Against a back drop of Thatcherism, this period also saw significant changes in sports stadia as a result of health and safety concerns, particularly following a series of stadium disasters that resulted in the tragic deaths of supporters (Sugden, 2002). Investigations into these disasters, including the Bradford Fire and Heysel and Hillsborough tragedies led to the recommendation of all-seater stadia, as well as regulations about safe building materials and design (Taylor, 1990). New legislation and the imposition of all-seater stadiums provided an opportunity to monitor football more effectively, as a way of deterring those individuals who might be out to cause trouble (Sugden, 2002). This was coupled with an increased police presence and the installation of CCTV, making it easier to identify and prosecute offenders. Other legislation also played a significant role in civilising football culture, for example in 1985, The Sport Event Act, led to the ban of alcohol within grounds. Shortly after, in 1991, the Football Offences Act made the throwing of missiles and racist chanting a chargeable offence.

In order to counter the negative image highlighted above, the vision was to turn the Premier League into a global brand, through injecting money and glamour to the game, not only attracting more viewers, but also making the sport more appealing to sponsors (Denham, 2000; Wenner, 1998). Drawing on a Debordian approach, Kellner (2002) recognises the central role played by the media in transforming the way sport is presented, making it more technologically dazzling and entertaining. The huge financial and marketing boost given to the game by money from BskyB in 1992, opened up the football industry to commercial forces which had paid little attention to football in the previous decade (Boyle and Haynes, 2004). Andrews (2006) discusses a similar change in the NBA which he describes as a self-conscious project led by David Stern, the commissioner of the league, to shake off previous negative images associated with the sport and its players. The league was overhauled to make it appealing to media corporations, as well as attract crowds of new middle class consumers to the games. He refers to the process of 'disneyisation' to explain the dramatic redevelopment of the NBA. 'Disneysation' involves increasing the level of merchandising, diversifying the brand into different fields, creating themed spaces and ensuring that there are identifiable characters that the public can relate to. The comparison to Disney is encapsulated in this comment from David Stern quoted in Swift (1991:84):

'They have theme parks . . . and we have theme parks. Only we call them arenas. They have characters: Mickey Mouse, Goofy. Our characters are named Magic and Michael [Jordan]. Disney sells apparel; we sell apparel. They make home videos; we make home videos'.

The success of this strategy is evident in the global popularity of the NBA today. Similarly, it could be argued that the changes that have occurred in football reflect the disneyisation process. Football has broken free of the constraints of the stadium and even mainstream media viewing, into a wide range of consumer products and alternative media such as gaming. More significantly for the focus of this thesis, it has a plethora of celebrity characters with which the public are encouraged to identify (Andrews and Jackson, 2001; Smart, 2005).

Duke (2002) suggests that 'the American model of sport is more commercially oriented than the traditional English structure, with key roles for advertising, sponsorship and particularly television'. There are however a number of examples of what might be referred to as 'Americanisation' within football, including the addition of big screens in stadia, music and half time entertainment (Crawford, 2004; Redhead, 2007). Duke (2002) suggests that disneyisation can be used as a model to explain changes that have occurred alongside the development of the English Premier League, although he appears to use it in a different and perhaps more disparaging way than Andrews (2006). When discussing de-differation of consumption for instance, Duke (2002) identifies three points that have characterised changes in the English Premier League, these are, standardised entertainment, less distinctive grounds and a lack of atmosphere. Duke (2002) does however acknowledge a number of elements that have attracted new markets to the game, for example, the availability of executive boxes and the creation of a friendly environment potentially making the sport more attractive to families.

The increase in social control and the commercial image of respectability associated with the new Premier League era has significantly changed and transformed the meaning and experience of football. More middle class supporters were drawn to the game as a result of stadium improvements and increased safety (Rowe, 2003). Consequently, there was a shift in creating consumer spaces catering for the entertainment needs of a new middle class audience (Bale, 1994; Crawford, 2004). Although this thesis is concerned with the developments in football, similar trends have been observed across a wide range of sports in a UK and North American context, for example, ice hockey (Field, 2002), football (Paramio et al,. 2008), baseball (Friedman and Andrews, 2011) and rugby (Denham, 2000). This shift has not been without its critics, particularly on the basis that as clubs increasingly adopted a market led approach, fans were treated as consumers (Crawford, 2004; Critcher, 1979; Horne, 2006). The increasing prices also served to exclude working class supporters from the game. Where loyalty once meant regularly attending games and having an identity tied to the club, in the new football culture, loyalty is perhaps tied more to processes of consumption (Giulianotti, 2002; Groves, 2011). As consumption becomes an increasingly important aspect of the sports viewing

experience, the underlying message according to Inglis (2001:38) is that that you 'can't possibly have a good time unless you are consuming an official brand'.

There is evidence to suggest however, that fans often demonstrate resistant practices in protest of the commercialisation of the game (Brown, 2007; Numerato, 2014). Furthermore, it has been suggested that increasingly fandom is based on a particular celebrity player or manager as their images have become part of the cultural mainstream (Boyle and Haynes, 2004; Giulianotti, 2002). This has not only impacted on the way fandom is categorised and understood, but also, the increasingly central role celebrity players and managers play in attracting new fans and consumers to a particular club (Wagg, 2007).

Further developments in the media, such as satellite television deals, but perhaps more significantly, developments in new media, including the Internet, have expanded the coverage of football across a global marketplace, providing lucrative opportunities for the sport (Boyle and Haynes, 2002). Even in the current economic climate, the sale of the domestic broadcast of the Premier League between 2010 and 2013 was reportedly over £1.7 billion (BBC, 2012). This is expected to rise to over 3 billion in the next 5 years (BBC, 2013). A key area of financial development for professional football has been the growth of the value of sports rights, both across a national and global context. The market for football rights has become more complex in the way that rights are bundled or unbundled between live coverage, delayed transmission, recorded highlights and the increasingly important internet. The packaging of football rights across different platforms means that both the sports rights sellers and media organisations get better value, effectively selling their product more than once (Boyle and Haynes, 2002).

As well as income from media deals, it has been suggested that the football industry of the 21st century offers far more opportunities to commercialise aspects of the daily operations and running of the club (Boyle and Haynes, 2004). Popular clubs offer stadium tours and have halls of fame and museums, capturing the clubs' past in commodity form (Paramio, et al., 2008). Stadium tour offer access to 'back stage' areas of the club, allowing consumers to see what is hidden behind the scenes. This kind of access is also offered 'virtually' through club websites, as well as media

projects that lift the lid on the inner workings of particular clubs. Documentaries such as *Being Liverpool (2012)* and *QPR: The Four-year Plan* (2012), provide examples of initiatives of this kind. It could also be argued that the personalisation that occurs in these documentaries, is significant in creating familiarity with celebrity players, a feat achieved through the breaking down of public and private boundaries (Holmes, 2004). This aspect of coverage will be explored in more detail later in the review. However, whilst clubs and players have seemingly opened their doors to allow access to previously backstage areas, it has been argued that this is a carefully controlled enterprise, aimed at increasingly popularity and generating income (Tolson, 2001; Scherer, 2007).

A craving for a continued engagement with the past, perhaps presents itself most pertinently in the sports museums and halls of fame that crop up in various cities across the globe, often becoming popular tourist destinations in the process (Giulianotti, 1999). Museums and halls of fame might be considered illustrative of spatial theming discussed by Andrews (2006). In this instance, a space is themed around the clubs history and consumers are invited to take a journey into the past. Typically, museums and halls of fame house 'symbols of faith, artefacts, documents and relics' as well as immortalising revered figures often through romanticised narratives that emphasise heroic discourses. The commodification of particular figures from the game, provides an interesting example for the focus of this thesis, since it reflects the process of turning human figures into consumable images and narratives long after their careers are over (Potolsky, 2006). In a contemporary age, nostalgia has become a key marketing tool in selling sport and repackaging history for the consumer experience. Although the past is irretrievable in a conventional sense, audio, time-zones and music associated with particular eras provides the consumer with a sense of authenticity. Both Farred (2002) and Scherer (2007) discuss the importance of familiarity with a club's history and past players for developing a sense of connection with a club. Engagement with history through attending a club's museum or hall of fame, either in person, or virtually, actively encourages identification with the club, which it might be assumed translates into consumer spending.

Changes in the marketing patterns of sport, and growth in global media networks have made it possible for football teams to widen their fan base, targeting new and untapped markets across the globe (Hughson, 2009; Smart, 2007). Rowe and Gilmour (2008) show how the Asian market in particular has become dominated by foreign sport, most notably the NBA and English Premier League. In recognition of its expansion within the Asian market place, Manchester United has developed dedicated websites in China, Japan and Korea (Nufer and Buler, 2010). According to Rowe and Gilmour (2008), the preference for foreign sport in this particular part of the world is largely put down to Asian society's aspirational engagement with consumerism and the pursuit of status that accompanies fashionable global sports brands and celebrity athletes (Rowe & Gilmour, 2008). It is important to recognise however, that there is likely to be connections based on the spread of the British Empire and Commonwealth nations. Although this preference is clearly lucrative for globally recognised leagues, it has been argued that it can be detrimental for the development of sport within particular countries. Talented players from within the countries mentioned above are likely to aspire to play in European or North American leagues. According to Williams (2006), this global flow of labour is likely to be facilitated by clubs who wish to bring in identifiable players from this area of the world. William's (2006:103) explained how Manchester United recognised the value of buying Chinese striker Dong Fangzhou with a primary motivation of tapping into the 'yellow pound' and attracting Chinese consumers to the Manchester United 'community'.

Growing the brand- globalisation, community and visibility

With the growth of media, and particularly the Internet, it could be said that 'community' is no longer spatially localised, but rather, defined by boundaries that are symbolic rather than geographical. Anderson (1991) uses the notion of the imagined community, to suggest how people may feel a sense of belonging to a common entity. With the extensive mediation across numerous platforms, as well as the drive to actively promote identification with clubs, consumers of football can more easily establish connections, not only with the club but with other fans who share the same interest. Football clubs have actively sought to extend their 'communities', since, from a commercial point of view, more consumers equals more income (Williams, 2006).

As another mechanism of spreading their popularity, teams embark on off season tours and take part in show matches, with the aim of further increasing the appeal of the sport, and using identification with the athletes as a way of exploiting commercial benefits (Lee, 2005). When the celebrity is used to promote off season tours, it is often their image off the field that is used to draw in consumers. Lee (2005) discusses two show games played in Hong Kong by Real Madrid and Liverpool, paying particular attention to how football celebrity coverage during the event was crucial for the overall spectacle. Gilmore and Rowe (2010) provide another example of this trend. They highlight how Beckham was a focal point of Real Madrid's tour of Australia in 2007, with his celebrity status outside of sport being used as a way of selling the game to the Australian public. Gilmour and Rowe (2010) illustrate how Beckham dominated national press coverage during his visit to the country, even superseding coverage of national sports and home grown celebrity figures.

Following the increased visibility of stars in the media, and recognition of their wider appeal beyond the field, there have been significant changes in contractual relationships between players and clubs. Haynes (2007) suggests that the recognition of the commercial value of football celebrity has coincided with the emergence and exploitation of image rights as players and other organisations become increasingly aware of the potential to exploit their image. Beckham for example, was bought by LA Galaxy primarily for his commercial appeal and celebrity status as much as his footballing prowess (Lawson, Sheehan & Stephenson, 2008). A clause allowing MLS (Major League Soccer) clubs to recruit one player outside the salary cap, made LA Galaxy's purchase of Beckham the most expensive transaction in the league's history. Given the prominence of Beckham's image however, the league and the club viewed his contract as a calculated investment. It was assumed that his global popularity would raise the profile of soccer and enhance the MLS brand.

Income from image rights is now the fastest growing revenue for football clubs. Global clubs such as Real Madrid have been quick to capitalise on this, ensuring that they secure fifty percent of players' income from their image rights. Boyle and Haynes (2004) suggest that the Internet and gaming industries have opened up further new vistas for the exploitation of player names and images both for the clubs and the players themselves. Clubs are increasingly therefore not only paying for the

talent of the player, but also the use of their image. Boyle and Haynes (2004) use the example of Rooney to illustrate the growing importance of image rights. In January 2003, it was suggested that Rooney agreed his first professional contract, but not before dispute over his 'value', not based on his footballing ability, but rather his potential to be marketed as a brand. The football celebrity can now expect to earn approximately two thirds of their salary through product endorsement, highlighting what an important aspect this has become (Haynes, 2007). Boyle and Haynes (2004) highlight for example, that in 2006 Beckham earned £4.4 million from playing football and £19 million from endorsements. The recognition of the value of his own image was one of the reasons that Beckham left Real Madrid. Haynes (2007) suggests that Beckham was seeking assurance that he would get complete ownership of income from non-football related endorsements; this was contra to the clubs policy of 50/50 across all endorsements. In subsequent years, the value of celebrity players has continued to rise. This might be illustrated by fees paid for Tottenham and Wales International, Gareth Bale who Real Madrid paid a record breaking £85.3 million in 2013.As the symbolic value of football celebrity had increased, Boyle and Haynes (2004) also suggest that attempts to control imagery and information have never been so great. Cultural intermediaries, the individual football celebrity figures and their representatives have therefore all become responsible for policing images in a commercial sense.

The use of figures from the world of football and other sports in advertising has received considerable attention in the literature. Woolridge (2002) for instance suggests, that even in the late 19th Century, players were seen as attractive to companies wishing to advertise their products, and for many, this opportunity was a viable avenue to supplement their wage. Tobacco was popular with working class and the circulation of cigarette cards featuring recognisable players promoted a degree of familiarity among this group. Although it is not on the same scale as it is today, Woolridge (2002) points out, even in this era, the use of football celebrity in advertising illustrates that fame was defined to some extent in terms of audience recognition particularly beyond the sport.

Russell (1997) has suggested that even in the period prior to heavily commercialised football, it became evident that a number of players could command higher commercial rewards due to their rising celebrity status. One such example he

highlights is Welsh international, and Manchester United player Billy Meredith, who caught the attention of fans, not only for his skills on the pitch, but also physical idiosyncrasies and mannerisms, which were often depicted in cartoons. In addition to a number of endorsement deals he had with companies, including OXO and the Central Railway Company, he also appeared in a film called *Ball of Fortune*. The fact that this appearance came at the end of his playing career, provided further evidence of his spread of fame and popularity off the pitch. This clearly highlights continuity, as well as difference in the way that football celebrity is used in advertising and in the way in which it is represented and consumed. It is notable however, that this is nothing compared to the scale that it is on today. Horne (2006:80) suggests that 'the media sponsors and marketing agents have exploited a growing interest in sport which has been created by increasing media coverage'. It was suggested earlier in the chapter that both the players themselves and the clubs have become increasingly aware of the value attached to the football celebrity image and this fact has been used for commercial gain.

A brand is a name, term or symbol given to a product by a supplier in order to distinguish his offerings from other similar products (Koernig and Boyd, 2009). Rines (2000) suggests that adverts using celebrity work by appealing to guilt or desires, for instance, the desire to be successful and attractive. Celebrity athlete endorsers in particular, are rated as trustworthy, attractive and competent, which serves to positively affect associations between celebrity endorsers and favourable behaviours towards consumption (Gamson; 1994; Vincent *et al,.* 2009). Furthermore, Horne (2006) suggests that sport provides a captivating medium of being young and alive, characteristics deemed as desirable in the consuming populace. Brands therefore have a cerebral dimension, like celebrity, they deal in intangible currency, selling hopes, dreams and ideologies, as well as particular consumer items (Hughes and Shank, 2005). Through advertising, the consumer is assumed to buy into an ideology and relationship with the celebrity figure as much as the consumer good itself (Kellner, 1996).

Specifically in relation to the use of football celebrity imagery, Kennedy and Hills (2009) discuss a campaign by Adidas featuring three global celebrity football players, Kaka (Brazil), Gerrard (UK) and Messi (Argentina). The players were shown drawing stick figures of themselves in a shoe box. The stick figures

subsequently came to life as the players narrated over the animation, highlighting their particular virtues as a team player. In this instance, Gerrard highlighted strength, Kaka-elegance and Messi- flair. It might therefore be assumed that the consumer will embody the characteristics of the celebrity figure, if they buy the product they endorse. Kennedy and Hills (2009) also illustrate how global sports companies such as Nike, Adidas and Reebok have drawn on different aspects of football celebrity appeal in their advertising. Reebok, they suggest, has often highlighted integrity on the part of the celebrity players, for example, the use of Ryan Giggs heading campaigns such as 'true football' and 'I am what I am'. Similarly, they point to Adidas' frequent use of the nostalgic qualities of football, a strategy arguably aimed at creating a sense of authenticity. In stark contrast, Nike has frequently adopted the risky strategy of using players with controversial reputations. For example, Eric Cantona, a player defined by notoriety after kung fu kicking a crowd member in Manchester United's game against Crystal Palace in 1995. In line with Nike's association with sporting excellence, they have also used players like Cristiano Ronaldo, who whilst recognised as being one of the top players in the game, has also been criticised for petulant behaviour (Wagg, 2010). The choice to use Ronaldo perhaps indicates that in today's sporting culture, excellence and individualism are more valued than sportsmanship (Whannel, 2003).

There are a number of factors that influence the choice of a particular celebrity figure by companies wishing to advertise their products. Primarily, it is suggested that although football celebrities are increasingly known for their lives outside the game, their performance in sport is still a significant factor in their appeal. This relates to what has been referred to as source credibility, with those at the top of their sport being attributed greater value. Kellner (1996) for example, highlight that it was the combination of athleticism and basketball skills that made Michael Jordan a superstar in the first instance. However, it was his sporting talent, commingled with his dynamic personality that has turned him into the global brand he is today, a brand inextricably linked with other global brands such as Nike and the NBA.

Desirable personal characteristics and success outside sport cannot be dismissed from the commercial appeal of individual football celebrities. In his analysis of 'Brand Beckham', Vincent et al., (2009:22) suggest that;

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'With his good looks, penchant for designer clothing and celebrity lifestyle, the Real Madrid star is one of the hottest commercial properties in sport. He has signed a series of very lucrative personal endorsements with Adidas, Vodafone, Pepsi, Police and high street retailer Marks & Spencer. In late May 2004 Beckham agreed the biggest deal ever for a football player, at a reported £40 million, to endorse Gillette'.

This not only shows the value attached to Beckham's image, but also the malleability of the Beckham brand, appealing to consumers of a wide variety of different products.

The celebrity can be understood as a product of commercial culture, imbued with symbolic values which seek to stimulate desire and identification among consumers (Andrews and Jackson, 2001, Walton, 2004). According to Bauman (2000), control in liquid modernity is achieved through seduction, rather than repression. A whole industry has grown up around trying to access our desires and shape them and convert them into spending habits (Cashmore, 2006; Rahman, 2004). Critics would view this as indicative of consumer manipulation (Potolsky, 2006), however, the over emphasis on social determinism and manipulation perhaps ignores that consumption may be pleasurable and empowering (Horne, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Lucas, 2000). Furthermore, Cole and Hribar (1995) suggest that adverts tend to be structured in such a way as to let viewers be actively involved in making meaning, making connections between the brand and their own lives. In doing so, even if there is a dominant ideology encoded within the advert, interpretation is likely to be based on numerous factors, rather than being passively consumed.

Celebrity players have also been used in advertising to selling products that endorse a particular masculine identity (Messner, Dunbar and Hunt, 2000). Smith and Beal (2007:107) suggest that, typically representations of sport celebrity emphasise a particular version of masculinity, illustrated through cool ways of performing success. This involves the display of 'shiny expensive stuff for boys to envy'. Gee (2014:917) outlines how the media perpetuate dominant ideologies of masculinity through the way that male football celebrity figures are used in marketing and advertising strategies. It is her contention that;

'The visual representations of male sports stars circulated by the media, including those available through advertising and marketing campaigns, are often heralded as contemporary archetypes that encourage traditional and even stereotypical beliefs and attitudes about what society expects of men. In this light, such representations, become the dominant ideals, against which some men measure, or gauge their own masculinity'.

Messner (2012) offers a similar perspective, arguing that sports media provide a chance for men to bask in reflected glory, at the achievements (on and off the field) of celebrity athletes. One way of doing this is through buying into the products that they advertise. Men are not only invited to feel inadequate about themselves, but also resolve such inadequacies through consumption.

Showcasing football celebrity lifestyles

In a capitalist society, it has been suggested that sports celebrities, including those from the world of football, offer high profile examples of lifestyle and success (Cashmore, 2006). Sports celebrities are now among the best-paid and wealthiest denizens of consumer society, offering fantasy aspirations of the good life (Kellner, 2002:306). Previous studies have considered how lifestyles are put on display through shows such as *MTV Cribs,* where celebrity athletes from a range of sports, including football, display elaborate mansions and luxury cars. Smith and Beal's (2007) study of *MTV Cribs* highlighted that the coverage primarily shows examples of 'making it' in a material sense, with wealth being equated with successful and desirable living. Within these representations, celebrities are pictured engaging in acts of conspicuous consumption and demonstrations of wealth on a grand scale (Smith and Beal, 2007). Echoing Debord's (1967) early suggestions about the function and influence of celebrity, it is argued that the many look to the few and who better to watch and follow than celebrities, the epitome of material success in our society. As Eagleton (2005:15) elaborates, 'celebrities are the fairytale purse that is never empty'.

Veblen (1994 [1899]) talked of a new middle class who distinguish themselves from old wealth by drawing on popular or low culture fields as well as physical competence to gain wealth and pursue hedonistic pleasures (Smith and Beal, 2007).

High culture is said to be marked by certain leisure activities including, reading, travelling, opera and ballet. In contrast, low culture is associated with engagement with popular culture and products of the media and entertainment industries. Celebrity therefore involves a conspicuous display of wealth, but not one associated with taste (Veblen, 1899). Characteristic of the displays of football celebrity lifestyle are things such as home theatres, pools, arcades and cars. These objects act as trophies, through excessive materialism to show that they've made it, although such displays do not buy them class, at least in a conventional sense (Cashmore, 2008). As Bauman (2000) points out, this new leisure class is not instrumental: 'it is 'autotelic', a value in its own right, pursued for its own sake; it is its instrumental functions that have now turned instrumental and are no longer allowed to override or even to push into the second place its erstwhile pleasure-giving task' (Blackhaw and Crawford, 2009:124). This is not to say that the display and exhibition of their ability to consume and be consumed is not important to the this new leisure class, but it is not as important as their personal dedication to task of putting off for as long as possible their own inevitable obsolescence.

Weiss (1996) highlights how the lifestyle sports celebrity status affords, is increasingly at the centre of their appeal. This aspect may be significant in allowing the audience to imagine what it's like to have a celebrity lifestyle (Cashmore, 2006). In his work, Weiss (1996) makes reference to the fantasies male audience members may have about celebrity, including being able to travel, attracting girls and having consumer trappings, including expensive cars. Engagement with the media and celebrity has often been depicted as providing an escape from the mundanity of everyday life allowing people to be transported into an alternative, more attractive and satisfying reality (Stacey, 1994). The audience might therefore be assumed to live vicariously through celebrity, through engagement with lifestyle centred media (Eagleton, 2005). As Eagleton (2005:15) elaborates 'if you can't own a private jet yourself, an alter ego known as Mick Jagger can do it for you'.

The powerful active bodies of professional sportsman also represent what may be considered to many the ultimate in masculinity (Easthope, 1990). The male sporting image is a now a profitable fashionable commodity, stimulating desire in both male and female consumers (Hargreaves, 1994). A key assumption of Mulvey's (1974) work has been that the objectification of the body subordinates it to the control and

definition of the gaze. The display of naked flesh is traditionally associated with women and the male gaze (Kennedy and Hills, 2009), however, the use of the eroticised body in advertising has increasingly used the male footballing body to sell commodities. It is important to recognise that the use of the male body in a commercial sense cannot be understood outside of the context of significant changes in representations of masculinity. In comparison to authors such as Whannel (1999) who equate shifts to the new man and consumer driven masculinity as causally related to the rise in feminism, Mort (1996) argues that men are not changing because of sexual politics, but rather through commercial pressures.

A 'male body beautiful' has been created by the media in capitalist societies which is directly connected to commodity consumption. Hughson (2014) alludes to a more commercialised masculinity. This it is suggested is reflective of class based masculinity being taken over by style based ones (Mort, 1996). Cashmore and Cleland (2011:728) highlight that such a shift in personal styles and life styles of privileged men have helped to eliminate or at least mitigate many of the aspects of 'traditional masculinity' that men have previously been constrained by.

Beckham has been used frequently to illustrate a more fashion conscious version of masculinity consistent with consumer culture. Rahman (2004:225) for example argues that 'he is surely the only heterosexual male in the country who could get away with being photographed half naked and smothered in baby oil for GQ and still come over as an icon of masculinity'. The sexualisation of football celebrity might therefore be considered indicative of cultural shifts in public discourses around heterosexual and working class masculinity. It is argued that the rise of the gay movement along with the commercialisation of male appearance has led to a wide spread acceptance of more androgynous identities (Cashmore and Cleland, 2011).

It is suggested that women play a role in displaying football celebrities' wealth, consumer lifestyles and masculinity. Clayton and Harris (2004) for example, highlight that during the coverage of the 2006 Football World Cup, the tabloid media coined the term WAG to refer to players' wives and girlfriends who had travelled to the tournament and who were creating more headlines than the players. They were characterised as a new type of celebrity, whose qualification was their involvement with a player and their instinct to party and shop around the clock. Furthermore, the

portrayal of players' partners reinforces gender roles as females are likely to be portrayed as a capital bearing object for the male (Thorpe, 2009). In line with gender role stereotypes, they are seen to fulfil a role as supporting their man and bringing up children. Therefore it might be argued that although shifts in masculinity have occurred, changes in representation that might be equated with a 'new man' mentality, have perhaps done little to challenge gendered expectations (Smith & Beal, 2007).

Whilst they are clearly celebrated, new consumer lifestyles might also perceived as a distraction to players. Images of extravagant lifestyles are used to show football players as over paid, over rated, flashy, pampered, show business types, driving Ferraris and living in million pound homes (Whannel, 2003). In these accounts, celebrity and consumer culture are often blamed for degrading the sport (Williams, 2006). Irwin (2008) for example, linked Beckham's non-inclusion in the 2008 Euros with his celebrity lifestyle. Central to his argument, was the notion of the shift in emphasis and role of the football celebrity. For Irwin (2008:75), the problem with Beckham is that he is an 'international celebrity, male model, trophy husband, shirt salesman and occasional footballer'. During Beckham's career at Manchester United, the media picked up on Sir Alex Ferguson's disapproval of Beckham's attendance of celebrity events. His celebrity lifestyle was viewed as an unwanted distraction for his playing career. Ferguson was also insistent that no player should be bigger than the club. It was concerns over his celebrity lifestyle that ultimately led to Beckham's departure from the club in 2003 (Cashmore and Parker, 2003). Celebrity lifestyles are therefore portrayed in contradictory ways, on the one hand something to be desired, yet something potentially problematic.

Contradictions not only occur at the level of representation, but also at the level of consumption. Although these visions of the 'good life' are exciting and glamorous, it has also been suggested that they can be considered cruel and mocking at the same time (Lasch, 1980). These conflicting messages may present a conundrum for the audience, as Smith and Beal (2007) admit during their analysis of *MTV Cribs*, they were entertained by excessive displays, but also repulsed by the basic message to the viewer, that equated material wealth with a definition of successful living. Similarly, Philips (2006) suggests that dreams of power are inevitably tinged with resentment and envy since they appear to have a freedom not available to any of us. We are

therefore likely to respond to celebrity with the characteristic doubleness of narcissistic fantasy, wavering between idolisation and hostility (Nicol, 2005).

The proliferation of celebrity discourse can be understood in relation to a broader context of the rise in neo-liberal capitalism and its widening disparities of wealth and power. Williams (2006) suggests that in an age where footballers have transcended the ladder from local heroes to global mega stars, the sense of an organic connection and solidarity between players, clubs and fans has been clearly stretched. This distance might also have impacted on the types of hostile interactions highlighted above.

One of the ways such discrepancies between the celebrity and audience are addressed is to emphasise not only the extraordinary, but also more ordinary aspects of their lives. Lai (2006) has suggested that when mainstream coverage often highlights spectacular aspects of celebrities' lives, more mundane aspects may be increasingly appealing, as well as being assumed to be authentic. It could be that this shift to recognise 'human interest' and ordinary elements of celebrity, is vital to the variety of ways that they are now both represented and consumed (Gamson, 1994; Turner, 2004).

For Eagleton (2005:54), the secret of celebrity super-stardom in contemporary society is a delicate balancing act, requiring them to be just like us, yet utterly out of reach, common place and transcendent at the same time. This is consistent with the work of Dyer (1986) who observed that in general, images of stardom are organised around themes of consumption, success and ordinariness. It has been suggested that the consumption of the star through their personal life, as well as spectacular representations, is a crucial catalyst in establishing football celebrities' presence in wider culture (Cashmore, 2006).

Celebrities frequently engage in projects to highlight more 'normal' aspects of their lives (Tolson, 2001). Typically, in initiatives of this kind, players' lives, habits and lifestyles are put on show for public consumption, allowing the public to see them in a different light. Cashmore & Parker (2003) suggest that the Beckhams have been effective in exploiting new marketability and the growing trend to commodify domesticity, as well as the more glamorous aspects of their lives. This has involved a number of documentaries that focus on their lives, as well as framing 'private'

personal occasions such as their marriage and the birth of their children as public spectacles. The highlighting of more everyday performances in this way, might be seen as an attempt to show that they are just like us. Cultural intermediaries are becoming savvier in the way celebrity is managed and presented, recognising the audience's desire for glimpses into the back stage areas of celebrity. It has been argued however, that the continuation of image management into the private sphere creates a 'middle region', where the backstage is converted into a staged public performance (Gamson, 1994: 143). 'Doing being ordinary' is therefore merely a social performance and evidence of commodification of the private sphere (Tolson, 2001).

The trend to emphasise what might be considered more ordinary elements of life through celebrity has been further exasperated in recent times with new media developments and in particular social networking sites (Hambrick, 2012). Through engagement with social networking sites such as *Twitter*, greater portions of the populace including celebrity footballers are now constructing online public personas (Marshall 2010). Social networking allows access to a wider range of information, including both career related and personal facts. It is also a relatively unique form of representation, since it seemingly offers first-hand, unfiltered information (Beer, 2008). A number of studies have highlighted how postings on social networking site *Twitter* may relate to a range of issues including personal life, business, sport, discussing media, for example, television shows or music, and responding to fans (Pedersen, Parks, Quarterman, & Thibault 2010). Furthermore, it has also become possible to communicate 'directly' with football celebrity through social networking sites, a feature that may be considered particularly appealing for those people wishing to gain proximity to their favourite player (Beer, 2008).

Through the types of media interactions highlighted above, it is possible to get a perceived sense of intimacy with those we have never met. With this in mind, Schickel (2000) suggests that the relationship we have of celebrities is increasingly characterised by an 'illusion of intimacy'. Although they are not physically present, the amount and type of media goes some way to compensate for this fact (Rojek, 2001). These illusions of intimacy have arguably changed the way people interact and respond to distant celebrity figures, creating what has commonly been referred to as parasocial interactions. Parasocial interactions are explained as a one-sided

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relationship, with any reciprocation existing purely at the imaginative level of the audience member (Horton and Wohl, 1957; Schickel, 2000).

Following trends within cultural and audience studies at the time, early accounts of parasocial interactions portrayed the audience member as psychologically inadequate and therefore presumably unable to form meaningful social relationships (Rojek, 2001). The formation of relationships with media characters was perceived as a chronic attempt to compensate for the perceived lack of autonomy, absence of community, incomplete identity and lack of recognition in people's real lives (Schickel, 2000; Turner, 2004). Turner (2004) uses the example of the public's grief following Princess Diana's death to show the level of emotional connection people develop with celebrity figures. Offering a critical approach, he highlights how cultural critics might frame public outpourings of grief as delusional. He argues however, that it is naïve to assume that these emotions are faux and that more often than not the public are making complex connections with their own life.

More recently, studies of parasocial interactions have had to account for trends in the media that actively encourage audience engagement; for example, through phone-ins, text messaging, emails and chat rooms (Giles, 2000; Evans & Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Schickel (2010) has highlighted the dramatic effect that the Internet has had on the consumption of celebrity. It is clear that with the technologies available, opportunities for interactions with distant media figures are not only increased but also transformed. In the past, fans' access to their sporting heroes was largely limited to what they could observe and consume from television and newspapers. There is now unprecedented access to professional athletes, as well as new and novel ways to interact (Kassing and Sanderson, 2009). It is important to acknowledge however, that these interactions are not always driven by positive relational motivations that might be associated with celebrity worship. The Internet and the anonymity it affords, allows people to vent more vindictive impulses and celebrity figures frequently become a target for hostilities.

Although it has served to obliterate boundaries, and in many cases potentially enhance the relationship between the football celebrity and the audience, the intense focus the private sphere now attracts has been the subject of scrutiny along both moral and legal lines.

The surveillance of football celebrity: privacy, gossip and confession

With a growing emphasis on players' private affairs, Calvert (2000) highlights that there have been changes in expectations of what information should be made available to the public. In the UK, privacy rests on guidelines set out by the press complaints commission code of practice and informed by two articles from the Human Rights Act which are somewhat contradictory (Mayes, 2002). Article 8, the right to respect for private and family life states that: 'everyone has a right to respect for his private and family life, his home and correspondence. Conversely, Article 10, the right to the freedom of expression, states that; 'everyone has the right to the freedom of expression. That right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impact and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers' (Mayes, 2002:3). Holmes and Redmond (2006) suggest that this is contradictory in the sense that the celebrity can be thought of as a commodity with public responsibilities, thereby surrendering a portion of the veridical self, however they are also depicted as a private individual with citizenship rights (Turner, 2004). Moreover, from a media perspective, the decision to express opinions about public figures is often done so under the guise of being in the public interest.

This has become an increasingly complex process, particularly since when it comes to their private affairs, since celebrities typically court media attention but shun it when the focus is not to their liking (Cashmore and Parker, 2003; Lawler, 2010). In order to protect their privacy and perhaps more importantly their carefully manufactured image, a number of players have resorted to applying for media injunctions to restrict media access. Former England captain and Chelsea defender John Terry for example, requested a media injunction following threats of the exposure of an affair with an England team mate's former partner. Although the judge acknowledged that allowing the information to become public may be personally damaging for Terry and his family, it was suggested that his motivations for protecting his image were primarily commercial and therefore the injunction was not granted.

Although, the culture of surveillance from clubs, media and the public is increasingly seen and accepted as the norm within society, the level of intrusion deemed acceptable is an area of contention, particularly for those individuals directly affected

(McNamara, 2009). Through a series of case studies Sanderson (2009) picks up this debate and draws attention to the complexities inherent in making decisions about what constitutes public and private spaces. He compares and contrasts an example of an injured NBA player who was reprimanded for playing pick-up game on a public court and an NFL player pictured partying in a hot tub at his own home. In the case of the NBA player, a fan posted to an official online site that the athlete had been playing, despite being out of the game through injury. The post was subsequently picked up by the club, who took action against the player. In the second example, the NFL player was hosting a party on his own property with no media invited. Although it could be argued that drinking and partying is in conflict with a professional image, this example crucially raises questions of the right of the media to intrude on to private property in order to create a story, and in this instance tarnish someone's reputation (Corbett, 2008; Somers, 2008).

It is not just sports organisations and mainstream media that are responsible for the surveillance of players; Andrejevic (2007) highlights for instance, how it is often the supposed democratised participatory culture that is used to monitor celebrity. This might be considered indicative of a world of synopticon and decentred surveillance, where the many are encouraged to watch the few, in this instance certain celebrity figures (Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004). Sanderson (2009) concurs with this proposition, suggesting how with the growth of new media web sites such as drunkathlete.com allow fans to post pictures and videos of athletes behaving badly. It is likely that motivation for posting information of this kind is as much about personal visibility, as it is exposing the athlete. This on the one hand, can be seen as illustrative of the trends towards consumption being more active and thus indicative of the democratisation of media. Conversely however, it could also be viewed as a form of audience exploitation, a means of clubs and governing bodies capitalising on what Andrejevic (2007) refers to as audience labour, which adds to the level of surveillance of the athlete and in doing so protects commercial interests.

The increase in the level of surveillance, particularly at the hands of the media has made football celebrity increasingly vulnerable to brand damage (Hughes and Shank, 2005). Vincent *et al,*. (2009) argue that negative publicity generated by bad behaviour is especially harmful, because consumers tend to pay more attention to it than positive publicity. Bad publicity may therefore not only cause embarrassment

for those associated with the celebrity player, but might create negative publicity for brand (Stone, Joseph & Jones, 2003). In the United States for example, following accusations of rape, brands associated with NBA player Kobe Bryant reported negative impacts on their image, thus prompting many of his sponsors to cut ties or distance themselves from the athlete. The loss of sponsorship impacts negatively on players' earnings; in this instance the cost to Bryant was estimated to be in excess of $100 million (Robinson, 2004). Both David Beckham and Tiger Woods also lost a number of commercial deals following accusations of extramarital affairs (Vincent *et al,*. 2009). As it was suggested earlier in the literature review, companies associate themselves with celebrity figures and a series of attributes they are perceived to embody to add value to a particular brand. Scandal can therefore undermine the carefully constructed image associated with the celebrity and consequently damage their relationship with the public (Crepeau, 2010).

Although the media illuminate and condemn bad behaviour of football celebrity, they are happy to profit from it. This shift in the style of reporting is often linked with what has been referred to as an infotainment society (Bird, 2003; Horne, 2006). It has frequently been posited that the mass media have responded to market pressures by competing with each other to present dramatic narratives and spectacles with strong moral content (McRobbie, 1994; Thompson, 1987). The metaphor of soap opera has been used to describe the way in which stories about football celebrity are narrativised (Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004). Using a series of case studies, Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004) highlighted how the Premiership might be viewed as a soap opera, with ongoing stories emerging around particular clubs and celebrity players. They suggest that mediated plots emerge around both on field and off field behaviour and incidents, with those that are shocking or excessive, being particularly valued. They suggest that sex, violence and celebrity hit all the buttons with the public's curiosity, allowing them to revel in what is referred to as consumptive deviance. In relation to the narrativisation of sport, Whannel (2001) refers to the process of vortextuality, where stories come to dominate news, gathering momentum and twisting and turning in different directions, the story effectively taking on a life of its own. Vortextuality perhaps becomes more exasperated with new media developments, with both a wider range of media available and numerous opportunities for more 'authors' to contribute to mediated debates.

A number of studies outside a sport context have drawn upon Peter Brook's (1976) concept of the melodramatic imagination to explore the way stories are characterised by an emphasis on strong emotionalism, moral polarisation, extreme states of being, situations, actions, overt villainy, persecution of good, reward of virtue, inflated and exaggerated expression, dark plotting and suspense (Ang, 1985; Beer and Penfold-Mounce 2009). Crucially however, melodramatic tales, whilst contrasting tales of good and bad, leave room for discussion and comment, therefore, although the media are responsible for framing stories in a particular way, the melodramatic imagination also requires interpretation on the part of the viewer (Jenkins, 1992; Meyers, 2009).

It has been argued that the pervasiveness of the mass media has implications for the learning of norms and values. Talk about celebrity might therefore be recognised as a way of evaluating the behaviour of others (Ang, 1985; De Backer, 2007). As such, celebrity talk can be considered a method of filling in knowledge gaps and identifying strategies for succeeding in daily life (De Backer, 2007). Through talking about celebrity, we collectively define who we are and what we value (Alexander, 2010). Stories about football celebrity may therefore potentially feed into discourses surrounding relationships, morality and citizenship, helping people to make sense of their social worlds rather than necessarily being problematic (Hopkins, 2002, Potolsky, 2006; Rose, 2003,).

It is also notable that celebrity coverage and interaction has influenced the range of subjects it has become acceptable to speak about in public. Bird (2003) highlights how topics such as illness, medical treatment, sex outside marriage, same sex relationships, divorce and suicide are increasingly common place. Previously, such topics were considered out of bounds and were only discussed in hushed tones. It is for this reason that people often use the media to talk about topics that are taboo or controversial (Bird, 2003). This sort of serious gossip can serve to enlarge the reader's private world and help to create a moral community (Jenkins, 1992). In relation to young people's interpretation and use of football celebrity, Lines (2001) challenged the assumption that young people are necessarily vulnerable to influence; rather, they discussed bad behaviour in order to make sense of a range of social issues. In this sense, the media provides a way of filling in knowledge gaps and identifying strategies for succeeding in daily life, for example, providing information about social roles, conflict resolution and relationships (De Backer, 2007).

