

**‘MIDFIELD MASTERMINDS’ AND ‘RUNNING FREIGHT TRAINS’: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RACIAL DISCOURSES IN PREMIER
LEAGUE AND EURO 2020 COMMENTARY**

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Abstract

This study explores racialised commentator discourses from concurrent Premier League and Euro 2020 competitions. The study comprises of a mixed method quantitative and qualitative analysis of covert racially biased language and football mediation mechanisms to address two research questions: 1) What are the similarities and differences between domestic and international commentary? 2) What effect, if any, does overt anti-racist commentary on the Taking of the Knee have on the covert biased discourses seen in wider commentary? Building on existing work, comparison of two concurrent competitions aims to identify the similarities and differences that emerge from each. The study utilises a sample of 60 hours of BBC and ITV Euro 2020 and Sky Sports and BT Sports 2021/22 Premier League coverage. The results indicate significant differences in the positive skew of physical description based on the race of the player being described in Premier League commentary, with an even greater positive skew being apparent in Euro 2020 discourses. Comparison of the commentator discourses delivered on the act of taking the Knee saw instances of overt racism take precedent over instances of covert racial bias in the discourses of commentators during both competitions.

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Introduction

Both the Premier League and the UEFA European Football Championship reside at the respective pinnacles of European domestic football and European international football. Recent Premier League seasons and the Euro 2020 competition have seen highly publicised instances of racist abuse towards players in both the stands and on social media. In the wake of defeats in both league fixtures and most prominently the Euro 2020 final against Italy, prominent English players such as Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho, and Bukayo Saka have been on the receiving end of hateful messages and comments focused on their racial background (BBC Sport 2021). The topic of racism in and around football has gained increased attention and discussion in recent years, with not only the abuses towards footballers resulting in debate and action, but also the murder of George Floyd in the United States sparking international outcry in conjunction with discussion about the ways in which racism is affecting the wider social and political world. For this study, those discussions involve the culture and practices in football with significant focus on the taking of the Knee (henceforth referred to as TTK) and the No Room for Racism campaign.

With significant focus from both the media and stakeholders in football being placed on the highly visible instances of racism, particularly social media racism at the time of study, this thesis aims to place focus on the less visible aspects of footballing discourse which serve to perpetuate racist stereotypes. Initial forays into the wider sporting field began in the 1970s with Rainville and McCormick's (1977) study on the 'extent of covert racial prejudice' in American Football commentary. Following this, research on English football commentary discourses originated with McCarthy and Jones' (1997) study into 'the portrayal of the Black soccer player on television' which was subsequently reinforced by McCarthy, Jones and Potrac's (2003) study utilising the same protocols, while being supplemented with audience reception work. In recent years, Campbell and Bebb's (2020) study provides International footballing insights into 2018 World Cup commentator discourses and the extent to which racialised commentary permeated both racial and national divides.

These studies provide valuable insights into the discourses in commentary, however one notable drawback in relation to the reach of these studies is that they all research discourses from a single domestic or international competition at a time. This study aims to provide parallel insights into discourses from the domestic 2021/22 Premier League season in comparison with the closest international competition, Euro 2020 that was postponed to summer 2021. Through studying two concurrent competitions, insights into the similarities and differences between the way players are described can be gathered. It provides the opportunity for direct comparison and contrasting of the findings and offers us an opening through which racial biases can be understood in the context of how they develop in domestic settings and international settings.

The importance of footballing discourses cannot be understated - an estimated 31 million viewers in the UK alone watched the Euro 2020 final between England and Italy (The Guardian 2021), with peak Premier League viewing figures from recent analysis by Nielsen Sports suggesting a global audience of 1.35 billion viewers consuming a total of 262,102 hours of media broadcasting (Premier League 2019). Notably, the Premier League themselves state that the viewership figures only account for household viewing and that 'out-of-home and mobile device viewing' are not included. With this context, the potential viewership figures are significantly higher than recorded and therefore the discourses delivered in the broadcasts potentially reach vastly more consumers than the already high figures suggest.