As De Backer (2007) argues, people are likely to have different motivations and want to derive different things out of their engagement with celebrity across the lifespan. She suggests how celebrity figures may fill an imaginative role, ranging from teachers to friends. As the audience make connections with their own lives, media figures take on more meaning, becoming part and parcel of everyday cultural and emotional experience (Hermes, 1999, Lash and Lury, 2007). One of the key criticisms of previous work about media culture is that it has been explored in isolation to wider social patterns of interaction, without seeking to understand how these inform and in turn are informed by social networks and relations (Gauntlett, 2002). As Bird (2003) argues, stories help to set the agenda for discussion; they do not exist as some definable text separate from wider cultural conversation. Arguably, the audience have become willing participants in the creation of multiple realities, with their relationships with media characters becoming seamlessly interwoven into their everyday lives. Media consumption might therefore be thought of as an embodied experience; everyday life is increasingly likely to be punctuated with mediated experiences and reference to issues drawn from the media (Tomlinson, 2007).

Celebrity gossip might also be significant in that it can be considered a much freer realm and therefore more game like than acquaintance gossip, with no repercussions, and no accountability (Turner, 2000). The lack of accountability however, may encourage negative interactions. This may be further encouraged by the narrative quality of the story, making the people contained within it seem less like human beings and more like characters or symbols. This is particularly evident in the way that media scandal is turned into jokes so quickly. It is argued however that this is just part of the cycle of public discourse (Bird, 2003). Leonard and King (2011) provide an example of this in their critical discussion of Kobe Bryant and how he attempted to gain redemption following accusations of rape. Bryant's appearance on Sesame Street was meant to realign him with mainstream values, however, he became the subject of ridicule in the form of jokes. Drawing on examples from social media, Leonard (2011:) provides examples of how his appearance on the show was linked to rape accusations 'Hey kids can you say Rapist?' and 'Now show me on the muppet where the bad man raped consensually touched you' are particularly

pertinent illustrations of this trend. This type of fan activity might be thought of as a form of athlete punishment.

Pleasures of this kind have frequently been explained as a response to economic inequality. As Marshall (1997) explains, celebrity is a site of hegemonic struggle in capitalist democracies, between overtly public individuals and those constructed as an undifferentiated mass of 'demographic aggregates'. A degree of symbolic levelling occurs through humiliation. Enjoyment of humiliation fulfils specific cultural functions because it offers vicarious pleasure in the witnessing of the powerful becoming less powerful (Alexander, 2010). Whilst therefore schadenfreude appears to critique the celebrity economy, it is has also become central to the economic turnover of celebrity capitalism that it critiques.

Andrews and Jackson (2001) suggest that following his sending off in the 1998 World Cup, Beckham became the target of various hostilities, not only due to the red card he received, but also because of envy of his successful and wealthy lifestyle. The audience take pleasure from the falling of celebrity athletes because they are envious of what they have. The pleasure of the story for Langer (1998) is in part seeing the psychological and social mess when the arrangements of everyday collapse. It was suggested earlier in the chapter that modern celebrities are imagined to be free from the cares of everyday life, with fabulous lifestyles, wealth and possessions. Articles of this kind then offer reassurance that their lives are not perfect.

The desire to take pleasure in celebrity failure might also explain the appeal of features and representation that focus on celebrity vulnerability. As well as highlighting misdeamours on a more regular basis, the tabloid era also highlighted and commodified the public face of vulnerability which became visible in the 1970s and the self-help era. Football celebrity literature has drawn attention to a number of particular individuals who have sought redemption after they transgressed. Whannel (2001) for instance, highlighted the high profile redemption strategies of Tony Adams and Paul Merson, who both suffered extreme and highly publicised lows due to alcohol addiction. There is nothing new about male footballers that enjoy a drink, or have a problem with drink. What is new, however, is how footballers seek help for these problems in middle class forums such as clinics and counselors.

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Gamson (1994) suggests that following scandal, confessions allow stars to renegotiate their public image and make requests for public absolution. In today's society, confession can be considered an important strategy in image management. Crepeau (2010:150) points out, 'it is an old, even ancient story, only now on an electronic stage, the hero is lionised, placed on a pedestal, knocked to the ground when proven to be human and then embraced again'. Redemption can therefore be considered as the ritualised attempt by a fallen celebrity to re-acquire positive status through confession and the request for absolution (Whannel, 2002). Redmond and Holmes (2007) explain that they face public vulnerability and appeal for compassion, not worship. As suggested earlier in the chapter, there is much at stake in the commercialised world of football when an image becomes damaged.

Confession theoretically exposes personal weaknesses, which in turn promotes self-understanding and the reformation of damaged character (Redmond 2008). In such scenarios, individuals are typically portrayed as having lost touch with their real selves and the public are encouraged to feel sympathy rather than disdain for them (Biressi and Nunn, 2008). Formats such as reality television, the autobiography and one-to-one interview have become key vehicles for the production of celebrity intimacy (Holmes, 2006; Redmond, 2008). Redmond (2008) explained that these mechanisms of confession allow the audience to get a direct look into the celebrities' life and emotions and get to see what is real, or at least presumed real.

When the star confesses, one is compelled to look for gestures that act as giveaways to the state of their mind, earnestness and truthfulness (Crepeau, 2010). Emotional signs, such as tears, or the loss of control, are an affective form of communication with the audience. This perhaps forms part of what Gamson (1994) refers to as the trend in celebrity consumption to 'game player' where the consumer searches for elements of 'truth' in spectacle driven media presentation. Biressi and Nunn (2008) suggest that emotional labour can be considered an ideology of intimacy putting vulnerability and the 'real' on display, often to limit or repair scandal minimising damage in the public eye. Conversely however, others have argued that the confessional sphere provides another stage for celebrities to draw attention to themselves thus increasingly their visibility (Redmond, 2008; Tolson, 2001). Therefore, on a more pragmatic level, such revelations have become integral to the

highly profitable circulation of the celebrity figure in contemporary media markets (Cashmore, 2002).

Although individual celebrities often engage in confessional strategies, these provide no guarantee of redemption. It has also been suggested that some athletes find this harder to achieve than others. Repeat offenders, those who are not deemed to be authentic and black athletes are less likely to be forgiven by the public (Kellner, 2002). Rojek (2001) does go on to point out that redemption is risky as the celebrity needs to make sure that they do not fall back into the pattern of behaviour that got them 'punished' in the first place.

Redemption can also be gained through sporting performances. Vincent *et al,.* (2009) referred to David Beckham's redemption after his fall during the 1998 World Cup. During the 1999 season Beckham put in many good performances and helped Manchester United on to the treble consisting of the FA Cup, League and UEFA champions League. Another significant point in Beckham's redemption came in 2002 football world cup, quite poignantly with a penalty kick against Argentina, the team from 1998 where he grabbed the headlines 'Ten Heroic Lions...One Stupid Boy'. Beckham had fully redeemed himself and went onto sign for Football giants Real Madrid in 2004 (Vincent *et al.* 2009). In fact, retrospectively, the debacle arguably not only boosted his football career, but also his celebrity career.

The various ways football celebrity representation and consumption are highlighted throughout this chapter might be considered reflective of Whannel's (2002) cycle of celebration, transgression, punishment and redemption. What is particularly telling about this cycle in the context of this thesis, is that each of the stages represents the football celebrity commodity, only in different forms. For instance, celebration of football celebrity lifestyle through a glossy magazine spread, is no more compelling as a commodity than tabloid scandal around a particular figure. Each is a commodity the audience buy into, although most likely for different reasons. Furthermore, Whannel's cycle highlights the increasing complexity of both representation and consumption, as well as the blurring of boundaries between these two stages. This might be illustrated by the opportunities the public have through new forms of media to contribute to the punishment of celebrity athletes.

Conclusions

To date the majority of academic work considering football celebrity has been relatively similar, exploring players' representations and appeal, focusing on the meritocratic aspects of players' status or lamenting about the state of the contemporary game. What has received less attention is the social importance of football celebrity in contemporary society as players become part of wider mediated culture. Turner (2010) has suggested that the really interesting but frequently overlooked aspect of celebrity is what we (the audience) do with it. Whilst it is frequently recognise that players fulfil an important social and cultural function, this is a subject that to date has seen a dearth of critical analysis (Hills, 1994).

Developments in football, most notably the launch of the English Premier League, paved the way for the proliferation of celebrity culture now surrounding the game. Football and individual football celebrities can now be considered global commodities, aided by processes such as Disneyisation, which ensures the spread of the football celebrity commodity in to as many different markets as possible. The social, cultural and economic capital now attributed to football celebrity, has allowed the spread of the football celebrity image into wider markets, allowing them to endorse numerous brands inside and outside of sport. They may also be seen as brands in their own right, particularly as image rights become embedded in professional football culture.

Drawing on Debord's (1967) notion of spectacle, Cashmore and Parker (2003) have argued that celebrity represents the commodification of the human form; as high profile footballers are turned into a series of representations to be consumed. This thesis therefore explores football celebrity as a cultural resource, available for people to draw upon in their everyday lives. Consequently, it focuses less on the corporeal player, than it does the consumption of the images and texts that surround them.

The wider trend in media representation to break down public and private boundaries and offer human interest stories is evident within football celebrity coverage. It was suggested that the breakdown of public private boundaries is a double edged sword, in that it provides further opportunities for media exposure and financial gain through the commodification of the domestic sphere. Conversely however, the same

levels of media exposure may leave football celebrity vulnerable to 'brand' damage, particularly if they do something that contradicts their carefully constructed image.

The development of new media represents a revolutionary moment in both sport sociology and the study of celebrity culture (Turner, 2010). Increasingly the public has access to information about sports celebrity through a range of blogs forums, online fanzines and social networking sites (Leonard, 2009). This is painted as a changing mediascape populated by multifarious media forms that enabling information to circulate through channels that both organisationally led and grassroots (Appadurai, 1990; Jenkins, 2006). Millington and Wilson (2010) have described the place of the media audience in the sport sociology literature as 'absent-present' in that the existence of the audience is implicit but rarely explored in any depth. To date the work of Weiss (1996) provides somewhat of a standalone example of how frameworks from cultural and audience studies can be used to consider player/public interactions.

It is apparent from the existing literature that modes of consumption can vary dramatically being highly individualised and contextualised (Turner, 2004). Given that it is widely acknowledged that the way in which celebrities are consumed may vary based on technological advancements as well as societal conditions, it is likely that in a new media era, consumption strategies are more sophisticated and contingent. Although the study of celebrity has implicitly referenced the audience, rarely has it been at the centre of analysis. Given that the focus of this thesis is what the audience actually do with football celebrity, the following chapter outlines critical debates that have been developed in audience studies.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical review of literature within audience studies, particularly focusing on strands of research that can potentially illuminate the study of audiences of football celebrity. It is consistently suggested that literature in audience studies can be categorised by 'generation' (Millington and Wilson, 2010). The reader can therefore expect to see a critical analysis of literature from each of these generations within the chapter. Even though the thesis is primarily concerned with frameworks developed in the third generation, it is nonetheless important to foreground key developments that occurred prior to this point. Although the movement through generations of audience studies, often refers to the level of engagement on the part of the audience, it is crucial to point out at the outset, it is also inextricably linked to developments in the media, that have altered the levels of interactivity and therefore the potential to resist dominant readings within the text (Leonard, 2009).

Millington and Wilson (2010) suggest that there is rich history of research, exploring ways that audiences make sense of the various media they encounter. As the reader will see, this history includes the introduction of Stuart Hall's (1980) ground-breaking 'encoding-decoding' model, to explain relationships between audience interpretations of media content and the intentions of media producers. This model recognised the potential for audience agency and moved away from the assumption that the audience are necessarily disempowered by mass media produced resources. Hall's seminal work paved the way for research that aimed to understand the social location of audiences and how this influenced their media consumption. Work by scholars including David Morley (1980), Janice Radway (1984) and Ien Ang (1989) on viewers of *Nationwide*, romance readers and viewers of *Dallas* respectively, is illustrative of studies that recognised selectiveness in consumption and the potential for different readings, as a result of varying social and personal attributes of the audience. Furthermore, it recognised that media was used as a social resource and something incorporated into people's everyday lives, rather than something separate from real life.

New media developments in particular, have challenged scholars to think in new ways about the place of media in the audiences' everyday lives (Millington and Wilson, 2010). Developments in new media have led to a plethora of academic research on blogging, social networking and fan forums, although most of this resides outside sport (Leonard, 2009). Perhaps as significant as the studies themselves, Millington and Wilson (2010) suggest that these developments have been accompanied by a series of epistemological and methodological debates and advances that continue to this day, as researchers such as Press and Livingstone (2006:31) 'contemplate the relevance of audience research and theory in an age of Internet communication'. Firstly these debates are premised on the breakdown of distinctions between the producer and consumer, as the audience is theoretically given more opportunities to actively engage with and contribute to media production. Secondly, as scholars including Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) have argued, definitions of the audience in the contemporary mediated society we live in today should treat the audience as 'diffused'. This is largely based on observations that relate to the increased privatisation and diversification of media consumption, making it difficult to research (Crawford, 2004; Poulton, 2008).

Although the study of the media is well established in sport studies, there is a significant gap in the sociology of sport literature when it comes to understanding sport audiences, particularly across the interactive cultures associated with new media developments. According to Millington and Wilson (2010:31), 'the very existence of audiences is an implicit and at times explicit rationale for analyses of media texts, contents and discourses, yet audiences tend to have a ghostly presence, hovering over and around research on sport media, yet rarely becoming a principal concern in and of themselves'.

These observations notwithstanding, there are studies that have made tentative steps into using concepts from audience studies within their analysis. It was suggested earlier in the thesis that Weiss's (1996) work on pseudo-social interactions with sports stars made some tentative steps in drawing on concepts from audience studies, to explain how the audience interact with high profile sports performers; this research however, was not fully developed empirically. Further work by Millington and Wilson (2010) also made use of paradigms derived from audience studies, in order to explore how sport media is embedded in the audiences' lives. To date

though, there is a significant gap in the consideration of how audiences might engage with, and consume, the football celebrity commodity.

First generation studies

Many early academic considerations of media audiences tended to rely on simplistic models that assumed everyone responded to texts in a uniform and predictable manner (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998). Early theories tended to favour a behaviourist approach, assuming a simplistic cause and effect relationship (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998; Livingstone, 2004). With the assumption of a direct effect, this approach has often been referred to as a 'syringe' model since it might be assumed, that, similar to a narcotic delivered in a syringe, the audience will simply absorb media messages and react in a uniform way. It is this approach that has emerged in media panics about media 'effects', for example, the presumed negative effect on a young audience who watch violent films or play violent video games (Anderson, 1977). This simplistic view of media effects has however been criticised for not taking into account a range of other factors that may contribute to changes in behaviour and attitudes (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998). It might be suggested therefore, that the audience needs not to be considered as a homogenous mass, but rather a group of individuals with the ability to read media in different ways. Within their critique of this particular paradigm, Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) also point out that media messages are likely to be ambiguous and open to different readings by the audience. This might particularly be something to consider with new media developments when there are a wide range of media sources in circulation, often with competing meanings (Lash and Lury, 2007).

In relation to sport, those studies that have explored the presumed influence of role models might be said to fit into this category (Harris, 1986). This could be said to relate to both positive and negative representations, where there is an assumed 'effect' on the audience. Positive representations are laden with functionalist assumptions that sporting figures inspire and motivate (Hughson, 2009). This discourse is often perpetuated through stories recounted by professional athletes, where they identify inspirational role models that helped lead them to success in sport (Weiss, 1996). Through engagement with positive media coverage, the young audience are assumed to take on the attributes of the athlete (Biskup and Pfister,

1999). It could be argued however, that this is likely to sit alongside a whole host of other forms of influence that are likely to shape someone's attitudes and actions (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998).

When it comes to more negative coverage, which it was suggested in Chapter Two, is frequently acknowledged as part and parcel of contemporary professional sport, there have been debates played out in the popular media, that focus on the presumed undesirable influences of athletes behaving badly both inside and outside their sport (Andrews and Jackson, 2001; Lines, 2001). Within a sporting context, behaviours such as spitting, diving and fighting are particularly lamented, for fear that young people may copy. Negative coverage outside the sport has focused on excessive behaviours such as excessive drinking, drug taking, gambling and domestic violence (Whannel, 2001). Lines (2002) has however pointed out, that young people are more likely to engage critically over athletes' behaviour, bringing the credibility of an effects model into question. Lines suggests instead, that attention needs to be paid to the way meanings are negotiated and integrated into an existing value system.

Within this first generation of studies, the uses and gratifications model developed in the 1940s was significant because it emerged at a time when there was a trend to offer overly pessimistic readings of the audience. Uses and gratifications is an approach that is focused on the role and function of media in everyday life, and on how viewers benefit (e.g., via escapism) from the media they watch (Ruddock, 2001). Wilson (2007) points out how studies that have adopted this framework have explored how teenagers look to television culture, consciously or not, to both acquire imaginative strategies for acting on their hopes and dreams for the future and for coping with social dilemmas. The individual therefore *uses* the media, rather than being directly affected by it. In a similar regard, Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) draw on the work of McQuail *et al,.* (1972) to suggest that media fulfils a number of positive functions including companionship, helping an individual develop a sense of personal identity and surveillance.

There are a number of studies that have used a uses and gratifications framework to focus specifically on how fantasy engagement with media can help the audience overcome real life social situations and dilemmas. Hinerman (1992) for instance, explained how a couple who had lost a child, used fantasy interactions with Elvis to

cope with their grief. They reported that parasocial interactions with Elvis offered them reassurance, and gave them hope for the future. These sort of 'fantasy' interactions for Freud might be explained as bridging the gap between where we are, and where we want to be. Whilst interactions of this kind have been previously perceived as delusional, Jenson (1992) argues that there is little evidence to suggest that those who engage with interactions of this kind are detached from reality. Rather, engagement with media is likely to change depending on people's needs at any given time (Cohen, 2001).

Another study that has used this approach is Stacey's (1994) study of film goers and their interactions with film stars. Stacey's (1994) study of the audience focused on how film stars were used as a cultural resource both during and after viewing. She suggested that through engagement with film star narratives, the audience could escape into a glamorous world, far removed from their own lives and personal circumstances. Weiss (1996) suggested that one of the functions of the media is to transport the audience into an alternative and more satisfying reality. Furthermore, his work recognises that media consumption does not stop when the television is turned off or the newspaper is shut, rather it extends into everyday practices and conversations. The context of Stacey's study is perhaps significant when considering the particular kinds of interactions that were reported by the audience. Since she focused on film viewing during the war, many of her interviewees reported that engagement with stars helped them escape anxiety about losing family members during the war and distracted them from a world of shortage and 'making do'. Their pleasure was derived from the distance reflected in the choice of glamourous Hollywood stars, rather than British counterparts. Despite the otherworldly nature of stars, Stacey observed that spectators regularly sought to take on aspects of their identity, incorporating mannerisms and copying their style. Through such imitation Stacey's interviewees reported feeling more positive about their social circumstances.

Although it has been heavily criticised for its lack of consideration of power structures, and how media readings are influenced by these (Morley, 1992), it recognised the pleasure that might be taken in consumption, a theme which has re-emerged in later theories of the audience (Horne, 2006). The uses and gratifications model is also notable for its emphasis on the complexity of audience responses to

media, although it did not perhaps adequately consider the characteristics of different forms of media and the responses they were more likely to elucidate. The continued suggestion of the need to consider media power within models of the audience led to a number of studies that used a structural approach (Rojek, 2001).

Structural theories such as Adorno and Horkheimer's work on the Culture Industry, differed from uses and gratifications, which assumes that audiences are comprised of individuals abstracted from social structure. Adorno and Horkheimer's (1979) work which expanded across both the study of celebrity and audiences, suggests that everything we see is mediated through the filter of the culture industry, through which producers effectively manage popular culture. Entertainment, in all its forms, is seen as a mechanism of social control, offering a distraction or release from the mundanity of everyday life. The celebrity, as an integral part of this system, is highlighted as one of the means through which capitalism achieves its ends of subduing and exploiting the masses, effectively herding them into imitative consumption. It is suggested that celebrity texts tend to promote the 'ideology of heroic individualism, upward mobility and choice, in social conditions wherein standardisation, monotony and routine prevail' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979:353). Depicted as cultural dupes and unaware of their exploitation, it is presumed that the masses are unable to resist manipulation (Marcuse, 1964).

Given the level of entertainment available in contemporary society, the audience is perceived to exist under a permanent state of distraction. In contrast to high art and live performances, the pleasure derived from media is seen as superficial and false. Adorno refers to this pleasure as 'emotional', and characterises it as irrational since it is detached from 'reality'. Scholars have however been critical of this deterministic approach, particularly on the grounds that it ignores the pleasure taken in media consumption (Horne, 2006). Crawford (2004) noted that a key critique of Adorno and Horkheimer's work actually came from within the Frankfurt school itself, in the form of Walter Benjamin's work that suggested, viewing art in a distracted state, does not stop someone appreciating it. Crawford (2004) expands to point out that the work of Benjamin had an important influence on many writers, including those in the Centre for Contemporary Studies at Birmingham University.

Although Adorno and Horkheimers work remains influential, Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding approach is often seen as the beginning of serious audience research (Millington and Wilson, 2010). Rather than seeing the relationship between media and the audience as necessarily deterministic, Hall's work recognises that in today's society, media engagement is woven into the fabric of everyday life. Consequently, the relationship between the supply and demand of the media is more complex than the 'production- circulation- consumption model' suggested in behaviourist audience studies (Alasuutari, 1999:3). Hall's work is particularly significant since it marked the intersection between audience research and cultural studies and the increased recognition of the possibility of viewer agency. The shift towards acknowledging audience agency has allowed work on the audience to move beyond stigmatised representations of the audience as psychologically lacking, and explore the various pleasures located in media consumption (Jenson, 1992; Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998). Rather than being passive consumers of media, it is increasingly acknowledged that the audience are involved in a wide range of activities that sometimes provide challenges and sites of resistance to the cultural mainstream.

The particular focus of Hall's approach is the consideration of how structures of power are embedded in media content and how these 'encoded' messages are subsequently consumed and 'decoded' by the audience. It therefore still works within the confines of producer/consumer dichotomies. Encoding and decoding works to separate the two moments in the existence of a mediated text. The text is first encoded and constructed (usually by the media industries). This process of making meaning draws on what Hall refers to as 'frames of knowledge, relations of production and technical infrastructure' (1980:130). Although texts cannot assume or prescribe how they will be read, they will nevertheless tend to be structured to convey preferred meanings that will have an ideological force. Possible readings are likely therefore to be influenced by the interests of cultural norms and the powerful elite. Then in the second part of the process (often referred to as reception), another set of meanings structures come into play. These are the codes through which readers encounter and decode the texts. This process is likely to be linked to a reader's social and cultural identity (Kim, 2004).

Hall was quick to point out however, that ideologies are not fixed and that there is a struggle for meanings from media texts by different social groups. The text is not merely a fixed unit that is sent and arrives unchanged at its destination. Instead, Hall theorises that the decoding process may be independent of the encoded meaning (Ruddock, 2001). Hall argued that audience members may choose to either accept or reject the dominant message, but equally, they may accept some parts, and reject others in what might be considered a more negotiated reading. This paradigm describes whether audience members are incorporated into the dominant ideology by their participation in media activity, or whether they are resistant to that incorporation. Whist it therefore does not automatically assume the audience to be duped, it strives to put consumption into categories that do not adequately reflect the nuances associated with audience activity.

Hills (2005) suggests that whilst moving away from assumptions of determinism through its acknowledgment of audience agency, Halls model preserved a model of media texts as culturally powerful. Hills (2005) explains it as a seesaw model, offering cultural theorists a way of keeping celebration and critique of readings in the air without definitively tipping to the ground on either side. Audience decodings might be considered active constructions, but decodings are only active in the shadow of constraining ideological forces.

As a leading figure of the Birmingham school, David Morley's (1980) study of the *Nationwide* audience has been acknowledged as one of the most influential works in the emergence and development of the new audience research. Morley's study aimed to test Hall's encoding decoding model empirically. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) suggested that a criticism of work in audience studies was the gap between empirical work and grand theories. Morley's work perhaps went some way to address this criticism. His work consisted of a detailed textual analysis of the television programme Nationwide to determine the basic codes and implicit ideologies inscribed in the text. Morley then explored decoding processes as an encounter between 2 determining forces. On the one hand, the 'preferred reading of the text', on the other hand, 'viewers' social positions infused with a range of discourses and experiences' (Morley, 1992:119). He hypothesised that decodings would vary based on viewers basic 'socio-demographic factors and their involvement

in various forms of cultural frameworks and identifications at the levels of formal and informal structure and institutions and with topics of texts' (Morley, 1980: 26).

Through his work, Morley aimed to develop a more satisfactory model of the power of the media, to better understand how that power operates in conjunction with the fact that people do make choices, and do make their own interpretations of material provided to them. Essentially, Morley was trying to offer what could be considered a more effective way of understanding media power than was offered by the Frankfurt schools simplistic approach to treating the audience as passive dupes (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998). Morley was not trying to replace the culture industry theory with a theory that says that audiences are completely active and that there was a totally free reading of media materials, rather he aimed to illustrate that there is interplay between structure and agency, with media power still deemed relevant. Similarly, Bird (2003) has argued that we may have moved from simplistic cause and effect analyses of media effects but that does not mean that the media are not powerful agents.

Although Morley's work moved audience studies forwards, particularly in its recognition of the need to consider how social factors are likely to influence readings of media, it has been argued that the emphasis on class over and above other social categories inhibited the focus on other factors such as race, gender and age (Kim, 2004). Furthermore, it has also been observed that there also exist clear differences in social class. As Morley (1980) pointed out, trade union members, shop stewards all share a common class position but their decodings are inflected in different directions by the influence of the discourses and institutions in which they are situated.

Second generation studies

The second generation emerged out of the first without superseding it (Millington and Wilson, 2010). Following on from Hall's seminal work, there was a flurry of scholarly activity, starting to recognise the need to explore the role of the media and its place in the audiences lives (Silverstone, 1994). The 'second generation' also raised debates over the ontological supposition that circumscribed and well-defined audiences even exist and can be studied (Livingstone, 2004). Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) had previously suggested that the audience is everywhere and

nowhere, alluding to the difficulty of pinning down a solid definition of the audience. This is largely attributed to media developments making consumption practices more complex and diffused (Bird, 2003).

Perhaps a key strength of studies in the second generation is that they have tended to give further consideration to the contexts in which media is consumed and how it is used, particularly through adopting ethnographic approaches (Radway, 1984).The proliferation of audience ethnography, created what Silverstone (1994) labels a 'double articulation'. 'Media (especially television) were considered '*qua* media— that is, for their role as 'real' objects that structure relations in the household and elsewhere; and media were considered *qua* texts—texts bestowed with various meanings to be interpreted by the viewer' (Press & Livingstone, 2006, p. 181). This separation allowed media consumption to be studied from different angles, taking power and ideological forces into account, whilst recognising that media is embedded in everyday practices, rather than something external to them.

Similar to suggestions by both Hall and Morley, the majority of this research has acknowledged the audience as active, even if constrained to some degree (Moores, 1993). However, it differed in its approach in that rather than viewing constraints as wholly defined by socio-cultural factors, it was suggested that it is more complex and personal (Ang, 1985). Mediated experiences do not take place in a social vacuum, therefore how texts are read and subsequently used, cannot be separated out from people's life histories. Engaging with symbolic texts therefore rests on a range of analytic competencies, social practices and material circumstances (Fornas *et al,.* 2002).

Although Ang recognises the power of producers in putting together media content, she suggests that the audience play with it and take pleasures from what they are given. The soap viewer, in the case of Ang's work, Dallas, builds up an understanding of the characters, puzzles over their secrets, eagerly anticipates the cliff-hanger, guesses the outcome of a subplot, recalls when appropriate the significant events from past episodes (Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004). In contrast to Adorno and Horkheimer, who argue that the pleasure taken in viewing is part of a system of manipulation, Ang's findings intimated that pleasure is derived from a critical engagement with media texts. Rather than being experienced in a uniform

way, it appears that viewing is capable of meeting individuals' unique needs (1985:17). Ang observed that viewers of Dallas picked out the characters and storylines that were most pertinent to them. Furthermore, in recognising the social dynamics of media engagement, Ang suggested that the soap in general as well as storylines and characters were used as a means of initiating interactions with others and maintaining social bonds.

Ang (1985) uses the notion of the melodramatic imagination to imply sensitivity on the part of the viewer to read the cultural text in a way that allows facets such as strong emotionalism, suspense and dark plotting to be read into the text and thus for the structure of feeling to be appreciated (Beer and Penfold Mounce, 2009). The melodramatic imagination, in Ang work, is about the psycho-social responses that are encouraged and cultivated through encounters with popular cultural texts, in this case the television show *Dallas*. Ang's contention is that the viewer uses the programme as a cultural resource from which they inform and stimulate an imaginative response. This allows the viewer to retreat from the monotony of the day-to-day into the stimulated melodrama which is seen as more colourful than 'real life'. In Ang's own words;

The melodramatic imagination should be regarded as a psychological strategy to overcome the material meaninglessness of everyday existence, in which routine and habit prevail in human relationships as much as elsewhere. The melodramatic imagination is therefore best understood as the expression of a refusal, or inability, to accept insignificant everyday life as banal and meaningless, and is born of a vague, inarticulate dissatisfaction with existence here and now (Ang, 1985: 79).

Although Ang was insistent on the idea that the audience were active, and her empirical evidence certainly seemed to support that assertion, her use of melodrama as an underpinning framework for her analysis to some extent undermines audience agency through the suggestion that they are dissatisfied with real life, to the point where they choose to escape into the world of the soap opera. Criticisms notwithstanding, Ang's work recognised nuanced readings of the soap opera text and moved away from audience effects models that assume the audience to be a homogenous mass.

Other work by Radway that focused on readers of romance novels might also be considered an important contribution to the field, since it showed empirically that media engagement can be a site of resistance, manipulation and even empowerment. Like a number of other studies in this generation, Radway (1988) had called for 'radical contextualism' in audience research. Through ethnographic studies that investigated the place of media culture in everyday life, she tipped the balance of audience research away from reception and towards consumption studies (Livingstone, 2003). Radway illustrated how readers were able to manipulate the texts presented to them in the stories, to develop alternative readings of the main characters, in particular the female protagonists. According to Millington and Wilson (2010:31), this emerging ethnographic work in audience studies, 'spurred on questions of identity politics, especially questions of gender—primarily in the work of feminist scholars who challenged the notion that only conventional politics (e.g., news media) should 'count' as cultural knowledge'. Radway is not alone in purporting that cultural knowledge can be derived from media consumption. Studies that have focused on fandom for example, have shown how alternative forms of social capital and empowerment are developed through media consumption. D'Accis (1994) study of the US television show Cagney and Lacey for instance suggests that fans used the show to enhance their self-esteem through identification with the strong female characters. Fans reported that engagement with the show and the characters turn enabled them to act more powerfully in their social world. Hopkins (2002) reported a similar trend with Madonna fans who used Madonna's transgressive behaviours, particularly with regard to pushing the boundaries of gender identity to help create a strong female identity.

John Fiske's work also stands out in this 'second generation' since it offers very optimistic readings of audiences, especially fans. Fiske (1992) suggests that to be a fan involves pleasurable reworking of the text. Fiske (1992) suggests that it is the power to resist dominant readings of texts that forms part of the pleasure taken in the media. Although Fiske acknowledges that social constraints exist, for him, they are relatively loose; giving more power to the audience to shape meanings from the texts they are given. In Fiske's view, audiences are free to make of television and popular culture what they will, within two sets of constraints, first the text itself and secondly

the social forces that impinge on audience members and for the attitudes, opinions and beliefs that mould the interpretations people make of television programmes. Therefore what we get from the culture industries is not standardised products but rather a cultural resource of everyday life that the audience may use in a variety of ways dependent of their individual reading of the text, and the social constraints that are acting on them.

Fiske has suggested that the activity of fans can be considered productive in three ways. The first way, which he refers to as semiotic, where fans make meaning from and construct an identity by interacting with products made commonly available by commercial cultures. Secondly, enunciative productivity is explained as the circulation of in group meanings within particular fan communities, leading to the construction of collective identities. Finally, he refers to textual productivity where a reworked cultural resource is produced, usually for circulation amongst the fan community. The act of consumption for Fiske is active since it always entails a new production of meaning. In the context of football, fanzines are a good example of this type of textual productivity. In response to disillusionment with the commercialisation of the game, fanzines provide an alternative form of media for fans to consume (Duke, 2002; Numerato, 2014).

The term alternative media has been used to reference media content produced by non-commercial sources that has the potential to challenge power structures (Atkinson, 2005; Downing, 2003). This recognises that there is a point at which the text leaves the hands of the author and becomes available for alteration in some way. Studies of this kind focus on forms of interactivity in which the text is affected, re-sequenced, altered, customised or re-narrated (Cover, 2006). Jenkins (1992) has drawn on and developed de Certeau's notion of textual 'poaching' to explain how fans draw on snippets of mainstream media material and alter it in some way to create something that is meaningful, either on an individual level, or something that has particular significance within a fan community. Similarly, Bird (2003) illustrated how fans of the television series *Doctor Quinn, Medicine Woman* poached ideas from the series and wrote their own endings to the shows as they were dissatisfied with the official version, since it did not fit with their readings of the characters.

Fan creativity in some instances might be embraced by media corporations who draw on it for inspiration for official stories. It may however create issues if the fan activity is deemed to breach copyright, or it is perceived as detrimental to the image of the original media content (Jenkins, 2006).One such example of fan activity that has highlighted issues of this kind is the fan practice of slash fiction. Emerging as a popular sub-genre of fan fiction in the 1970s, slash fiction (commonly known as 'slash') refers to the use of a forward stroke or slash to signify same sex relationships or encounters between two characters usually from a television series – for example Kirk/Spock from the 1960s series *Star Trek* (Green *et al,*. 1998, Jones 2002). Slash fiction writers in such examples typically select characters which in reality are portrayed as the epitome of hegemonic or even hyper masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) and portray them in alternative roles (Jenkins, 1992).Such outlets enable viewers' often radical reinterpretations of mainstream material. Although slash is more often associated with fictional series, the emergence of celebrity culture has given rise to the production of fiction featuring the public's favourite celebrities, a convention known as 'real person slash' (Allington, 2007). Studies of real person slash have however tended to focus on popular film stars and boy band members rather than popular sporting figures. This might be due to the homophobic nature of sport compared to other areas of the entertainment industry.

Slash fiction might be considered a significant practice, since it is predominantly written by females, a group who have arguably been excluded from media production processes (Jenkins, 2006b). Female fans have traditionally also been stigmatised in fan studies for expressing sexual desire for male characters (Vemorel and Vemorel, 1985). Writing about male characters in same sex relationships might be seen as a form of resistance, since the stories that they write disrupt hegemonic norms. Stories, for instance tend to avoid stereotypes of top and bottom roles associated with homosexual relationships and portray characters as both hyper masculine but homosexual, thereby disrupting what Butler (1990) refers to as the heterosexual matrix. This matrix represents the societal assumption that gender and sexuality are interrelated, for instance is someone is hyper-masculine, they must be heterosexual.

Although it has been celebrated in fan studies as a form of resistance, this is a genre that has also been criticised, particularly based on the female writers' choice to write

about male characters (Sandvoss, 2005). It is argued that through the tendency to focus on male characters, the stories offer few, if any chances to challenge gendered stereotypes of females. In fact when females do feature in the stories, they tend to be side lined and marginalised (Jenkins, 1992). It is important to acknowledge however, that there is a small sub-genre of slash that does feature stories about women, but as Jenkins points out, this does not hold as much value within the slash community.

Due to the nature of slash, fan communities have been difficult to access particularly by outsiders. Sandvoss (2005) suggests that Jenkins (1992, 2006) work could be seen as significant, since he writes academically as an overt fan and writer of slash fiction. His insider position therefore offers him access to the slash fiction community. Other work by Allington (2007) on slash stories based on the Lord of the Rings films might also be seen as particularly insightful for the same reasons highlighted above. As a self-describing slash fan and slash writer, Allington (2007) emphasises that writers see elements hidden within the text. The ability to decipher the film in a particular way is therefore perhaps indicative of whether someone is classed as an insider or an outsider to the fan group. As Bird (2003) has previously suggested certain cultural competencies may be required of fans to allow them access to particular fan communities.

Although the studies outlined in the above sections have clearly made steps forward in balancing media power and the potential for audience agency, Hermes (1995; 1999) has criticised the tendency in fan studies to focus predominantly on cultural creativity and a deep engagement with media texts. Rather, she notes, that engagement with the media is often more mundane for example, magazines are frequently just leafed through during gaps in readers' everyday routines; they are easily put down rather than invested with any deep significance. This is premised on the idea that most of us adopt a blasé attitude to the media since we are so used to its presence (Appadurai, 1990). This 'everyday' engagement with media is likely to be more common place given the wide range of media platforms available in a contemporary setting, as well as the blurring of off line and online environments (Livingstone, 2008).

Third generation studies

The interdisciplinary 'third generation' acknowledges the very real problems associated with trying to separate the text/audience from the culture in which they are embedded. It has been argued that frequently the media has been studied in isolation to wider social patterns of interaction, without seeking to understand how these inform and in turn are informed by social networks and relations (Gauntlett, 2002). The goal in the third generation of studies is to contextualise and draw connections between the media, audience and wider culture (Livingstone, 2004). Fornas *et al,.* (2002:1) characterises this new field as; an 'expanding tribe of cyber cultural studies combining media and cultural studies with internet research. As a rapidly growing field, it crosses and reworks traditional borderlines, such as those concerning identities, communities, forms of reception or media use, textual genres, media types, technologies and research methods'.

In the media saturated society we live in today, it might be argued that media culture is relevant to understanding contemporary culture (Gitlin, 2001). This culture has become routine and embedded in the rhythms of everyday life (Appardurai, 1990). Work in the third generation characterises the audience as active producers of meaning, with the media frequently being used to fuel the audiences' performances and as a stand point from observing others. Furthermore, it added a previously neglected layer of reflexivity to research on the reception of media messages, largely by addressing audiences' notions of themselves as the audience' (Alatassurai, 1999:6).

Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) suggest that there have been significant changes in how the audience should be theorised and understood. The notion of the diffused audience is perhaps the most reflective of changes within contemporary society and media, as well as most pertinent to understanding 'celebrity' in the sense that it is being used for this thesis. With the diffused audience, it is suggested that everyone is a member of the audience all the time. Social performances are no longer exceptional, but rather constitutive of everyday life. This might be considered reflective of what has been termed a performative society in which human transactions are complexly structured through the growing use of performative modes and frames (Kershaw, 1996:167). Consequently, performance is so deeply

embedded in everyday life that people are unaware of it. Factors contributing to this shift are highlighted as the pervasiveness of new forms of media and the growth in accessibility and use of portable devices. This not only decreases the symbolic distance between the audience and performer in a conventional sense but also leads to what is referred to as 'media drenching' where the media becomes constitutive of people's everyday lives (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998).

In recognition of the trends towards omnipresent media imagery and the audience becoming increasingly diffused and fragmented, Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) developed what they refer to as the spectacle/performance paradigm. Whilst there are clear crossovers in their uses of the term, Abercrombie and Longhurst's use of spectacle is different from Debord (1967) in that they do not equate engagement with the spectacle as necessarily passive. In line with the aims of the third generation of audience studies, the spectacle/performance paradigm situates media use as part of wider changing social conditions. It is suggested that people live within a contemporary 'mediascape' where they are constantly engage with information about identity, lifestyle and personal performance (Appadurai,1990; Gauntlett, 2002; Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998; Real, 1996). Rather than being seen as external to it, media audiences should be considered part of the media scape (Appadurai, 1990). As Grossberg (1988:386) explains, 'they [the audience] are shifting constellations located within varying multiple discourses which are never entirely outside the media discourse themselves'.

Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) explain that the media spectacle has entered life in new and important ways. What is significant about this paradigm is that they suggest as people engage more with the spectacle, the distinction between performers and the audience begins to blur significantly. Clear parallels can be drawn between Abercrombie and Longhurst's spectacle performance paradigm and Baudrillard's observations about the dissolution of media culture into everyday life. Baudrillard (1994) suggests that there has been the emersion of the spectator into the spectacle, breaking down the distinction between actor and spectator.

Lash and Lury's work on what they term the global culture industry takes into account the merger of the spectator into the spectacle. They use the term *global*

cultural industry to draw attention to key changes that they argue have impacted on how media is both represented and consumed. Lash and Lury (2007: 4) suggest that:

'Culture is so ubiquitous that it seeps out of the superstructure and comes to infiltrate, and then take over, the infrastructure itself. Culture no longer works-in regard to resistance or domination- primarily as super structure'.