Within footballing and football commentator discourses, there is a widely researched existence of discourses pertaining to black physicality, specifically discourses that suggest black physicality comes from a natural athleticism (McCarthy and Jones 1997). Footballing discourses involve discourses outside of the broadcasting sphere, social media users for instance, while football commentator discourses primarily focus on the live match, in-game commentary team in addition to the punditry teams delivering their discourses before and after the match and at half time. Football commentator discourses, when delivered consistently and repetitively, have been suggested to have the ability to 'become something of a taken for granted and naturalized form of knowledge' (van Sterkenburg 2013 p. 97).

With this assertion, the problem begins to arise where significant quantities of footballing media are being produced, with substantially biased discourses towards the physicality of black athletes. A situation is fostered where successes and abilities are, as van Sterkenburg puts it, taken for granted. In discourses relating to the description of black and white athletes, black athletes have been regularly deemed to be reliant on natural gifts and physical ability, in place of hard work and intellect which is instead attributed to white athletes (Rada and Wulfemeyer 2005).

This study aims to answer a research question relating directly to the widely seen dichotomy of black physicality and white mentality in addition to the wider landscape of racialised footballing discourses. The question was formulated in relation to the existing literature and the context of actions taking place in the competitions themselves. The research question aims to uncover, *'what are the similarities and differences between domestic and international commentary?'*. This particular wording for the question was chosen due to the abovementioned studies having a focus on a single competition at a time. This study aims to provide comparative answers to what is similar and what is different in the discourses delivered by commentators when they are covering club and country. The intersections of race and nation provide an opportunity to understand whether or not discourses differ in settings where nationality is more overtly on display compared with club affiliations. The social media racism towards black members of the England national team displays the overt and hateful instances where national identity and exclusion from national identity are evident. The ability for this study to research discourses on the same players for club and for country allows for direct comparison of the discourses around them, Romelu Lukaku for both Belgium and Chelsea, at the time of research being a notable example.

The secondary research question relates to the recently adopted act of taking the Knee, an act which originated with Colin Kaepernick's TTK in 2016 in response to racial injustice and police brutality (Doehler 2021). In the context of Premier League football, the TTK was adopted by the league in conjunction with the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in the United States in 2020. The act of taking the Knee in the Premier League fell under the scope of the No Room for Racism campaign and was undertaken consistently at the start

of Premier League fixtures during the studied 2021/22 season. The research question asks, *'What effect, if any, does overt anti-racist commentary on the taking of the Knee (TTK) have on the covert biased discourses seen in wider commentary?'*.

This approach to the question offers multiple avenues of analysis, firstly when the players are taking the knee before kick-off, this offers opportunity for commentators to directly address the issue of racism in football allowing for analysis in this study of what they say directly. Secondly, it allows for assessment of whether or not they address issues of overt or covert discourses, both of which are concepts that will be unpacked in the review of literature. If only overt discourses and instances of high-profile hatred are addressed in commentary on the TTK, covert biases will remain unseen. Thirdly, the research question allows for analysis of whether or not commentators default back to the usual patterns of commentary, describing black and white players in terms of physicality and mental characteristics, as seen in the studies above and in the review of literature. The act of TTK resides between the dual notions of anti-racialism and anti-racism (Goldberg 2008). Briefly defined, anti-racialism is posited as being the challenging of racism without standing up against racism. Conversely, anti-racism is presented as being a mode of resisting which involves placing oneself 'at risk' in order to achieve change (p. 10). Such notions open avenues of discussion as to the extent to which TTK, and the deliverers of TTK commentary, assert themselves on the issue of racism and racializations.

A significant angle of research emerged during the research process regarding two high profile players that reside outside the black/white discursive commentary dichotomy, Mohamed Salah and Heung-Min Son. The 2021-22 golden boot award was jointly won by these players hailing from Egypt and South Korea respectively, the considerable number of goals they scored resulted in them receiving several instances of commentary focusing on them. Utilising recommendations for future methodologies by van Sterkenburg et al. (2010), which specify making note of discourses that do not fit directly into the categories of research, a case study question was formulated from the emerging findings to unpack the direct insights into the types of discourses on Salah and Son. This was done to understand how Salah and Son are described in commentary and begin to provide indirect insights into the way in which the black/white discourses interact and develop.

In wider study into commentator discourses describing mixed heritage players, Christian's (2011) work suggests that mixed heritage players are described physically more regularly than white players, in line with the ways in which black players are described. Researching Son and Salah as a case study, as players who do not directly fit into the black/white dichotomy of the study, offers opportunity for brief insight into whether or not they receive mental or physical description, and therefore insight into how the discourses on them reside in relation to the widely used discourses on physicality and mentality. As natural physicality discourse is so commonly used in commentator discourses to describe black athletes; it was anticipated that discourse on Son and Salah would relate to more mental characteristics as the discourses emerged. It must also be stated that the notions of 'black' and 'white' are utilised in the study in the context that they have undergone social construction. Further unpacking of notions around race and ethnicity takes place in the review of literature.

With the research questions established, the methodology of the study will aim to triangulate an approach to the research in order to provide a clear picture of the scope of the discourses, alongside the depth and intricacies of the discourses. The triangulation approach commences with a quantitative content analysis approach utilising protocols from both McCarthy and Jones' 1997 study and McCarthy, Jones and Potrac's 2003 study, and is followed by the application of qualitative discourse analysis principles adapted from van Dijk's 1991 'Racism in the Press' study. The two approaches combined offer a situation where the wider scope and scale of the discourses aim to be identified through quantitative numerical means, while the discourses and messages in the commentary are unpacked in depth by the qualitative discourses analysis principles to identify the discursive mechanisms at work in the commentary.

The structure of the thesis includes a review of the literature pertaining to media production and media discourses, including Stuart Hall's (2001) encoding and decoding principles. A subsequent review of applicable and non-applicable theories in the field of media production discerns those that comprise the selected theoretical perspectives for the study, with reasoning for why each were selected or discounted. Empirical studies into the field of media discourses with focus on race

discourse and feminist discourses offer differing intersectional viewpoints to the applicable approaches to this study. Further review of the selected theoretical perspectives include expansion into Hall's (2001) encoding theories. Specifically his notion of codes being the ways in which meanings are ascribed to situations and people (p. 167). In addition to Hall, Hylton's Critical Race Theory (2005) provides 'a framework to challenge orthodoxies, narrow 'race' thinking, and under-theorized approaches in sport' (p. 336) through which the socially constructed nature of race is conceptualised. Following this, a review section on the influence of the media in football assesses television rights in the Premier League era beginning with the start of television rights in 1992 up until the most recent television deal encompassing this study's selected seasons.

The theory behind the Media's decision-making processes for fixture selection is reviewed and their use of statistical data in recent years is unpacked in the context of recent analytics. The increasing role of statistical data is appraised in relation to the development of legitimacy in footballing discourses. In the wake of the initial investigation of legitimacy as a discursive concept, the notion of competitive meritocracy (Sage 1990) is unpacked alongside the notions of the hegemony of discourses and 'commonsense' discourses. Hegemony is a key notion for the study, defined briefly here as a control of and assertion of the prevailing norms (Femia 1987). Hegemony and its variations will be further unpacked in the dedicated section in the review of literature. A section of literature on race, and the key terms around race, offers insight into the origin of theories around race and ethnicity, the key concept of racialisation, and colour-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Bonilla-Silva's work on naturalisation in the scope of colour-blind racism forms the backbone of this study's insights into commentator discourses. The processes through which naturalisation, the effects of broadcast structures, and football discourses occur all factor into the naturalisation of racialised discourses.

Following the discussion of terminology surrounding race, ethnicity, and racialisation, a discussion of race and sports media offers insight into what are deemed by Hylton and Lawrence (2016) to be four 'areas of concern' in relation to racism in sport. The first of their four areas encompasses the vernacular of racist incidents, such as chanting in crowds in addition to slurs and hatred. The racist

events associated with the wake of the Euro 2020 final are examples of vernacular based racism in sport. Occupational instances are their second area and include role selection and leadership diversity. Third is that of Institutional racism, differentiated from occupational by specifying them as the overlooked factors obstructing opportunities for minoritized individuals. Finally, their fourth involves what they deem to be the 'culture industry' in which covert instances of racism and unspoken assumptions take the forefront. This particular aspect is key to the study of sports commentary.