The analysis of power operating in mediated encounters therefore needs to take place at points of media circulation and consumption, and within everyday spaces, rather than at the point of production. In the global culture industry, it is argued that products no longer circulate as identical objects determined by the intentions of their producers, instead they spin out of control and in doing so 'change through transposition, translation, transformation and transmorgrification (Lash and Lury, 2007:5). This clearly implies that media 'objects' become a resource that can be drawn upon and in doing so the object is transformed in some way. In contrast to Adorno and Horkheimers (1979) vision of the culture industry, Lash and Lury view the objects of the global culture industry as indeterminate in their effect. They do however suggest the continued need to consider how power operates. Any understanding of media therefore should take into account what the audience actually do with it.

Beer (2008) and Beer and Penfold-Mounce's (2009) work has been significant in testing the limits of Lash and Lury's model. This work is particularly significant for this thesis given its focus on how individual celebrities can be considered cultural objects that circulate in the same way as other commodity images. It focused on the analysis of particular mediations of pop singer Jarvis Cocker and children's TV star turned singer Miley Cyrus. Beer's work on Jarvis Cocker explored how the range of media, coupled with the interactivity now afforded by new media forms such as social networking, wikis and mash ups allowed the audience to make acquaintance with, and even 'befriend' the star. He was critical however, that whilst ostensibly such developments might be considered evidence of the democratisation of the media, it may hide the reality that power operates in new ways. This debate will be revisited and discussed further later in this chapter. Although Beer and Penfold-Mounce's (2009) study of Miley Cyrus adopted a similar theoretical and methodological approach, it explored a different dimension of consumption. Similar

to studies discussed in Chapter Two that had explored how celebrity contributes to social norms and values, Beer and Penfold-Mounce (2009) provided a discussion of how online sources relating to Miley Cyrus were used to debate issues such as teenage sex. Online discussion forums in this instance provide a space where the audience can debate issues with other interested parties.

Beer (2008) is one of a number of scholars who has stressed the continued need to consider power in the new interactions that are facilitated by technological and media advancements. The complexities associated with these new arrangements might best be summed up by Jenkins' (2006) notion of convergence culture. Convergence is explained as where grassroots and corporate media come together, where the power of the media producer and media consumer play out in unpredictable ways. New media, for Jenkins is like the arrival of an unexpected child in that it has disrupted existing social relations. The part now required of researchers across a number of different disciplines, is to explore the significance of these changes, most notably, the audiences engagement with and use of various forms of media. Convergence is a significant concept for this thesis, since it investigates a number of different examples that represent the merger of grassroots and corporate media. Furthermore, it explores how power is played out at the point of convergence.

Significantly, what Beer's work did in developing Lash and Lury's model, was that it specifically pointed to new media developments and how they contribute to the movement of a media object. The following sections will therefore outline key developments in new media and how they have influenced the study of the audience. As Millington and Wilson (2010: 35) note;

'Changes that have manifested over time in the study of media reception are inseparable from changes to media themselves. The boundaries between media reception and media production are dissolving at breakneck speed with the emergence of so-called "new media" technologies that allow user input in ways previously unimaginable. While this is most evident with Internet communication, Lahti (2003) reminds us how technologies like video games increasingly produce hybrid, or cyborg subjectivities, rendering media consumption an embodied experience more so than ever'.

The study of the Internet in particular, has been influential in driving forward the third generation of audience studies research. The Internet is an important form of communication in contemporary society with almost 1.5 billion users worldwide (Griggs, 2010). What has been referred to as Web 2.0 is often considered to be an updated version of the Web. Coined by Tim O'Reilly in 2005, it was seen to harness collective intelligence, as well as participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006). Users therefore become co-developers of content. Another key feature associated with Web 2.0, is the operation of software above the level of a single device (O' Reilly, 2005). Applications are accessible from any networked interface, from a range of mobile devices anytime and anywhere. Lash (2006) calls this the age of the portal where 'the logic of feed comes to displace the logic of search- the data find you' (2006:580).

Beer (2008:228) has suggested that there are four interrelated types of Web 2.0 application that can be categorised into the following categories; wikis, folksonomies, mashups, and social networking sites. Beer (2008) explains that;

'A *wiki* is an application that draws together open input to form communal projects. The key example is the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia, where anyone can edit and add content. Anything can be added to this wiki provided it may be linked into an existing entry. The result is a vast online literary project that is constantly changing, being updated, edited, content added, and expanded as new entries are linked into the network'.

The second category discussed by Beer was folksononomies. YouTube is an example of a folksonomie, which in this instance is a repository of video clips. Youtube provides a vast archive of video clips that people can upload and classify by tagging them. This enables these archived items to be searched or browsed and retrieved by the audience. (Lash, 2006: 580). Furthermore, the audience can comment on video clips that other people have uploaded. Thirdly, *Mashups*, 'mash together' two available and usually free-to-access data sources. The most common applications tend to use Google maps with other information sources to create 'new cartographies' of particular phenomena (Beer, 2008:228). Finally, social networking is a platform designed to support peer to peer communication, given its significance

as a growing area of study, this will be returned to and discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

According to Cover (2006) interactivity is an important concept which is implicated in the ways in which we can think about authorship, audiences and texts, and allows some considerable reinterpretation of the role and function of audiences in previous, older media forms. Interactivity refers to the process in which the text or its content is affected, re-sequenced, altered, customized or re-narrated in the interactive process of audiencehood (Kiousis, 2002). It is the contention of Bruns (2006) that a digital environment promoting interactivity has fostered a greater capacity and a greater interest by audiences to change, alter and manipulate a text or a textual narrative, to seek co-participation in authorship, and to thus redefine the traditional author-text-audience relationship (Bruns, 2006). The continuation of the mythos of the author into the digital age is one which is now to be located in what Manuel Castells refers to as a 'pluralisation of sources of authority' (Castells,2002: 303).

There is a widespread notion that the Internet has and will continue to blaze the trail in the democratization of intellectual activity and knowledge production. Indeed, there is evidence to support this assertion. A recent wave of popular and scholarly discourse has hailed the arrival of the Web 2.0, marking a new generation of Internet users who share and collaborate on popular social networking sites such as MySpace and user-generated communities such as YouTube and Wikipedia (Beer, 2008; Livingstone, 2008). Grossman (2006) identifies key trends in the Web 2.0 for what he calls 'the global intellectual economy'. Specifically, what has Grossman so excited is the potential for collective intellectual productivity. He goes so far as to call it a media revolution. Grossman, is referring to the change in Internet practices from information-reception to information-production that have opened up further opportunities for the audience to engage in potentially culturally resistant practices (Gane *et al.*, 2007).

Amidst research that has outlined the potential for democracy and productivity in new media, the audience commodity theory has always entailed a contentious proposition that the so-called work of audiences has been effectively subsumed within the capitalist logic of accumulation. A number of scholars have extended and

revised the idea of audience labour in the context of new media environments (Andrejevic, 2006; Cohen, 2008). Their work contributes to the understanding of the ways in which capital seeks to exploit the unacknowledged and voluntary efforts of Internet users as a source of value. Capitalism has been transformed, more complex and more disguised. It is particularly effective since it hides behind what is aiming to challenge it e.g. democratic practices that actually exploit the audience- someone else gains commercially from them (Van Dijck, 2009).

The Internet offers spaces to react and resist, but now, Lash contends, we also find domination here as an active part of what we do (thus taking up and filling the space where resistance formerly took place). Clearly then Lash's power binary is underpinned by the notion that power structures have got closer to us as they move into our everyday communications. Or, as he puts it, 'now domination is through the communication' and communication is 'among us' (2007: 66). Consistent with Foucault's (1979) suggestion about decentred power, rather than power being a dominant presence acting on us, it is instead localised in our communications. Web applications like MySpace and YouTube for instance might be considered increasingly commercial ventures, particularly considering the possible values of the information that they hold, how they are embedded in the routines of the users, and what they know about their collective users (Caraway, 2011). As yet these applications have received little attention with regard to the possibility of their part within new forms of power. Although their work does not consider Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, these are new spaces where similar debates about power and commercialisation might be played out.

The work of Andrejevic (2006) also recognises that although new media offers more participatory opportunities for the audience, to some extent this may be merely a distraction from their exploitation. Using the concept of audience labour, Andrejevic (2007) explores how organisations frame audience interactivity as empowerment, whilst such activity frequently creates data sets that organisations profit from. In highlighting this point, Andrejevic (2007) used Nike ID, a marketing campaign that invited consumers to take on the role of apprentice designers to design their own shoe brand to show how this project whilst masquerading as an opportunity for audience creativity, ultimately served as a data gathering exercise for the corporation.

Furthermore, he points to similar strategies used by television shows that have discussion forums and blogs where fans are encouraged to make comments make suggestions for future episodes, without receiving credit or payment for their contributions (Andrejevic, 2008).

Sport and new media developments

The development of new media, particularly the Internet, can also be considered a particularly significant milestone for the consumption of sport, changing not only the amount of information available, but also the way the audience interact with it, adding another layer to what has been referred to as the media, sport cultural complex (Leonard, 2009; Rowe, 2004). Indeed, the impact of media development on sport has not gone unnoticed within academia. In 2009, a special edition of the Sociology of Sport Journal tackled a range of issues pertaining to new media including; sports gaming, blogging and the creation of Wikis. It is however, given its rapid growth, an area that is grossly under researched.

Leonard (2009) has suggested that the growth and development of new media has altered the relationship between sports fans and teams they support, as well as blurring fan and athlete boundaries. As such, new media has become an increasingly important aspect of sports culture. Everyday fan practices include; visiting websites, contributing to blogs and forums, playing in fantasy leagues and even communicating with their favourite athlete via the various social networking platforms available (Crawford, 2006; Leonard, 2009). Sports consumers can no longer be seen as a mass audience, but rather increasingly constituted and segmented across a range of media platforms (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Hutchins & Rowe, 2010). Although this perhaps presents difficulties for research, in the sense that the audience are fragmented, the recognition of this trend is important in moving scholarly work in this area forward. Millington and Wilson (2010) argue that sport media research would be enhanced by the adoption of multi-method research approaches that are sensitive to contradictions and complexities that exist in media representation and consumption.

The Internet has become a regular place for sport fans to visit to access information about teams, players and other sport products (Real, 2006). Typical sites include statistics, schedules, interactive elements, screen savers and player downloads.

Websites are often seen as a trusted and reliable communication channel and a place to come together on blogs and forums to discuss teams they follow (Giulianotti, 2002; Phua, 2010). Leonard (2009:9) has also discussed the place of sport on YouTube, a new media site where users can upload videos; 'the arrival of YouTube has not only allowed for an endless supply of highlights, with over 155,000 dunk videos, but an array of other sports-related pages. In fact, searching for "sports" and 'athletes' on YouTube brings up 884,000 and 31,700 videos, including sport blooper videos, various commercials and athlete interviews, countless videos sexually objectifying female athletes and other women within the sports world, and various videos documenting the untold stories of various athletes'.

The popularity of Facebook, MySpace and Twitter (numerous athletes have pages on these Web sites) has encouraged work that examines how social networking is used by athletes from a plethora of different sports. Where traditional mass media was characterised by a one way flow of information from the producer to the consumer, new media makes it possible to interact in multilateral communication particularly through social networking applications.

With a huge surge in its popularity, the consideration of social networking site Twitter has been the subject of a great deal of analysis in this area. Twitter is a social networking site allowing users to post micro-blogs or 'tweets' of up to 140 characters (Sanderson, 2008). Like all social networking platforms Twitter is specifically designed to support 'participation, peer to peer conversation, collaboration and community' (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Sites also allow users upload photographs, descriptions, personal histories, preferences, lists of friends and blogs (Beer, 2008). Users of social network sites can also create user groups, meet people and make friends as well as communicate with people they know in the 'real' world (Livingstone, 2008). This clearly provides a challenge to the decline of connectedness that is associated with contemporary society and particularly engagement with technology.

Unlike other sites such as Facebook where users put in a friend request that requires an acceptance, most celebrity Twitter pages are open access and users sign up to follow someone's twitter feed (Murthy, 2012). This can be restricted however most people choose to keep their profile public. The profile page effectively acts as a live

'news' feed displaying Tweets from both the user as well as anyone they are following (Murthy, 2011). Whilst users can decide whose messages they wish to receive, they do not have full control over who can receive the messages that they post. The increasingly common practice of retweeting or reposting the original message can introduce new and sometimes unintended audiences (Marwick and Boyd, 2010).

For the audience, social networking sites allow seemingly direct communication with the athlete rendering communication social, rather than para-social (Beer, 2008). Cromwell (2009) illustrates this shift through the example of avid Tweeter, Lance Armstrong's invitation to his twitter followers to join him for a bike ride in Dublin resulting in over 1000 people turning up to join him (Cromwell, 2009). Developing the work of Pahl (2000), technological changes such as social networking might also have implications for the way friendships, relationships and even community are defined.

For athletes, an additional function of social networking sites might be that they provide a platform for self-presentation, allowing stars to break news to the audience on their own terms. They have also been used to counter unfavourable representations, usually within mainstream media (Sanderson, 2008). This has implications for more traditional mechanisms of media reporting that use a 'middleman' to report stories. One consequence of this shift, has been the change in the way reporters access material for their stories. Rather than gaining interviews in a traditional sense, social media is frequently trawled through to find something to generate a story (Lebel and Danylchuk, 2012).

Social networking also provides a unique communication channel for athletes who do not receive extensive mainstream media coverage allowing them to connect with their fans through alternative means. Research into the content of athletes posting on Twitter, indicates that postings may relate to a range of issues including, personal life, business life, relating to sport, other sports or athletes, responding to fans, and comments on other media for example, television shows (Frederick, *et al.*, 2012). It was suggested in the previous chapter that it might be the fact that this type of communication resembles more day to day interactions. The tendency in mainstream media for providing spectacular representations of athletes and intense scrutiny into

their private lives arguably makes more mundane forms of communication special, since it hints at the real person behind the public face (Pogue, 2009; Song, 2010).

However, issues have been raised about appropriateness of athlete disclosures in these un-managed spaces (Sanderson 2011). This debate was also a concern for Miller *et al.,* (2010) who pointed to the permanent nature of postings on social networking sites. Their study indicated that college athletes may harm their future careers through the posting of semi-nude pictures, discussions around sexual activity, derogatory comments about employers and racist commentary. It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that sports organisations have increasingly sought to control athletes' online activities.

The study of social networking has highlighted complex battle between the individual rights of athletes to express themselves, and sports leagues and clubs attempt to control the athlete, keeping scandal out the news and protecting their image. There have been attempts by organisations to ban, curb and control athletes' use of social networking. Pandaram (2009) suggests that the nature of professional sport requires a degree of secrecy around tactics and game plans, therefore, to make this information public can potentially cause a disadvantage. With the growth in athletes' use of social networking, team media policies increasingly have to take these new forms of media into account. Athletes' use of social networking provides a conundrum for sports organisations. On the one hand, it fosters closeness and fan identification, resulting in loyal behaviours, including attendance of games and buying merchandise, however, it increases the potential for controversial content since they have little control in filtering what athletes are posting (Dees, Bennett and Villegas, 2008).

In addition, studies of Twitter can be considered significant in that they have acknowledged some of the potentially negative sides of people's engagement online. The term 'flaming' has been used to explain that individuals are more likely to engage in critical messages or inflammatory remarks online than in face-to face situations (Cosentio, 1994; O'Sullivan and Flanagin, 2003).

Leonard (2009:10) has identified a number of significant gaps in the literature on sport and new media and made suggestions of directions of future scholarship. Leonard argued that future work should 'consider the ways in which contemporary

sporting cultures are shaped by user-generated content, how athletes are using these new media technologies, as well as how traditional media outlets are utilizing these technologies'. The current thesis aims to address these issues, with a specific focus on new media associated with football cultures. Moreover, additional research is needed on fan usage in terms of how mediated representations and consumed narratives are increasingly produced by "fans" as well as well as more formal mechanisms. Again, this is an area that is addressed in the thesis.

Conclusions

It is clear from the studies presented in chapter that the academic study of the audience has developed radically over the past 50 years, moving from treating the audience as constituted of passive dupes, to exploring how engagement with media becomes embedded in the practices of everyday life. Crucially, these studies have cemented the need consider audience agency and acknowledged that media may not always be consumed in the way intended by its producers. Yet it is also clear from reading the literature that it is important not to fall into the trap however of dismissing the continued relevance of media power.

In critically exploring the literature, it has been suggested throughout this chapter, that the audience constitutes an important area of study, particularly with the development of media technologies that arguably allow greater levels of interactivity and potential for resistant practices than previously possible.

 The present thesis aims to answer a call for further academic work in the area of new media and sporting cultures, in this particular instance, football culture (Leonard, 2009). It explores how the audience engage with football online as well as how players represent themselves and transform themselves into commodity form through spaces such as Twitter.

In this regard, a further aim of the thesis is to address Leonard's (2009) suggestion that there is a need to consider and analyse fan usage in terms of how mediated representations and consumed narratives are increasingly produced by "fans" as well as well as more formal mechanisms

It is not the contention of the thesis that new media is wholly democratic nor wholly a new and more sophisticated mechanism of domination. Rather it seeks to explore how the relationship between power and resistance are played out across various online sites as well as through social interactions.

In order to do this, the approach will be influenced heavily by the third generation of media studies that have been concerned with the place of media in everyday life and the changing producer/consumer relationship. It will also consider the audience as a diffused audience making the assumption that media does not exist separately to everyday life. This will also take into account how media is drawn on to constitute social performances.

In line with suggestions made within the third generation studies, the thesis will explore the changing dynamic of production, circulation and reception particularly to take into account how the audience use images and texts associated with football celebrity as a cultural resource. Through the types of sources selected it also aims to take into account both casual and more intense forms of media consumption associated with fandom. It will also, through media analysis, identify trends in football celebrity representation in both the contact of corporate media such as newspapers and also how this is interpreted and used by the audience.

Chapter Four- Researching Football Celebrity: Theory, Practice and Other Challenges Along the Way

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodological and research methods framework used to gather data for the thesis. It also aims to highlight in critical detail, the philosophical and ethical issues that arise when exploring a concept as elusive as celebrity (Cashmore and Parker, 2003). Integral to this chapter is an overview of the 'research journey' which took several twists and turns as the thesis progressed. The first part of the chapter outlines how the focus of the study changed in order to take into account new forms of media that have arguably impacted significantly on celebrity culture and particularly the way in which the audience interact with it. In line with the suggestions made earlier in the thesis, it also discusses the methodological implications for considering football celebrity as a commodity, a mediated object that takes on different meanings and significance across a multifarious mediascape (Lash and Lury, 2007).

Beer and Penfold-Mounce (2009) refer to the transitory nature of the celebrity commodity and the need to take this into account when trying to explore it sociologically. He argues that to try and pin down laws and categories, at least in a conventional sense, to something like celebrity misses the point of its contingent nature. For this thesis, acknowledging the ambivalent nature of celebrity meant rethinking the way in which football celebrity could be explored. Furthermore, treating celebrity in this way had implications for epistemological assumptions underpinning the analysis. A particularly pertinent aspect of this epistemological position was acknowledging upfront, that the thesis was not aiming to uncover the *truth* about celebrity by revealing its inner essence or true nature through the research findings in a positivistic sense. Rather, it aimed to explore the discourses surrounding football celebrity interpretation and representation, and if and how they were transformed through processes of consumption (Walton, 2004). It will be suggested that although more traditional methods associated with a positivist epistemological framework have offered some useful insights into celebrity culture, they lack the adequate flexibility to reflect to the wide variety of interactions it elucidates.

This issue has become more apparent amidst new media developments, that have changed the ways in which the celebrity image is represented, circulated and consumed. The contemporary mediascape is changing and the means of communicating and consuming ideas have been affected by these changes (Turner, 2010). It is not that the 'patterns of the dissemination of ideas have become defunct, rather it is to say that new media resources have integrated themselves into such networks and have consequently remediated the flow of ideas' (Allen-Robertson and Beer, 2010: 530). In recognising the consequences of this shift, Han (2010:203) suggests, 'new media technologies are not so much the catalysts for the proliferation of a global knowledge society but, in fact, are responsible for the queering of modernist conceptions of knowledge, including its circulation, production, and functionality'. This is consistent with suggestions made in Chapter Three, that knowledge is now produced and circulated at a number of levels, leading to what Castell's (1997) has referred to as the pluralisation of sources of authority.

The chapter moves on to outline the method of object tracking, a framework developed by Lash and Lury (2007) to explore how mediated objects transform across different forms of media. It also takes into account shifting and more complex power dynamics between the media producers and the audience. Although Lash and Lury's work does not consider celebrity, their framework has subsequently been adopted by Beer (2008) and Beer and Penfold-Mounce (2009), to explore the mediation and consumption of particular celebrity figures. As it will be demonstrated, in order to capture football celebrity's movement across a diverse mediascape, a range of media resources, both corporate and grassroots, were selected and analysed. In line with viewing media consumption as embedded in the practices of everyday life, semi-structured focus groups were also conducted to explore the intersection between the mediascape and socio-scape (Lash, 2002; Lash and Lury, 2007). Across all the analysis, a key objective was to explore how power is played out, and whether interactions with the mediated resource of football celebrity could be considered a form of social resistance to dominant ideologies, especially those embedded in football culture (Lash, 2007).

Research Journey

Initially, the thesis aimed to explore how football celebrity was consumed by a young audience and how talk about celebrity was embedded in their everyday lives. This aimed to explore how they actually used football celebrity as a resource, beyond more conventional assumptions that players necessarily inspire and motivate. Weiss (1996) intimated that the convergence of sport hero and celebrity in the age of mass media raises questions about the social role of sports stars in contemporary society. This focus has however has received little attention to date, at least in an empirical sense. Although a number of studies have acknowledged the changing focus in celebrity representation, they have rarely considered what the consequences of this are for its consumption.

At the time of starting the PhD, there had been some suggestions in the literature that football celebrity could be considered a cultural resource, and therefore something to be drawn on to help people make sense of their everyday lives. Gill Lines' (2001, 2002) work for example, explored how young people interpreted and negotiated often contradictory readings around particular sports celebrities, including footballers, who were characteristically represented as heroes, villains or fools. Significantly, for the purpose of the thesis, her work moved debates about the cultural function of football celebrity forward, since it moved beyond the assumption that players such be considered as heroes or role models in a conventional sense (Hughson, 2009). Furthermore, it challenged the assumption that negative behaviour is likely to be imitated by what are often perceived to be 'vulnerable youth'. This suggested that rather than adopting behaviourist assumptions that engagement with football celebrity will result in a particular outcome, interactions need to be considered more nuanced, recognising a more complex interplay between structure and agency.

Another study by Weiss (1996) had also considered the social significance of sports celebrity that went beyond straight forward imitation or role modelling. For Weiss, the sport celebrity is a multifunctional mediated resource, serving as a form of consumer aspiration and vicarious excitement. Whilst Weiss's research paper relied on illustrative data to highlight the potential for research in this area, it was unique in the sense that it sought to show how concepts from audience studies could be used to

explore a wide range of interactions, something not previously considered in sport sociology. Most notably, Weiss identified how there is an increase in the potential for what he termed 'pseudo-social' interactions as sport and its performers become more socially significant and their images have become part of the cultural mainstream. This study hinted at the changing relationship between the audience and celebrity performer, a trend which has arguably been exasperated with developments in new media (Leonard, 2009).

The studies highlighted above suggested that, as the nature of coverage of football celebrity has changed, the diversity of representations are likely to impact on the variety of ways it is drawn upon. This was seen as a significant gap within the area of study, particularly since many papers exploring the issue of sports celebrity had to date avoided any sort of empirical research, perhaps due to methodological difficulties (Wilson, 2007). This might be best illustrated through psychoanalytical interpretations of celebrity that have sought to offer explanations that take into account the complexities of celebrity interaction, but offer little in terms of empirical evidence to back up their assertions (Eagleton, 2005; Phillips, 2006; Rose, 2003).

Time for a change of direction

It took quite some time to acknowledge that the main challenge of the thesis was that of chasing a moving target and hence ever changing subject matter. This raised the pressing problem of actually being able to get to grips with, or stay on top of what is happening in celebrity culture as the information sources about it expand and diversify. As Beer and Penfold-Mounce (2009) have previously suggested, keeping up with, and getting an understanding of celebrity culture, as a defining aspect of contemporary culture more generally, is now far more difficult as we consider the ubiquity, ambiguity, mobility and vastness of the information with which we are faced. It is notable that since starting the PhD, there have been numerous developments in media technology, most notably the rise in popularity of the Internet, which has resulted in shifting forms of representation, as well as new ways to engage with and consume football celebrity images (Leonard, 2009; Turner, 2010). Any consideration of mediated culture, including celebrity, therefore needs to acknowledge the audience's use of the Internet as part of regular media consumption and everyday experience (Leonard, 2009). As it was previously suggested in Chapter

Three, the movement toward what is often described as Web 2.0 is usually understood as a large-scale shift toward a participatory and collaborative version of the Internet, where users are able to get involved and create content. As things stand to date however, there have been few attempts to explore how new forms of power play out in this context of apparent 'empowerment' and 'democratization' (Beer and Penfold-Mounce, 2009). This gap was therefore seen as an opportunity to contribute to research in this area.

With the recognition of the central role of the media and other cultural intermediaries in creating the celebrity commodity, I was also forced to ponder the question of how I was going to interpret and define celebrity within the thesis. Although many definitions allude to the idea that it refers to a human being with public visibility and high status, an alternative was to view the celebrity as the commodification of the human form, a product of the global culture industry that circulates as a commodity image (Cashmore, 2006; Rojek, 2001). Rather than focus on the corporeal celebrity figure, this approach considers celebrity as a series of mediated images and representations that are available for the audience to draw on in a multiplicity of different ways (Cashmore and Parker, 2003; Walton, 2004). Although it has been consistently suggested in the literature that the focus on celebrity as a cultural resource is a significant gap in the literature, the difficulties of actually doing this methodologically have arguably stifled work in this area.

Epistemologically, I adopted what might be broadly termed an anti-positivist approach to the study, in the sense that the thesis did not aim to uncover the 'truth' of football celebrity. In line with suggestions made by Cashmore (2002) and Walton (2004) in particular, I believe that there is no truth to be found, only multiple layers of discourse that are played out in images, representations and interpretations of celebrity.

Although 'scientific' approaches underpinned by positivistic assumptions about real, concrete phenomena and the need to reveal laws that explain celebrity phenomena continue to be seen as 'best practice' in research terms, such methodologies are not particularly effective in illuminating the complexities of celebrity culture, let alone exploring the contradictions in production, representation as well as consumption (Whannel, 2003). Initially however, despite recognising that conventional methods

did not provide the tools needed for the job of research, I was acutely aware that there is a continued expectation within academia to follow a rigorous methodology which is often perceived as the requisite for credible social science research. Blackshaw (2003) has argued that this reflects assumptions about knowledge, both in terms of what is privileged and how it is constructed. One of the aims of this thesis was to develop a more contingent view of knowledge construction, as well as a critical interrogation of power played out through the representation and consumption of football celebrity. This was particularly to acknowledge the potential for audience agency and how 'knowledge' and interpretations of the media often emerge in ways that were un-intended by the producer (Fiske, 1994).

Given the suggested change in relations between the audience and the media presented in Chapter Three, it was considered important to explore football celebrity as part of a wider mediascape (Appadurai, 1990). As it was suggested in Chapter Three, the third generation of audience studies acknowledges the need to think about the 'audience' alongside its consumption of media, it therefore considers the complexities inherent in media production and consumption, treating them as increasingly intertwined rather than separate entities (Crawford, 2004). The primary aim within these studies is to explore media culture as part and parcel of everyday experience, something that is embodied, rather than something that exists externally to 'reality' (Deleuze, 1994; Tomlinson, 2002). The prominent new media theorist Scott Lash (2007) has spoken of what he describes as 'new media ontology'. This is a term designed to capture a shift toward forms of living, in which information becomes active in shaping lifestyles and environments. Crucially, in line with suggestions within the third generation of audience studies, this recognises that the contemporary mediascape also consists of the people who make, circulate and consume the object (Burrows, 2009).

Object tracking

To fully understand and explore contemporary media culture and its place in our lives, Real (1996) argues for selecting specific cultural products and staying close to the texts, narratives and interpretations of actual people. Lash and Lury (2007) employed this philosophy in the development of a methodology of object tracking. They describe their approach in the following terms; 'the method we adopted from

the start of the project was to 'follow the objects' self-consciously developing sociology of the object'. This they suggest, involves finding out as much as possible about the object, in different places and at different times. This involves analysis of the object at varying points in the mediascape. For instance, Beer (2008) tracked the mediated Jarvis Cocker cross Wikipedia, YouTube and MySpace, using media analysis to identify themes and trends at each point. The central premise of such a method and using multiple points of analysis , rather than a conventional newspaper analysis for example, is that it treats the object as mobile and contingent rather than fixed and stable. The contingency afforded by this approach was seen as useful for the study of football celebrity, since it arguably provides more flexibility than conventional methods. It also acknowledges that what we are likely to find out about objects, in this instance football celebrity, is that they change and transform as they move across the mediascape.

Lash and Lury's (2007:8) preliminary work focused on seven 'products of the global culture industry that were chosen for their 'high level of visibility' and 'potentially long and varied trajectories'. The seven objects they chose to follow could be considered as a subset of those produced by what they termed the global culture industry. These objects included Toy Story, Wallace and Gromit, Euro 96 and Swatch. In developing their research around the aforementioned objects, Lash and Lury (2007:35) aimed to address questions such as, 'what are the key components of the story?', 'who are the central figures?','what are the key moments?' And 'how does the object transform from context to context?'. Although their work did not focus on online media, it might be argued that new digital footprints left by the audience's participation online, leaves traces in the mediascape that can be followed (Mackenzie, 2006:73). Moreover, the mobility of ideas in the contemporary mediascape is re-shaped more radically than would have been previously possible as it passes through the hands of online participants (Webber, 2009). It was suggested in Chapter Three that the media culture we live in today might be best described by Jenkins' (2006) notion of convergence, a concept that recognises the intersection of corporate and grassroots media and the increasingly unpredictable power dynamics between producers and consumers of media content. This thesis explores this concept of convergence in relation to football celebrity, thereby adding to the literature that explores the significance of these changes empirically.

Tracking the object does not privilege or focus exclusively on one moment in the object's life, for example, its production, circulation, publicity, advertising and reception (Lury, 1993). As suggested earlier in the thesis, a similar approach was adopted by Crawfords (2004) work on sports consumption, in that he aimed to move away from separating out production circulation and consumption suggesting that it is an increasingly more complex process than this. Lash and Lury (2007) suggest that tracking mediated objects can help understand the relation between culture and capitalism in the contemporary era (Hayles, 2007). Through tracking the object, it is possible to explore how power is played out in more complex ways between the producers and consumers. Power is therefore still viewed as relevant, although transformed in a digital age (Lash and Lury, 2007). Since this thesis aimed to explore football celebrity as a mediated commodity, and hence another product of the global culture industry, an overarching aim was to explore a range of representations to explore to what extent they reflected or resisted dominant ideologies associated with football celebrity and the wider media and consumer society.

In the context of the current thesis, the method of tracking the object allows the exploration of the types of narratives being constructed about football celebrity and how they are consumed, whilst methodologically also demonstrating how as an object football celebrity can be followed or tracked using contemporary media (Beer, 2008, Beer and Penfold-Mounce, 2009; Whannel, 2001). Although Lash and Lury used inanimate objects in their work, Beer (2008) has previously drawn upon and used the approach to offer new insights into celebrity culture. Crucial to Beer (2008) and Beer and Penfold Mounce's (2009) work was that it paid particular attention to transformations that occurred across Web 2.0 applications including Wikis, social networking sites and online discussion forums. Beer also drew on user generated content to use as a data set to draw information for sociological analysis, something that was seen as important for tracking football celebrity in this thesis.

Another difference with Beer's approach was that he recognised that in Web 2.0, following an object does not have to be a linear process. Beer (2008) suggests that objects are blurred with their own pasts, presents and futures overlapping. His approach was therefore not longitudinal in the way that Lash and Lury approached their objects. In recognition of the non linear nature of media, Savage and Burrows

(2007) propose therefore that sociology move towards a descriptive model based on critical reporting of new digitalisations using the vast number of transactional data sets now in electronic circulation.

Since the thesis had originally set out using focus groups to explore the audience's interpretation of media it used the responses from this, as a starting point for tracking football celebrity in the media. Based on several key themes identified in the coding process: (moral conduct both on and off the pitch; lifestyle and privilege; pleasure in the fall; masculinity and identification) searches were then made to see how the issues highlight in the focus groups were represented and transformed across various forms of media; predominantly from online sources. The use of online sources allowed further exploration of consumption of football celebrity through comments sections, fan fiction and forums. Crucially, the exploration of online media drew on both mainstream sites as well as those considered grass roots media and more associated with fan activities (Jenkins, 2006). Deliberately diverse sources were chosen to explore the scope of football celebrity as a resource and its malleability as it moves across the mediascape, allowing it to be transformed in a multitude of different way.

Given the two distinct stages in the research process, the following section will be split to reflect this. The first part will cover the process undertaken for the focus group,s as well as identifying the themes that emerged. It will then outline the online methods and analysis, including an overview and justification for the sites that were explored.

Focus groups

The focus groups sessions were conducted in May 2010. The study used 20 participants aged between 16 and 21 who were split into four focus groups to ensure that group size was manageable (Wilkinson, 2011). This allowed for the development of a group dynamic but ensured that running the session was manageable. Bloor *et al*,. (2001) have suggested that since the aim of the focus group is to facilitate discussion, it is important to consider the numbers within the groups. It has been suggested that with too many in the group some individuals are likely to be left out of the conversation, with dominant characters tending to impress their views at the expense of other people's contributions (Gilbert, 2001; Robson, 2002). It was

therefore important during the focus group session, to manage the discussion effectively, particularly to ensure that one person did not dominate proceedings (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

All the participants for the interview and focus groups were Sports Studies students studying at Further Education colleges in North Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire. A combination of both convenience and purposive sampling was used, since it is assumed that at least to some extent the students had prior knowledge of football celebrity and they were a group to which the researcher had easy access to through existing relationships with the college. Bird (2003) has suggested that when face to face methods are to be utilised, building up rapport with the participants can be an important part of the research process. The fact that this sample allowed the research to be conducted over a relatively short space of time and there was an established researcher, participant relationship at the outset was deemed to be worth the risk of any potential drawbacks (Walsh, 1998). In this instance, where there was an established power dynamic between the researcher and the group, the focus group was therefore deemed to be a less intimidating proposition than one to one interviews (Back, 2004).

The focus groups were relatively homogenous since the participants were of similar ages, and socio-economic backgrounds, additionally; all members of the group knew each other. This aimed to address that the participants may not be comfortable talking about potentially sensitive topics with strangers, or people dramatically different from their usual friendship circle (Gobo, 2008). Three out of the four focus groups were mixed in terms of gender, although not always an equal split. A younger age group was initially chosen for the study since it has been previously suggested that younger people tend to have a greater interest in celebrity (Hopkins, 2002; Vemoral and Vemoral, 1985). It may also be more commonly accepted in society for younger people to acknowledge an interest in celebrity without facing ridicule (Hopkins, 2002). The focus on one particular age band however is likely to have limited the range of responses and ways in which football celebrity was used (DeBacker, 2007).

All the focus groups were conducted in a classroom setting ensuring a familiar and quiet environment for discussions to take place. A Dictaphone was used to record

each of the focus group sessions. This is seen as standard practice in such settings, to ensure that conversations are recorded accurately during the transcribing process (Heath *et al.*, 2010). The quiet environment with very little back ground noise, also aided the transcribing process, particularly in terms of differentiating between the responses of the different participants. The participants were briefed of the nature of the research and they were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. They were also assured that all the information obtained would be used strictly for research purposes and that pseudonyms would be used in the write up of the research to keep their identities anonymous (Israel and Hay, 2006).

Since it has been consistently suggested in the literature that celebrity is often used in a social setting, for example, through the process of gossip, focus group sessions were conducted to take into account the social dimension of celebrity (DeBacker, 2007). The focus groups sessions were semi structured to allow the flow of conversation as much as possible. The questions were developed to try and ensure the participants were not led to provide particular answers. Semi-structured interviews give access to peoples meaning endowed capacities and produces rich, deep data that come in the form of natural language (Bird, 2003). The interviewer is also free to probe further in order to follow avenues that may be of interest.

Participants were encouraged to discuss issues brought up by other members of the group, thus allowing for debates not possible in a one on one interview setting. Focus groups yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, attitudes and feeling and can therefore be considered useful for gaining access to well-rehearsed shared public knowledge (Mason, 2002). This approach was incorporated to recognise that whist celebrity stories are a way in which people make sense of their own worlds, it is also used as a way people interact with each other and become incorporated into social groups (Ang, 1985).

Although focus groups aim as much as possible to mimic everyday social interaction, participants are aware that they are being researched and are likely to modify their behaviour and answers accordingly. Barbour (2007) has also pointed to the limitations of using focus groups to tackle potentially sensitive issues. Given the potential stigma attached to an intense interest in celebrity, the focus group may not

have allowed access to answers that identified deeper levels of engagement (Rose, 2003).

Following the completion of the focus group sessions, recordings were transcribed. Silverman (1989:62) has suggested that researchers can expect 'if only at a subconscious level, to find concepts staring at them in the face or leaping out at them from the data, even at this early stage analysis has started to occur'. The transcripts from the focus groups were read and coded using open codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). After the completion of the initial coding exercise, a second read through was conducted so that common themes could be identified allowing data to be grouped together into axial codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Themes identified in this process were moral conduct (on and off the pitch), lifestyle and privilege, pleasure in the fall, masculinity and identification. These themes were used subsequently in the trawl for online resources (Whannel, 2001).

One weakness of the use of focus group data within the thesis was that it was collected prior to the growth in popularity of social networking sites such as Twitter. Discussions within the focus groups therefore did not fully manage to interrogate the interplay between social media and other areas of everyday life. The decision was made to include the data despite this weakness and to make links between mainstream media content available at the time of data collection and the focus group discussions. If this aspect of the thesis was to be repeated, the link between interactions on social media and face to face discussions would be worthy of exploration. In line with the third generation of audience studies, future work in this area could investigate the interactive nature of consumption in both online and offline environments. It would also illuminate the different forms of interactivity and productivity associated with new media formats.

Prior to the collection of data, all participants were given a participant information sheet and consent form, informing them of the nature of the research and advising that they could withdraw from the process at any time. In order to conform to data protection recommendations, the participants were reassured that only the primary researcher and the supervision team would have access to focus group transcripts and any personal data contained on the consent form. In the write up of the research, pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Researching online

It was suggested previously in the chapter that during the course of the thesis the Internet went through some significant developments potentially changing the way football celebrity is consumed. With this in mind some further questions became relevant to the study, including;

- How is football celebrity used as a resource in new media environments?

- To what extent can the use of football celebrity new media spaces be seen as resistant?

- Has new media changed the types of interactions that occur with football celebrity?

As the line between physical and electronic social environments becomes increasingly blurred, scholars interested in conducting research on virtual sites or with online communities must adapt traditional research methods to these settings (Livingstone, 2004). The practice of researching messages sent to Internet-based forums has been examined in broader online research often referred to as 'netnography' (Kozinets, 1998). However, in more recent times research into what are commonly referred to as computer mediated communication (CMC) has expanded considerably, seeing such forums grouped along with blogs, chat rooms, and social networking sites (McKee and Porter, 2009). The research process that has been referred to as '*list mining*' involves the collection of data from the sites, usually in the form of comments or posts and subsequently analysing these posts using a content analysis approach (Till, 2006: 939). Whilst this technique has been predominantly used thus far in medical and health related fields (Eysenbach and Till, 2001), Bird (2003) highlighted the potential for expanding into media studies through her use of list mining from discussion boards. Griggs (2010) has also suggested that list mining allows the researcher to identify the norms and values of a particular online community through the exploration of posts.

For this thesis, data was mined from online newspapers accessed via *Proquest*; social networking site *Twitter*; slash fiction fan site, *Not Just a Game*; The Secret Footballer column in *The Guardian* and female fan site and football blog; *Kickette*. These sites were purposely selected to look at different types of engagement with football celebrity, as well as encompassing a variety of new media platforms which

in turn influences the interactions that are likely to occur (Beer, 2008). Media analysis now encompasses various kinds of communication including the analysis of adverts, newspapers and more recently internet sites. It is an effective method for analysing themes and trends within media representation. In line with one of the aims of the thesis, it also allows power to be explored. Each of the sites highlighted above was mined for a twelve month period (specific parameters are identified in the section below). It was deemed that a twelve month period would be sufficient to gain a representative sample of the information included on the sites, and also, where relevant, the types of interactions that occur.