Hylton and Lawrence's work is followed by examples where themes of racism and racial bias have been identified from sports outside football including the Olympics, American sporting spheres, and cricket. Two dedicated sections on instances of overt and covert racism in football follow suit with sections on racism and stereotyping pre-1992 and during the Premier League era. Racism faced by Cyrille Regis, Garth Crooks, and John Barnes amongst others exemplify select examples from the pre-1992 instances of racial abuse, with contextualisation of the vernacular, occupational, institutional, and culture industry factors from Hylton and Lawrence (2016). Reports on racism in football from the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport, in addition to more covert instances of racism, exemplify the instances from the Premier League era. Furthermore, the advent of the internet, with social media platforms and online forums, provide a medium through which racism and racial stereotyping are seen.

The methodology section of the thesis offers more focused insight into social research perspectives beginning with the initial social research approaches of Comte and Durkheim, these approaches form the first basis through which real-world empirical approaches are seen. Following these are the approaches of Weber and those who influenced his work into ideal types and value relevance. Value relevance being a concept that is key to the qualitative aspects of commentator discourses and the study of them. More specifically, the notions of value neutrality in relation to objectivity when studying a value relevant topic. The approaches to discourses of Fairclough, Foucault, and Barthes unpack definitions of discourse, power, and connotations through semiotics respectively. Fairclough's (2013) approach provides a lens to discuss the ways in which discourses can construct and reconstruct ideas.

Foucault's (1978) approaches to discourse offer insights into the ways in which discourse, on the one hand, can help those in power to dominate and conversely how those out of power can use discourse to challenge said dominant ideas. Barthes' approach to semiotics offers a lens through which we can analyse descriptive commentator discourses and discern meanings and connotations (1957).

Theories relating to the structure of organisations and the agency of individual actors are developed in the methodology, with respect to the ways in which discourses are affected by the structure of live broadcasts and the agency that individuals exert when delivering analysis and commentary. The research design approaches the notion of triangulating content analysis and discourse analysis. The content analysis procedures, in conjunction with an a priori hypothesis, are outlined with justifications and rationales followed by the discourse analysis and semiotic procedures and rationales. The adaptation of Van Dijk's protocols to analysis of spoken commentator discourses, from the original analysis of print media discourses, is outlined in the research design. Specifics relating to the structural, rhetorical, and contextual analysis aspects of van Dijk's protocols are detailed in the section.

The results section of the thesis firstly provides tabular, quantitative results from the studied Premier League and European Championships datasets broken down into performance related, physical related, and mental related commentary. Following this, Premier League qualitative results outline the physical and mental descriptions of players delivered in the recorded commentary. Additionally, commentary that does not fit into the categories prescribed by the research protocols was recorded and analysed separately in line with reflexive recommendations from van Sterkenburg et al. (2010). Commentary relating to the novel act of taking the Knee in addition to the emergent case study of Mohamed Salah and Heung-Min Son follow suit. The Euro 2020 qualitative results section reports the physical and mental discourses to compare to the Premier League discourses in addition to international-specific commentary that has the effect of welcoming and alienating players in relation to their national spheres. The adapted van Dijk (1991) discourse analysis principles allow for insights relating to the structure of the commentary, rhetorical devices in the commentary, and contextual information that supplements the commentary.

The discussion chapter develops the understanding of the theory of naturalised racialisation seen in the results alongside the notion of naturalised nationalism that resulted from the comparison of the domestic and international discourses. Following this, the notion of the dominance of the naturalised discourses is discussed and placed in the context of the anti-racism efforts that overtly take place during football broadcasts. The thesis concludes with summary of the quantitative and qualitative findings and the significance of the discourses around the TTK. Finally, the ways in which the theories of media discourse interact with the results and the nuances around the intentions of commentators are discussed in addition to how the ever-increasing TV rights allow for the perpetuation and proliferation of the discourses seen in the study.

This research coincides with a period of time where great focus is being placed on racism in football. However, the extent of the focus on racism from the media often fails to reach deeper than instances of overt hatred. While such efforts to remove hate from football are welcomed and profoundly needed, introspective efforts from media organisations are sorely lacking. This research, and others like it into the field of sports commentary discourses, aim to focus the spotlight on the less visible aspects of racism and racialised discourse. Through analysis of the processes that take place, and the ways in which commentary is delivered in different circumstances, a better understanding of how to tackle the issue of racialised discourses can be sought.

Review of Literature

Introduction

This research into media discourses, specifically football commentary discourses, has been informed by several areas of literature. The first subsection, titled Media Production and Audiences, begins with an insight into the academic theorizations and methodologies that have been developed in relation to the ways in which the media can be studied. The section assesses the similarities and differences of the various frameworks and lenses, with the aim of discerning which theories are most applicable to this thesis. Following this, some past empirical studies which have utilised the frameworks that are key to this study are assessed (Morley 1992; Ang 1989; McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003). Subsequently, the selected theoretical perspectives for this research are placed in the context of the thesis, with rationale behind why they have been selected, in addition to why other theories have been disregarded for this particular study.

The second subsection, titled The Growing Influence of the Media in Sport, offers an insight into the areas of influence of the media in relation to sport and specifically football. Chief amongst these enquiries is the research and comparison of the media television rights, the finances involved in broadcasting Premier League football, and the subsequent key role in which television media plays in relation to this study and the prior studies into the field of commentator discourse. Secondly, discussion of the mediation that football programmes undergo is done in regard to the information delivered to audiences both visually and aurally. As a result of the mediation of the audio-visual information given to audiences, the key concept of commentator legitimacy develops becoming a significant media instrument in the delivery of discourses and requires discussion and unpacking. Finalising this section, the debates and theory regarding the existence of a 'hegemony of discourses' in football are summarised. The section aims to distinguish the arguments claiming the existence of a hegemony and those asserting against the existence of a hegemony and instead assert the existence of a dominant discourse.

The third review section, titled Race: Key Terms and Concepts, involves a discussion of race, racism, and racialisation literature. It acknowledges the prior researched content of commentator discourse studies and sets out to define the key terms of race, racism, and racialisation in context and unpack the concepts and frameworks that have been developed in the sociology of race. Afterward, the contested theories of 'old' and 'new' racism are analysed. The conclusion of this section aims to address key themes and concepts regarding race and sociology. The section titled Race and Sports Media offers contextualised examples of stereotyping and racism in wider sports media, alongside specific examples of racism and stereotyping in football. The section on racism and stereotyping literature is split into pre-1992 and post-1992 in order to differentiate the empirical examples by the creation of the Premier League and therefore the emergence of the media's significant and ever-growing influence over football.

MEDIA PRODUCTION AND AUDIENCES

Media Production and Audience Reception Theories and Methodologies

Initial research into the cultural and critical study of media originated in the 20th century inter-war and post war periods with the Frankfurt School's insights on music, literature and culture (Adorno and Simpson 1941; Herzog 1941; Horkheimer and Adorno 1947). This area of research focused on the so-called 'culture industries' (Kellner 2002), a term coined to refer to mass produced 'low' culture, a term since critiqued as elitist (Kellner 2002), in a similar vein to the economic industries which faced criticism in wider theory. Specifically, the aspects of society in the sights of the Frankfurt School were technology and culture, with suggestions of technology combining with culture, serving to produce and reinforce methods of control in society. Such parallels are echoed in football media and football discourse albeit with a present-day context and the qualifiers which accompany it. The insights gained from this relate to how the interaction of modern television, as technology, interacts with football, as culture, to produce discourses that hold dominance both in the sphere of the media production and technology, alongside the culture of

football and football fandom. With this initial groundwork of dominance, which will be elaborated upon further in the chapter, more contemporary theories for the reception of culture and media and for the critical theorising of culture and media have been developed.

Theories and formations of methodology to tackle the research of media production and audience reception gained significant momentum and focus from researchers in the 1980s, with six approaches to audience research and audience reception of media research being discussed here with varying aims and theories. Four of these theories are introduced here and will be utilised in the thesis, where they will be further discussed at greater length when placed in the context of the study in the Selected Theoretical Perspectives subsection. These four are: Hall's (2001) Encoding and Decoding concept, Fejes' (1984) Critical Mass Communications Theories, and the two Marginalised Audiences approaches of Ang's (1989) Feminist centred approach and Hylton's (2009) Critical Race Theory. The two remaining theories of the six total comprise of the Uses and Gratifications theory (Katz 1979) and Asynchronicity theory (Ruggiero 2000), they provide interesting points for discussion regarding modern media communication, but do not align closely with the aims of the study. They were therefore placed under consideration, but subsequently not selected as perspectives.