The following subsections outline the specific parameters for data collection for each of the forms of media used in the thesis.

Twitter

Data were extracted from the *Twitter* profiles of 4 high profile football celebrity figures (total of 1392 tweets). The players' profiles that were selected were Wayne Rooney, Joey Barton, Rio Ferdinand and Michael Owen. Data were collected between the 1st of January 2012 and the 31st of December 2012. These players were selected since they were featured in the top ten players that use Twitter in a Sky Sports survey. The extraction of data included all the tweets from the players during this time period. Responses from followers were also extracted, to explore specifically the types of interactions that occur on *Twitter*. Previous work outside the study of football had used similar techniques of harvesting data to explore posts communicated via *Twitter* (Pegoraro, 2010). This has involved collecting *tweets* from the feeds of specific users and subsequently subjecting them to forms of media analysis (Lebel and Danylchuck, 2012). Directed content analysis was utilised, using codes develop previously by Hambrick *et al.* (2010), and these were sport, fandom, entertainment and interaction (Hseih and Shannon, 2005).

Online newspapers

Online newspapers were used specifically to explore how stories in mainstream media fitted with the way scandal was discussed by the focus groups. A search on the Proquest newspaper database was used to identify articles that had highlighted stories about Ashley Cole and John Terry. Stories about these two particular players were

chosen because they were a central focus of discussion during the focus group sessions. Given the timeframe in which these incidences occurred, the search parameters were between 1st of January 2010 and 31st of December 2010. In order to offer a representative spread of both broadsheet and tabloid coverage, the newspapers were filtered to include; The Telegraph, The Times, The Sun and The Mirror. Search terms used were 'football scandal', 'John Terry scandal' and 'Ashley Cole scandal'.

Each of the 26 articles was read to identify common themes as well as exploring how the narratives fitted with the focus group discussions. On the second read through, data extracts were assigned to five axial codes. These were public/private, betrayal, football culture, punishment and sponsorship. The discussion around each of these themes was linked with the focus group data to form the basis of Chapter Five.

YouTube

YouTube was accessed to explore how the stories relating to Ashley Cole and John Terry were manipulated by the audience and transformed into new resources. In keeping with the dates highlighted above, searches were restricted to 2010. Leonard (2009) had previously suggested that YouTube provides a wealth of sport related resources that have been 'produced' and uploaded by a potentially active and critical audience. To date however data, in the form of videos from YouTube has not been used and analysed empirically in sport related or celebrity studies.

Not just a Game

Not Just a Game is a fan site dedicated to the creation of slash fiction about prominent football players. As it was suggested in Chapter Three, slash fiction has been viewed as significant for its potential to disrupt cultural norms through stories about players engaging in homosexual encounters and relationships. Although not considered in the sport literature to date, it is an area of interest in wider fan and audience studies, particularly due to the fact it has been considered an activity that provides a challenge to notions of hegemonic masculinity. Data was extracted from the site between the 1st of January 2011 and the 31st of December 2011. Typical slash fiction sites available on the Internet are basic online forums with unrestricted public access. Messages or stories (usually referred to as chapters) have a basic index

allowing the viewer to search for a particular aspect such as player or author. The site used for analysis in this study was '*Not just a Game*' which appears to be a typical and popular site and features highly across Internet search engines. At the time of writing, it had 532 members, containing 1723 chapters with a total word count of 2275535 written by a total of 120 authors.

Given the UK focus of the study, the stories selected were narrowed down to those featuring Premiership players and teams. Stories were also filtered by rating, with those receiving the highest rating (24+) being selected for analysis. It was assumed that those with a higher rating were the stories that were privileged within this particular slash community. This allowed for the exploration of themes within the stories that were particularly valued.

These stories were harvested and collated into a single document. The data were analysed using open coding to identify prominent themes within the stories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). After a second read through of the data the themes were grouped together into axial codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). By the end of the process, four robust axial codes or themes were developed – queer space, hierarchy, strictly casual and sexual violence. These themes form the basis of the Chapter Six.

Kickette

Kickette was selected for analysis since it is a site that is written by women, for a predominantly female readership. A number of scholars have suggested that females are not treated as legitimate fans and are often accused of lusting after the players. *Kickette* brazenly declares itself as a space for women who enjoy the players as much as the game. Therefore, at least ostensibly, the site provides a forum for the gaze to be turned on males, as they are sexualised and scrutinised for the females' pleasure. Jenkins (1992) has previously suggested that fan spaces allow fans to explore the elements of media that are of particular interest to them. Fan sites also provide opportunities for groups to share their object of fandom with those of a similar interest. Data were collected from the *Kickette* fan site between 1st of January 2011 and 31st of December 2011. In total 79 articles were analysed. All the articles and images were copied into a single document.

The data were analysed using open coding to identify prominent themes within the articles and fan comments (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). After a second read through of the data the themes were grouped together into axial codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The themes identified were, sexualisation,WAGs and fashion. Since it had been suggested previously that fan sites frequently use mainstream media material as a resource, the images that were used to stimulate discussion on the site were also analysed to identify prominent themes.

Secret Footballer column

It was suggested in Chapter Two that the football industry has become heavily guarded, particularly when it comes to protecting its commercial image. As the audience have become aware of the manufactured and stage managed nature of the game, an insider and unguarded perspective has arguably become more valued. The Secret footballer is a column in *The Guardian* written by a current premiership player that claims to offer backstage glimpses into the game and what life is really like for a player. All articles from *The Guardian* Newspaper column, The Secret Footballer were collected between January 2012 and 31st December 2012. The eighteen articles that were extracted were copied into a single document and read through. The articles were analysed using open coding to identify prominent themes. After a second read through of the data the themes were grouped together into axial codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The themes that emerged after coding were, privilege, behind the mask and media intrusion.

Being Liverpool

In Lash and Lury's (2007) work they stressed that tracking the object should include a variety of media including televisual media in the form of films and documentaries. Although this type of media is perhaps more associated with 'old media' and therefore not interactive, the blurring of different types of technology mean that people can engage with films and documentaries streamed online and view them on a wide range of devices including phones and tablets (Osmond and Phillips, 2011). Given the presence of ideologies contained within all kinds of media, the analysis of film and documentary provides another area of rich analysis. Smith and Beal (2007) had previously used the analysis of the television show MTV Cribs to examine how masculinity and celebrity were put on display, the inclusion of Being Liverpool

within the analysis aimed to investigate similar discourses with a specific focus on football culture in the UK. Furthermore, considering football through the lens of the Global Culture Industry, it aimed to identify strategies that made the game and club more appealing to a worldwide audience. All episodes were viewed and initial themes were identified. During the second viewing of the documentary, further themes were added and some existing codes amended. The codes identified were leadership; backstage; authenticity; history ordinary versus extraordinary; family; the role of women and foreign players. A third viewing of the documentary took place to ensure that the list of themes reflected the content.

Ethical considerations for researching online

Despite the obvious potential for researching online, it has however been acknowledged that there are several issues with the approach. Sandvoss (2005) for example has highlighted how members of fan communities may be particularly hostile to having their activities analysed, particularly by an outsider. Although when people post online they are aware it will be seen by others, people would not assume their comments would be collected and analysed for research purposes. Knowledge of the researcher would potentially influence future communications and possibly damage a community (Sanders, 2005). However it has been posited that if social researchers became known as 'snoopers' who deceive people as a matter of professional course, the image of work would be adversely affected (Bryman, 2008: 123). Griggs (2010:87) points out however that The British Sociological Association- 'ethical standards for Internet research are not well developed as yet therefore members who carry out research online should ensure that they are familiar with on-going debates on the ethics of Internet research'.

Furthermore, Eysenbach and Till (2001:103) highlight that such research raises new issues in research ethics, particularly concerning informed consent and privacy of research subjects, as the borders between public and private spaces are sometimes blurred. However early research in this field suggests 'not necessary to explicitly seek permission for recording and analysing publicly posted messages shares many similarities with conducting research in a library or other public area, where observers are not necessarily expected to obtain informed consent from all present' (Smith, 2004:230). In addition, 'the archived responses of individuals may be

construed to be matters of public record, and few ethical considerations apply when the records of these responses are used in research' (Pace and Livingston, 2005:35).

Though the use of these online messages may not require informed consent, it does perhaps blur notions of what might be deemed private (Elgesem, 2002; Hewson *et al,*. 2003; Lange, 2007). It is therefore important that relevant steps are taken to protect participants' identities. For example, Barnes (2004) found that messages posted on online public discussion boards were considered to be public by the majority of users, however other users though a degree of privacy should be afforded to their communications. In using such posts as part of research, it is important to handle data responsibly as well as to anonymise all obvious identifiers to protect confidentiality. Although this is clearly contested terrain, increasingly it has been suggested that a range of measures can be used to gauge the perceived level of privacy (Sveningsson, 2004). Firstly, if some form of registration or subscription is required to gain access to a discussion board then subscribers are likely to regard the group as private (Mayer and Till, 1996). The online sites and forums used in this study, had no such protocols. Secondly, the number of users within an online community determines how public or private the space is perceived to be – the greater the number the less private the space (Eysenbach and Till, 2001). Thirdly, the perception of privacy depends on codes or policies laid down in the information files of an online community (AoIR, 2002). At no time were any such policies apparent upon any of the sites or either through published materials or by indication from the site manager.

Conclusion

The chapter has suggested that the wider field of what might be termed 'celebrity studies' has faced inherent difficulties in terms of finding appropriate ways to research the topic area. This has resulted in the continued reliance on tools that do not have the flexibility to explore such a contingent and ambiguous subject area. Although the literature around football celebrity had alluded to the notion that it has become increasing complex both in terms of representation and consumption, particularly in a new media era, little has been done to explore this issue.

In response, this thesis borrowed perspectives from cultural studies, most notably Lash and Lury's (2007) idea of 'tracking' media objects. Consistent with ideas developed in relation to celebrity players such as David Beckham, this involved considering the representations around the player as a series of media objects. Furthermore, it allows the consideration of both representation and consumption simultaneously. Whilst Lash and Lury's (2007) work had explored a range of media objects, their analysis had not extended to celebrity. Beer (2008) however had adapted their framework to consider celebrity as well as develop their ideas further with regards to new media environments.

Drawing on Beer's (2008) work, the thesis aimed to track football celebrity across a series of new media environments in order to explore the range of representations in circulation as well as the way consumers engage in these new spaces. This involved combining 'list mining' from a number of sites with focus group interviews in order to understand how media becomes located in people's everyday lives.

The following chapters provide critical discussion and analysis around the different ways that football celebrity as an object was tracked. In doing so it aims to show the various sides to football celebrity representation as well as the different ways in which it can be consumed. In exploring issues of power, it will be suggested that football celebrity can be considered a product of the global culture industry and therefore it is at least partially constructed or shaped by the consumer. This is not to say that power becomes irrelevant but rather that it operates in more nuanced ways as the interplay between structure and agency becomes more complex. As Foucault (1979) demonstrates, power in modern societies is best understood as a decentred, contingent and interactive network of shifting and changing social, political and cultural relations among and between individuals, groups, institutions and structures.

In contemporary society, there is an entire industry built up around selling proximity, or rather, perceived proximity to football celebrity (Turner, 2004). It was suggested in Chapter Two that there is a particular value attached to information that privileges the private sphere and offers glimpse of the back stage, where the 'real' individual and truth is presumed to reside. Amidst spectacular representations of football celebrity that are associated with stage management strategies, more ordinary representations might therefore be considered authentic (Meyers, 2009). Conversely however, it might be argued that strategies of this kind are little more than managed projects, designed to enhance the commercial interests of those involved (Scherer, 2007). With this theme in mind, the chapter considers three different forms of media that offer a chance to 'lift the lid' on the football industry and in the process get closer to football celebrity.

The first section considers the documentary *Being Liverpool*, an enterprise by Liverpool football club with a particular aim to break into the American market. Though critical analysis of the documentary, it will be argued that notion of *'Being Liverpool'* is offered as something ideological, a brand to buy in to, rather than necessarily associated with a fixed community (Farred, 2002). Viewers are thereby encouraged to look for aspects of the being Liverpool ideology that they can relate to and identify with. Football celebrity fulfills an important role in this strategy, providing identifiable figures for the audience to relate to and humanizing the game (Lee, 2005). In providing access to the supposedly 'true' intimate and behind the scenes details of celebrity's private life, within the documentary, Holmes (2005) argues that it emphasizes the real celebrity, who in 'unguarded' moments is just like the average person. Although Being Liverpool is a commercial project, it is argued within the chapter, that frequent reference to the audience, either through featuring fans as part of the documentary, or the use of fan driven media, including radio and Twitter commentary, offers the illusion of democracy, whilst potentially masking processes of audience labour (Andrejevic, 2007).

Secondly, the chapter analyses the Secret Footballer's column in *The Guardian* newspaper. This is an anonymous column written by a professional footballer that

aims to lift the lid on the football industry and give a firsthand insight into the life of a celebrity player, both on and off the field. The anonymity associated with the format, arguably provides freedom of expression and therefore presumably the 'truth'. In a commercial age of football, where secrets are closely guarded, and where players are increasingly subjected to mechanisms synopticon surveillance, a column like this might be considered appealing. It will be suggested that the column also provides the public with a game, where they aim to seek out the truth and unmask the Secret Footballer (Gamson, 1994). It is notable that linked to this aspect of the column, there is a Twitter page dedicated to piecing together clues as to the identity of the Secret footballer. This is an audience led project, illustrating perhaps the playful way in which new media is sometimes used. In keeping with the desire to encourage audience interactivity online, the audience is frequently invited to ask the Secret Footballer questions, to find out particular information they want to know, as well as potentially pick up clues as to the secret footballer's identity. However, similar to trends evident within the analysis of *Being Liverpool*, given the central role that the audience play in the creation of the secret footballer 'game', their 'labour' is perhaps integral to the popularity of the column, which in turn has financial benefits for *The Guardian* newspaper.

The third section examines how *Twitter* is used by football celebrity as a way of establishing connections with followers. Professional athletes' use of new media forms, such as *Twitter* has been highlighted as an area of study that requires attention (Leonard, 2009). *Twitter* also seemingly allows the audience to communicate directly with the celebrity creating connections not previously possible and arguably breaking down barriers created by the commercialization of the game (Critcher, 1979). Again, the new interactions afforded by *Twitter* have been cited as an important area of critical investigation (Leonard (2009). It will be suggested that as well as discussing football, players draw attention to more mundane and ordinary aspects of their lives, as a way of showing the real person behind the public face, and perhaps distancing themselves from more manufactured representations associated with celebrity culture. It will be argued however, that the electronic representation of self might also be considered an image management tool, aimed primarily at increasing popularity and visibility. Furthermore, in a society where there has been a significant breakdown between public and private boundaries (Tolson, 2001), strategies to

reveal the back stage, and in the case of new media forms such as Twitter, to be readable at every moment could be considered illustrative of what Foucault (1977) termed, a confessional society.

Being Liverpool

Being Liverpool is a documentary that claims to offer an insight into the inner workings of the club as well as give exclusive access to its celebrity players. The business driven nature of the contemporary game associated with the development of the English Premier League has been blamed for distancing fans from both the club and players (Critcher, 1979). Documentaries of this kind therefore perhaps go some way to re-establish a connection, through highlighting the normality of players and the behind the scenes operations of the club (Scherer, 2007). *Being Liverpool* provides an insider perspective into the football celebrity's everyday life, both in their football career and at home in more personal settings (Tolson, 2001). Spiegal (1992) recognises that this is part of a wider trend in reality shows focusing on everyday life and domestic spheres, arguably providing a 'new kind of social experience and allowing more intimate connections to be formed between the football celebrity and home audience. As Shearer (2007) suggests however, that whilst ostensibly providing a window to the 'backstage', this type of project is likely to reflect commercial objectives. Furthermore, as it was suggested earlier in the thesis, when it comes to celebrity, there is no truth to be found, only layer upon layer of (often contradictory) discourse. The documentary has therefore commodified something unobtainable, something that the audience will believe resembles the 'truth'. In this way it might be argued that there is an attempt to dupe the audience by offering them hyper reality, something more real than real (Baudrillard, 1994).

As the English Premier League, as well as individual clubs become global commodities, how they situate themselves in the global marketplace is an increasingly important consideration. The production of *Being Liverpool* is part of a wider trend in packaging and selling the heritage and history of a club (Paramio, Buraimo and Campos, 2008). The working class ideologies associated with Liverpool Football Club are clearly deemed important in setting the scene for the documentary. With this focus, it perhaps seeks to distance itself from big money

clubs such as Manchester City who are seen as being able to buy success (Haynes, 2007). A sense of authenticity was reinforced through the formatting of the documentary. This is evident through access to 'back stage' or operational areas, including the kit room, catering, grounds maintenance, as well as the business driven side of the club, including the inner workings of the transfer market; a subject of intense speculation, but often a carefully guarded aspect of the game (Sanderson, 2011). Although documentaries might be perceived to mirror reality, McDonald (2007) suggests that they frequently draw on conventions more associated with fictional forms of media to tell a story in a particular way. It is likely therefore that like other forms of media, dominant ideologies are embedded within the media content for the audience to decode.

Furthermore, in recognising the audience's desire for interactivity, it might be argued that this is a trend that is drawn upon, and in turn commodified as a way of cementing the aura of authenticity surrounding Liverpool Football Club within the documentary. At various points of the documentary for example, audience input was used to develop the narrative, however this is likely to have been developed and edited in such a way as to be in keeping with the commercial objectives of the club (McDonald, 2007). One particular instance of this trend was audience debate about Andy Carroll's transfer fee and his role at the club, developed particularly through a fan produced radio programme and fan commentary on Twitter. It is argued that whilst ostensibly appearing as critical media around the club, it was edited in such a way as to enhance the *Being Liverpool* brand whilst not having to acknowledge the audience contribution. This could be considered illustrative of the notion of audience labour discussed in Chapter Three (Andrejevic, 2007). As such, audience power is undermined by the very commercial forces it seeks to challenge.

The filming of the documentary *Being Liverpool* coincided with the hiring of new manager Brendan Rogers, who was brought in to steer the club in the right direction and ultimately create an invincible team that could win leagues and trophies. It was suggested that the manager had to reflect the clubs values and vision, with a view to returning the club to its winning ways. A historical glance back in time, reminded the viewer of Liverpool's previous successes, and suggested they had never given up hope of returning to the glory days. Farred (2002) has highlighted how an

understanding of a club's history is important for developing connections with the club. Although Farred experienced his early years of Liverpool football fandom from South Africa, it was the wider values of the club that he identifies as being drawn to. Considering the American target market in this instance, the documentary used emotive commentary that reflected neo-liberal ideology and the American dream. An example of this commentary is offered in the extract below:

In sport moments of transition are inevitable, periods of struggle unavoidable, a need for leaders with true vision-fundamental. A new man is brought in to capture vision of the past. The history of the club binds players and managers to players and managers of yesteryear. Shankley's vision was to build up the club into a bastion of invincibility, the Liverpool aura he built up endures. Could Rogers be the man to lead Liverpool to another Red Crusade.

<div align="right">Being Liverpool, 2012 Fox Soccer/Channel 5</div>

As Wells (1999:231) remarked, sport is 'imbued with persuasive narrational incident and an intrinsic emphasis upon the psychological, emotional and physical limits of the human condition' As a 'storied club' steeped in history, it is highlighted by the narrator, that Liverpool Football Club has experienced the highs of winning and the lows of defeat. Although it is not specifically referenced in the extract above, images that coincided with the narration, showed flowers left at Hillsborough, following the disaster in which ninety six Liverpool supporters lost their lives. The suggestion of the need to be able rise up against adversity might also therefore relate to the clubs recovery following the tragedy of Hillsborough as well as to recovery of form on the field.

Values, particularly those pertaining to hard work, were reflected in the portrayal of Rogers throughout the documentary. As the new leader of the club, Rogers' portrayal emphasized his integrity and commitment to achieving success, through hard work and establishing the right environment. This aspect of Roger's portrayal could be considered consistent with a desire to reflect a more golden age of sport, embodied within the *Being Liverpool* ethos (Whannel, 2003). From the outset of the documentary, Rogers seeks to tackle accusations that football has been corrupted by money. He suggests that the modern game has been taken over by money and media

which has obviously benefited the game but he argues that this does not replace the need for hard work. This ethos is illustrated in the extract below.

'You can't get away from the nuts and bolts which are hard work and honesty; how you win on the pitch'.

<div align="right">Being Liverpool, 2012 Fox Soccer/Channel 5</div>

This is an ethic that he consistently adheres to throughout the series. Scenes of hard work on the training pitch under Rogers' surveillance, serve to reinforce the achieved quality of their celebrity setting them apart from those who achieve fame via media exposure (Boyle *et al.*, 2006; Rojek, 2001). Rogers' success in the sport is mirrored in the lifestyle it affords him. Representations of his life outside the game, frequently highlight the trappings of the leisure elite class as well as meritocratic ideologies (Smith and Beal, 2007). This arguably sends the message, that if you work hard, you will achieve material success, an ideology firmly embedded within the American dream.

The portrayal of Rogers as a 'firm hand' perhaps also aims to address the almost constant media talk of the wild and feckless behaviour of a 'too much too young' generation of top English professional players (Lines, 2001). Overpaid young stars are often perceived to be too out of touch from fans and also out of control and more concerned with the celebrity lifestyle than hard work. A patriarchal male figure is seen as a positive influence on managing both masculinity and celebrity (Whannel, 1999). Consistent with re-affirming more 'modern' values of football, during one of the training sessions, one of the younger players can be seen diving after another player tackled him. Rogers was quick to intervene reprimanding the player;

'You young ones watch too much TV. Stay on your feet'.

<div align="right">Being Liverpool, 2012 Fox Soccer/Channel 5</div>

Actions such as diving and swearing might be seen as evidence of a game in decline. It was not only issues of unsporting like behaviour that were addressed. An ill-considered rebuttal from seventeen year old, up and coming talent Raheem Stirling during a training session was seen as an opportunity to issue a stern warning to the

younger players that attitudes need to improve. The same player was also warned during the first game back of the season

'Start dancing like that and you will be dancing on the side line'.

Being Liverpool, 2012 Fox Soccer/Channel 5

It was suggested that it is important for the manager to keep players' egos in check and nurture an ethos where success is achieved in the right way. Managing a team therefore involves both the management of men but also the socialisation of boys. Whilst the documentary shows the team getting off to a slow start performance wise, Rogers suggested that he was building a team that would be successful in the longer term. This appears to be captured in the footage featuring the young player who was disciplined early in the series, starting in the first team and scoring his first goal.

Another key focus of the documentary is allowing access to the club's celebrity players. As it was suggested in Chapter Two, the model of fandom developed by Giulianotti (2002) stressed the growing importance of celebrity players and managers in attracting new consumer fans to the game. This aspect of fandom may be even more significant when trying to break into a foreign market. It was suggested in Chapter Two for instance that increasingly prominent celebrity figures from the game are used to enhance the clubs brand (Lee, 2005). A similar trend was observed in *Being Liverpool*. In episode one, the cameras are invited into Liverpool Football Club's captain, Steven Gerrard's home. On the drive back from the training ground, he tells the audience that, football is *'parked up at home'*. His home is therefore situated as a separate sphere from work, where he spends time with his family.

Consistent with ideas in the literature, the documentary encourages the breakdown between public and private spheres, and in particular, the commodification of the private sphere (Cashmore, 2002). This might be considered significant for the representations in the documentary, since it allows the featured individual football celebrities to perform what Eagleton (2005) refers to as, the balancing act between ordinary and extraordinary. As such, Gerrard is able to retain his working class male identity and ordinariness, whilst displaying consumer trappings the audience can only dream about (Cashmore, 2006: Smith and Beal, 2007).

It is notable that whilst the documentary is about the club and its players, scenes of players' home lives tended to be focused on the family, most notably a female partner and children. Messner (2012) has suggested that successful masculinity achieved through an athletic career, might be defined in terms of both sporting and commercial endeavours, and ultimately attracting a conventionally attractive female partner. Although Gerrard's wife is featured regularly in celebrity magazines as the archetypal WAG, it is notable that the portrayal of her in the documentary is markedly different.

The documentary provides a particular discourse of femininity that situates the female as subordinate to the male, playing largely a supportive role. According to Clayton and Harris (2004), the wife of the sports star is rarely seen, living a traditional lifestyle in which she is responsible for domestic work, childbearing and rearing and emotionally supporting her husband. It is essential that they accept prominent position of football in their husbands' lives, and provide a quiet happy home life which acts as a diversion from the stresses of the football world. In return presumably, they reap the rewards of financial security. It is this version of femininity that is overwhelmingly presented in the documentary. The portrayal of women in domestic settings, can however be seen as a more subtle display of conspicuous consumption, as well as reinforcing gender roles; a man has to work but his wife does not (Clayton and Harris, 2004). Females are therefore positioned as the males' possession, a 'capital bearing object' whose value accrues to the primary group to which they belong (Thorpe, 2009:493).

Gerrard introduces his children, and can be seen to be interacting with them, giving the impression that the same thing would be going on if the camera wasn't there (Turner, 2004). Whilst he is not portrayed as the primary care provider for the children, he is represented as a 'hands on' dad. In their analysis of *MTV Cribs* Smith and Beal (2007) highlighted a theme that they referred to as 'attentive dad'. It was suggested that this was characterised as a man who was explicit in his concern for the welfare, comfort and happiness of his children as well as the stability of a strong family life. This notion appeared to be fitting for the way Gerrard and a number of other players were portrayed. It is clear that there have been wider shifts in expectations of masculinity, including in some instances the open rejection of the

traditional male role, particularly in the context of domestic responsibility or child care (Cashmore and Cleland, 2011; Messner, 1992).

Although he clearly has a big house and material trappings, unlike shows such as *Cribs*, the focus was on family, with the house forming the backdrop, rather than the main event (Smith and Beal, 2007). It did still however reflect neoliberal ideologies of material success achieved through sporting endeavours. It may therefore be considered a discourse that was transferrable to a U.S. market, since it embodies many aspects of the 'American dream' (Tuss, 2004). The American dream particularly emphasises upward social mobility and prosperity achieved through hard work in open competition. Football celebrity is adept to putting this on display, through its players and their rise from working class roots, to becoming idols of consumption (Holt, 1989). Consistent with Smith and Beal's (2007) findings, the emphasis on luxury and lavish lifestyles was countered by suggestions that the player had not forgotten his roots. It was suggested earlier in the thesis that the audience may feel resentful of celebrity wealth and success. Emphasising more ordinary elements therefore perhaps helps to maintain a positive relationship with the audience, promoting identification, which in turn, particularly from the club's perspective, may lead to more loyal consumers, who literally buy into the *Being Liverpool* brand.

It has been suggested in the literature that although celebrity culture is celebrated as emblematic of success in western society, its merger with football has also been criticized for degrading the game (Whannel, 2003; Williams, 2006). Typically, celebrity players have been portrayed as petulant, and more concerned with celebrity lifestyle and commercial deals than being successful in the sport. Frequently, comparisons between players from different eras of football have been used to highlight such deficiencies within the game. For example, Whannel (2003) illustrates the differences in representation between David Beckham and Stanley Matthews. Crucially however, Whannel does not fall into the trap of making the assumption that players in the contemporary game do not work hard. In fact, he argues that contemporary professional sport consists of more thorough training regimes than it did in the past. The themes of hard work, dedication, passion and commitment were central to the way that players were represented. The extract below from an interview

with Gerrard for instance, makes specific reference to how lucky he feels to be playing for Liverpool.

'I'm lucky and privileged to be in this position. I'm doing a job that I love doing'

Being Liverpool, 2012 Fox Soccer/Channel 5

Similar to other players who come from the local area, he self identifies as a Liverpool fan as well as a player. The notion of *'Being Liverpool'* is clearly reflected in his identity through the suggestion that this involves;

'Eating, drinking, believing (inside the body part of who you are) you feel an honour'

Being Liverpool, 2012 Fox Soccer/Channel 5

His love of the club is therefore portrayed as something that is deeply embodied and therefore presumably authentic (Farred, 2002). His fandom is also further authenticated through the revealing of his personal loss in the Hillsbrough disaster, where his cousin was killed. His family history is thus tied inextricably to the history of the club. In contrast to representations of football celebrity that have frequently highlighted superficial connections with clubs based on the accumulation of personal wealth, rather than loyalty, the way Gerrard presents himself perhaps serves to distance himself from this stereotype (Wagg, 2010).

Whilst there is a theme of family running throughout, each of the players featured in the documentary tells their own story. There is a distinct emphasis on the 'normal' things they do, particularly outside the sport and their normal (most often, working class) backgrounds (Schickel, 2000). It was pointed out in Chapter Two that it is only relatively recently that the private sphere of footballers has been put on public display. This shift is attributed to the intense mediation of football and its players, associated with developments such as the launch of the English Premier League. It might be argued that in the current climate of sport, the price for the fame and wealth is the expectation of media intrusion into the private sphere.

As Jay Spearing walks towards his car (a typical footballer's 4x4) he tells the camera (therefore viewer):

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'this is mine scuse the mess in the back'.

This emphasises ordinariness as well as providing access to another backstage area. His story, whilst bringing forth elements previously identified, also picks up on the notion of celebrity privilege. This is firstly achieved through the narrator who posits that

'He achieved the spotlight he always dreamed of living in, but that can occasionally make one's life feel displaced from reality'.

Frequently the wider literature on celebrity has alluded to the idea that an individual can lose a sense of who they are when they become famous. Dyer (1998) accounts for this on the basis that the star is a commodity and the range of commodities in circulation may have little resemblance to the real life figure. Consequently, there is a propensity for the individual celebrity figure to lose touch with their real selves, if indeed there is such a thing.

Spearing's stable family life (girlfriend, daughter and dog) is therefore situated as an important factor in keeping him grounded. Clayton and Harris (2004) outline the civilising and rounding impact of women, being in a long term relationship is therefore crucial for creating and maintaining appropriate masculinity. In another scene he also points out his father who works the Liverpool tunnel, emphasising his working class background. The celebrity lifestyle and desire for wealth for wealth's sake is an idea that is played down. He suggests that he perceives his own skills as beneficial in tangible ways, particularly to look after his family. He stresses the insecurity that football can bring in that it is a highly changeable industry and you have to fight to get first team games and secure a place. In Spearing's case, this fear appears to be justified to some degree towards the end of the documentary, when he is put out on loan to Bolton after the club make some new signings. This reinforced the idea of the celebrity as commodity in that they are something to be sold on when they are no longer deemed a valuable asset to the club (Haynes, 2007). The choice to

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include the information about Spearing's loan appeared to go against the grain of the documentary where the club and Rogers were portrayed as caring about the welfare of players, with Rogers frequently referring to the players as his surrogate sons.

The only exception to the family portrayal within the documentary was the newly signed Fabio Borini. He suggested that he felt unsettled after moving between clubs five times in the last two years. After staying in a hotel on his arrival in Liverpool, the cameras followed him as he moved into a bachelor pad. He expressed his desire to feel at home and stay at the club. In contrast to the stability of the players with families, Borini was portrayed as a lost 'boy' trying to find his place at Liverpool. In 'becoming Liverpool' it might be expected that the club and presumably manager would provide a stabilizing influence in his life and career. Although it has not been a trend in representation associated with male athletes, the emphasis on Borini as a boy, rather than a man, could be said to distract attention from a lack of a female partner. Infantilising female athletes has been recognized as a way in which the media distract from the absence of a male partner and hence suspicion around sexuality (Kian *et al.*, 2008).

The portrayal of Borini did however draw on other strategies that have been used to 'reveal' football celebrity. Cameras were invited to follow new signings through their medicals. This not only emphasises the medicalization and professionalization of the game in terms of scientific support but it also situated the player as a commodity belonging to the club. Winter (2003) suggests how male sporting bodies are increasingly subjected to an invasive media gaze that moves beyond the body to probe beneath the skin. He highlights how on his move to Real Madrid Beckham's medical examination was relayed to fans via Real Madrid TV. This trend is linked to the cultural association of authoritative scientific discourse and the unquestionable right to scope and scalpel penetration of the body's surface (Cook, 2000: 171). Similarly, Borini was shown having blood tests, enduring rigorous fitness testing and being hooked up to an ECG. This also revealed aspects of the clubs' operations that the public would not normally have access to. Access of this kind might be seen as privileged information, allowing the audience to see the behind the scenes areas.

South American players were also depicted in a slightly different way during the documentary. Rather than a focus on them individually they were presented as a

collective, coming together to socialise and sharing their culture in their home away from home. It was suggested that they were missing family and friends. Viewers are therefore reminded that they are young players in a foreign country. It could be suggested that this focus perhaps served to create an understanding of player Luis Suarez, whilst not having to make reference to his highly mediated indiscretions for misbehavior on the pitch. From a commercial point of view this might have been an important strategy by the club to renegotiate the player's public image (Haynes, 2007). Lucas Leiva talks of Suarez's temper as being driven by intense commitment to the club, but he stresses that off the pitch he has a really good sense of humour. Suarez was cited as being significant to the clubs development for the creative options that he brings. In line with criticism the club have faced in the media about the control of Suarez, it appears that Liverpool to some degree turn a blind eye to his indiscretions because he is a valuable commodity on the pitch for the team.

Although documentaries of this kind offer verisimilitude they are commercial projects that ultimately benefit the club. The metaphor of *Being Liverpool* becomes something of a commodity in its own right. Global consumers are encouraged to make connections with the club through association with celebrity players and managers with the football being a lower priority. This might be considered reflective of Giulianotti's (2002) typology of fandom discussed in chapter two, where it is suggested that fandom might be increasingly based on an affinity or interest in a celebrity figure rather than the game. It is notable that as well as airing in the UK, *Being Liverpool* was also aimed at a U.S. audience. This is perhaps not surprising considering that the club's owners are based in the U.S. The aim of capitalism is to break into as many different markets as possible. Through marketing itself in a way that is appealing for a mainstream as well as a sporting audience, being Liverpool arguably increases its commercial value and appeal. In his analysis of All Blacks.com Scherer (2007) highlighted the difficulties in creating a product that was meaningful across different cultures. It could be argued that framing the documentary in the form of human interest stories bridges the divide between cultures and allowing more people to emotionally invest in the Being Liverpool commodity.

The Secret footballer

The *Secret footballer* is a column in *The Guardian* newspaper written by a Premier League player whose identity is deliberately concealed. The anonymity this provides allows him to talk in a less guarded and direct way about football and celebrity players. In an industry where secrets are closely guarded, it therefore potentially offers insights that wouldn't normally be available in mainstream media outlets (Pandaram, 2009). As well as providing access to firsthand information, which might be deemed desirable, the column has also become somewhat game like, as readers attempt to guess who the player is through the clues, both intentional and unintentional that he leaves. In recognition the fun inherent in the column may be the detective work, rather than finally solving the puzzle, one reader suggests however that it will be disappointing if and when the true identity of the secret footballer is revealed.

atrack *thinks he has unearthed another clue:* "It looks like you're left footed in the video - are you, or is that another red-herring?"

legaff *does not hold back:* "Whoever you are, I am going to be immensely disappointed when I find out it's you."

The Guardian, 23rd August, 2012

In what might be considered an illustration of the link between grass roots and corporate media, followers developed a twitter page, dedicated to picking up clues and guessing who the secret footballer is. This aspect of audience activity involved the reposting of photographs or extracts from the column to build up a shared set of clues. Unlike fan activities, characterized by Jenkins' (1992) notion of 'poaching', the audience in this case, is not changing and transforming the media material presented in *The Guardian*, however, they are active in its interpretation. Gamson (1994) refers to a type of consumption he terms 'game playing detective' this relates to speculating about information in circulation, using it in playful ways, but also sorting the 'authentic' from the constructed. The game is therefore to find the truth in the spectacle performance environment. Rather than being manipulated, it could be

argued that the type of fan activity highlighted above is illustrative of the kinds of pleasure located in media consumption (Horne, 2006).

Consistent with trends in the representation of football celebrity, the column focuses both on life in and out of the sport. Whist it discusses topics and issues that are present in other forms of media, it does so from a first-hand perspective. The fact that his identity is hidden allows him to be critical both of the football industry and other players. It was suggested earlier in the thesis that frequently club's media policies forbid players to be critical of managers, players and the club, as well as saying anything that could be considered controversial and damage the club brand (Browning & Sanderson, 2012). As long as the player remains anonymous however, they are spared any club punishments for their breach of the rules. On one of the discussion forums, the secret football is asked about his motivations for writing the column. Although sceptics might suggest that the column was designed to whet the audience's appetite for a book written by the secret footballer, and published by *The Guardian* (Andrejevic, 2007), the Secret Footballer suggests that his motive for the column is somewhat selfish and more about his own piece of mind, rather than highlighting anything important.

At this stage of my career I have become frustrated at hearing things that I know to be incorrect. I heard these same things well over ten years ago when I started my career and that has become a sense of huge frustration for me personally. I wouldn't say that it is important that I share them, I think it might be more for my own peace of mind and sanity as much as anything else.

The Guardian, 23rd August, 2012

In admitting that he is largely writing the column for himself and his own sanity, on the one hand, makes himself appear self-centred, conversely however, it also makes him seem credible in that he is not trying to hide his motivations. Specific reference is made to hearing things he knows to be incorrect. In contrast to the 'incorrect' information, presumably from mainstream media outlets, the reader is led to believe that the column contains the truth (Tolson, 2001).

Following the theme of mainstream media credibility, he gives an example of how the media twist information to produce a story, regardless of whether or not it is truthful. In the extract below, the secret footballer draws on his own experience to illustrate underhand tactics of media reporters.

During my career, I have been stitched up for many things. The most bizarre was to do with my supposed addiction to methadone. I first found out that this story was building when a friend in America called to say that "a British guy from one of the red-tops" wanted to ask her what she knew about my dependency on the drug. The background to all this was that I'd had an operation a few weeks before and, as a result, was taking some pretty heavy-duty prescription pain relief. I mentioned this to a journalist and, from there, the Chinese whispers began. My friend didn't say anything, but that didn't stop his newspaper from trying to run a story the very next day suggesting I had overdosed on painkillers.

The Guardian, 10th August, 2012

The Secret Footballer alludes to the level of public interest in stories featuring football celebrity, making it a valuable commodity to the media who stand to make a profit from selling stories. It was suggested earlier in the thesis that the same media who lament the poor behaviour of players are happy to profit from it (Lines, 2001). The credibility of the media is brought into question, in particular tabloid media with specific reference being made to the 'red tops'. By doing this, he also avoids criticizing the Guardian newspaper where his column is featured. It is somewhat contradictory however that a motivation for revealing this story appeared to be to set the record straight, however, due to his identity being hidden in the column, his explanation of the truth does little to clear his name.

Privilege

The Secret Footballer frequently comments on the intersection of football and celebrity culture. The notion of priviledge was coded across nine of the articles written by The Secret Footballer. In line with suggestions in the literature, he makes reference to changes within the culture of the sport that have impacted on the attitudes and behaviours of players. In the following extract young up and coming

players are singled out and described as being aware of their worth not only as a player but also as a celebrity figure (Lines, 2001). Celebrity culture in this instance is said to have impacted on the natural hierarchy within football which created 'responsibility', 'professionalism' and 'respect' (Whannel, 2002). It is implied that the removal of these traditions has been to the detriment of the game. In the following extracts the secret footballer makes reference to the traditions within football that he believes have been negative for the game.

Once upon a time the YTS lads had to clean the first-team players' boots, something almost everybody in the game feels ought to be reintroduced, not because it is demeaning but because, in its own little way, it encourages responsibility, professionalism and respect.

Years ago, kids were caught in the headlights around first-team players. They looked up to them and, by and large, respected what they had achieved to "make it". But today that relationship has changed. There is a degree of arrogance among an increasing number of youngsters, which could be argued is indicative of society in general, although it seems strange in many respects when it comes to football, because the chances of making it have never been slimmer.

A couple of years ago, Frank Lampard complained: "The lads are forgetting the hard work that needs to be done to earn this sort of lifestyle. Not enough of them have the same dedication and it's something I feel very strongly about. They think they have made it already."

The Guardian, 3rd February, 2012

The hierarchy that previously existed within the game, is discussed as a socializing mechanism for young players teaching them about the hard work needed to 'make it' in professional sport, a career that is hard to access. Young players are described as arrogant, perhaps seeing celebrity status as a divine right rather than something that has to be earned (Williams, 2006). It was suggested in Chapter Two that there have been concerns expressed about the perceived entitlements that come with celebrity and fame. Perhaps as a way of addressing these concerns, The Secret Footballer highlights that he believes that status and privilege should be earned, through hard

work and dedication on the pitch. His perspective might be linked to his own story, in which he identifies his lifelong passion for the game. Similar to trends in representation in *Being Liverpool*, identified earlier in the chapter, his story is in keeping with meritocratic ideology and a rise from working class roots to wealth and success.

As a kid, I played football day and night – I used to take a ball to bed with me so that I could do keep-ups as soon as I woke up. Football held the possibility of glory and happiness, and an escape from the mundane life that came with growing up in a small town.

The Guardian, 10th August 2012

He highlights how football held the possibility of glory and happiness, as well as escaping from his mundane life. Sport has frequently been considered a viable prospect for young males particularly from working class backgrounds to make it and prosper financially (Cole and King, 1998). Whilst he doesn't cite this as his main motivation for involvement in the game, it certainly appears to have been a consideration for him.

There was clear acknowledgement of changes that have occurred within football as the result of the injection of money coinciding with the development of the Premier League (Platts & Smith, 2010). It was suggested earlier in the thesis such changes have fundamentally altered the relationship between football and the media, turning it into a lucrative business as well as a game and furthermore, providing financial benefits for the players and clubs. The following extracts highlight the recognition of benefits of commercialisation, but also the downsides that are maybe not considered by the audience.

No footballer who preaches ethics where the media is concerned would be foolish enough to completely regret the influence they have in this country. After all, Sky TV has pumped billions of pounds into football, which in turn has filtered down into our pockets.

The Guardian, 10th August 2012

Our career decisions are, to a certain degree, influenced by how much money we need to earn and for how long. The biggest mistake I ever made in football was moving clubs for more money. I vowed never to do it again, until I realised it was too late and that I had arrived at the point where my career would forever more be only about how much money I needed to earn. It's regrettable and makes me cringe when I put it in writing but I promise you it is the same for a huge number of professionals.

The Guardian 24th February 2012

Although money is cited as providing financial benefit, it is simultaneously discussed as negative, since players come to rely on it and make their career choices on this basis. The original early 1990's Sky television coverage and subsequent deals have been highlighted as instrumental in the changes within contemporary football (Boyle and Haynes, 2004). In their consideration of football celebrity coverage for instance, Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004) suggest that Murdoch's millions served to spruce up the sets of the game, by injecting not only money, but also glamour to the set. The aim of the convergence with the media, was to bridge the gap between football and other entertainment industries, bringing football into line with other forms of televisual communication (Sandvoss, 2002). This has had knock on effects on the representation of players particularly with regard to the way their lifestyles become the subject of media interest. Such interest might also be seen as reflective of what has been referred to as an infotainment society, where salient issues and ideologies, in this instance, the celebration of capitalism are packaged in the form of human interest stories (Bird, 2003).

Messner (2012) has previously suggested that the media offer glorified packages of what it means to be a man in contemporary society. This is often perpetuated through mediasports coverage which equates physical and economic capital acquired through sport with success and 'making it' in a material sense (Faludi, 1999; Smith & Beal, 2007). In the following extract, the secret footballer reveals details about the lifestyle his premiership career afforded him. The ostentatious and privileged lifestyle he details may allow the audience live vicariously through stories about celebrity wealth and lifestyles (Eagleton, 2005).

During the boom years of the Premier League, my wife and I had a beautiful detached house with five bedrooms, a games room, a cinema and so many other rooms that I don't think I ever went in all of them. I had a full-sized snooker table that was used at the world championships, as well as a collection of games consoles that sat on a £6,000 custom-made sideboard gathering dust. The house had its own mini-spa, including a hot tub, sauna and twin bath with a built-in TV that sat in its own wet room. Every wall displayed a piece of art, including an etching by Picasso bought at auction through Bonhams. I drove the kids to their £3,000-a-term private school in one of three brand new cars. We holidayed in Barbados and Dubai, and rented villas costing up to £30,000 a week which came with their own butlers and staff. In a really flush year, I'd fly my family and friends out to join us on private jets that were stuffed with champagne.

The Guardian, 10th August, 2012

The *Secret Footballer* highlights the centrality of entertainment, including a private cinema, mini spa, numerous games consoles and holidaying in exotic destinations. It is consistently suggested that celebrity provides a reflection of the deepest goals and values of a particular society. As Real (1996:143) highlights, 'flamboyance, self-promotion, consumption and fame are all rewarded in the postmodern culture of excess'. Consistent with Real's (1996) suggestion, the emphasis is on excess, for example, having so many rooms he hadn't been in them all, and flying him family and friends out to join him on holiday, on private jets 'stuffed with champagne'. This gives the audience access to the possibilities afforded by celebrity status and glimpses into what might be considered a fantasy lifestyle (Eagleton, 2005; Weiss, 1996).

Much has been made in the media of what might be termed superstar behaviour in which the celebrity footballer flaunts their wealth in public, or engages in bad or distasteful behaviour. Lines (2001) for example, refers to a range of examples where players were portrayed as irresponsible and immature, abusing the privileges afforded to them by their careers. The Secret Footballer draws on his own experience as he discusses his firsthand view of player behaviour, in this instance in a night club.

I think that some elements of our excessive behaviour in a nightclub are tolerated by the owners because a certain amount of patronage can be very welcome. If a footballer throws £50 notes in the air, then that's good for their business. Most of the people that were there to see it will surely be there the following next week. For me, it isn't necessarily the bad behaviour as a whole, it is more about not knowing when to stop. That is certainly what I have witnessed throughout my career. Some players are great value on a night out and then right at the last moment they go too far as their audience demands something even more bizarre and outrageous and that is what ends up in the papers the next day.

The Guardian, 23rd August, 2012

He draws attention to the idea, that despite criticism, the bad or excessive behaviour of players' is what people expect and want to see. Celebrity in this instance might therefore be considered as a form of social performance (Goffman, 1959; Rojek, 2001). Club owners benefit financially and the audience get to witness 'bizzare' and 'outrageous' performances. Furthermore, the audience might relish in the opportunity to say 'we were there' when stories end up in the papers (Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004).

The notion of celebrity privilege also extends to women, in particular how their status allows them easy access to sex (Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004). Furedi (2010) points out that whilst this is frequently a feature of contemporary celebrity culture, even in ancient times, famous figures were granted privileges and considered more popular and attractive than those without status. The Secret Footballer's suggests that players' status bases on economic capital, grants them popularity with women. He acknowledges that players have a lot to lose when they cheat, but he explains that it is more about the ego boost it provides. From an audience point of view, the exposure of stories of this kind might be considered particularly appealing. As Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004) point out, sex and celebrity hit all the buttons for the public's curiosity.

A married player has so much to lose for the sake of five minutes of lust. But it's more than that. There is the bravado. I can sit down with a stunning woman and she'll hang on my every word; I can make the worst jokes and she'll laugh like I'm a

standup; I can buy her bottles of champagne and she'll be impressed. In short, a player can have his ego stroked relentlessly, sleep with a beautiful woman at the end of it and, nine times out of 10, he'll get away with it.

The extract alludes to the notion of celebrity power, suggesting that a footballer's economic status is the main appeal for women. The women chase players not because of any genuine or deep affection but rather because of their wealth. Interactions are discussed as superficial not only for the player but also for the women. These types of interactions might be considered consistent with Cline's (1992) discussion of the groupie culture that often emerges around male celebrity figures including individual football celebrities.

In line with suggestions in Chapter Two that highlighted the contradictory and ambivalent nature of celebrity representation, the secret footballer discusses the down side to being a professional footballer. In particular, he discusses the fragility of celebrity status and how easily a footballer's lifestyle may unravel. Inherent to celebrity is however the propensity to fall and the higher the celebrity in terms of wealth and status, the further they have to fall (Rojek, 2001). This perhaps offers reassurance to the audience that the celebrity's life is not perfect and in fact they may be plagued with all the same insecurities as the audience, only on a grander scale. Gamson (1994) previously discussed the contradictions in the pleasures taken in celebrity consumption. Celebrity culture tends to offer extremes in representations, for example, offering airbrushed versions of glamorous people and lifestyles, conversely, it offers a warts and all glimpse into celebrity indiscretions and celebrity downfall. In the extract below, the secret footballer provides an insider perspective on what happens when a player loses the security of their professional contract.

The manager went round the dressing room and shook everyone's hand and I knew I would be moving on soon. My contract, as was the case with many of the other players, was about to be cut in half and my assets, mainly property, bought on the back of a Premier League spending spree, were hopelessly exposed. In short, I could not afford to keep up the payments on any of it and as a result everything I owned would be at the mercy of the bank. I do not expect any sympathy here but afterwards,

when you are sat in a big house with nothing but your material possessions rubbing your face in it and having just been paid the best part of £100,000 for a month's work that has ended in total failure, it is impossible to feel any more disgusted with yourself. It's like a constant feeling of nausea brought on by overwhelming guilt.

The Guardian, 11th May, 2012

In contrast to perceptions that celebrities are free from the cares of everyday life, the Secret Footballer highlights the anxieties of having it all, only to have it all taken away. The same material possessions that he boasted about earlier are described as cruel and mocking. As suggested in Chapter Two, it is in these moments that the public are invited to revel in celebrity misery as the football celebrity commodity takes a different direction. In moments of celebrity downfall, the audience are reassured that cosmic justice is taking its toll (Carroll, 2010).

It was highlighted in Chapter Two that since the 1980s there has been what might be referred to as a theraputic discourse within football (Whannel, 2001). This has included players' well documented battles with drug and alcohol addiction. Similarly, the secret footballer is open in his column about suffering from depression, a condition that might be associated with mental weakness, not something that men are expected to be vulnerable to. Whannel (2001) however discusses how football celebrity has increasingly become associated with a confessional discourse with a number of players exposing their personal weaknesses for public consumption. In the extract below the culture of football is cited as contributing to his condition in particular, abuse from the fans. He openly talks about the effects of his depression making him withdraw from interactions with fans and other players and turn to drink as a way of coping.

Depression had always been there, but it took football at the highest level to really bring it to the fore. Once, I could ignore the catcalls from the stands, but it got to the point where I didn't want to take that abuse anymore and I'd answer back. I never smiled for pictures with fans, I didn't train if I didn't want to and I didn't bother to make small talk with other players who I didn't have anything in common with. I drank more and I argued with the manager (more than normal).

Today, aided by 15mg of mirtazapine and 20mg of citalopram every morning, I am a completely different person. I still have bad days, but I don't wake up dreading the day ahead, I don't look out of the training ground window wishing I could be as far away as possible and I don't look at every single task as if it were the equivalent of climbing Everest.

If I'm honest with myself, for about a year I have been drinking very heavily and eating excessively in a pathetic attempt to develop a gut so that they won't pick me anymore.

The Guardian, 10th August, 2012

The column adopts a confessional tone as he explains the difficulties associated with carrying on with his football career and dealing with depression (Redmond, 2008). Despite stating that his condition is under control, he confesses that he has been engaging in unhealthy behaviours in order to not be selected. It appears that he does not want to be responsible for ending his own career but rather wants someone to make that decision for him. It has been argued previously that like other forms of confession, celebrity confession perhaps fulfills a cathartic function for the individual (Crepeau, 2010). Rojek (2001) has also offered an alternative perspective suggesting that the exposure of personal weakness may create more positive relationships with the audience.

Although online newspapers such as the Guardian actively encourage audience interaction, the growth and development of social media perhaps represents one of the most instrumental shifts in the way that individual football celebrities present themselves through the media. Furthermore, social media has arguably redefined the relationship between the celebrity footballer and the audience, a suggestion primarily based on the presumably direct contact that occurs in these spaces (Beer, 2008). Both of the developments above have been highlighted as significant areas for research within sport sociology. It was suggested in Chapter Three that social networking site *Twitter* has been popular with athletes as well as fans who wish to 'follow' and interact with athletes online. The following section therefore explores how football celebrity is represented and consumed on *Twitter*.

Twitter

In order to explore how *Twitter* has impacted on football celebrity representation as well as audience engagement, this section analyses the public Twitter profiles of four high profile players (Wayne Rooney, Michael Owen, Rio Ferdinand and Joey Barton) to examine how they construct an online identity, through both the information they post and the way they interact with followers, allowing the audience to 'get to know them'. Data from the players' profiles were extracted between January and December 2012. In line with the aim of the thesis, data were also extracted from players' followers. This was essential to explore the types of interactions that occur on the site. It will be suggested that in spaces such as Twitter the celebrity seemingly communicates in an unfiltered and more direct way making it more appealing to the audience. Conversely however, Twitter might be considered an increasingly stage managed space, dedicated to impression management (Goffman, 1959). Even though social networking makes it appear that we are 'befriending' the stars and getting to know them, sceptics might argue that it is just another layer of mediated representation (Beer, 2008).

Presentation of self on Twitter

Lasch (1990) suggests that in modern societies, people have a sense of self as a performer under the constant scrutiny of friends and strangers. The gaze and surveillance of others, even that which is imagined is likely to play a key role in patterns of self-regulation (Foucault, 1979). As Goffman (1959) argued, we are all performers, we *comport* our dress, expressions, mannerisms and vocals to the demands of the audience and the roles we play. Goffman's analysis of self and social impression management takes on new relevance in an era, characterised by the widespread use of online social network spaces such as Twitter (Livingstone, 2008). In online spaces, the self is presented in terms of stories, posts and photos, all contributing to creating an impression to others. The 'audience' is therefore used as a fan base where popularity is cultivated and maintained through on-going image management strategies (Gackenbach, 2007).

It was suggested in Chapter Three that previous research into athletes' use of *Twitter* has indicated that postings may relate to a range of issues including, personal life, business life, relating to sport, other sports or athletes, responding to fans and comments on other media for example, television shows or music (Pedersen, Parks, Quarterman, and Thibault, 2010). *Twitter* therefore may be seen as a valuable source of information since it not only offers a first-hand perspective into the sport, but also ostensibly allows the audience to get to know the 'real' person in a way that is analogous with other social relationships (Clavio and Kian, 2010; Kassing and Sanderson, 2009). Although in sports such as football, coverage of football celebrity is extensive, the audience are aware of the stage management strategies of mainstream media and consequently desire access to something more authentic (Gamson, 1994).

Getting personal

It has been consistently suggested that if a fan recognises similarities or connects in some way identification is more likely to occur (Weiss, 1996). This may include being similar or sharing the same interests as the celebrity figure (Chaney, 1993:147). Sun (2010) highlighted how perceived personality characteristics can also be influential in defining the relationship between the celebrity and the audience. Although we only 'know them' through the media, we are likely to make judgments in the same way we would with our actual friends and acquaintances (Giles, 2000). With social networking and more personal information being put into the public domain, they are more opportunities to identify such connections. There are a number of strategies for seducing people into feeling that they know a public figure intimately. One of the most common is for the star to present himself or herself as, just like one of us (Frederik *et al.,* 2012).

This notion of presenting themselves as ordinary was clearly evident in players' tweets as they suggested they were engaged in similar activities to their followers. In the extract below for instance, Rio Ferdinand makes specific reference to spending an evening watching soaps on television, a pastime it might be assumed is shared by the audience, in this case, his followers (Tolson, 2001). He appears to deliberately

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contrast 'reality', with the expectation of celebrity culture and the glitz and glamour lifestyle the audience perhaps expect him to have (Schickel, 2000).

flicking between channels between football, Eastenders and Corrie! Followed by CBB....yes, that's the glitz and glamour lifestyle people!

Million miles from a night out in the spot covent garden!

Those were the days

Wow Rio you really live on the edge

Yes Alderley Edge

Rock and roll fella

Good to no I'm doing the exact same as @Rioferdy5 on a Friday night

@Rioferdy 5 24th August 2012

It has been frequently suggested that the commercialisation of the game was responsible for distancing players from fans (Whannel, 2001). In his typology of football stars Critcher (1979) refers to a category he calls superstar dislocated to indicate how the money in the game dislocated players from their communities, providing them with consumer lifestyles far removed from their fans. Through Twitter players have the opportunity to reassure the audience that they are 'approachable', albeit through electronic means. Ferdinand has sought to grow his popularity through his use of *Twitter*. Whilst ostensibly however such tweets might be thought of as authentic, Sacks (1984) refers to the self-conscious highlighting of everyday behaviour as 'doing being ordinary' insinuating the performative nature of such strategies. Furthermore, those who communicate with followers are likely to be popular and perceived as approachable, Ferdinand therefore uses topic areas that his followers are familiar with as a way of sparking conversation (Frederick, Lim, Clavio and Walsh, 2012).

Social media has also been cited as an effective way of changing the public's perception of celebrity athletes. In the mainstream media Rio Ferdinand had been

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previously criticised for his irresponsible and immature attitude; failing to turn up for a drug test and cheating on his pregnant partner shortly after portraying himself as a family man. His infidelity was however exposed, despite his appeal to put a media injunction in place based on the fact that he had attempted to mislead the public with a constructed image (McNamara, 2009; Crepeau, 2010). When this occurs the individual has to rebuild their trust and image with the public (Sanderson, 2010). It appears that through his tweets, particularly his frequent reference to his role as a dad, he seeks to show he has grown up, therefore distancing himself from previous images.

'why don't you get a Mohican as well dad?' 'I'm 33, grown-ups don't have mohicans son'

@Rioferdy 9th August 2012

bike ride up and down the garden with the lil men done. Bath and bed time for them coming up

@Rioferdy 23rd August 2012

Gilmore (2010) has previously highlighted that reference to family is a good way of players highlighting that they are grounded individuals as well as celebrities. Furthermore, it offers a willingness to give their followers an insight into their private life. Similar to representations in Being Liverpool, reference to spending time with his children could be characteristic of what Smith and Beal (2007) referred to as 'hands on dad'.

In contrast to Ferdinand's somewhat playful and humourous image he appears to construct, The image construction of Michael Owen on *Twitter* could be considered relatively 'manufactured' and corporate, in that he avoids saying anything controversial and largely restricts his tweets to family, football, horse racing and comments about other sports. It is notable that this representation is largely consistent with mainstream media coverage of the player. Whannel (1999) has previously pointed out that the emergence of Michael Owen at the 1998 World Cup marked a shift in the expectation of football celebrity. Compared to players such as Paul Gascoigne, who were defined by a 'laddish' and irresponsible form of masculinity, Owen represented a new era of professionalism in the game. Owen was

presented as a model professional, a sort of 'boy wonder' meets 'boy next door' (Whannel, 2001). Crucially, unlike Paul Gascoigne, Owen's genius on the pitch was not marred by bad behaviour off it. It was suggested in Chapter Two, that the vision of the Premier League was to shun previous negativity associated with both the culture of the game and its players. Similar to Andrews' (2006) suggestions about the rebranding of the NBA, the new commercially friendly Premier League had no room for 'fools' (Lines, 2001).

Owen arguably fits in with the mainstream culture of sport, but has the credible persona and affluence that allows him to be taken seriously in wider cultural arenas. Furedi (2010) for instance, points out that authority is outsourced to celebrity figures, as such they become authorities on a wide range of public matters. During the London 2012 Olympic Games for instance, Michael Owen used *Twitter* to respond to criticisms regarding footballers' attitudes in comparison to Olympians after a wide spread debate spread across both mainstream and social media. Although the behaviour and attitudes and behaviour of players has been lamented in both academic and mainstream accounts of football celebrity (Lines, 2001: Williams, 2006), the Olympics perhaps provided a catalyst and comparison to provoke discussion and debate online. Perhaps ironically, given his reputation for poor behaviour, it was Joey Barton who started the online debate, being critical of footballers' attitudes. In the response below, Michael Owen stepped into the debate, offering an alternative and perhaps most crucially, an insider perspective.

Michael Owen I'm a huge fan of our Olympians but I struggle to understand the low opinions most people have towards footballers

Reply Footballers are easy targets as every move is reported. Olympics aside, when do athletes dominate column inches

Reply Sorry but dominating column inches is no excuse for attitude, disconnection, arrogance, flash behavior

@themichaelowen 14th August, 2012

Consistent with previous work on athletes' use of Twitter, there was evidence that the medium clearly allows for challenges to mainstream media representation (Hambrick *et al,.* 2010; Sanderson, 2008). Michael Owen made specific reference to

the idea that comparing Olympians to footballers was unfair. Although he did not elucidate on this point initially, one of his followers suggested that the amount of coverage and level of intrusion is likely to impact on the way players are represented compared to Olympians. However, it was apparent that others were not content to accept this as an excuse for 'flash behaviour' and 'arrogance'. Such arrogance from wealthy players has previously been discussed in the literature as instrumental in the degrading of the game (Whannel, 2001; Williams, 2006). Although a lot of mainstream media attention has centred on privilege and what might be considered the positive aspects of being a celebrity footballer, Owen's input to the debate highlighted that it has its downsides too, in particular the aggressive and vindictive behaviour of fans. This view from Owen's insider perspective perhaps encouraged the followers to adopt a critical reading and to consider the issue from different angles rather than unquestionably accepting the version presented by mainstream media.

I agree that football has lost touch with reality slightly but let's get it right, if you were playing at an away ground and.....Went to hug the spectators like Usain Bolt you would struggle to get out alive not to mention the tirade of abuse every.....Footballer gets when in earshot of the crowd. We are talking about a totally different audience and like it or not a.....Football ground isn't the most pleasant of places in the world. I certainly wouldn't take my kids to watch a match

Players role in creating that atmosphere? Habitually swearing at/chasing officials abusing opponents etc

@themichaelowen 14th August, 2012

So it's the fans fault? You don't think the fans are maybe reacting to the players? Genuine question

Michael Owen- 15/8 its ok blaming the footballers but in my opinion it's the whole culture of football that needs to change. As I've said, it's easy to lambast footballers but they are normal people. If they act like normal people and get treated like normal people that would be a start.

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Owen however, highlights the discrepancy between football and other sports, particularly in terms of the culture surrounding the game. Although the debate comes to no clear conclusion about whose fault the problem is, and what should be done, Owen clearly implies that the fans also have a part to play in creating the current negative atmosphere within the sport (Jones, 2008).

Mean (2001) argues that 'doing' sport properly involves the demonstration of competence and knowledge about current issues and the culture of a particular sport. In this instance discussing the issues inherent within football culture perhaps serve to reinforce Owen's followers their identity as fans, particularly since they were prepared to debate the topic with someone who has an insider perspective.

Lebel and Danylchuk (2012) reported that followers also felt greater affinity with those who displayed thoughts, feelings and behaviours on *Twitter*. All the players displayed their thoughts and feelings in one way or another, often using the medium to highlight the different sides of their personality. Rooney for example interacted with fans about an injury that was keeping him out of the game. He expressed frustration that the media had misrepresented how long he was likely to be out of action for. *Twitter* was used to reassure fans that he was ok and show his commitment to keeping his fans in the loop with something that more typically might be more guarded information (Pegoraro, 2010).

Read all the nonsense in the papers and heard what people have to say. Absolute rubbish

Thanks for all the messages of support. Gutted to be out for a while but my leg will be ok which is the main thing

@WayneRooney, 28^{th,} August 2012

His expression of dismay that he couldn't play showed his commitment and passion for the game and his desire to get back to playing. In an age where footballers have been increasingly criticised for their celebrity lifestyles and petulant behaviour, talk

about their passion for the game might provide a degree of reassurance to fans that they are not concerned with financial rewards (Williams, 2006).

With the exception of sport, traditionally, men are not expected to display emotion. However, shifts in masculinity and the open celebration of the sensitive new man have allowed men to show more emotional sides of their persona. In one particular tweet Wayne Rooney used *Twitter* to show his grief publicly following his grandfather's death.

Tommy mc I will always miss u. so lucky to be part of ur family. Love u always. Your mate Wayne. RIP granddad

Hope you're ok

My condolences

Sorry to hear it chap

<div align="right">@WayneRooney 26th July, 2012</div>

Langer (1998) has suggested how personal disclosure is assumed to reveal the real self. In contrast to his often volatile persona on the pitch Rooney shows vulnerability thereby revealing a softer side to his personality. In this instance, Twitter becomes a space not only for sentiment to be displayed but also allows fans to wish him well.

In comparison to the other players, Joey Barton mentioned very little about his private life or family. He appeared however to use links to other causes and topical issues as a way of connecting with his followers and establishing common ground. One particular issue he highlighted was the failure of Liverpool Football Club to contribute towards a memorial for the fans killed in the Hillsborough disaster. Some of Barton's tweets around this subject are highlighted below.

I am not out to cause shit for LFC just feel that people must know the truth. All this is the TRUTH

not 1p from the club towards a city centre memorial for the victims of the biggest tragedy in the clubs history. It's truly shocking...

It's a fucking disgrace lad. Its pocket change to half the players aswell. I hope you practice what you preach an donated

<div align="right">@Joey7Barton 23rd August, 2012</div>

Well done to Liverpool FC for finally putting their hand in the pocket

<div align="right">@Joey7Barton 29th August, 2012</div>

Hailing from Liverpool himself it was perhaps an opportunity to connect with followers and show he cared about a cause close to his heart and close to the hearts of many Liverpool fans. It is a growing expectation of celebrities that they use their 'authority' and 'charisma' for public good (Furedi, 2010). Whilst some have been critical of celebrity involvement in politics, others have suggested it is a useful way of providing a connection with the public and raising awareness of certain issues. There are those however who would question the true motivation behind such strategies and whether it is little more than an attempt to increase their personal profile and popularity (Evans & Hesmondhalgh, 2005).

Barton has previously referred to Joey as his 'stage name' indicating that he is acutely self-aware that *Twitter* forms a platform for self-presentation (Clark, 2012). Barton's presentation of self-online appears to play with contradiction, perhaps trying to create intrigue in the audience as to who Joey Barton really is. In fact *Twitter* appears to allow him to play out a Jekyll and Hyde character moving between philosophic and seemingly deep musings, to abusive outbursts. It has been suggested that celebrity highlights the tension between the two sides of the persona, the larger than life and real person coupled with the tension between the possibility and impossibility of knowing the truth. It is this ambivalence that makes celebrity intriguing (Eagleton, 2005).

Barton's interest in philosophy, politics, art and literature has become a subject of ridicule in the mainstream press, perhaps because it is seen to be at odds with his bad boy image and wider stereotypes of footballers. He frequently makes reference to spending time reading and uses quotes from well-known philosophers, including reference to Morrissey in the extract below.

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off to read a book now and do some stuff the pseudo-intellegent do

<div align="right">@Joey7Barton 21st August, 2012</div>

I've been dreaming of a time when the English are sick to death of labour and the torries and spit on the name of Oliver Cromwell

<div align="right">@Joey7Barton 2nd August, 2012</div>

Although he does not conform to what is considered a typical football identity, he does not have his masculinity or sexuality questioned as other players have for expressing what are often considered 'middle class' tastes and preferences (Whannel, 2001). Grahame Le Saux was famously taunted by Robbie Fowler for being a 'Guardian-reading, art lover from the Channel Islands, clearly 'suspect' from the perspective of the constricting limits of working-class terrace subculture masculinity' (Whannel, 2001: 212). This difference in the way Barton is treated is perhaps due to his violent tendencies which serve to reinforce his masculinity. Despite the contradictory elements, his behaviour is therefore firmly located in notions of working class masculinity.

Although there are clearly guidelines in place to regulate players' use of *Twitter*, Joey Barton used *Twitter* to voice his dissent at his treatment by his club QPR and to express his wish to move to Marseille, a move which he subsequently achieved. Although *Twitter* is limited to Tweets of 140 characters, this did not stop Barton sending a series of tweets in close succession. Tynan (2012) highlights that social media guidelines for English Premier League playersnurges players to understand the potential audience of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook and offers advice on the endorsement of brands, goods and services. It also prohibits confidential information about team selection, injuries or tactics from being disclosed on social media. The type of information included in Barton's tweets is clearly not adhering to the rules and guidance for players.

I am not the type of player to sit on the sidelines and take the cash....I want to play football

not gonna cry about it, maybe its just time to move on

to the QPR fans, for some reason the manager dislikes me from before Man city

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hopefully QPR and Marseille can finalise the deal in the next few days. My head is already in the Velodrome.

I am hopefully that things will be sorted out soon. Other clubs are in but I only want to play in Marseille. This is the place for me........

I could of appealed as is my right. I chose not to out of respect but when I returned from the club I am forced to train away from the first team.

I am stripped of the captaincy. Then made to train at 3pm, then I am hawked out on loan

I hope to move on with my career, with my life. If that is in France, so be it. I don't want to be disrespectful to QPR but enough is enough

good night people! I've said enough for today. I'll get into trouble no doubt. But this is how it is, this is life.

@Joey7Barton 26th August, 2012

The lack of control in voicing opinions is linked to his overall demeanour in both online and offline spaces. Knowing that his *Twitter* account is frequently monitored by journalists it is likely that he knew his comment would create controversy and therefore attention. Crucially with Twitter, Barton's followers interjected with their own opinions. Some followers used Twitter to offer advice, suggesting that he should play well and not speak out in that way.

Time to get your head down and prove to England what a great midfield player you are. Trouble free and let your boots talk

You going to have a good season this one. Keep ur cool & no fighting : -) if you can help it

26th August 2012

Consistent with Sanderson (2010), this perhaps indicates a reversal in the way advice given. It is suggested that ICT environments produce relational qualities that afford people that they can and should offer advice. The comments are however appear to be supportive of Barton, trying to protect him from himself.

It was evident however that comments frequently got more personal with insults being traded with the player. It is likely that anonymity afforded by the sites allows people to vent vindictive impulses that cannot be released in other more direct forms of interaction (Eagleton, 2005; Moe, 2010). Lewis (2001) has highlighted how the interactive nature of the Internet might encourage people to disclose negative relational characteristics, for example, a person could communicate disgust, shame or disappointment over a celebrity's action. In the case of Barton, previous misdemeanours highlighted within mainstream media were drawn on to insult him. It was suggested earlier in the thesis that psychoanalytical approaches focus on the way in which vindictive impulses are vented. The comments below provide clear examples of the venting of such vindictive impulses.

'Prob your disciplinary record, he needs players on the pitch'

'Nobody is crying here either now fuck of and shut up bitching. The gaffer don't like you because you're a skipper who does not lead by example....Absolute dogshit role model'

'Twitter is really the worst thing for someone of your demeanour to have access to'

'And whose fault is all of this? Have a look in the mirror and you'll see a very ugly answer. Always the victim Please stop winging nobody gives a shit'

26th August, 2012

The responses above indicate little sympathy for Barton with suggestions that he should stop complaining. His treatment by the club is firmly blamed on his lack of discipline and poor behaviour. In referencing Barton's use of *Twitter,* it is suggested that it is 'the worst thing' for someone like him to have access to, perhaps due to his propensity for outbursts. It does however appear somewhat ironic that despite the negative comments above that imply negative relational qualities, all individuals have chosen to follow Barton. This trend is again consistent with psychoanalytical suggestions that there is ambivalence in both the way that celebrity figures present themselves and the way we consume them (Rose, 2003). On the one hand we admire their fame and visibility but we are secretly resentful of their success and take pleasure in opportunities to pull them apart (Eagleton, 2005). Although the majority

of comments address Barton directly, one in particular however switched part way through to seemingly addressing a wider audience to voice dissent.

'You really are a boring twat- The wanker forgets he gets paid 70k a week. Wow I hate him'

26th August, 2012

This suggests that people are aware that there is an audience for their comments and are therefore perhaps encouraging a response from Barton's followers rather than from him. Although studies of parasocial interaction to date have tended to focus on positive relational qualities (Cohen, 2001; Cashmore, 2006), it appeared that a large numbers of Barton's followers in particular used *Twitter* to be aggressive and hostile towards the player. Although this is likely to be influenced by his representations in mainstream media it indicates that followers interact with football celebrity for a number of different reasons.

Conclusions

The chapter has illustrated a number of different ways in which the audience is encouraged to interact with football celebrity, particularly through allowing access to seemingly backstage areas. Firstly, the exploration of *Being Liverpool* illustrated that, although the overarching narrative was concerned with authenticity, and perhaps aligning both the club and its players with a more golden age of football, it could actually be considered an ideological project designed to promote the commercial interests of the club. Furthermore, the documentary drew significantly on audience labour in promoting itself as authentic and in touch with its fans. Consistent with the US market the documentary was aimed at, it also reflected neoliberal ideology associated with the American dream. Dominant ideologies associated with gender were also evident within the documentary, for instance the role of the female as playing a supportive role in comparison to the male 'bread winner'

The Secret Footballer column in *The Guardian* provided an example of the intersection of corporate media production and grassroots activities where the audience are invited to be interactive and directly ask questions to the celebrity player. It was suggested that the game like quality of the column might also be

considered significant, allowing the audience to look for clues as to his identity. To some extent, the pleasure taken in this game might be considered reflective of the appeal of celebrity more widely, since it arguably reflects attempts to uncover the 'truth' within the spectacle performance environment. In comparisons to assumptions that interactivity equals resistance, it was suggested that the interactivity afforded in this particular online environment was largely playful, rather than aiming to challenge dominant ideologies. The representations of football celebrity were highly contradictory drawing on different aspects of appeal to engage the audience. In an entertainment driven society this is perhaps to keep the audience engaged and keep them guessing.

Although *Twitter* is a social networking site allowing players to connect with fans, it is undeniably a space for the celebrity players to portray themselves in a particular way. The way that they interact with fans is significant in this strategy. Although there was clear evidence of interaction, it was notable that these interactions were often initiated by the celebrity footballer around a topic of their choice. There appears therefore, to be a clear power dynamic between the celebrity player and their followers in this respect. Players used the site to show themselves as ordinary, part of a strategy to maintain a relationship with the audience. Consistent with previous research about *Twitter* use, it was used on occasions to challenge mainstream perceptions of the culture of football as well as individual players. The credibility of certain players to challenge mainstream representations appeared to be significant, perhaps indicating that interactions on Twitter are informed by inter textual readings of the players. Joey Barton in particular was a target for abuse online, a form of interaction that has often been overlooked academically despite being a frequent feature of mainstream news reports.

Chapter Six- Football celebrity and alternative fan sites : fandom, interactivity and resistant practices

Introduction

This chapter specifically considers interactive fan activity that occurs around football celebrity. Jenkins (2006) has previously suggested that the growth of the internet has allowed fan activity to flourish, including particular forms of fandom that were once kept 'underground' for members' fear of judgment. Fan writing has been explored extensively in wider media studies as a potential form of resistance, but sport has rarely been at the centre of this analysis (Sandvoss, 2005). In recognition of this gap, this chapter explores two fan sites that might be considered disruptive to the prevailing norms of football, particularly in terms of gender and sexuality.

The first part of this chapter provides a critical analysis of football fan site and blog *Kickette*. Given that football fandom is a practice associated with masculinity and male bonding, the site is significant in that it is run by women, for women, with a particular focus on the players of the game, rather than the sport itself. Whilst the female body has frequently been an object of scrutiny within the literature, the female gaze on the male body has largely been overlooked. Through this site, football celebrity becomes an object for the female gaze, where players' bodies are desired, judged and commented upon. Since the gaze is considered to be linked to the articulation of power, this space potentially allows women a degree of agency. The site also allows female fans to discuss stories about football celebrity that are of particular interest to them, for example discussing fashion and the players' family lives. It is suggested however, that although on the one hand, the shift of the gaze perhaps provides a degree of empowerment and resistance, the trend to comment on, and sexualise men in a similar way to how female athletes have been treated within mainstream media, perhaps copies hegemonic culture rather than offers a serious challenge to it (Chase, 2006).

The second section in the chapter explores a subject hitherto untouched subject within the study of football, that of slash fiction, and how, what might be considered

resistant stories are written about players in the game. It was suggested earlier in the thesis, that whilst slash fiction has often been associated with creative writing that involves fictional characters in homosexual relationships and encounters, there is a growing interest in real person slash that draws on popular celebrity figures for its inspiration. Through fiction that presents individual football celebrities in homosexual relationships and encounters, the online fan site, *Not Just a Game* provides a space where subverting hegemonic masculinity becomes possible. It is suggested that the 'queering' of football and football celebrity through slash, provides a potentially resistant text. Given the persistent taboo of homosexuality within the sport, this is a practice that in itself disrupts the prevailing norms and values of football culture. However, it will be suggested that critical readings of football slash perhaps contradict the outwardly progressive and resistant texts thus supporting the notion that power needs to be considered as contingent. While slash has often been discussed as relatively formulaic in its convention, the slash written about football celebrity appeared to contain a number of unique elements perhaps reflecting the culture of the sport.

As it was suggested in Chapter Three, although slash fiction was created and circulated prior to the development of the Internet, online sites have made it a more accessible form of fandom. As Busse and Hellekson (2006:12) elaborate, 'it [the internet] has changed the size of fandom and demographics, and has created new forms of reader-author interaction'. Consistent with the notion that fan activity represents a complex battle between the 'producer' and 'consumer' over the control of the text, the Internet has on the one hand allowed more slash fans to produce and circulate their fiction, however, the public nature of the Internet also potentially now makes fan material easier to police by corporations who wish to protect their copyright (Jenkins, 2006).

Kickette

The *Kickette* site is described as a fan site for girls 'who enjoy the men as much as the game'. Although Kickette contains some information about the sport itself, the focus is largely on the players, their private lives and personal appearance. It is overtly gossip orientated, a style associated with a female readership (Bird, 2003). Some of the features of the site are highlighted below.

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- WAG watch (features focusing specifically on WAGs with a particular emphasis on fashion and their domestic and supportive role)

- Beck talk (Beck Talk and Cristiano are features relating to David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo).

- Cristiano

- Infidelity files (Consistent with trends in coverage in mainstream media, there is an emphasis on stories involving scandal surrounding marital infidelities

- Bubba and ballers (This features stories and images of players with their children, usually emphasising their role as doting parent).

- Fashion (This category includes links to the various fashion brands that players are involved with. It also shows them at celebrity events).

The categories highlighted above largely reflect the content of mainstream coverage of football celebrity, offering celebratory accounts of wealth and success, as well as opportunities to engage with celebrity scandal. Sanderson (2010) however notes, that new media spaces, including fan sites, actually allow fans to voice their opinions on such issues, an option not available through more traditional media formats. The analysis of Kickette therefore offers, not only an insight into the ideological content of the site, but perhaps more importantly, what female fans actually 'do' on the site. The use and reinterpretation of mainstream media material on the site might be considered consistent with Lash and Lury's (2007) work, in the sense that it illustrates that media resources have indeterminate effects and circulate in indeterminate ways. Thus females are able to take images from mainstream media and use them in a different way than they were intended, particularly with regard to images of masculinity.

Objectifying the male body

In contrast to mainstream football environments where women are criticised for lusting after players, fan sites such as *Kickette* may provide a space where they can express their desire for the male body. Although the gaze is usually associated with men looking at women, the sexualisation of football celebrity, as part of wider marketing strategies, has provided opportunities for the gaze to be reversed

(Kennedy and Hills, 2009). Images of female athletes within mainstream media have tended to conform to feminine stereotypes that emphasise passivity, submission and overt sexualisation (Kian *et al.,* 2008). Increasingly however, the sexualisation of male athletes is common place, particularly within marketing strategies. With the male sporting body providing confirmation of hegemonic masculinity, individual football celebrities have been used frequently in advertising campaigns of this kind.

This trend was clearly reflected in the content of the site where images were selected to scrutinise the male body. A regular feature of the fan site is 'the weekly fit' in which (usually half naked) players are highlighted and their bodies subjected to scrutiny. Similar to how coverage of female athletes in the media tends focus on specific female body parts, such as the buttocks and breasts, features on Kickette emphasised particular aspects of the male body, most notably, chest abdominals arms and thighs. In the extract below for instance Saloman Kalou is described as having 'abs you could grate cheddar on'.

Is *there anything sexier than a man with a sense of humour? Well, yes, a man with abs you could grate cheddar on obviously, luckily Saloman Kalou has both!*

(Kickette, October 15th 2011).

Such a focus on particular body parts can however be thought of as a practice of objectification, effectively dehumanising the individual within the picture. Mason (1992) however offers an alternative perspective, arguing that partitioning the male body into muscle groups can be a strategy for de-emphasising the sexual qualities the image. In this way the body is treated as a machine, a series of functioning parts, rather than an object (Beynon, 2002). Furthermore, the male sporting body fulfils a performative function. The body is put through rigorous training in order to be successful on the field; the display of the male body could therefore be viewed as the embodiment of physical capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Thorpe, 2009).