The foremost theory involves the utilisation of cultural studies with the media being framed as a vehicle for the creation and reproduction of culture (Hall 2001). Hall's key principles for the interactions between media and audience revolve around critiques of the linear modelling of interactions between media and audience, with the message merely travelling from sender to receiver. Hall rather employs his concept of 'encoding and decoding' in relation to the media/audience dynamic. In his framework, the media organisations encode their message with influence from 'topics, agendas, events ... within the wider socio-cultural and political structure' (p.163), whether it be a news bulletin, soap opera, or for this study, football commentary. Such encoded meanings in the message may be deliberate on the part of the media organisation, or unknowing additions from naturalised societal discourses. With the mediated and encoded message then

delivered to the audience, it is then decoded by the audience in various ways determined by a range of factors which will be discussed shortly.

Before discussion of the decoding process takes place, Hall's discussion of 'connotation' as an analytical device must be addressed due to its significance to the decoding process. Hall prescribes that connotation is used in reference to a theme or a meaning which is not fixed and is negotiable depending on the codes used. Expanding on this, Hall (2001) suggests that connotation is the place where discursive messages and the media engage with the encoding and decoding process. It is the site where connotive meanings have the ability influence social reality, through being encoded by the media with differing connotations, and be decoded by the audience in accordance with said connotations. This is contrasted to his discussion of 'denotation' which instead refers to as the literal, non-negotiable meanings of messages, of which Hall acknowledges there are few (p. 132). These concepts emerged from, and expanded past, Hall's engagement with the field of semiotics. The engagement is concerned directly with the study of signs due to its intrinsic link to the production and assignment of meaning within media. Barthesian signs, and how they interact with connotation and denotation, will undergo deeper analysis and contextual application in the methodology in order to provide sporting context in conjunction the research design.

With the role of connotation established in Hall's encoding/decoding framework, the three aspects of the decoding process can be elaborated upon in greater detail. Firstly, the 'dominant reading', sometimes discussed as the 'preferred reading', relates to a reading of a text which is decoded utilising the 'institutional, political and/or ideological order' (p. 171). Such a reading is often influenced by a selection of factors. Placing the dominant reading in a news context, the media encoding methods relate to the choices of images, interviews, and information combined with the portrayal and production of the news story in a manner which expresses professionalism, these factors all contribute to the creation of the institutional, political, or ideological order stated above. Through this selective mediation, combined with veneered professionalism of production, Hall states that 'It may even be said that the professional codes serve to reproduce hegemonic definitions, specifically by not overtly biasing their operations in a

dominant direction' (p. 172). Therefore, an audience decoding the text from a 'dominant-hegemonic position' decodes the media by the same terms in which the media has been encoded.

Secondly, Hall's decoding principles declare the existence of a 'negotiated reading'. Such a reading acknowledges the existence of the media producer's dominant reading and how the dominant reading represents an inherently dominant situation 'carrying with it the stamp of legitimacy' according to Hall (p. 172). The caveat provided by a negotiated reading involves the inclusion of 'adaptive and oppositional' aspects of decoding. Both the hegemonically encoded meanings are decoded alongside the more nuanced, situational aspects of the text. Hall exemplifies this position as often contradicting itself within the negotiation. The example provided by Hall relates to an individual suggesting an unfavourable course of action which would benefit the whole (demonstrating their acknowledgement of the dominant-hegemonic reading) whilst potentially being unwilling to personally subject themselves to said course of action (the example being a person suggesting wage cuts who would themselves not take such a cut).

Thirdly and finally, Hall's remaining paradigm of decoding is the 'oppositional reading'. This reading involves the reader decoding the text in disregard of the media producer's preferred dominant reading and decoding the text in a different, often opposing way. Oppositional readings deconstruct the often positively framed, dominantly encoded texts in a negative way based upon the decoder's situation and viewpoint towards the encoded information. Contextualising this with Hall's prior wage example above, Hall states that an oppositional reader would decode the supposed 'national interest' of a wage cut as instead being a 'class interest' in disregard of the encoded meaning. Hall's three principles place focus on the decoding of the encoded, however they offer an avenue through which one can assess the way in which the commentators frame the events they are commentating on, one can assess whether or not the commentators default to the dominant/hegemonic norms seen in the wider literature or whether or not the commentators provide an alternative, oppositional appraisal of the events taking place during the game.