Adverts using sexualised images of players were also used on the site to provoke discussions amongst women. The image below is described as 'another subdued ad campaign from Dolce and Gabbana', a company who have frequently used football celebrity to advertise their brand. Given that the advert is selling a product aimed at males, it is again playing to the idea that men should aspire to fit lean body, perhaps

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epitomised by football celebrity (Gilmour & Rowe, 2010). Messner (2012) has argued that mediated images of celebrity athletes allow men to bask in reflected glory, not only in relation to sporting achievements, but also idealized forms of masculinity.
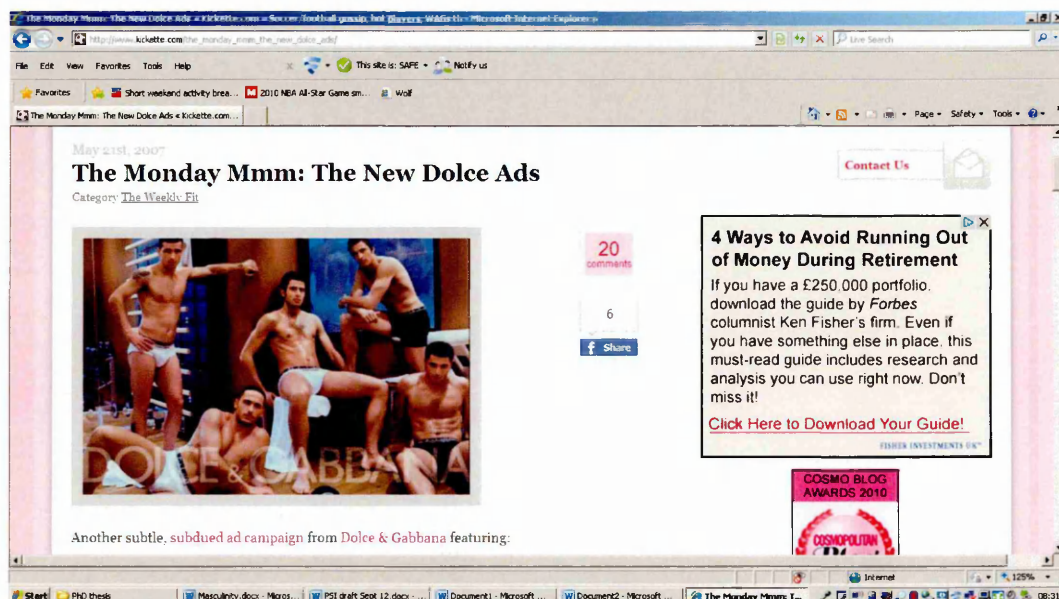
It is evident however, that even in the most extreme state of undress, as illustrated in the image above, the male subject always strives to be empowering (Brittan, 1989). Crucially although the ad features five males in their underwear, none of them are looking at each other (Brod, 1987). It has also previously been suggested that muscularity and hardness are emphasised through media techniques, lighting and camera work (Morrison & Halton, 2010). The camera shot in this instance is taken from below, leaving the males higher in the photograph and therefore in a position of looking down rather than being looked down upon (Gard and Fitzgerald, 2008). This serves to reinforce the idea that the male is still in a position of control in relation to the viewer.

Furthermore, Morrison and Halton (2010) have argued that the sexualisation of male athletes often uses strategies to make links to more hegemonic forms of masculinity, almost perhaps as a form of apology. One way this might be achieved is to feature the male body in a way that implies readiness for action. This is often achieved through a backdrop of a sporting environment or through the presence of sporting equipment to perhaps signify masculinity. In the image above for instance, the

photograph is taken in a gym environment with weights equipment in the background, signifying that it is a male space.

Messner (2012) points out that athletic masculinity is part of a successful manhood formula. Images of conventionally athletic men are therefore used as a way of selling consumer products and encouraging male consumers to survey their own bodies in relation to hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, men are encouraged to consume the products associated with celebrity athletes, including footballers as a way of addressing their masculine inadequacies. Although the image below was featured on the Kickette site it is notably that it is the front cover of a magazine aimed at men.
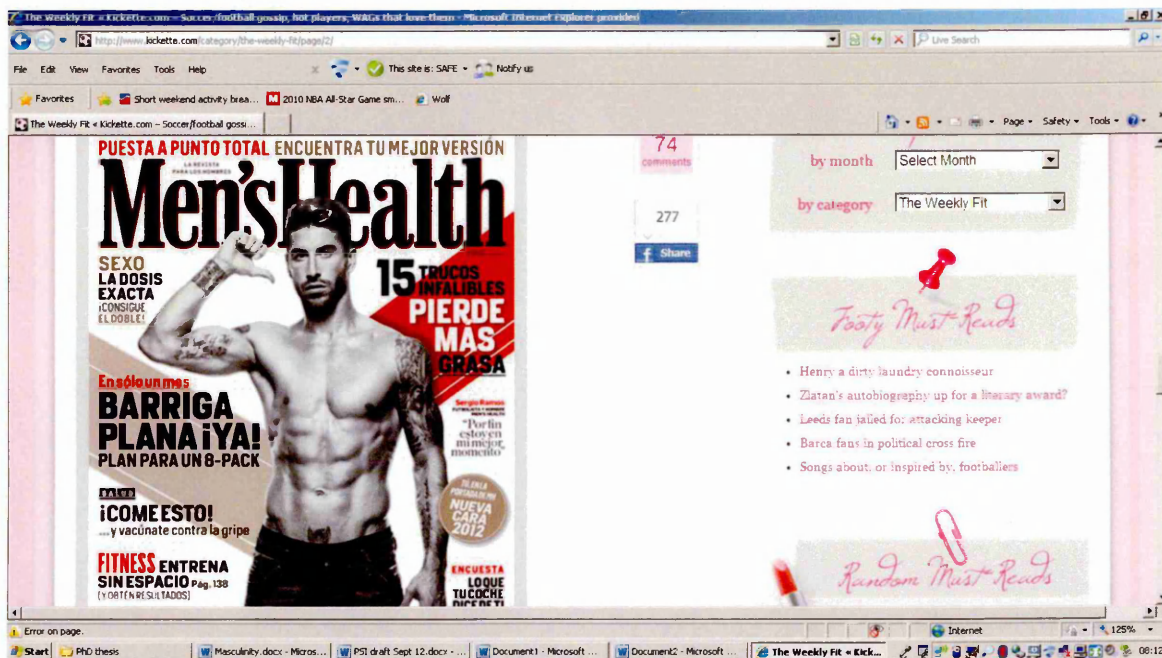
Masculinity theorist Benwell (2003) has researched strategies used by *Men's Health Magazine* to make images of semi-naked male bodies less challenging to heterosexual male consumers. He suggested that masculine on masculine looking is culturally permissible if the emphasis is on musculature or offering the promise of self-transformation of the body, particularly as a way of being more successful in heterosexual relationships. In this context, images and corresponding features become bench marks and also a handbook for achieving masculinity. Although in this instance the image does not feature 'sport' as what might be considered an apology for the display of the body, the confident gaze of the model looking straight

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back at the reader implies invulnerability and therefore negates connotations of femininity associated with the display of the body (White and Gillet, 1994).

Consistent with the aim of the site, this did not stop the females interpreting the image in a sexual way with the focus of discussions between users being on his physical attractiveness.

Holy smokes the man is stunning……seriously I don't know when I've seen anything hotter

Knowing the worlds most chiselled six and eight packs have a place to call home on the internet pleases us immensely

Ay Carumba indeed! This is what I like to see on my computer screen (or, ya know, in my bed). I would like to thank Sergio for his willingness to strip and kickette for providing an outlet to let my crazy flag fly with other ladies who understand

Kickette, November 7[th,] 2011

It is evident from the quotes above that females gained pleasure from looking at the male body with one perhaps implying fantasies about Ramos as a sexual partner. There was particular reference to the notion that Kickette provides a space where females can 'look' without being judged. Vemorel and Vemorel (1985) suggest that there is a key societal difference between men and women when it comes to the gaze. Since sexual desire is more aligned with male attributes, it is acceptable for males to look at females however; it is seen as inappropriate for women to desire men, particularly male fantasy figures. Morse (1983:45) argues that this can be explained by a 'strong cultural inhibition against the look at the male body based on the deep seated reluctance to make males the object of scopophilia. Vemerol and Vemoral (1985) suggested that fantasy based interactions with male celebrity figures were unhealthy for females. They suggested that females who engaged in this way were unable to form real relationships and were unable to separate fantasy from reality. The interactions in this instance however appeared to be more playful and nothing like delusion.

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Masculinity, metrosexuality and fashion

Connell (1988) has previously argued that masculinities come into existence at particular times and places and are always subject to change. In highlighting one such change, Carmiel (2009) suggests how contemporary consumerist masculinity allows heterosexual men to engage in practices more typically associated with femininity, for example, care for appearance and following fashion trends. In recent years however football and fashion have become increasingly intertwined allowing men to legitimately indulge in consumer practices without ridicule. In the photograph below, Ronaldo could be mistaken for a male model. There is no reference to football or no reference to who the player is, perhaps because it is assumed that consumers, both male and female would already know who he is and what he does. Whilst football celebrity has always been used to sell consumer products, these new forms of masculinity has allowed the link with a wider variety of brands and consumer goods thereby offering opportunities for men to express manhood through consumer practices. As it was suggested in Chapter Two, the use of particular sports celebrities in branding involves commodifying the personal attributes and achievements of the individual, to allow the consumer to buy into the brand. Ronaldo's success in the sport is therefore transferred to the brand, perhaps seducing consumers into the belief that if they buy watch he is advertising, they become symbolically closer to Ronaldo.
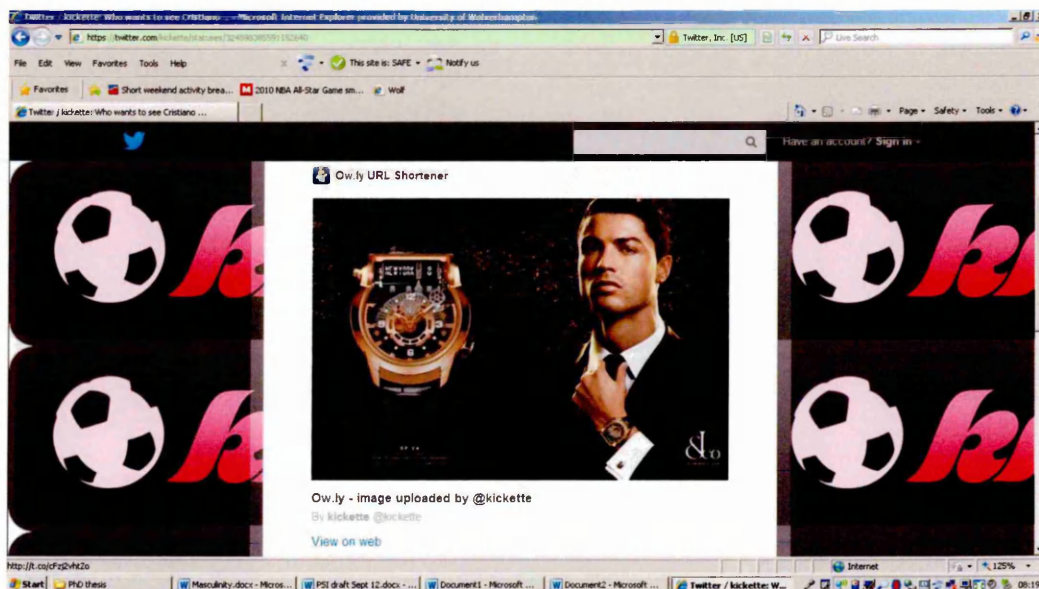
The females on the site made reference to Ronaldo's fashion conscious image, making specific reference to his 'reckless abuse of Gucci' as 'obnoxiously over the top'. It appears therefore that not all females are in favour of the fashion conscious and narcissistic masculine identity embodied by Ronaldo.

Here's a guy who is single handedly keeping the textile industry afloat. Personally we find Cristiano Ronaldos reckless abuse of Gucci to be obnoxiously OTT but we're big enough to put our differences aside when it comes to identifying hotness

Kickette, October 28th, 2011

It did not appear however to detract from his perceived attractiveness. It was suggested earlier in the thesis that metrosexual footballers like Beckham, Ronaldo, Henry and Ljundberg confuse and confront rigid categorisation based on binary logic (Coad, 2005). This shift does to some extent however indicate how subordinate forms of masculinity have increasingly influenced dominant ones (Cashmore & Cleland, 2011). Cashmore and Cleland (2011:728) highlight that a shift in personal styles and life styles of privileged men have helped to eliminate or at least mitigate many of the aspects of 'traditional masculinity' that men have previously been constrained by.

Whether they are the object of the gaze, or being subjected to wider mechanisms of societal surveillance, football celebrity becomes a point of convergence for discussions of masculinity and success. Whilst on the one hand the site offers resistant readings of masculinity, particularly through the sexualisation of individual players, these interpretations are somewhat limited by the forms of representation which ultimately deny the gaze. Furthermore, although the merger with fashion has been viewed as indicative of a more femininised form of masculinity it is perhaps more reflective of shifts in consumer capitalism that has sought to commodify men in a particular way.

A player's guide to dating

Another type of feature on the site is interviews with players, usually with a focus of what they find desirable in a partner. It appears that the purpose of the feature is providing readers with an insider's perspective, a guidebook on what is required to attract a footballer. It was suggested earlier in the thesis that mainstream media coverage of players has focused on the notion of privilege particularly when it comes to women (Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004). Although celebrity gossip has been cited as predominantly a female practice, it was suggested in Chapter Five that stories about the lurid sexual activity of football celebrities might be appealing to a male audience because it is indicative of hegemonic masculinity and success. In the following interview, Chris Pontius answers questions about his experiences with women as a professional footballer. It is evident even from the line of questioning, that footballers are deemed sexually desirable and consequently, women are likely to pursue them.

When you venture out on the town how frisky are the females?

If a girl comes up and is a bit much right away, that's probably not the best first impression. Also when they're too drunk that can be bad. A classy girl is one you can take home to mom and dad, not one who you're telling your friends about and they suddenly have a story about her with another guy.

Ideal girl?

I like to be taken care of, so ideally I prefer someone who knows her way around the kitchen. I'm into girls who take care of themselves, like when they have a nice manicure/pedicure . It's crucial

Kickette, November 7th 2011

Although football players are well known for their sexual exploits and often aggressive pursuit of women, he suggests that he would be put off by a girl who behaved in this way. The description of his ideal girl was consistent with stereotypical gender roles. He wanted someone to look good, perhaps as an accessory, but also, someone who would take care of him and cook for him. Messner (2012) highlights that one of the rewards for success in sport is to gain the attention

and adoration from conventionally attractive women. Consistent with suggestions made by Clayon and Harris (2004), Pontius sees the role of his female partner as supportive, taking care of domestic arrangements and being a capital bearing object, in turn enhancing his masculine status. Goffman (1959) has suggested that we are all social actors, who are aware of the various roles we are expected to perform. It was suggested earlier in the thesis that the sub-culture of football perhaps encourages the mistreatment of, and a lack of respect towards women. However, these views and behaviour outside the football sub-culture may not be valued in the same way. Pontius' interview in this instance perhaps comes across as what Goffman would refer to as a breach in performance.

Although the aim of the interview was to show what the football celebrity finds attractive, thereby providing some sort of guidance for attracting a player, the nature of sites allowing consumers to be critical of content was evident in responses highlighting that users of the site were less than enamoured with his view on the role of women.

He doesn't sound nice, a girl has to look like Victoria Beckham, be able to cook and clean for him and also keep herself together, but should not expect him to get her nice things? And it also kind of sounds like the word slut is lurking in his mind during a lot of the 'classy girl' discussion, although I shouldn't put words in his mouth. Hot, but I would never date him

So basically he wants a virgin who can cook- good luck with that

Maybe if we are all lucky enough to sit down with our favourite ballers and ask them the tough questions then we would find some unsavoury answers that make us realise these fine men we drool over are not the people we thought they were.

Kickette, November 7th 2011

This highlights wider trends in fan studies that highlight potentially resistant readings of texts. In particular, there was a rejection of the idea that they would want to be with someone who had those views on the role of a female partner, no matter what their status, or how physically attractive they were. This however, doesn't change the fact that features of this kind are there to provide guidance on what women need to do, or how they need to act in order to attract a player. Although the purpose of the

interview was to get a first-hand perspective of what players want, some of the responses indicated if they discovered what players were really like they would be disappointed. This might be considered consistent with the work of Gamson (1994) who suggested 'distance' is crucial for maintaining our image of celebrity, if we get too close, we are likely to be disappointed and ruin the illusion.

Conversely however, whilst fans were critical of Pontius' view in this instance, it was evident from other features on the site that they also seemed to revel in the stereotypes of WAGs as kept women who are happy to engage in consumer lifestyles at their husbands' expense. It is important to recognise that WAG culture has emerged out of wider changes in football culture and a change in emphasis towards celebrity and consumer culture. Clayton and Harris (2004) suggest that WAGs serve to reinforce both notions of masculinity and male success. The following section explores the notion of player wealth and consumption more widely, to show how it creates not only feelings of excitement and aspiration but it also has the capacity to tip into derision. In the extracts below for example the contradictions in feelings towards WAGs were highlighted.

Let's give it up for Winnona de Jong who managed to score a Zac Posen gown to wear to masters of LXRY event in Amsterdam. Winnonah kindly posts her daily outfits and fashion finds on her Instagram so we can be jealous and marvel at the speed with which she continues to spend Nigel's money. True class from a Dutch WAG.

'On the one hand we want our wags to break from the chains of their stereotypical personas and run free through the streets demanding natural nails, flat shoes and library cards. But, if we're honest, like most things in life that are pure and perfect in their creation, we don't want to change the non-job having, salary rinsing, heavily tanned and made up with shellack machine that is the modern Wag life. Because, well, it's fabulous'.

(Kickette, November 4th 2011).

In the first quote it is implied that Winnona de Jong posts her daily outfits on Instagram, allowing the audience to bear witness to her wealth and consumer habits

that are likely to be far removed from their own. It could be argued, that WAGs have in many ways become emblematic of the football celebrity lifestyle, characterised by excessive displays of wealth and consumption. Consistent with ideas presented in Chapter Five, although reference is made to class, it appears to reflect ideas more associated with the leisure class. Her role of a WAG and specifically being a kept woman is referred to, making it clear she is spending her husband's money rather than her own. The second extract specifically picks up on the ambivalence inherent in interactions with celebrity. It is clear that on the one hand WAG culture is deplored; however, it is also celebrated for its blatant frivolousness. The second quote again makes reference to the way that their leisure class is defined. This serves to differentiate them from class in a conventional sense. The reference to the WAG as '*non-job having, salary rinsing, heavily tanned and made up*' suggests that they have the economic capital, but not the social or cultural capital that is associated with the higher classes. Bourdieu (1984) highlights how what he terms the new middle class are characterised not only by conspicuous consumption, but a lifestyle defined by what might be thought of as engagement in low culture.

The legendary Liverpool designer boutique that caters to your favourite Northwest WAGs and ours held to annual xmas shindig last night and it certainly wasn't lacking in everything you've come to know, love and make fun of.

Kickette, December 16[th,] 2011

WAGS have therefore become a point of convergence to discuss issues pertaining to both social class and gender. Although they may have economic capital, they are perhaps portrayed as lacking in the social capital of the culturally elite. In the extract above, it is implied that the excessiveness and classlessness of the typical football WAG has become a focal point for humorous discourse. It was suggested in Chapter Six, that celebrity wealth can create feelings of hostility leading to vindictive attitudes and behaviours towards particular celebrity figures. Through mocking the celebrity WAGs in this way, the discussion forum on Kickette perhaps becomes an outlet for hostile feelings to be released.

Slash fiction

The final section of this chapter deals with another form of fandom; slash fiction written about football celebrity. As it was highlighted in Chapter Three, slash fiction has been identified as an area of interest in the fan literature, particularly since it is a genre predominantly written by women, for their own personal pleasure, and the pleasure of other slash fans. Specifically, Russ (1985) argues, that in slash writing, female fantasies of heterosexual sex are acted out through male bodies. It is suggested therefore, that the encounters and relationships presented in the stories, reflect females' desire for equal partnerships, not confined by gendered stereotypes. Slash also provides an example of how groups [in this instance, women] who might be marginalized from contributing to mainstream media, can create content that not only potentially challenges social and cultural norms, but also meets their own individual needs. Characteristically, slash draws on the convention of what Jenkins (1992) refers to as textual poaching, in order to rework an original text and subvert the meanings within it. Typically, previously developed characterisations, and/or storylines are used as a starting point for the creation of a slash story, although they are usually radically reworked.

Through writing stories that involve [straight] male characters in homosexual encounters and relationships, slash has been discussed as a challenge to hegemonic masculinity, as well as a disruption to binary categories of sexuality (Jenkins, 1992; Sandvoss, 2005). Slash therefore provides a useful site of analysis for this thesis, to explore how power might be both challenged and reinforced in the stories written about football celebrity. In a genre that has been dominated by stories about fictional television characters, the focus on slash fiction written about particular football celebrities, provides a unique contribution, adding to an understanding, not only of what has been referred to as real person slash, but also to the sociology of sport literature since there is currently no literature in this area.

The particular focus of this section concerns itself with the portrayal of football stars within real person slash and in particular high profile premiership footballers who dominate media coverage within the UK. This focuses specifically on stories obtained from slash fiction site *Not Just a Game*. For writers of real person slash involving sports stars such as footballers, the potential for fantasy that can disrupt

stereotypes is heightened given that it has been consistently suggested that sport serves as a powerful socialising institution for masculinity and as a place for men to 'do gender' and sexuality appropriately (Connell *et al,*. 2005; Kian, Vincent and Mondello, 2008). In contrast to the prevailing homophobic culture of football, slash fiction arguably provides an opportunity to challenge common sense assumptions about heterosexual norms and their presumed link to hegemonic masculinity. The section highlights themes evident within football celebrity slash fiction and explores the extent to which these might be considered resistive texts. In comparison to the slash genre as a whole, it will be suggested that there are certain themes that appear to be unique to football slash.

Queer Space

The analysis of slash fiction to date has indicated that stories tend to focus on particular pairings and subsequent sexual encounters between characters, with little reference being made to the context in which they occur (Jenkins, 2006; Sandvoss, 2005). In contrast, it appeared that an overarching theme in stories about football celebrity aimed to be to subvert the prevailing culture of football entirely, effectively turning it into a 'queer' space. This was achieved by the sheer numbers of players in these stories engaging in homosexual activity (although not necessarily adopting a homosexual identity) as well as the settings in which the stories took place. Typically there were only one or two players who were not engaging in homosexual activity with their team mates. The setting for football slash might be considered significant in that it used spaces associated with hegemonic masculinity, for example, the locker room or training ground as the backdrop for the stories. This arguably problematises the traditional meanings associated with these spaces.

Although perhaps not written explicitly with a political and cultural agenda in mind, many of the slash stories portrayed the heterosexual players as the minority, thereby reversing cultural norms. Hutcheon (2000) extended and used the concept of parody within the analysis of slash, to suggest that it accomplishes a wider goal of highlighting some aspect of the original, by creating something similar with highly contrasting differences. In this instance, the cultural norm of heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity is turned on its head, as homosexuality becomes the norm. In the fictional extract below for instance, the Liverpool goalkeeper Pepe Reina was

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portrayed as expressing his dismay at the diminishing number of heterosexual players at Liverpool Football Club, and in football more widely.

Until a few weeks ago, Pepe, entertained the slender hope that Cavalieri's disinclination to touching him might make the other man a member of his and Carra's very tiny fraternity of straight Liverpool players. Even if the other man was completely mental, size did matter, and three sounded a whole lot more impressive than two. Word was Chelsea's parallel had five

'How to survive Anfield with your sexuality intact', 0sweet_tart0, Not Just a

Game

The reference to the number of straight players in different teams clearly indicates that the norm in the story is homosexuality. It was also notable that as a minority, Pepe Reina was frequently singled out in the stories. His heterosexuality identity appeared at best to be limiting, in terms of his acceptance in the culture, and at worst stigmatized. In the extract below one of Reina's team mates awkwardly broaches the subject of his sexuality.

Sorry it's just, Sami told me-are you really....?

Straight? It's okay, you can say the word.

Just a question, sophiamoon, Not Just a Game

Reina's response in the story of 'it's ok, you can say the word', implies that in the context of the story, being straight is something hidden, or only talked about in hushed tones. This has clear parallels with the notion of being in the closet, implying that 'deviant' sexuality is something to be hidden. This alternative culture of football provides a stark contrast to reality, where there are currently no openly gay players in English male professional football.

In previous accounts of slash, a common theme has been the protagonists' emotional turmoil as they struggle with their identity following a same sex, sexual encounter (Jenkins, 1992). This frequently involves a homophobic reaction and a temporary crisis in the friendship of the characters, which is ultimately resolved through the gradual acceptance of their true feelings towards each other (Jones, 2002). In the football slash however, there appeared to be little evidence of homophobic reactions

in stories about their encounters, or indeed crises of identity. Players in the stories were, by and large, comfortable with their own identities and the identities of those around them. Although homosexual encounters formed the focus of the stories, players tended however, not to be labelled or label themselves as gay, but rather, they adopted more fluid sexual identities, where a range of encounters with both male and females were permissible. Furthermore, terms commonly used to define sexuality were not frequently used in the stories, perhaps reflecting a desire to avoid labelling as well as disrupt the binary system of sexuality that assumes if someone is not straight, then they must be gay (Brod, 2006).

In the following story involving Steven Gerrard and Jamie Carragher, the assumed association between sex with another man and a homosexual identity is brought into question (Boucher and Pinto, 2007).

It's not very often Jamie takes his captain to bed. It's simply not how their relationship, their friendship works. But when he does, he takes him time. He's long past the awkwardness. He no longer feels the need to tell Stevie, or perhaps mostly himself that he's not really that way. No matter how he calls it though, it's still sex between two men. And it's the kind of sex he very much enjoys.

Staying for breakfast, sophiamoon, Not Just a Game

Although the sexual act is described as pleasurable, it is suggested that Jamie does not identify as homosexual. The act of sex is therefore something that takes place between them, but does not define their relationship or their individual identities. The encounter appears to be portrayed as a blurring of friendship and a sexual relationship. Such a shift, from friendship into a sexual relationship is a common theme in the wider genre of slash. Bacon-Smith (1992) for example, has highlighted how friends in slash stories consistently break into each other spheres of personal space blurring boundaries between homo-sociality and homosexuality. This is particularly the case when characters are portrayed to be working in close proximity to each other, usually in a work context. This might however be consistent with players who are on the same team. In blurring of the boundaries between friendship and a sexual relationship, it might be argued that it becomes possible to view an individual as comprised of a multitude of intersecting, and often competing discourses (Mouffe, 1992).

Encounters between men were discussed as providing an experience that women could not offer. It was not only in a physical capacity that men were shown to be more compatible with other men, but also in the level of emotional investment during and after sexual interactions. These casual encounters between players were portrayed as pleasurable but emotionless; something females were discussed as not being capable of (Boucher and Pinto, 2007).

Now, what do you usually do afterwards? Stevie asked with a grin. 'Cuddle?'
Carra snorted getting the drift. Well you know how it is, women are crazy about that.

It was strange and unusual not to have any obligations after sex for once, but he had to admit that he was relieved by it.

Staying for breakfast, sophiamoon, Not Just a Game

It was suggested throughout the story, that intimacy following sex is something that women want, but men perceive as an obligation. Sex is therefore valued in the stories for the physical rather than emotional pleasure it provides. This is different from previous accounts of slash that have clearly emphasized a strong emotional component, with the male characters in the stories finding pleasure in intimate encounters, and therefore experiencing a less restricted masculine identity (Jenkins, 1992).

It was notable, that although relationships with other men were consistently portrayed as being more pleasurable, it was rarely intimated that the men did not want the women to remain in their lives. The footballers featured in the story typically had a stable partner or wife, but had a number of casual encounters with other men, presumably encounters that their female partner was unaware of. Although these extra marital affairs were with men, rather than women, it reflects stereotypes perpetuated through mainstream media that football players are sexually promiscuous (Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004). Furthermore, the desire to maintain a relationship with a female partner in the stories might be seen as a strategy for maintaining the 'front stage' performance, in this instance, ostensibly appearing as heterosexual to society outside of football.

Hierarchy

Consistent with Jenkins' (1992) observation that slash often follows formulaic conventions, the football slash stories tended to focus on relationships between English players and their foreign colleagues. Furthermore, there was clear evidence of a consistent hierarchy within the stories, between foreign and English players. One way the hierarchy and therefore power was signified in the stories was through the power of the gaze (Boucher and Pinto, 2007). It was evident that the direction of the gaze in the stories appeared to be indicative of power therefore reinforcing a particular hierarchy, with the foreign players being objectified.

Stevie was looking at Fernando for months, longing to touch him

I don't know what you're talking about Stevie insisted, though it was clear that Carra just caught him staring at Fernando again.

Go and get him, Sheep_emilia, Not Just a Game

Typically, characterisations in slash stories slide between masculine and feminine representations, often playing with stereotypes of gender and sexuality (Bacon-Smith, 1992). It was suggested in Chapter Three that the normative matrix of heterosexuality proposed by Butler (1990), predicts particular ways of doing and being masculine or feminine and it is the taken for granted re-enactment of these valued ways of doing gender and sexuality, that power (through discourse) permeates social relations of all kinds. It has previously been suggested that affording both masculine and feminine characteristics across the characters disrupts stereotypes about homosexual relationships and presumed roles of the dominant top or submissive bottom as fixed and normative positions (Cicioni, 1998). It was notable however that although previously, slash has tended to avoid stereotypes of top and bottom roles in homosexual encounters and relationships between characters, slash associated with football appeared to support this clear differentiation of roles. Foreign players were consistently cast in submissive bottom roles. It could be argued therefore that through mimicking straight society in this way the stories were limited in terms of offering any serious challenge or alternative (Lonc, 1991; Boucher and Pinto, 2007).

'He has the boy bound with the softest rope he could find and a knot that has mostly a symbolic function, though it does mean that Fernando is unable to get up and walk away just like that'

'Distraction', sophiamoon, Not Just a Game

The 'feminine' role adopted by the foreign players within the stories did not just relate to sexual encounters. In a study exploring the role of players heterosexual partners in the construction of a masculine identity, Clayton and Harris (2004) suggest that characteristically the male leading role is set opposed to the expressive female support role. This same trend was observed in the slash writing with the foreign players discussed as carrying out traditionally feminine tasks in traditionally feminine spaces such as the kitchen.

Xabi grins, I'll keep him out the kitchen.

Fernando was searching for recipes for cheesecake.

Surprise, surprise, yet another surprise party, ombu_tree, Not Just a game

It was also notable that foreign players tended to be described using feminine or adolescent descriptors. This is consistent with how female athletes are discussed in order to reinforce gender order and establish males at the top of the hierarchy (Kian, Vincent & Mondello, 2008). Fernando Torres in particular was singled out for this sort of labelling.

Fernando sagged on to said couch like a blond pouting martyr.

Fernando was busy waving to the figures hanging out of cars, like he thought he was Marilyn Monroe or something.

How to survive Anfield with your sexuality intact, 0sweet_tart0, Not Just a

Game

Moreover, physical characteristics in particular descriptions of players' hair and skin were also used to feminise the foreign players. In the extracts below for instance the Spanish players in the Liverpool team were discussed, particularly for their hair. The first quote makes reference to obsessively maintained hair, perhaps serving to

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feminize the players in question. This is done more overtly in the second quote, with reference to the player being mistaken for a girl.

Okay, picture Fernando, now look at him, Pepe pointed to Xabi, and him I guess, he reluctantly pointed to Alvaro. The hair okay, the over gelled, obsessively maintained, beautiful Spanish hair

At least his hair style didn't get him mistaken for a girl

Almost lovers, jumping_down, Not Just a Game

It is suggested that to show contempt for a male is to like him to a female in what can be considered a symbolic attack on masculinity (Kane & Disch, 1990). In the case of the slash stories however, the descriptors appeared to be used more to differentiate between 'male' and 'female' roles as well as reinforcing a particular hierarchy.

Even though the casting of players into stereotyped roles can be seen as conforming to dominant ideologies, the tendency to discuss certain players as being in long term, stable and monogamous relationships perhaps answers Lamb & Veith's (1986) plea for slash that moves beyond first time encounters. One particular pairing-Steven Gerrard and Xabi Alonso were frequently depicted in this way with reference made to their home life and day to day goings on in their relationship.

'They are not hiding anything because there is nothing to hide. Off the field it's them. Arriving together, going home together. Their shared home, full of things and gifts from their wedding.'

'About Them', sophiamoon. Not Just a Game

The reference to 'their wedding' shows the level of commitment evident in their relationship in the story. Although there are numerous references to their relationship within the stories these tend to focus on intimate conversations and moments rather than explicit sexual encounters. This perhaps suggests that whilst monogamous relationships are a celebrated and important part of the football slash, the more elicit encounters appeared to take centre stage, perhaps indicating that they are more valued within the football slash community.

The extract below, offers another example of how the heterosexual matrix is played with and disrupted, thus making it possible to represent characters as defined by both dominant and subordinate forms of masculinity at the same time. The male protagonists are therefore cast as homosexual although overtly masculine. This can be seen as a clear challenge to the heterosexual matrix which equates heterosexuality with hegemonic masculinity. The story also therefore goes some way to challenge the notion that homosexual men are not 'real men'.

So what if they were good together when they played, enjoyed each other's company after work and had marvellous sex. Still didn't make them some sort of girls, they were men you understand: doing things instead of endlessly blabbering about it. Not being afraid to go straight for whatever you wanted be it the championship or the player that worked right beside you because he was the hottest man you'd ever laid eyes on. Man being the word here, so no flowers, no chocolate and no talk about you know what.

An honest admission, el3anorrigby, Not Just a Game

Whilst the story reinforced hegemonic aspects of the players' identities, it arguably represented women and femininity in a less than favourable light. In fact, a central point within the story is the distancing of the male protagonists from feminization. Having a homosexual relationship was therefore explicitly distanced from the players being seen as 'some sort of girls'. This was achieved in the story through the emphasis on specific aspects of masculinity, for instance, being driven and perhaps somewhat aggressive in approaching something they want both inside and outside of sport. The idea that no flowers and chocolates were required again plays down the idea of romance and intimacy and instead favours the focus on sex.

Strictly casual

Extant studies of slash have highlighted that stories tend to feature around particular pairings tracing the development of a close friendship into a sexual relationship (Jenkins, 1992; Sandvoss, 2005). Although this theme was evident in football slash, more casual and non-monogamous encounters appeared to be privileged within the community. Although players were often presented as having a previous history of sleeping with each other, it had not developed into intimate relationship. Rather they

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just used each other for sexual satisfaction. Adam (2005) has argued that gay men are fully capable of acting like other citizens, according to neoliberal norms, masculinity and competitive individualism. For Adam (2005) this might be reflected particularly when sexual encounters are brief and non-committal. Although the analysis of slash to date has focused on how stories conform to, resist dominant ideologies and stereotypes of masculinity. Taking Adam's (2005) point, it could also be argued that there are other ideologies at play, certainly in the slash stories about football players.

Xabi and Steve are sleeping together again. He looked at Fernando out of the corner of his eye. Did you know that.....

That Xabi spent the night at Xabi's? Yeah, sure. What about it?

But I thought you and Stevie were?

Yes Fernando said slowly as if he were speaking to a small child, sometimes me and Xabi are too. It's been like that since I came.

<div align="right">Uncertainty, cloverdash, Not Just a Game</div>

In the story above, Fernando Torres is unfazed by the notion of sharing a partner. There is no reference to feelings of jealously; rather, he struggles to understand why Pepe Reina cannot make sense of the casual arrangement. In relation to the genre of slash overall, the casual nature of interactions is unique to football slash. It therefore does not develop aspects of other slash stories, usually considered resistant to hegemonic masculinity, for example displays of tenderness, affection and vulnerability (Stolenberg, 1989).

Football slash stories on *Not Just a Game* also commonly featured threesomes and group sex, something else not evident within extant studies of slash. Although the stories featured sexual encounters between men, mainstream media coverage has frequently highlighted footballers' preferences for group sex where the players become observers of each-others sexual performances. Usually within stories of this kind, the female is shared between the males in the group illustrating a clear power dynamic (Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004). A similar trend was observed within the slash stories. Although in the story below Fernando is clearly complicit in the sexual encounter, it is notable that he is cast in the female role of 'being fucked'.

He (Fernando) lies stretched out on the heavy mahogany table, legs wide in invitation.

Let the youth lead the way- Pepe smiles indulgently

Shut up and fuck me Fernando orders his legs wedged around Daniel's narrow hips, forcing him deeper in

The boy's claiming his territory-Sami comments with something of pride in his voice.

So he gets fucked. Fast and hard, so hard that the table rattles on its sturdy legs

Fernando turns his head to look at Pepe. Now you fuck me

<div align="right">The hunted, casis_casi, Not Just a Game</div>

There is an element of voyeurism in the story with players watching on as they take it in turns. It has been suggested by McInnes *et al.*, (2009) that voyeurism and performance are strong elements of the discourse group sex. During group sex, McInnes *et al.*, (2009) argue that men take it in turns to demonstrate their capacity, particularly in terms of size, activeness and duration. In the context of group sex, turning it into a form of competition might be considered consistent with sporting discourse and hence not totally in conflict with hegemonic masculinity.

Contra to previous observations within slash fiction, but seeming consistent with the theme within football slash, the emphasis is therefore transferred from intimacy, to the physical act of sex. Foucault (1977:136) theorises, that it is the emotional side of the homosexual relationship rather than the sex that society finds hard to accept. He suggests that the portrayal of homosexuality as a form of 'immediate pleasure, cancels everything that can be troubling in affection, tenderness, friendship, fidelity, camaraderie and companionship'. It is the homosexual mode of life, much more than the act itself that people find disturbing.

The places where sexual encounters took place also tended to reinforce the casual nature of interactions. These typically took place in areas of the training ground where there was the potential to get caught, perhaps adding to the excitement of the encounter.

People interested in post training shenanigans had moved into the other dressing room by now, apparently the benches there had better friction of something

My car kind of screwed up

Oh no, Agger had sex on it with someone didn't he?

Fernando squirmed in his seat and busied himself with checking his hair in his window reflection. 'Oh,' Pepe realized. 'Someone was you, wasn't it'.

'How to survive Anfield with your sexuality intact', 0sweet_tart0, Not Just a
Game

It also perhaps emphasized the high sex drive and hence virility of players, getting sex as often as they could and wherever they could.

Sexual violence

Another strong theme emerging from the stories that appears to be relatively unique to football slash was that of sexual violence. This is perhaps not surprising given the propensity of the media to report on players' conduct with women, particularly in a social context. It does however problematize slash in this instance as providing a challenge to mainstream representations of hegemonic masculinity.

Previous research has highlighted the locker room as an intimidating space and centre of fraternal bonding that serves in the construction and reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity (Pronger, 1990; Curry, 1991). However, the locker room in the football slash stories provided a backdrop where homosexual encounters took place thereby challenging notions of this space as homophobic. On the one hand therefore the locker room could be seen as a space of empowerment and a challenge to a masculine hegemonic culture, on the flip side however, the locker room in the stories became an intimidating and threatening place for straight players where they feared they might be harassed or subjected to sexual violence at the hands of their team mates.

He stood on tip toe and looked in the direction of the locker room. 'It's early enough that I might be able to get changed without getting molested.

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He and Carra usually changed near each other because they were the only people not inclined to pre-training quickies with their team mates. The places in the locker room where people weren't jumped at from behind a corner were rapidly depleting.

'How to survive Anfield with your sexuality intact', 0sweet_tart0, Not Just a
Game

The stories make reference to fears of being molested or jumped out on while getting changed. This suggested that the negative connotations associated with locker room culture had shifted rather than been eradicated therefore to some extent legitimising the prevailing mainstream culture (Kane and Disch, 1993). In emphasizing the unwanted nature of sexual advances, it also perhaps reinforced stereotypes of 'gay' men as sexual predators (Reynolds, 2009).

Sexual violence was used in the following story as form of punishment for sexual indiscretions, as well as demonstrating power over the other male protagonist in the story. The extract from the following story *'Backroom negotiations'* deals with the 'punishment' of Fernando Torres at the hands of Xabi Alonso.

Fernando was still dripping wet in the locker room head bowed, hair covering his face as he towelled off clumsily

Xabi's hands landed squarely against the planes of Fernando's back as he shoved him forcefully against the locker. Fernando brought his hands up to shield himself from the impact but he still thudded loudly against the hardwood.

Xabi I didn't know, I swear, he said he wasn't…….Fernando choked out unnerved.

I don't want to hear it Xabi cut off coldly. Bracing his shoulder against Fernando's back he held him down. With his other arm he reached into the next locker-#8 and expertly rooted around Stevie's toiletry bag

What are you doing? Fernando asked his voice shaking as he watched Xabi from the corner of his eye.