A different but less applicable framework for researching media production and audience reception is the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz 1979). This theory asserts that audiences take an 'active role' in the selection of their media (Ruggiero 2000), meaning choices and conscious decisions are foremost amongst the thought processes of audiences who are selecting media to consume. This notion, however, has received criticism for its totality, with suggestions of audiences having impeccable rationality and tendencies towards being hyper-selective being cited as critiques of those putting forward 'active audiences' theories without nuance (Windahl 1981 cited in Ruggiero 2000). One would further add the notion that certain forms of media are limited, or even do not require an excess of options for an audience to actively select from. With factors instead being based on their intended uses and gratifications, whether it be due to the existence of a largely monopolised form of media or other option-limiting factors, live televised football would fall into this category as only a few media outlets provide such coverage. The Uses and Gratifications framework was therefore not chosen as a selected theoretical perspective for this study.

Despite this, recent technological developments have, according to proponents of the uses and gratifications theories, reopened avenues of research through which modern media consumption practices can be understood (Finn 1997; Chamberlain 1994). The increases in both the abundance of and options for the consumption of media, such as mobile phones, television, news, and so on, have resulted in an increased usage of the theory to determine audience decision making processes and the effects of the media upon the actively participating audience. The technological era has led to the creation of concepts which reaffirm theoretical frameworks of audience activity with media. The concept of 'interactivity' (Williams, Rice and Rogers 1988 p.169) is suggested as being the extent to which an audience or consumer actively participates in the exchange of information. With modern methods of communication, interactivity has become an ever-increasing factor within media production and audience consumption. The concept of 'demassification' relates to the selection of media available to the consumer and in turn, the choice which an increased selection affords the audience (Ruggiero 2000; Chamberlain 1994).

Thirdly, the final theoretical concept to arise from the electronic era and the information age is the concept of ‘asynchronicity’ (Ruggiero 2000) which is defined by an audiences’ ability to consume media and for media to be produced at differing times from the initial production or consumption (Chamberlain 1994). Modern examples of such would include cloud storage and streaming services. Ruggiero exalts these concepts in the modern contexts as offering ‘a vast continuum of communication behaviours to examine’ (p. 16). Critically, such concepts require the media, medium, and audience to be applicable to theories of active audiences as well as the three aforementioned concepts in order for modern uses and gratifications theory to be utilised in audience reception research. If they are not applicable, then the theory is rendered unfitting and would yield results lacking in significance.

A further framework for the theorization and study of media production and audiences are the critical mass communication theories, of which there are three identified by Fejes (1984). First among these is the ‘structuralist approach’ (p.220), which is described as having the goal of studying systems in the media. Fejes exemplifies media forms such as film, TV, and advertisement as coming under the scope of structuralist analysis. Their role in ideology, defined in this context as being ‘an optic through which one frames the world’ (p. 220), is at the forefront of structuralist research. Fejes also cites work by Hall which utilises structuralist frameworks when dealing with societal structures including the media, policing, and law (Hall et al. 2013). Referring back to the prior reference to semiotics, structuralist approaches and the framing lens intertwines closely with media usage of symbolism and signs in media.

Following the structuralist approach, the ‘political economy approach’ is defined as examining ‘the economic structure and processes of media production’ (Murdock and Golding 1977 cited in Fejes 1984). Utilising a distinctly Marxist analysis, those using this approach to the research examine monopolization in the media with vested interests being protected and identifying the reproduction and reinforcement of ideological hegemony. Fejes states that the primary trajectory of the political economy approach is the ‘investigation of the structures of control within the media.’ (p. 220). Therefore, this aspect of the critical mass

communication theories does not align with the goals of the study being to focus on covert biases.

The final approach of the three is the 'cultural studies approach' and intertwines most significantly with the aforementioned encoding/decoding theories of Hall. With focus on the content and message of the media, the cultural approach examines the societal environment in which the message is produced and received (Hall 1980 cited in Fejes 1984). In the theoretical framework, note is made of a tendency amongst critical researchers to make the assumption that 'the impact of the media is powerful' (p. 222). Furthermore, this is emphasised as being a noteworthy observation due to its effect of regarding the audience as passive against the might of the media. In turn, Fejes identifies the trend that research is taking 'towards content and production' and therefore ending up dismissing the audience in the audience reception research. Fejes' concerns in the context of this study will be addressed shortly in the following section.