'I said' Xabi struggled to uncap a bottle of lube using only one hand 'I don't want to hear it' he unknotted the striker's towel and dumped it on the floor. His own training

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shorts followed. The striker screamed hoarsely, but not as hoarsely as Xabi expected,
it wasn't the boy's first time then. In seconds fernando's breathing changed from
panicked bursts to ragged gasps.

'Backroom negotiations', jumping_down, Not Just a game

In the story above, physical restraint and forcible penetration appear to be more about power than pleasure. It is significant however that there is a shift in tone towards the end of the story to possibly neutralise and legitimise what would be considered rape. What started off as being forced, ultimately becomes consensual. Although sexual violence and rape has not been a theme in other studies of slash, it might be suggested that there are aspects of the football culture, as well as the characteristics of sport itself, that encourage such a focus. Pronger (1999) suggests that the pleasure of competitive sport is the violent phallocentric pleasure of adding to oneself by subtracting from another. Sport might be considered a brutal economy that takes delight in the vulnerability of one's competitor. The pleasure of penetration in competitive sport depends on withholding pleasure from ones opponents and violently taking it against will for oneself. It is for this reason that Pronger points out that sport has many similarities with rape.

Issues of consent are also evident in the story *A Dreamless Sleep*. However, the nature of the story seems to highlight the pleasure taken in having power and could therefore be viewed as another way of establishing a hierarchy. It is perhaps significant that Fernando Torres is consistently cast within the stories as submissive, in line with previous suggestions of how he tended to be feminised within stories.

Nando was very much out for the count. Daniel makes place for Martyn. With a
confusing mixture of shame and excitement enters Fernando's arse once again.
Martyn fucks his sleeping lover fast and hard, for a few strokes he tries to fool
himself into believing he's doing this for Daniel, that he's not really into this. Then
he loses all pretenses and goes all out, almost shocked by his own stamina and
fuelled by the ugly need to make use of the submissive boy's incapacity.

A Dreamless sleep, sophiamooon, Not Just a Game

Whilst the stories involve men and therefore homosexual encounters, footballers are no strangers to accusations of sexual violence. In fact the story has clear parallels

with many mediated cases of players' alleged abuse of women (Blackshaw & Crabbe, 2004). Melnick (1992) has argued that physical acts of aggression serve to establish territorial rights, read in this way the story might be said to represent an act that emphasises dominance and submission thereby reinforcing the hierarchy as well as certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to explore fan's use of football celebrity, in two online environments. These sites were selected specifically since they are predominantly used by women, a group that has been overlooked in the study of football fandom (Jones, 2008). It has been suggested previously, that fan sites constitute an interactive and potentially culturally resistant space. To date however, there has been a death of analysis, particularly exploring the types of narratives constructed online, and how the creation of these narratives offers a challenge to dominant power relations.

As a fan site that overtly declares its focus as the men in the game, rather than the sport, Kickette certain fan activities might be seen as providing a challenge to patriarchal hegemony. The overwhelming focus of the site was to discuss the sexual attractiveness of players thereby transferring the gaze to objectify male figures. Furthermore, it trivializing the achievements of male athletes and sexualizing them, rather than creating a new set of rules and a new culture, the females arguably reinforced hegemonic culture.

It was also evident that the images used on the site to provoke discussion and comments were still very much consistent with traditional notions of masculinity. This is perhaps not surprising however, given the tendency to take images from mainstream media sites. When the women created their own media however, particularly in the form of interviews, the questions they asked perhaps served to reinforce gender stereotypes and football celebrity privilege.

It is important to recognise however that all fan interactions are illustrative of resistant practices. The fan site gave women a space where they could comment on men without the fear of ridicule. Although, perhaps aware of the ongoing stigma associated with females looking at and objectifying men, a number of comments

suggested that they were aware that sexualizing men was something they might be judged for. It brought women together who had a specific interest in players, rather than the sport in its entirety supporting the notion that online fan sites allow those people with a similar interest to come together.

The site was also used to discuss wider issues associated with the off field culture of football. This included players' wives and girlfriends, with a particular emphasis on their consumption habits. Discussions on this topic area reflected the contradictions associated with celebrity consumption and perhaps reflected Eagleton's (2005) assertion that celebrity is the hatred of which we love. Through discussions about WAGs the fans mocked them for their classlessness, but also suggested that they took pleasure in reading about consumerist lifestyles.

It was suggested at the start of this chapter that although the study of Slash fiction is a relatively well established area in fan and audience studies, to date however, the study of sport related slash has not been considered academically. Slash has been considered significant for its propensity to offer challenges to notions of hegemonic masculinity, through the representation of alternative forms of masculinity as less restrictive and more satisfying. Given the prevailing culture of football, the study of slash relating to stories written about football players provided an interesting case study. Although football slash writing followed some of the conventions of slash more widely, there were a number of unique elements. As such this particular area of the study offers new insights in fan studies.

Despite the subversive elements, here were a number of themes that suggested the stories were very much influenced by the culture of football, for example, the tendency to focus on casual encounters, and the inclusion of sexual violence within the stories. Both of these themes have framed stories about individual football celebrities within mainstream media. Furthermore, although the stories featured homosexual encounters, it was implied through continuing relationships with women that to some extent there might be need to maintain a heterosexual façade.

Although the stories provided a challenge to the heterosexual matrix in the sense that they clearly separated out assumptions about gender and sexuality, they did so in a way which was demeaning to women which limited the progressiveness of the text. There were also clear hierarchies of power, leading to stereotypes of top and bottom

being perpetuated in the stories. This is something that has traditionally been avoided in other forms of slash fiction since it illustrates an unequal power dynamic between the characters. Specific characters were however featured in stories that alluded to the monogamous nature of their relationship. This gain was different from other forms of slash that have rarely moved beyond first time encounters and developed the characters' relationship.

Chapter Seven-Football celebrity, scandal and the moral debate

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how football celebrity is used to frame debates around scandal, the moral issues surrounding these, and the extent which they are exaggerated. As it was suggested earlier in the thesis, the spread of coverage into players' off field lives has frequently portrayed them to be flawed, engaging in a range of immoral, as well as illegal activities, both on and off the field (Giannoulakis and Drayer, 2009). This is likely to have implications for the way they are drawn upon as a cultural resource. Alexander (2010) refers to the celebrity figure as a symbol of moral significance, therefore, whilst celebrity culture might often be deemed trivial, it fulfils a wider social function, perhaps providing a blank canvas on which society can wrestle with a range of salient social issues (Cashmore, 2002; Lines, 2001). Psychoanalytical perspectives might also suggest that engagement with celebrity culture allows us to vent vindictive impulses and take pleasure in the celebrity fall from grace (Eagleton, 2005). It is suggested that such interactions are fueled by deep seated frustration based on both social and economic inequality. The fall of the celebrity under the watchful eye of public surveillance might therefore be thought of as symbolic levelling (Penfold, 2004).

At the time of data collection, between January and December, 2010, both John Terry and Ashley Cole had been featured in the media for marital infidelity. This had particular significance at the time, with the World Cup being held in the same year. The slant of discussions within the media had tended therefore, to consider implications for team performance in the tournament. This chapter focuses predominantly on the stories that emerged around these two players in mainstream and grassroots media, as well as how the stories became a focus for discussions within the focus groups. It also provides critical discussion around the changing coverage of Ryan Giggs, a player who at the time of data collection was scandal free, but a year later found himself in the limelight, for all the wrong reasons.

In line with suggestions made in Chapter Two, it highlights the contradictions evident in both the representation and consumption of football celebrity. It is argued that such ambivalence is integral to celebrity representations, and perhaps even a crucial part of its appeal. The ambivalence associated with contemporary celebrity

representation has been referred to by psychoanalyst Adam Phillips (2006) as the hatred of what we love implying the way in which our feelings about celebrity are likely to shift. Moving away from deterministic accounts of the audience, it is suggested that the audience are critical consumers of media both when it comes to assessing the media's motive for featuring stories in the first place, and developing nuanced readings of the media content with which they are presented (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998). Key issues relating to football celebrity scandal, for example, the breakdown of public and private boundaries, assumed levels of football celebrity privilege and consequences for indiscretions were raised in both newspaper coverage and focus group discussions.

In recognition that there has been less attention paid to the more negative interactions with celebrity, this chapter also examines the audience's pleasure taken in the downfall of celebrity figures. As it was suggested in Chapter Two, this has been explored within psychoanalytical accounts of celebrity, although not in an empirical way. In order to illustrate the links between mainstream media, the socio-scape and new forms of media, the final part of the chapter explores how scandal is used as a starting point for audience creativity, particularly in the form of 'banter' forums, photographs and YouTube clips. This is characteristic of audience activity that Jenkins (1992) has referred to as poaching, where a mainstream media resource is transformed, and in doing so, the meaning is often altered. The idea of poaching has been cited previously as significant for exploring the audience's critical engagement with media texts (Jenkins, 2006). It might also be argued, that the manipulation and use of media sources relating to scandal, whether that be in a social setting, or online, might be pleasurable, allowing the audience to select aspects of the story that are of particular interest to them.

Changes in the coverage of football celebrity

It was suggested in Chapter Two that the commodification of all aspects of football celebrities' lives has had many positive benefits, in particular, providing them with an additional revenue stream and raising their public profile. However, the growing focus on the off field culture of football, has frequently drawn attention to the misdemeanors of high profile players. This can largely be accounted for by the

increased levels of synopticon surveillance football celebrity is now under, making it difficult to keep scandal under wraps (Sanderson, 2009).

Whannel (2001) highlighted how the tabloid media in the 1990s started to take reporting on football celebrity in new directions. Prior to this period, it is suggested that the focus was on the sport, rather than what football celebrities did off the field. Infrequent features off the field, tended to focus on respectable leisure pursuits, or idyllic notions of family life (Whannel, 2003). The media therefore revealed information that confirmed dominant social values. There was a tacit agreement between the media and celebrities that stories contradicting certain societal values be kept out of the spot light (Evans and Hesmondalgh, 2005). Whannel (2002) for instance, showed how Stanley Matthews' extramarital affair was kept out of the spotlight, because it was inconsistent with values of the time. This well-kept secret remained relatively hidden from the public until his death. It is unlikely however, that Matthews would have been granted the same discretion had he been playing in the contemporary game. The extract below, alludes to changes in both the media and football, that have arguably opened the doors for the more negative and intrusive forms of media reporting we are more familiar with today.

Their profile and exposure appear to have risen in proportion to their salaries so that they are followed more closely by show biz and investigative writers than sports reporters

Until the 80s footballers on tour were accompanied by sports journalists whose remit was to report matches, not post match parties. It has been the cult of celebrity that has caused footballers problems.

(Steve Curry, Daily Mail, 5th February, 2010)

Although the specific context of the extract from the Daily Mail highlighted above was to discuss John Terry's affair, it clearly used the changes in sport to set the scene for the story. This was perhaps to situate the storyline within wider shifts in football celebrity culture. Somewhat ironically, it appeared to lament the change in the role of the media, from reporting on sport, to reporting on post- match parties. Although the reporter blames the culture of celebrity for causing players problems, it is arguably the media exposure that creates celebrity in the first place (Schickel, 2000). This

style of reporting might be considered typical of the contradictory celebrity coverage in circulation, in this instance, the media appears to be criticizing the very 'monster' it helped to create. Clark (2012) has linked the changes in football culture with the ambivalence felt towards celebrity players. He suggests that the obsession with contemporary football is riddled with class confusion, latent aggression and barely concealed schadenfreude.

It is clear that the focus of media coverage has impacted significantly on public and private boundaries, with no area of players' lives considered off limits in the name of entertainment (Mehl, 1996). However, it might be argued, that for the celebrity, the tradeoff for wealth and fame, is having all areas of their life put on display and turned into commodity form (Cashmore, 2002). It is suggested in the extract below, that football has been 'sucked into the vortex of celebrity', indicating its merger with wider celebrity, and entertainment industries. This implies that football and celebrity players have become caught up in a whirlwind of publicity, driven by a desire to entertain a celebrity hungry public. The public are no longer satisfied with what they deem to be stage managed performances of family life, rather, they want access all areas, to uncover the real individual behind the public face (Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004; Evans and Hesmondhalgh, 2005). The way that celebrity figures often deal with the intrusion that makes them famous in the first place, is to claim their right to privacy and their wish to be left alone. Rose (2003), writing from a psychoanalytical perspective, suggests however, that the celebrity is never performing so perfectly as when they are denying their own celebrity.

Football has been sucked into the lurid vortex of celebrity.....and like any other celebrities, the price that footballers pay for their fame and wealth is their privacy

(Mick Brown, The Telegraph, 5th February, 2010)

Consistent with this suggestion, all of the focus group participants demonstrated knowledge about the off field aspect of football celebrity coverage. In some instances, this was expressed overtly, for example, admitting to taking pleasure in reading celebrity magazines that feature stories of this kind. On other occasions, knowledge was demonstrated through the discussion of details of particular stories that had been in the media. However, in line with previous suggestions in the literature, there appeared to be a gendered difference in the willingness to admit

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having an interest in stories about football celebrities' private lives (Bird, 2003). Gossip is often perceived to be a feminine practice and therefore not as acceptable for males to engage in. Furthermore, despite suggestions that we live in a celebrity culture (Cashmore, 2006), Rose (2003) suggests that there is shame inherent in our interactions with celebrity. This might be due to the link between celebrity culture and triviality.

It was evident however, that there were a number of strategies used, particularly by the males, to make their engagement with football celebrity more acceptable in a social setting, and to avoid the kind of labelling mentioned above. Male respondents for instance, emphasised that their discussions mainly focused on sports performance and suggested they would only usually read about stars private lives and engage in gossip if it was part of what they were reading.

James (Male, 17): All I'm bothered about is if it puts Chelsea off

Liam (Male, 16): 'I read papers so if there's a story in there I would read it but I wouldn't buy a magazine'.

John (Male, 17): Men talk about the sexual part of it, we don't go, Ashley he's on all that money and he's not going to get good media and all this. We just think Cheryl Cole's fit, why cheat on her

Putting the sport first, or emphasising 'casual viewing', appeared to make engagement with information of this kind permissible. James for instance, felt that he could comment on celebrity driven stories if they had potential consequences for Chelsea's performance on the pitch. This might reinforce the assumption made in Chapter Two, that celebrity lifestyles are likely to provide an unwanted distraction on the field. In referencing the casual nature of his engagement, Liam admitted that he would read stories, but only if they were in the newspaper he was reading. Bird (2003) has discussed previously, the shift to what has frequently been called an infotainment society, where news has merged with entertainment features perhaps making celebrity driven gossip difficult to avoid. Moreover, with the breakdown in public and private boundaries, private matters have increasingly become part of public discourse (NcNamara, 2009). In recognition that 'gossip' is often considered to be incompatible with performances of masculinity, another strategy to divert

attention from engagement, and simultaneously reinforce hegemonic masculinity, was to sexualise the player's female partner. Males thus distance themselves from gossip and reinforce their masculinity through commenting on the sexual attractiveness of the player's partner. As John suggested above, he was only interested in the story because he thinks 'Cheryl Cole is fit'.

It is important to acknowledge however, that although media intrusion has increased, this is coupled with a willingness of football celebrities to put their private lives on public display. This frequently includes allowing their weddings and birth of their children to be mediated and commodified, their 'breach' of privacy compensated by inordinate sums of money from celebrity magazines such as *Hello* and *OK*, which are dominated by features of this kind (Turner, 2004). It was suggested in Chapter Two that celebrity figures frequently bemoan the same media attention they actively court. For this reason, it has been argued that boundaries of acceptable intrusion into the private sphere become blurred. The extract below highlights the financial benefits for individual football celebrity figures, when they allow aspects of their private lives to be put on display.

Cheryl and Ashley, two young people as cute as buttons, married in the summer of 2006. It was a deeply personal and private event, which they sold to OK magazine for a sum not un-adjacent to 1.5 million pounds.

(Jan Moir, Dail Mail 23rd February, 2010)

The reporter, seemingly tongue in cheek, highlights the contradictions inherent in claiming their wedding as a deeply personal and private event, but being happy to benefit from the proceeds of selling the exclusive coverage of the event to *OK* magazine (McNamara, 2009). The inclusion of this feature, amidst accusations of Ashely Cole cheating, perhaps also serves to show the celebrity fall from grace. Two, young, rich, celebrity individuals, who were happy to showcase their happiness in the public eye, perhaps have to accept that their misery will be shown in a similar way.

The marriage of Cheryl Tweedy and Ashley Cole which was forged in the vulgar crucible of OK magazine for a fistful of cash has been ended on Twitter with a blunt confirmation from her PR company that she has filed for divorce.

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It has frequently been suggested that the same media that are responsible for putting celebrities on a pedestal, are equally keen to pull them down (Kellner, 2002). Even if the media are not instrumental in the downfall of the celebrity figure, they gain financially from the reporting of such stories (Lines, 2001). In this instance, the marriage coverage in *OK* was referred to as vulgar, implying the distasteful nature of trading their privacy during a personal event for 'a fistful of cash'. They point to the role of the media in the celebration of events of this kind, but also the role the media play in reporting the break up. Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004) have previously suggested that sex and celebrity create curiosity in the audience, media material focusing on the private sphere therefore provides a starting point for discussion amongst the audience.

Perhaps in response to speculation in the press about her relationship, and her response to her husband's cheating, Cheryl Cole chose to inform the public of her intention to divorce via *Twitter*. Eliopulos and Johnson (2012) argue that melodrama is typically played out around larger than life celebrity romances. The fact that this particular melodrama involved two well-known and highly mediated characters, perhaps made the story more compelling. Each twist and turn, as well as reactions from either party, provides fodder for the media and public consumption. It was suggested in Chapter Three that celebrity figures have increasingly turned to social networking sites such as Twitter to break news to the public on their own terms. In keeping with her identity as the victim of the story, Cheryl Cole was perhaps perceived to be more authentic through her choice to inform the public directly. The decision to communicate 'directly' with the audience also points towards the increasingly intertextual nature of both media representation and consumption. Rather than there being one coherent narrative in public circulation, there are likely to be multiple versions of the 'truth' for the public to unpick.

There was recognition that the behaviour featured within these stories is behaviour that occurs every day, the only difference is that it relates to someone well known. Celebrity status therefore, does not make an individual immune from the problems that afflict everyone else. Corresponding with a growing intrusion into the private sphere, there has been a shift in media reporting from treating celebrities as gods, to

treating them as mortals (Dyer, 1998). Eagleton (2005) has previously suggested, that the secret of celebrity is that they are just like us and otherworldly, common place and transcendent at the same time. The highlighting of their problems therefore brings them symbolically closer to us (Rojek, 2001). As the following extract points out, if you take away the celebrity trappings, the personal problems they face are the same as everyone else's.

Take away the flash cars and gated communities and Terry's adultery is no different from all the other painful infidelities that happen every day in insurance offices, call centres, colleges, factories and yes, even government departments. The difference is that we don't usually find out about them

(Carol Midgley, The Times, 4th February, 2010)

Discussions in the focus groups also alluded to the idea that stories about football celebrity involved behaviors and misdemeanors that occur every day, but the fact that they are considered a public figure means that it gets put on display (Sanderson, 2010). The debate therefore, was as much about public and private boundaries, as it was the particular individuals within the story.

Mel (Female, 17): Its everyday life isn't it, but because they're in the spotlight it gets noticed, like people all over the world will be cheating but we don't hear about that because they're not in the spotlight, because someone famous does it, we all need to know

Tom (Male 17): The media are always going to pick up on bad things though aren't they, people want to read it.

There was recognition from Tom that the media are providing stories that people want to read hence acknowledging that they are catering for what the public want, as much as they are forcing ideas on them. This suggestion perhaps reflects the debate as to whether the media are actually duping us, or merely reflecting our interests back to us. Consistent with suggestions associated with the third generation of audience studies, the focus group participants could read media in a critical way and

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make seamless links between their own lives and the media (Bird, 2002; Millington and Wilson, 2010).

Although there was recognition that the media were responsible for highlighting players in a particular way, it was also acknowledged that certain players put themselves in the public gaze more readily than others, and are therefore partly responsible for the media intrusion that they so often shun (McNamara, 2010). Williams (2006) has previously highlighted the growing commercialisation and celebrification of sport, and the detrimental effect it has had on sport and the degradation of the sport hero to celebrity. The image of the global celebrity, perhaps epitomised by David Beckham, was used as a comparison to Ryan Giggs, who was seen predominantly as a footballer, rather than a celebrity, as the focus group discussion reflected the debate outlined above. Giggs was admired for not exploiting his own image and encouraging intrusion into his family life outside the sport.

Lee (Male, 17): 'I'd much rather be like Giggsy'

Jack (Male, 17): 'With Giggsy though you never see him in the limelight, unless he's scored a couple of goals or something, you don't see much of his personal life'

Lee (Male, 17): Compare Giggsy with Beckham, he's kept all his personal life out of it, but Beckham, he's in the spotlight wherever he goes, with Posh with him, couple of kids

In an age where increasingly celebrity is defined by mediated visibility rather than talent, it was seen as something to be admired for a player to let their football do the talking. However, in the increasingly commercial and entertainment world of sport, those that do not embrace the celebrity element are not seen as interesting (Lines, 2001). Rather, the representation of contemporary players requires playing ability and personality to create a desirable commodity. Whannel (2001) points out that Giggs could have been a bigger star but he was too dull and lacked the bad boy image, identifiable eccentricities and not being involved with major controversies. However, since the focus groups were conducted, it is notable that Ryan Giggs was exposed for marriage infidelities, disrupting the image that he had previously constructed and maintained. Of particular interest are stories that catch stars off guard, or reveal secrets, unmasking them if they do something that contradicts their

carefully constructed public image (Arno 1980; Gamson, 1994; Taylor, 1994). It was suggested however in Chapter Two that a fall does not equal the death of a particular star, but rather the death of their current image (Rojek, 2001).

Amidst a battle that raised wider debate about social networking and the privileged position of celebrity to control information in the public sphere, Giggs' family man image unravelled under the media gaze. Kellner (2002) observes that those who live by the media spectacle, can be brought down by its cruel omnipresent power and eye of surveillance. Against the grain of the image held in the media previously, Ryan Giggs was transformed from footballing hero, to villain overnight. Ryan Giggs the (married) Manchester United player, former BBC Sports Personality of the year was often considered one of the few Premier League players with a reputation to protect. The revealing of Giggs' as a liar and cheat brought his integrity in to question. As the stories continued to unfold, it was revealed that Giggs had previously won a gagging order, in order to stop details of a seven month affair with Big Brother contestant Imogen Thomas becoming public. However, after speculation on Twitter where he was named by over 75,000 twitter users, he was officially 'outed' by MP John Hemmings in the House of Commons. The stories that followed played on the contrast between the images of Giggs, pre and post affair. Stories are more likely to be eye catching if they highlight inconsistencies with an image, or identity that has been conveyed previously (Thompson, 2000).

Headlines included:

'Censored' (Sunday Herald, 20th May 2011)

'Naming Private Ryan' (Mirror 23rd May 2011)

Giggs accused of 8 year affair with his brother's wife (News of the Word, 24th May 2011)

Ryan Giggs unmasked as gagging order footballer (The Daily Telegraph, 24th May 2011)

The headlines refer to the idea that Giggs had successfully maintained a 'secret' life for a long number of years. It is in revelations of this kind that the authenticity of the

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public image is brought into question. One headline refers to Giggs being 'unmasked', which in itself suggests that his previous image was a performance that had served to hide what he was really like underneath. For Goffman (1959), identity is always performative, since it involves the careful crafting of a self to an audience. In the presence of others, we alter facial expression, posture, tone and actions, just as actors do when they are performing (Tolson, 2001). However, crucial to giving the impression of staged reality is to persuade the audience that the act is sincere (Gebauer and Wulf, 1995). In this instance, the sincerity of all previous performances is brought into question. As increasingly celebrity has become more staged managed, it is perhaps not surprising that the stolen image is considered as 'higher truth' (Meyers, 2009).

Giggs' social characteristics and background, were used to offer explanations to his behaviour. It was highlighted that his father, ex rugby league star Danny Wilson was a *'womaniser'* who split from Giggs' mother when he was still a boy. The negative image of this early role model was further fuelled by descriptions of heavy drinking and crime including a six month jail sentence for attacking a police officer.

The young Ryan disowned him and adopted his mother's surname. But he might have inherited at least one of his father's flaws.

(The Daily Telegraph, 24th May 2011)

Giggs is not only situated as working class, but also there may also be an implied racial stereotype evident within the comparison with his father. Photographs of Gigg's black father highlight that Gigg's himself is mixed race, a fact often hidden by his physical appearance, which is ostensibly white. In making references to what he may have 'inherited from his father, there are arguably racial stereotypes at play. Kellner (2003) suggests that media culture is only too willing to use 'black' figures to represent transgressive behaviour, particularly if it reinforces racial stereotypes. Similar to representations of Tiger Woods that emerged, following the exposure of a string of extra marital affairs, Giggs was framed as a sex addict.

Sex addict Giggs gets therapy (Daily Star, 21st June 2011)

In this case, Giggs' transgressed from being the 'last gentleman of football' (Whannel, 2001) to hyper-sexual, mixed race male finding himself in what Feagan

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(2009:13) refers to as the white racial frame. This he argues consists of stereotyped racial knowledge, racial images and emotions, racial interpretations that fit into stories with morals. The fact that prior to this indiscretion, Giggs' racial background had not been a focus of discussion in the media perhaps indicates that its inclusion in explaining his behaviour was significant in this instance. It might therefore be argued that there are dominant racial ideologies embedded within the media content. As suggested in Chapter Three however, there is no guarantee that the audience will decode the media in the way that was intended. The reference above to Giggs getting therapy also fits with the therapeutic discourse discussed in Chapter Two. Through admitting weakness and seeking help, the celebrity is more likely to be redeemed.

Football Celebrity Soap Opera

It was highlighted in Chapter Two that, reporting on players' private affairs, tends to be played out in ways that resemble other media formats (Sandvoss, 2002). Like a soap opera, stories about football celebrity are turned into a seamless web of narrativised news and media events for the public to engage with (Whannel, 2001). Reference is made in the extract below to the idea that stories might be considered a form of soap opera, alluding to the ways that stories of this kind might be played out in the media.

The John Terry saga is merely the latest chapter in an on-going national soap opera

(Mick Brown, The Telegraph, 6th February, 2010).

The notion of sport as soap is nothing new. Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004:109) for instance have analysed the Premier League as a form of soap and, through their analysis, observed that the soap opera we call the Premiership is characterized by 'the usual extra marital affairs, drugs scandals, bust ups and dodgy deals'. Consistent with wider understandings of soap opera (Ang, 1985), Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004) demonstrated how storylines tended to be mobilised around particular characters and consumed through the discussion and dissection of relationships, feelings and motivations of various individuals and the commentary that surrounds them.

Terry is consistently cast as the villain of the piece, with his character and personal morals being brought into question, through the excavation of nearly ten years of bad behaviour. Consistent with previous analyses of soap opera, the history of characters

and readings are related to previously constructed knowledge (Lines, 2001). The framing of stories in this way appears to be to illustrate that this is merely the latest in a long line of indiscretions of varying nature, rather than a one off mistake. This is therefore likely to impact on the way the audience view, interpret and discuss the misdeamenour.

A serial philanderer, a 'colourful' (i.e. loutish) character, who routinely urinates in public, had sex in his car with a fan and who made a drunken display of himself in a hotel in 2001, where travellers were watching the TV news after the planes hit the world trade centre in new York.

(Janet Street-Porter, Daily Mail, 1st February 2010)

Williams (2006) has suggested, that todays pampered athletes believe they are entitled to behave as they please, no matter how immature and offensive it appears to the public. In the extract highlighted above, a number of Terry's previous indiscretions are outlined, all seemingly leading to the conclusion that his behaviour and presumed moral character, is incongruent with traits required to be a leader and role model (Lines, 2002). The examples offered above, imply that he is uncouth, irresponsible, and in the case of his behaviour in the context of the World Trade Centre terror attack, disrespectful and self- centred.

In a similar way to Giggs, explanations were offered into his behavior, often drawing on his family background and working class upbringing as a reason for his lack of morality, perhaps by implication, highlighting that Terry was a suspect choice for the position of England captain in the first place. The extract below makes specific reference to John Terry's family and in particular their criminal backgrounds.

Let's not forget his drug selling dad and shop lifter mother. Team terry is a shambles a bunch of cocky vulgarians who most of us wouldn't invite in for a coffee let alone select the prodigal as the face of our national game

(Janet Street-Porter, Daily Mail, 1st February, 2010)

Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004) have highlighted how social class, particularly a working class background is often drawn upon within media representation of

players to offer an explanation for bad behaviour. This is not a unique observation, indeed it has frequently been suggested that working class males are not equipped to deal with the responsibility that comes with fame (Walton, 2004). As Carroll (2010:491) argues; 'beware being given great gifts lest you don't have the capabilities and attributes to handle them'.

Given the fact that football celebrities are considered high profile public figures, it was suggested that revelations are often printed and circulated under the guise that it is in the public's best interest (Cashmore, 2002; Whannel, 1999). Responses in the focus group however reflected skepticism around the motives for revealing particular stories. It was suggested that the media benefit financially and are not bothered about the consequences for those involved. Challenging the motives of the media in this instance, clearly illustrated a critical reading of media.

Chris (Male 17): At the end of the day though, it's not the actual person themselves, because Terry didn't just come out and say I've been cheating on my missus or nothing it's the newspapers that are doing it.

Matt, (Male 18): But they make the decision it would be good for the public to know that information

Leon (Male 17): But they're not though, they're just doing it for the money, they don't care who they hurt as long as they get money from it. He tried to keep it quiet but they had decided it was in the public's best interest, for them to know what he is really like

Chris acknowledged that information about private affairs was often exposed against the football celebrity's will. It was suggested in Chapter Two that the growing media intrusion into celebrity figures' private affairs coupled with the willingness of individual celebrity figures to put their lives on display makes it difficult to decide what information should and should not be exposed. In the extract below, the article in the Daily Mail, the reporter discusses Terry's attempt to keep his extra-marital affair out of the public eye

The Chelsea star has desperately tried to keep the public in the dark over his infidelity and initially managed to use human rights laws to obtain a gagging order against the press. He claimed his right to a private and family life would be breached is his shameful behaviour were exposed. Even the existence of the so called super injunction was supposed to be a secret.

(Sam Greenhill, Christian Gysin and Steve Doughty, Daily Mail, 30th January, 2010).

Although Terry had suggested that his motives were based on protecting his family life, he was 'outed' for his extra marital affair based on the judge's rule that his primary motivation was not to shield his family from embarrassment, but rather, trying to protect his commercial image and earnings associated with this aspect of his career. Commercial deals are no longer a supplementary part of an athlete's earnings, but frequently this dwarfs their income from sport (Haynes, 2007).

In a scathing rule the judge made it clear that he suspected Terry was more afraid of losing the commercial deals than anything else. He said the footballer appeared to have brought his court action in a desperate move to protect his earnings

(Sam Greenhill, Christian Gysin and Steve Doughty, Daily Mail, 30th January, 2010).

Despite arguments that what an athlete does off the field is their business, from a commercial perspective, it could be argued the player's image and what he chooses to do in his free time is not just his business, since it can financially harm those who have invested in a particular image (Hughes & Shank, 2005). John Terry had aimed to construct a particular image built around being a good father and a respectable family man. As the extract below suggests, it might therefore be considered relevant to the public if he does something that brings the authenticity of that image into question (Crepeau, 2010).

There's a school of thought that decrees we should admire sportsmen and women for their physical prowess, not what they are up to after games are over and they are enjoying themselves in private, but when these people rack up millions in sponsorship deals by employing PR men and brand managers to craft a lucrative

image as wholesome and well-rounded family men, then the public are entitled to expect that they will conduct themselves in a way we find socially acceptable.

(Samuel Martin, Daily Mail, 1st February, 2010).

An attempt to control what is circulated in the media, based on commercial objectives might be seen as an abuse of privilege (Leonard and King, 2011). It is this assumed level of privilege which has often led to the assumption that celebrity footballers are not subject to the same laws that govern behaviour as everyone else (Eagleton, 2005; Williams, 2006). A number of comments in the focus groups suggested that players may receive special treatment or get away with more because of their status. Examples of this are offered below.

Steph (Female, 17): It paints a picture that it's ok for certain people to do what they want but not for others.

Amy (Female, 18): 'I reckon that sometimes they get away with more because they are players'.

The ruling against Terry in this instance might therefore be viewed as a challenge to celebrity privilege, perhaps reassuring the public that poor behaviour will not be overlooked, particularly when overlooking it would potentially mislead the audience. In the extract from the Daily Mail below, specific reference is made to the suggestion made by the ruling judge in the Terry case, that celebrity figures should not be granted the power to stifle the media.

Mr Justice Tugendhat effectively declared that celebrities should not be able to stifle newspapers from reporting on their activities even if they are embarrassing

(Sam Greenhill, Christian Gysin and Steve Doughty, Daily Mail, 30th January 2010).

In their role as public figures, it might be argued that punishment for off field indiscretions perhaps serves to set an example and show that there are consequences for negative actions. Cashmore (2006) has previously suggested that celebrity culture is significant for setting moral boundaries, in this instance, the punishment therefore might be seen to show where the boundaries lay. This was an idea picked up on during the focus group discussions detailed below.

Dave (Male, 17): 'Well John Terry has lost the England captaincy, he should have looked after himself. He shouldn't have lost that though. I don't think. In a way he shouldn't have done it in the first place, in a way it's his private life'.

Donna (Female, 17): 'Other people think because John Terry got his captaincy taken off him, people might think don't do that, so you could look at him in both ways really.

Donna (Female, 17): It shows you it has consequences

Reference to John Terry losing his captaincy due to off field behaviour was seen as an area for debate, suggesting that morally he should not have cheated, but equally, the fact he did, shouldn't have necessarily impacted in his career.

The poor behaviour of players has however put the culture of football under the spot light within the media. Whist indiscretions we see in the media tend to be about the poor behavior of particular individuals, it may be the culture of football that is to blame for creating a climate that breeds contempt for women (Blackshaw & Crabbe, 2004). The extract below describes Cole's liaisons with girls as akin to using prostitutes, with the girls being escorted to and from his room by club officials.

In that sweaty culture, packs of young men regularly travel away from home together and are...we now discover...encouraged and enabled to do their worst. More than one of the girls Cole is reported to have slept with claimed that their trysts were facilitated by Chelsea FC officials escorting them to and from Cole's hotel room

Questions need to be asked about this seedy shadowy world where wives are treated with little respect and grown men are exhorted to take advantage of the willing, starstruck girls who throw themselves at their feet of clay

It's hard to know what is the most dispiriting; his serial infidelity, or the girls who were prepared to be used like slippers by him, even though they knew there would be no Cinderella ending

(Jan Moir, Daily Mail, 23rd February, 2010).

Williams (2006) has raised concerns over the entitlements that come with celebrity and fame. Reference was made however to the way that stories involving footballers'

sexual exploits are no longer shocking, but rather, what we have come to expect. Similarly, in their work on the Premiership, Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004) point out that media stories tend to highlight the potential of a celebrity lifestyle, where everything comes easily, including access to women.

Discussions within the focus groups also tended to be particularly critical of the players' wives for standing by them following marital indiscretions. Consistent with suggestions in the academic literature, the discussions alluded to a clear power dynamic between the player and his female partner (Clayton and Harris, 2004). She is expected to stay and put up with infidelity, in return for a consumer lifestyle and security. In this way, women are considered to be little more than a commodity that can be bought by rich professional athletes (Messner, *et al.*, 2000). The following focus group data illustrates the critical debate that arose about player infidelity.

Dan (Male, 18): 'But all the stupid wives are setting an example for other people by not finishing with them, like John Terry, a week later he was on holiday on a boat with his wife, I mean, it might be a front but...Cheryl Cole is still with Ashley'

Donna (Female, 17): 'Sends out the message they're with them for the money'

Jack (Male, 17): If someone did that to me, I would be like, just get stuffed

Lee (Male, 18): Makes you think that it's not such a big deal if she's with him, if I do that, I will be fine

Jack (Male, 17): What it needs is for John Terry's missus to break up with him and then it shows.....

Nic (Female, 17): But its security for a lot of them though

Jack (Male, 17): But then she has got twins, John Terry's missus has got twins, which should have prevented him from doing it in the first place, not only has he made a commitment to someone, you've got children

Nic (Female, 17): If they hadn't got kids they could have just like broken up, but when they have got kids it changes things doesn't it.

It is notable that the responses highlighted above tended to reflect dominant ideologies about gender roles, with a dominant emphasis on the female partner as

aligned with responsibility for childcare. Some exceptions were highlighted, with attention being drawn to the fact that a number of players' wives and girlfriends have their own careers and are therefore theoretically not dependent on their partner for financial support.

Tom (Male, 17): 'Most of them are known already, some of them have good careers in their own right so they would be good role models for girls'

Liam (Male, 17): 'Cheryl Cole is a strong career woman'

Rather than discussing the story in a straight forward way, there were clear indications of identification, as participants in one of the focus groups tried to see it from the point of view of the wives. This involved the comparison of the stereotypical way that WAGS have been portrayed in the media, against the need for security and looking after the family. Furthermore, Lines (2001) suggests how through making judgments about celebrities' private affairs and conduct, we make sense of, and reinforce our own ideas about morality and gender roles. Rather than passively consuming media, people are more likely to ask 'what can I get from this story? How does it apply to my life?' Discussions about celebrity should therefore be understood as an important process through which relationships, identity and social and cultural norms are debated, evaluated, magnified and shared (Turner, 2004).

Punishment

Whannel (2001) has highlighted that following an indiscretion, celebrity athletes are likely to be punished for their actions. Terry was not only set to be punished through losing his captaincy, but in the world of globalized and commercial football, perhaps some of the biggest punishment of all comes from the loss of endorsement deals (Hughes and Shank, 2005). The articles below for instance suggest that the public exposure of Terry's behaviour could have lost him millions in commercial sponsorship.

The decision will shatter Terry's recently acquired family man image and could lose him millions in commercial sponsorships.

(Sam Greenhill, Christian Gysin and Steve Doughty, Daily Mail, 30th January, 2010).

Sponsors are under pressure to ditch John terry potentially costing the player millions

The footballer has a 4.5 million contract to wear Umbro shoes at every match. He has also appeared in adverts for the nationwide building society and electronics giant Samsung.

(Sam Greenhill, Christian Gysin and Steve Doughty, Daily Mail, 30th January, 2010).

Screaming lurid headlines were not what they had been looking for when they paid the England captain to establish a link with their brands

(Mark Hunter, The Times, 3rd February, 2010).

It was suggested in Chapter Two, that the celebrity image is used to add value to the brand (Vincent, Hill and Lee, 2009). A sports brand is a symbol embedded with ideology, capable of organizing the exchange of meaning between producers and consumers (Kennedy and Hills, 2009). With the growing levels of public exposure associated with football celebrity, brands frequently draw on a combination of sporting talent and personal attributes, including their mediated persona outside the game (Koernig and Boyd, 2009). The extracts above discuss how Terry's family man image was jeopardized by the exposure of his actions. It is clear therefore, that although they can be valuable for a company wishing to promote their brand, they are also a potential liability, causing the brand image more harm than good if their image becomes tainted (Vincent *et al,*. 2009). Recent history across a number of sports, including football, has shown that sponsors are often quick to terminate endorsement deals to ensure damage limitation and in doing so costing the athletes involved millions of pounds in commercial income (Leonard and King, 2011). Following allegations of an extramarital affair in 2003, David Beckham lost his contract with Marks and Spencer's. Similarly, Tiger Woods found himself out of favour with the companies he puts his name to following the exposure of a string of affairs leading to the break-up of his marriage in 2010.

It is not only sponsors who are responsible for the 'punishment' of celebrity footballers, but increasingly the public are invited to feel outrage at their actions (Leonard, 2004). Cashmore (2006) suggests that reactions to scandal, especially sex scandal, form four main categories; condemnation, indifference, resentment or

approval. Which of these dominates he argues, depends more on the context than the outcome. In this instance, the fact he had deliberately misled the public with a constructed image that belied his actual behavior, elucidated a particularly scathing response (Crepeau, 2010). The extract below highlights how the public reacted to the news that John Terry had cheated.

Listening to the spluttering indignation over the airwaves and on the web this week, it's clear that many people are indeed outraged, scandalised, shocked and repulsed to learn that the England captain has been 'playing away' with his mates ex-girlfriend.

(Carol Midgley, The Times, 4th February, 2010).

The way it is suggested that the audience respond to stories of this kind, implies that they have taken it personally. The notion of taking it personally is discussed in the quote below.

Because John Terry shagged someone we don't know, upsetting his wife, another women we don't know, we bay for him to get the boot

(Carol Midgley, The Times, 4th February, 2010).

The tone adopted in the extract above appears to be critical of the audience (which she includes herself a part of) for getting so involved in a story that has nothing to do with us. It perhaps implies that we [the audience] are unable to differentiate between reality and mediated reality. As it was suggested in Chapter Two however, it could be argued that celebrity provides us with the material to rehearse moral positions (Alexander, 2010). Viewed in this way, the audience gets to experience a wider range of social scenarios than they are ever likely to experience first-hand.

Given the context and the potential implications of his behaviour for the England team at the Football World Cup, particular reference was made to the reactions from his England team mates. The extract below alludes to the condemnation of Terry's team mates.

Yesterday even fellow England stars- not always known for their family values were privately condemning Terry for crossing the line in sleeping with a team mates partner.

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(Sam Greenhill, Christian Gysin and Steve Doughty, Daily Mail, 30th January, 2010)

The extract highlights the idea that footballers as a whole are not known for their family values, a fact which perhaps makes their judgments seem somewhat contradictory. Indeed, Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004) have suggested that the sub-culture of professional football positively encourages elicit sexual behaviour, perhaps as a means of reinforcing hegemonic masculinity. In this instance however, the condemnation appeared to be based on the fact he crossed a line by cheating with his team mate's ex-partner, and furthermore, in doing so, potentially jeopardized the England team's performance.

Pleasure in the fall

Although the articles highlighted above were quick to point out that the public condemned Terry's behavior, it was also suggested that pleasure in the form of amusement was taken in in consumption of the story. This is consistent with Whannel's (2001) suggestion that the audience frequently express what might be considered faux outrage, rather than genuine shock at scandalous tales about football celebrity. Perhaps consistent with the way that fictional media might be viewed, it is suggested that people may respond as though there are no real consequences for these 'characters' (Bird, 2003). The humorous tone to the way celebrity stories are represented and consumed is alluded to below in the extract from the Telegraph.

The chorus of jeers and derision was not the sound of deeply offended sensibilities but of pantomime villainy

(Mick Brown, Telegraph, 6th February, 2010)

It is increasingly clear however, that the pleasures of certain kinds of celebrity material are derived from their capacity to be invasive, exploitive and vengeful (Rose, 2003).Whether it be the revealing of the breakdown of personal relationships, or a loss of wealth and status, Watts (2008) suggests that the audience seek out humiliation of celebrities and take enjoyment from it. The misfortune of the celebrity footballer is often perpetuated through the media, offering consumers to experience 'schadenfreude' and derive from celebrity misfortune in the form of rituals of public

humiliation (Cross and Littler 2010). Several explanations have been given for the enjoyment in the fall, ranging from irritation of (economic) inequality (Leach *et al,.* 2003), to the misery of others may make people feel better about their own lives (Hermes (1999). The pleasure of the story for Langer (1998) is in part seeing the psychological and social mess when the arrangements of everyday collapse. Modern celebrities are imagined to be free from the cares of everyday life, with fabulous lifestyles, wealth and possessions. Articles revealing their downfall therefore offer reassurance to the public that their lives are not perfect.

The theme of amusement taken in football celebrity downfall was also evident in the focus group discussions. In the extract below for example, comparisons are made to the appeal of 'reality' talk shows such as *Jeremy Kyle* for the tendency of such television formats for highlighting what has previously been hidden, revealing the truth and humiliating people publicly for their actions.

Tom (Male, 17): 'Because they've got nothing else going on, same reason people watch Jeremy Kyle isn't it to be fair! Like everyone likes to have a good laugh at people's misfortune in life, I say it how it is'

John (Male, 17): 'They are famous, but you can relate to them. They've got all this money and all this good life and everything. Everyone envies them and wishes, oh I wish I was like them, but they get in shit and they're like, that's funny. People like reading about other people's imperfections when their lives seem so perfect'

The suggestion above by Tom, that 'everyone likes to have a good laugh at people's misfortune', alludes to the idea that the unravelling of the celebrity image is humorous. Discourses that enter the public domain may also serve as a form of punishment, as the athlete is chastised for their actions. One way this is evident is through the circulation of jokes and other material that pokes fun at the athlete's circumstances and misfortune (Bird, 2003). Jokes tend to reflect the prevailing moral judgement surrounding a particular issue, therefore the existence of jokes or parody presupposes knowledge of a particular story, jokes contribute to firming up the story in particular ways (Cross and Littler, 2010).

Online Forums such as the *Mirror's* Football Banter Blog provide a space where joke like material can be shared by readers.

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John Terry has been lined up to star in a new ITV drama, it's called Other footballers' Wives

Poor Wayne Bridge he's not even first choice with his wife

Wayne Bridge bought Vanessa Perroncel a chocolate willy....but she says she prefers Terry's

What do Wayne Bridge and the Titanic have in common? They both should have stayed at Southampton

(Mirror Football Banter online, 3rd February, 2010).

Carroll (2010) suggests that engaging in aggressive humour allows for the expression and release of impulses which are necessarily inhibited and repressed in a civilised society (Leak, 1974; Phillips, 2006). From a different perspective, Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004) suggest that humour also allows access to topic areas, otherwise off limits. Given that a Freudian perspective would suggest that jokes are likely to emerge around what is repressed, it is perhaps not surprising that sex and sexuality are a focus in this instance. The jokes could also be considered a symbolic attack on Wayne Bridge's masculinity, who is effectively emasculated through implications that; 'he's not even first choice with his wife'. Since heterosexual competence and virility are deemed necessary for reinforcing a masculine identity, this focus of the joke may be less about Bridge and more a reflection of a wider fear of male inadequacy. Consistent with previous suggestions, humour appears to be rooted in masculine cultural capital with the display of crudeness and vulgarity, often under the guise of 'banter' is central to male camaraderie (Easthope, 1990).

As new media expands and develops, there are a growing number of spaces available for interactions of this kind to occur. New media has presented more opportunities for 'wild leisure' in the forms of pictures and videos (Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004). Consumers, particularly in a new media age, could be said to epitomise de Certeau's (1984) notion of 'textual poaching' as readers use officially produced media sources and run with them in different directions (Fiske, 1992). As was discussed in Chapter Three, textual poaching has been used in fan and audience studies to indicate the active nature of media consumption. In particular, it characterises the relationship between readers and writers as an ongoing struggle for possession of a text and

control of its meaning (Jenkins, 1992). Despite this suggestion, this is frequently an area that has been overlooked (Turner, 2010).

On the same topic area, others took to the use of imagery to join in the 'banter' on the subject. This offers another example of how officially produced media material can be manipulated to fulfil a different function (Jenkins, 1992; 2006). Rather than being passive recipients of media material, consumers have become increasingly able to become part of the text, or even production process, helping to shape and give it meaning. Mass media consumption has therefore increasingly allowed audiences the opportunity to connect with the spectacle in their everyday lives (Crawford, 2004).

Figure 1- (Mirror Football Banter online, 3rd February, 2010).

In the image above for example, the creator has used a mainstream media image of Wayne Bridge and John Terry from before the scandal, and added speech bubbles making reference to Terry's affair effectively changing the meaning and context of the original image.

You Tube provided yet another new media space where the story could be played out in a different way; through spoof songs about the affair. Whilst it appears in a different format, it still uses intertextual understandings of the story as well as arguably reinforces the judgment. The song uses the tune from Michael Jackson's 'beat it', although the words are changed to reflect the John Terry story.

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He's Mr Chelsea he's the king of our land

But Fabio's gone and taken away his arm bard

Cos he had dirty sex with Wayne Bridge's ex he cheated,

He cheated, he cheated

He used to meet her at the Hilton Hotel

While Wayne was playing one-twos with Darius Verssell

But now its exposed and everyone knows

He cheated, he cheated

The gagging order's been deleted

He'll claim he's persecuted, misunderstood

Go share your sob stories with Tiger Woods

You cheated, you cheated

(A Song for John Terry, You Tube, Uploaded January 31st, 2010).

Whannel (2001) suggests that a sense of vicarious superiority may be felt by those who devise, share or tell a joke, it can even be used to enhance personal status and recognition, something largely considered desirable in our society. Engaging with something topical allowed the creator of the spoof song to attract attention, receiving over 200 comments. The content of the song also highlights a point made previously about the intertextual nature of media use. Reference to Tiger Woods shows that John Terry's infidelity fits within a wider issue of sports star behaviour. The song also references Terry's failed attempt to obtain a gagging order and the consequences of his actions, in terms of losing the England captaincy. The various ways that new media allows debates to be played out further adds weight to the argument that the audience are unlikely to read media material in a uniform way (Millington and Wilson, 2010).

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Conclusions

It is clear that the changing nature of coverage provides opportunities for the public to engage with stories about football celebrity misdeamenours. Rather than being passive recipients of media, they were able to critically engage with issues such as the media's motives for reporting on stories as well of the content of the stories themselves. Consistent with previous literature, these stories tended to be played out in ways that resembled other forms of media, such as soap opera. This involved the casting of players into often stereotypical roles such as villain or fool (Lines, 2001). Whether these characterisations were seen as shocking, largely depended on previous readings of the individual in question. Although the readings of celebrity were clearly critical, it was notable that the way in which messages were encoded within the newspapers was consistent with the notion of infotainment (Bird, 2002). This problematizes straightforward consumption of media, rather, engagement is likely to be inter textual and draw on a range of media sources. With a wider range of media available that ever before, contributed to by both mainstream and grassroots channels, the audience is left with the project of interpreting the media, drawing their own conclusions and making connections to their own lives.

Although focus group participants suggested that the media should focus on the sport rather than player's private lives, they had an obvious knowledge of stories relating to this topic. They openly talked about more positive aspects of off the field coverage in terms of players' lifestyles but when talking about scandal they adopted strategies to explain their engagement or play down their engagement with it. This involved denial of engagement or making specific reference to the casual way in which they engaged with media. Despite its prominence in contemporary society, more intense involvement with celebrity culture is seen as embarrassing, particularly for males (Rose, 2003). Celebrity culture and the gossip surrounding it is associated with more feminised practices (Bird, 2002). For males to admit an interest in celebrity is therefore a potential threat to their masculinity.

Similar to studies that have explored the melodramatic imagination, engagement with the media was not only seen as escapist but also providing a significant resource for people to make sense of what might be considered salient social issues. The notion of privilege of one kind or another was central to discussions. Gender roles

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were also debated, particularly in relation to players' treatment of women. Both of these issues were seen as related to a culture where players' celebrity status allows them to behave how they want. Dyer (1998) had previously alluded to the idea that often the range of media surrounding the celebrity figure is contradictory, as such texts of this kind allow societies tensions to be put on display. A number of tensions were apparent in both the representations and consumption of football celebrity. Firstly the culture of the sport was deplored although it provided the media with a focus for their stories and obvious pleasure was gained by the audience in engaging with media material that emphasised excess of various kinds.

Although a number of studies have alluded to the notion that engagement with celebrity may not always be about positive relational characteristics, this is one area that has received less attention certainly empirically. This might be considered surprising given that a number of studies and definitions of celebrity make specific reference to the celebrity's propensity to fall from grace. This fall from grace might be encouraged through the increased media intrusion, making it more difficult to keep matters once hidden out of the public eye. Consistent with psychoanalytical explanations of celebrity, pleasure was taken in the fall. This was accounted for on the basis that the media hold up images of celebrity lifestyles as highly desirable, their misdemeanours and often subsequent fall bring them down to earth and closer to us.

The range of new media that the audience has access to may be significant. It has been observed that the anonymity afforded by the media is likely to encourage more hostile reactions to celebrity. A number of these on social networking sites such as Twitter have involved prosecution. Although they may adopt an aggressive tone, in some instances they are also playful and illustrate the audience's creativity. The spoof about John Terry for example, is characteristic of what Jenkins (1992) refers to as textual poaching, where a mainstream resource is used as a starting point for cultural creativity. In this instance the individual who created the spoof song, poached clips from newspapers and other mainstream media to fit within a song he had created about John Terry's affair. The song also used the tune from Michael Jackson's 'Beat It', again another form of commercial media. It was notable that whilst poaching is often associated with significantly changing the meaning of

mainstream texts, the tone of the new material created by the consumer reflected the prevailing social mood around the affair.

The thesis set out to explore how football celebrity was used as a cultural resource in both online and offline environments. As a number of scholars had suggested, this has perhaps been the aspect of celebrity that has been overlooked within academia (Turner, 2010). It was argued throughout the thesis, that this has become an even more salient issue amidst developments in new media, when there are more opportunities to engage in interactive ways and therefore actively shape and transform the cultural resource. It was suggested that this shift is likely to impact not only the way in which football celebrity is represented, but also in the way it is consumed. Although engagement with new media has been celebrated, based on the assumption that media has become more democratic and traditional relationships between the producer and consumer have become blurred, the exploration of power within these spaces is still relevant. One of the aims of the thesis was therefore to explore not only how football celebrity was used, but also the extent to which its use might be considered illustrative of democratic practices.

It was suggested throughout the thesis, that the focus on football celebrity as a (mediated) cultural resource implies that celebrity consists of representations and images, rather than a flesh and blood individual (Cashmore & Parker, 2003). The fact that the images are based on a human being is however important in how they signify. This is consistent with a number of scholars who have discussed the notion of the celebrity commodity and its potential role in shaping contemporary discourses, particularly around gender, sexuality and social class. Although there was clear evidence of these discourses in the representations of football celebrity considered in this thesis, they were both represented and consumed in contradictory ways. This problematises the assumption that there are straight forward audience readings of football celebrity texts.

Celebrity literature frequently alludes to the idea of the attempt to uncover the private individual behind the public face. As societally, we have seen the breakdown in public and private spheres, locating the real and authentic individual has become a

central driving force of both mainstream media features and audience activity (Turner, 2004). It was suggested in the thesis, that the celebrity industry is geared up to selling access to behind the scenes areas, in the form of documentaries, news features and more recently social networking sites. These features frequently offer 'backstage' glimpses into the private sphere allowing the audience to 'get to know' their favourite celebrity figures (Beer, 2008). However, it was argued in the thesis that projects of this kind are more often than not commercially driven. Furthermore, the continuation of stage management into the backstage perhaps makes it likely that representations will reflect dominant ideologies. It was suggested in the analysis of *Being Liverpool* for example, that the American dream was a prominent theme underpinning the overarching narrative of the documentary. Authenticity, across all of the sites explored for the thesis appeared to be merely another commodity. This has parallels with Baudrillard's (2000) notion of hyper reality, where mediated representations become more real than real. Our perceptions of 'reality' are therefore increasingly constructed by the media.

As it was highlighted throughout the thesis, a prominent debate in the literature has been the extent to which media culture, including celebrity, constitutes a form of social control. Early perspectives were dominated by this idea suggesting that the media rendered the audience cultural dupes who were unable to resist manipulation. Conversely however, more recent studies have indicated the pleasures taken in media consumption and the potential for media use to provide opportunities for resisting dominant ideologies. The third generation of audience studies was cited as providing a framework for the thesis with its focus being on how celebrity as a resource is used in everyday life. Furthermore, in moving away from deterministic perspectives it was suggested that media resources are more likely to circulate and be consumed in indeterminate, although not necessarily resistant ways. The use of the third generation was also important in recognising the complexities of media production, circulation and consumption.

The growth and development of the Internet has allowed the audience to interact with media resources, including celebrity in a wider range of ways than previously possible. Given the developments in new media and the increasing number of opportunities for interaction, it is clear that the audience are an important factor in the study of celebrity. The thesis highlighted how the audience are interactive and

critical in both their readings and uses of football celebrity, although they are still influenced at least to some degree by dominant ideologies in society. This was particularly evident in the use of football celebrity on fan sites *Kickette* and *Not Just a Game* where although there was evidence of potentially resistant texts, these tended to be confined by the hegemonic culture they perhaps aimed to challenge.

In response to issues with exploring celebrity through 'scientific' approaches, the thesis also sought to develop an alternative methodological approach in following football celebrity as a cultural object. This reflected numerous suggestions within academic work about football celebrity that its significance needs to be considered in terms of layers of mediation (Cashmore, 2002; Cashmore & Parker, 2003). Given the suggested increasing self-referentiality of football celebrity associated with a postmodern era, this appeared to be a particularly pertinent approach. Whilst this has been a philosophy that has been drawn upon in cultural studies previously, it has not been used within the field of sport. it therefore provided a unique insight into football celebrity.

Whilst it is a method clearly limited by the sheer volume of information in circulation about football celebrity, it was a useful way to explore the subject area. It was also evident that some of the characteristics of the approach highlighted by Lash and Lury in their original work in 2007 may be less applicable, even in the relatively short period since their work was published. Developments in media technology since their work needed to be considered and factored into the methodology. For example, Lash (2006) had suggested previously that characteristic of new media is the logic of the feed displacing the logic of the search in this way the data often guides the consumer. The method of tracking the object offered potentially a different way of exploring the topic of football celebrity. Given that this involved drawing on a wide range of outlets to see the various ways celebrity was used, it allowed football celebrity to be explored in different contexts.

Although the alternative methodology yielded some interesting results, it is recognised that there were a number of issues with the approach. The initial focus groups used a very specific age group which may have impacted on the type and range of responses given. Whilst this age group was initially chosen for the suggestion that younger people are more likely to admit an interest in celebrity, it

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would have offered a wider range of perspectives and a broader insight into interactions, if different age groups had been selected. It was also an issue that the focus group data was out of date. Given the rapid developments in media in recent years, perhaps most notably the growth of social media, the focus group data did not adequately capture this shift. It was suggested that future work in this area should examine the ways in which social media is drawn on as a resource as well as the way that social media is used to contribute to debates going on at a particular time within society.

The thesis could have explored a wider range of examples of how football celebrity is used in new media spaces. Focusing the analysis on two specific fan sites aimed at particular groups for example women or those with a specific interest in fan fiction limited the range of responses gathered. Such a focus is perhaps not representative of wider ways in which it is used. The thesis would also have benefited from interviewing people who use the specific sites to discuss their motivations for engagement and the pleasures they derive from interaction. This was however not included as it had previously been suggested that fans may be quite defensive about having their motivations and pleasures explored by an academic, particularly someone who does not identify as a fan of the cultures being explored (Sandvoss, 2005).

It could also have considered the analysis along lines of levels of engagement. Previously it has been highlighted that it is important to differentiate between categories such as fans, audience and cultists (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). The focus groups focused on those who identified a casual interest in football celebrity in contrast to the data collection from online sites which related to very specific fan activities.

Consistent with suggestions in previous work, there was a reluctance to admit an interest in celebrity particularly for males (Bird, 2003). This was consistent with Rose's work that argued that interactions with celebrity are likely to be tinged with shame or embarrassment. However, tying discussions to wider issues of sports performance, or if it was a sexual indiscretion, making comment on the players' partner, appeared to be two prominent strategies that were used by males to legitimise celebrity talk.

With the vast amounts of information in circulation about celebrity it allows narratives to be built up around high profile players therefore readings are likely to be based around previous knowledge. There was the tendency for example, to be more critical of celebrities who transgressed, but appeared not to learn from their mistakes. Readings are also likely to be intertextual and based on a wide variety of social factors including gender and class. In line with critical readings of celebrity, there was also clear recognition of the role the media play in highlighting indiscretions and the motivations for doing so (Lines, 2001). In speculating over the media's motives for revealing celebrity indiscretions, in the focus group discussions it was argued that the media are primarily concerned with selling a story and making a profit, no matter what the consequences to those involved.

It was not only football players who were the focus of discussions and media coverage but as football celebrity culture has expanded, frequently players' partners and families become more visible and drawn into the celebrity vortex. The process of vortextuality was evident in the representation of certain players and consistent with Whannel's (2003) suggestion, this relied not only on the continued presence and new stories being put into circulation in mainstream media, but also the way that they were used once out of direct control of the 'producer'. Discussions in the focus group for instance provided a critical view on players' partners staying in a relationship with them when they had cheated.

The ways that stories and information about football celebrity were consumed were diverse in terms of the site as well as the mode of engagement. As well as admiration, there was clear pleasure taken in football celebrity fall from grace. This appeared to reflect notions of privilege, focusing on the breakdown of relationships or the loss of wealth and status. Previously in the literature, the focus on this aspect of celebrity appeal has largely been based around gossip in terms of verbal exchanges (DeBacker et al., 2007). With new media developments, the scope for this type of interaction has been transformed with evidence of critical readings of football celebrity misdemeanours evident in interactions on social networking sites, as well as through the creation of songs on sites such as YouTube (Sanderson, 2012).

The contradictory nature of celebrity representation and consumption was also evident within the analysis of the Secret Footballer Column in The Guardian

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Newspaper. Features in the column highlighted not only the wealth and glamour associated with celebrity culture, but also the downside, in the form of vulnerability and personal loss. It was argued that consistent with psychoanalytical explanations of celebrity, the fall of celebrity allows the audience to vent vindictive impulses. It also provides a form of symbolic levelling. The column may also be considered contradictory in the sense that it encourages audience interaction with input from readers fulfilling a vital role in maintaining the popularity of the column and the 'game' of guessing who the secret footballer might be, however, audience input might considered 'labour' since audience members are contributing to a commercial project but not receiving any payment or recognition.

With several suggestions that research should seek to explore changing relationships between the celebrity and the audience, the thesis aimed to explore interactions on the social networking site Twitter. Previous studies of celebrity have suggested the presence of what have been termed parasocial interactions that occur between the celebrity and the audience. With the proliferation of media representations, and information in circulation, the distance between the celebrity and the audience is symbolically closed through compensatory media. This kind of interaction has historically been defined as a unilateral relationship, since direct communication does not occur. More recently however, the development of social networking sites have sparked new debates about changing nature of interactions possible in social networking sites, where seemingly direct communication is possible.

On all four of the Twitter profiles explored for this thesis, there was clear evidence of an attempt to create a particular image. Although Twitter is a social networking site, it fulfilled an additional and important function as a platform for image management. It was suggested throughout the thesis that impression management has become an increasingly important for individual football celebrities since they stand to benefit commercially from the exploitation of their image. All of the four players created an image through their tweets that was largely consistent with their representations within mainstream media. It was suggested for instance, that Michael Owen portrayed himself as a model professional, tweeting about sport and family life rather than anything overly personal or controversial. His credible image allowed him to debate current issues with his followers, as well as challenge mainstream perceptions of football culture and football players.

As a reflection of celebrity culture more widely, the type of information posted extended beyond the sport and into other areas of their life. Characteristically this involved talk about other hobbies and interests and family. This reflects what is considered to be a balancing act of the celebrity between ordinary and extraordinary. Against a culture that provides mainstream media images of stars spectacular images, more mundane images appear to be particularly valued. In order for identification to occur it is necessary for the follower to connect in some way. This often involved making reference to taking part in relatively everyday activities. This was a significant way in which players encouraged interaction with their followers.

Leonard (2009) had previously suggested that there is a need to understand the changing nature of interactions, as well as the changing nature of 'audiences' alongside new media developments. The interactions through Twitter indicated that the audience tended to view celebrity as someone in their social circle rather than someone to be worshipped. There was evidence of two way interaction although it was notable that the football celebrity was more likely to respond when they had initiated the topic of conversation. This indicated that there was still a difference in power between the celebrity player and their followers.

Furthermore, extant reserach has focused on positive interactions, some of interactions were particularly venomous, targeting individuals for their mistakes as well as attacking the culture of celebrity more widely. Joey Barton in particular was targeted in this way, with his followers frequently making reference to his past misdemeanours. The anonymity afforded by the Internet arguably encourages hostile interactions, since there is no perceived accountability. Some of the comments of this kind appeared to be targeted at other followers as much as Barton. It might therefore be argued that posting venomous comments online to a celebrity, is a way of gaining persnal attention and visibility.

While football culture and fandom is associated as a masculine activity, football celebrity arguably provides a site for the diversification of fandom. With a wider variety of masculinities in circulation, the thesis aimed to reflect how this has allowed for new forms of consumption. As such it aimed to see the potential for fan sites to offer challenges to dominant forms of masculinity that are arguably deeply ingrained within football culture.

Using fan site *Kickette* it explored football celebrity as an object of the female gaze, an act in itself that appeared, at least ostensibly, to provide a challenge to hegemonic masculinity. Since the gaze is more associated with men looking at, and objectifying women, *Kickette* was seen as a potentially resistant space. Consistent with fan activities more widely, the site used representations from mainstream media outlets as a starting point for discussions. Whilst the females clearly took pleasure in the act of looking at the male body, in line with previous suggestions of masculine imagery in the media, male football celebrity images denied the gaze through looking disinterested, or through challenging the gaze upon them through a challenging or confident gaze denial of passivity and invulnerability.

As well as pleasure taken in turning the gaze on men, there was also shame implied in the act of looking. This is consistent with suggestions that females are not expected to look at and eroticise the male body. Features such as the interviews with players, tended to reinforce the notion of football celebrity privilege through asking what they like in a woman. This could be said to reinforce gender roles, putting the emphasis on the woman to do what it takes to please a man. However, it was evident that this was not read indiscriminately, in fact a number of responses were critical of his stereotypical views of the role of women.

Although the site provided a space for women to sexualise players, it was argued that in treating the male players in a similar way to the way female athletes have been treated in the mainstream media, the site did little to offer an alternative to hegemonic masculinity, rather it merely copied it.

Although there were a number of commonalities with extant literature, the slash written about football also provided some unique themes. The first theme was *Queer Space* which consisted of three separate elements; the queering of particular players, the number of players engaging in homosexual activity and the disruption of traditionally masculine spaces. Where typically previous work on slash has focused on particular characters, football slash took this further casting the majority of players as queer. This trend was consistent throughout the stories, allowing writers more flexibility to put different players together in casual pairings. Another theme *Hierarchy*, highlighted defined power structures evident within the stories. In contrast to previous literature that has emphasised the shifting power balances

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between characters, power structures in the football slash stories were clearly defined and seemingly fixed. Hierarchy, related to both stories featuring relationships between English players and their foreign colleagues, and players being cast in top or bottom roles, something previously avoided in slash fiction. 'Strictly casual' was a theme that illustrated the tendency within the stories to focus on casual encounters, rather than meaningful interactions. This focus within the stories also kept the emphasis on the physical pleasures of sex rather than the emotional pleasures. This to some degree seemed to be used to show that the characters were 'real men' and not 'girls'. Although these stories offered challenges to stereotypes of gay male homosexuality, it reinforced gendered stereotypes of women as subordinate. It was also notable that casual encounters frequently involved group sex, it was suggested that the focus on power and performance in these stories might be considered consistent with a sporting discourse and therefore compatible with aspects of hegemonic masculinity. The final theme 'sexual violence' was again something relatively unique to football slash. The stories however, tended to mimic mainstream representations of players' treatment of women. It was argued that the stories might reflect ideologies of football and football culture.

Overall, the football slash could be considered somewhat contradictory in that it both challenged and reinforced a culture that is built on masculine hegemonic values and homophobia. On the one hand, the hierarchy of power was relatively fixed and appeared to privilege certain forms of masculinity over others. The privileging of a hyper masculine, straight acting identity could be considered as a queer apologetic. The casting of foreign players in feminine roles can also be seen as a replication of straight society rather than truly exploring new possibilities for contingent and shifting masculinities. Conversely however, it offered a challenge to binary classifications of sexual identity with reference to players' encounters with both men and women. Crucially, with the exception of one player being cast as 'straight', there was no attempt throughout the stories to label a player with a particular sexual identity. The stories also could be seen as progressive for the broader slash genre since there was an emphasis on longer term relationships between players as well as casual encounters.

Given the emergence of new themes, effectively making it a unique sub-genre of slash, football is an area that would benefit from further attention focusing on a wider

range of clubs and players. Due to the transitory nature of the game with players transferring to different clubs it would be also be interesting to explore how writers deal with disruption to 'their cast' when a player leaves. Furthermore, future research in the area could explore if racial stereotyping evident in mainstream media reporting is transferred to slash writing and how this potentially cross cuts themes around masculinity.

Summary

It is suggested that the thesis makes a number of unique contributions to the literature, both within sports sociology and audience studies. Each of these contributions will be summarised below.

- In answering calls for further research about presumed democratisation of the media, it critically explored the extent to which fan practices might be considered illustrative of interactive and resistant practices.

- It was suggested that although previous models that accounted for audience influence might be overly deterministic, there is the continued need to explore how power operates in more complex ways. Through the analysis of Being Liverpool and the Secret Footballer column in The Guardian Newspaper for instance, it was argued that the audience are somewhat complicit in their manipulation allowing mainstream media corporations to use their contributions without receiving any payment or credit. Conversely however other aspects of their interaction could be considered interactive and playful, for example, readers of the secret football column piecing together clues to guess who the player is.

- Milington and Wilson (2010) highlighted that there was a specific need to develop research within sport that used a third generation approach. Furthermore, it was stressed in Chapter Three that there is a paucity of work within sport that has explored the audience empirically and/or used frameworks developed within audience studies. The thesis used a third generation approach to the study of football celebrity, recognising complex relationships between the media producer and consumer.

- In a special edition of the Sociology of Sport Journal, Leonard (2009) argued that future studies take into account the implications of new media

developments for sport cultures. More specifically, he made suggestions about the directions this work should take. He pointed to a need to explore changing relationships between the audience and performers. This thesis tackled this issue through the analysis of football celebrity interactions on Twitter. He also suggested that work should examine the texts created by sports performers and sports fans in new media spaces. Again, these issues were tackled within the thesis, most notably in the study of *Twitter*, *Kickette* and *Not Just a Game*.

- In recognition of the contradictory nature of celebrity, the thesis aimed to draw on themes from psychoanalytical accounts of celebrity and explore them empirically. This particular theoretical perspective is missing from the sociology of sport literature when it comes to the topic of celebrity. It does however offer a useful framework for exploring the contradictory interactions the audience have with celebrity.

- Methodologically, the thesis explores football celebrity in a new way. Although 'tracking the object' has been drawn upon in cultural studies, it has not been used in a sport context. In line with previous suggestions that football celebrity can be considered a commodity, this method allows for the exploration of how the commodity circulates and how it is consumed.

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Secret footballer data

Pass notes No 3,235: The Secret Footballer

So just who is the mysterious Premier League star who writes an anonymous column for the Guardian?

26/8/2012

Age: It's a secret.

Appearance: It's a secret.

This is going well. Is there anything you can actually tell me? Certainly. He's a Premier League footballer who writes an anonymous column in the Guardian, which has now become a book.

The Guardian, eh? I thought that was a newspaper for teachers and vegetarians. Oh yes, it is. But this footballer is a more sensitive character than you might expect. That's the whole point of his columns.

How so? Well, he has suffered from depression, and says it upsets him that he and his fellow players are all portrayed as ignorant and shallow multimillionaires.

Whereas in fact … ? They are all multimillionaires, but only some of them are ignorant and shallow. "People would be amazed," he told the Today programme on Friday, "how many players could hold conversations about literary classics, politics and popular culture."

I think I'd need to see a transcript of these conversations before I break out the amazement. Sadly none is available, although the Secret Footballer himself owns a Picasso etching, and is apt to namecheck Marcel Proust. Indeed he would like to be a novelist himself.

Not much danger of becoming a multimillionaire doing that. No indeed.

So come on then. You work for the Guardian – who is he? I don't know.

But you know everything! Honestly, I have no idea. I asked around earlier, and nobody even knows who knows. There's a blog at whoisthesecretfootballer.co.uk which is dedicated to sleuthing it out.

What have they deduced? Well, based on what the player has written in his columns and on Twitter, they reckon he is white, English, married with a daughter, coming to the end of his career, and probably a midfielder or a forward.

And whom would that describe? The leading candidates, according to a poll on the site, are the Bolton forward Kevin Davies, the QPR midfielder Joey Barton, and the Everton defensive midfielder Phil Neville.

Maybe it's David Beckham? It is not David Beckham.

Do say: "Can we have a secret banker next?"

Don't say: "Then a secret vegetarian."

The Secret Footballer answered your questions

The Secret Footballer answered readers' questions, with a free book and T-shirt awarded for every question answered 23rd Aug 2012

Good morning. **The Secret Footballer will be online at 11.30am to answer your questions**.

Every question answered will be awarded with a free copy of his new book I Am The Secret Footballer and one of our Secret Footballer T-shirts. If you have any questions, drop them into the **comments section below**.

In the meantime, here's some footage of The Secret Footballer on video for the very first time, and a review of his book by Alex Clark.

The Secret Footballer is known for his openness, as shown by this extract from his new book, but he is not going to give away his identity today; he is here to provide a unique insight into the game.

11.35am: The Secret Footballer is now in the comments sections answering questions.

bartoj asks about his motivation for writing the column: **"Why do you feel it's important to show the 'other side' of the footballing world to the general public?"**

TSF replies:

At this stage of my career I have become frustrated at hearing things that I know to be incorrect. I heard these same things well over ten years ago when I started my career and that has become a sense of huge frustration for me personally. I wouldn't say that it is important that I share them, I think it might be more for my own peace of mind and sanity as much as anything else.

11.35am: **Danamo** asks about wages: **"In what year did you think wages reached a level where the short career argument became invalid? If all this had never happened footballers made an average wage, do you think you'd be happy?"**

TSF replies:

Well, I suppose there is an argument that wages were only going to go one way when Jimmy Hill lobbied to abolish the maximum wage because the demand has always been there for football, especially in this country. However, we all know that the real reason for enormous wages is a combination of Sky TV and the inception of the Premier League so if I had to say a year it would be 1992.

Regarding the second part of the question, it is impossible to tell. I can, however, point to the things that would not have been there without the money. There is a certain pressure to maintain the income as the seasons are slipping by and a feeling of butterflies in the stomach as you are running out of time. And I think for a lot of players this can be applied to, for example, the adulation, the camaraderie etc. Fortunately I have always had an exit plan in place but so many don't.

11.38am: **GlasgowGooner** asks about the Premier League's imports: **"I've always been curious why players who come to the premier league from Europe seem much more sophisticated/rounded Individuals. I'm thinking Cantona, Zola, Di Matteo to name just a few. Does the Secret Footballer think there is a genuine difference in outlook/attitude, and if yes, can he suggest why?"**

TSF replies:

A friend of mine that is a journo is adamant that Scandinavian players are the friendliest and most approachable and I can certainly agree with that. It does seem as if players from abroad (not all of course) are well rounded and more capable of dealing with the spotlight.

A foreign friend of mine at one club I played for used to think that this was because they would make it in to teams at a young age in so called lesser leagues before coming to the big European leagues, and they also knew that they would be going home one day which enabled them to look at life outside of the bubble.

11.40am: **matthewlgrant** wants to know what the future holds for the Secret Footballer: **"Will there be more columns, or is the book the end of it all?"**

TSF replies:

Can you ask the editor for me? And then let me know!

11.42am: **Rob Crespo** asks: **"Do your team mates know you're the secret footballer? If so, what do they think of what you're doing and how has it affected your relationship with them?"**

TSF replies:

A couple of players do know. One is involved in the secret footballer website and the other has since retired. It obviously isn't the sort of thing that I discuss in the dressing room, not because I would be worried about what they thought but because word would soon get out in to the public domain, and that would have ruined the columns and the book.

11.47am: **marcostanleyfogg** asks about the reading habits of footballers: "Do you know any high-profile footballer who reads the Guardian or high-brow novels? If so, is he despised for his 'intellectualism'? Thanks."

TSF replies:

I can only think of one player I have played with that reads a broadsheet and he certainly wouldn't be a player that you would have expected to read The Times. The most popular paper is The Sun, followed by The Star but even then it is literally a 30-second flick through.

Any player that reads on the bus or the plane is reading a novel, lots of the foreign players read novels. The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo was passed around the coach last year at the request of the players. Unheard of!

11.49am: **AntLivsey** asks about football boots: **"In one of your columns you talked about the smell of a brand new football boot and the feelings it brought back. I still remember my first boots. Puma Play-offs! Yours?"**

TSF replies:

Golas. Everyone on our estate had Golas, moulded of course.

11.51am: **GhostWiper** wants to know why TSF doesn't have better things to do: **"How come you're not at training this morning?"**

TSF replies:

Wednesday is nearly always our day off. Read the book!

11.56am: **GeorgeAllwell** asks about tactics and insubordination: **"Do players ever, against the managers wishes, blatantly and flagrantly ignore the tactical instructions of a manager in a game; and consequently, do managers really 'lose a dressing room'?"**

TSF replies:

Thanks. In reply to your question the most common flagrance of a manager's instructions is from set pieces. Sometimes a player just needs to go with his gut instinct of where the ball will be delivered and where the opportunity for a strike a goal may lie. We all have individually tailored runs but if a team is in desperate need of a goal in the final minutes you might find that the players go with their instincts.

As for losing a dressing room, it most definitely does happen and it will come on the back of a manager that changes too much too soon or a manager that just isn't up to the job and is out of his depth. The players will lose respect and stop trying as hard.

12.01pm: **GhostWiper** seems to have caught out The Secret Footballer on the timing of his day off: **"It's Thursday today. Who ever said footballers are thick?"**

TSF replies:

I cannot believe you have gone for that one, you wouldn't last 2 seconds in the dressing room! haha

12.03pm: **iwouldprefernotto** asks about pre-match preparation: **"Like all sportsmen, footballers are prone to superstitions and strange pre-match (or, in the case of David Luiz, in-match) rituals. What's the strangest one you've personally witnessed?"**

31/8 I am now a player for L'OM what a birthday present! Cannot wait to get going

31/8- Hopefully once the ink is dry I can immerse myself in the culture, learn the language and just play football. That is my dream

28/8 maybe it is time to dumb down and be dishonest. It seems to get you a long way in this game….

Never change

Maybe it's time to stop head butting people on the pitch

28/8 why can't things just be simple

28/8 doesn't look like Marseille thing is going to happen now 'whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger'

You can almost hear violins playing…..never joey's fault

26/8 good night people! I've said enough for today. I'l get into trouble no doubt. But this is how it is, this is life.

You deserve better than QPR

Don't blame you. With a crippling wage bill and the championship beckoning your better jumping ship whist you can

You really are a boring twat

26/8 I hope to move on with my career, with my life. If that is in France, so be it. I don't wan't to be disrespectful to QPR but enough is enough

Eng will never win anything until the Eng team is picked from players moving abroad. Simple as that

The wanker forgets he gets paid 70g a week. Wow I hate him

26/8 I accepted all this. I never once spoke out of turn or angrily towards anybody. I am a man. I can only take so much. I want to leave.

26/8 then I have my shirt number taken without any notice. Then, I read that I wouldn't of been signed had the current regime been in place

Twitter is really the worst thing for someone of your demeanour to have access to

And whose fault is all of this? Have a look in the mirror and you'll see a very ugly answer. Always the victim

26/8 I am stripped of the captaincy. Then made to train at 3pm, then I am hawked out on loan

26/8 I could of appealed as is my right. I chose not to out of respect but when I returned from the club I am forced to train away from the first team.

Please stop wingeing nobody gives a shit

My apologies thought you had finished! Please carry on this is comedy gold

26/8 I am hopefully that things will be sorted out soon. Other clubs are in but I only want to play in Marseille. This is the place for me…….

26/8 hopefully QPR and Marseille can finalise the deal in the next few days. My head is already in the Velodrome.

26/8 to the QPR fans, for some reason the manager dislikes me from before Man city

Prob your disciplinary record, he needs players on the pitch

That's probably because you're an overpaid shit player who thinks he's hard with a hitler tash and a Widnes fringe

26/8 not gonna cry about it, maybe its just time to move on

Nobody is crying here either now fuck ff and shut up bitching. The gaffer don't like you because you're a skipper who does not lead by example….Absolute dogshit role model

Steph- my boyfriend's granddad paid loads of money to stay in Dubai at the hotel where the England players stayed its crazy it cost loads more than going somewhere else it was just so he could tell everyone.

Alex- its not just that though is it they are always on adverts so it makes people want to be like them even more. Think of Beckham advertising pepsi and gillete nothing to do with football but bet loads of people by it because he gives his name to it.

Mel: in magazines too they always say what labels they wear to try and make people buy the same or something that looks similar.

Alex: all the people who sell those brands are laughing they will make a bomb

Steph- I love it, reading the magazine stories (some of the lads start to laugh and pull faces) bet you all do just I'm the only one who doesn't care about looking stupid.

Don't you read them then?

Liam: I read papers so if there's a story in there then yeah but wouldn't buy a magazine.

Mel: it must be a girl thing

How do you think what we read or see about celebrities influences our aspirations?

Donna- well I wouldn't say no to what they have

Tom- yeah I think everyone wants to have a big house and loads of cars imagine how cool that would feel.

Nic- I suppose I do want that but I've never really though about why

Is sport celebrity different from other celebrities?

Steph- they're more deserving than people who go on big brother and stuff. They've worked hard at least to get where they are.

Mel: they train hard