A set of theories approaching from an alternative trajectory to the previously discussed theories are those regarding marginalised audiences. Feminist centred approaches (Ang 1989; Radway 1984) and Race focused approaches to research (Hylton 2005; 2009) are among the most common. With the focus of this study residing on race and men's football, the research theories on race will take precedent but by no means diminish the importance of other marginalised audience theory. Feminist frameworks, though not directly applicable, provide a transferrable approach which can be incorporated into race focused theory. A core principle of feminist methodological frameworks assert that, due to differing beliefs and experiences between men and women, studies with majority male researchers, combined with an overgeneralisation of said male experiences to represent the whole, often results in the omission of any differing female experiences (Gilligan 1979). Contextualising this into a race-focused study, the lack of inclusion and subsequent generalisation of the views of an ethnic majority would omit and silence the views of said ethnic minority. Learning from such studies requires a diversification in research methodologies and therefore reflexivity as a white researcher.

In Livingstone's analysis of theoretical approaches (1998), the wider field of marginalised audience research is said to differ in focus from the general audience approaches in the specific aim of 'giving voice to those hitherto invisible to normative theory' (p. 3). This aligns with both the feminist research principles and applied race research principles. Building on this, Hylton's application and expansion of critical race theory (CRT) from both a US to UK setting and a sporting context creates avenues through which it can be applied to the contexts of this study. CRT has been summarized as 'a framework from which to explore and examine the racism in society that privileges 'whiteness' as it disadvantages others because of their 'blackness'' (Hylton 2009 cited in Hylton 2010 p. 337). This framework provides the theory and approach to initially critique the methodological aspects of the previously mentioned general focus theories, and during analysis can be used as a lens combined with the established audience reception theories to provide a CRT approach in tandem with the traditional approach. The CRT framework's usage of whiteness can be contextualised and expanded upon with research from Bonnett (1996) which asserts that whiteness, as a notion, is not 'monolithic' and is instead a fluid and changing concept (p. 97). With this contextualization, one must utilise the lens of CRT with nuance to identify notions of whiteness in commentary and the situations in which it appears and contributes to discourses.

Empirical Media/Audience Study

The utilisation of Hall's encoding/decoding model was key to Morley's 'Nationwide' study in 1980. The study has been critiqued both in terms of methodology and the key terms utilised in discussing the findings. Reflecting upon the study, Morley addresses the ambiguity of the notion of the 'preferred reading'. He states that the phrase 'implicitly invokes a notion of intentionality on the part of the broadcasters' (1992 p. 112). With this, a critique has been levelled at the utilisation of the preferred reading and the decoding positions (Madianou 2009) due to a lack of initial basis for the decision to deem the decoding to be dominant, negotiated or oppositional. A further issue relates to assumptions on the part of the researcher that interpretation is taking place when a decoding stance is taken by the audience. This has been critiqued by the assertion that audience comprehension

is not taken into account in the research model (Madianou 2009). Again, Morley had addressed these views suggesting that the contentiously phrased 'preferred readings' can be subject to both the interpretation of the audience and the comprehension of the audience.

In the domain of audience study and marginalised audiences, Ang's feminist study on soap opera audiences focusing on *Dallas* (1989) provides an empirical angle through which the important insights gathered through the lens of feminism can be modified for the lens of race allowing it to be discussed methodologically in reference to research which uses non-normative audience reception frameworks. Ang's research should be utilised here as a piece of research which highlights the requirement for a plurality in both approach to the research and the research sample. Notably, a plurality of race or gender in order to acquire knowledge of groups who would not find representation in a normative framework of research with a generalised homogenous audience. Through the specific focuses of the research in feminist frameworks, the research places significant emphasis on the requirement for a diversified research design in this thesis by contextualising the notion of plurality in the face of a generalised homogenous audience to the plurality of footballers being described by commentators. Methodological provisions for this factor have been made in the research design section later in the thesis.

McCarthy, Jones and Potrac's (2003) study focusing on race in sports media and the subsequent audience reception of racialised language, raises several points for consideration in this study and several issues for critique. Firstly, their study utilises methodologies which highlight racial commentary divided along 'black' and 'white' racial lines in both the content analysis and audience reception sections of the study (p. 225-226). The terms 'black' and 'white' will undergo further elaboration in the later section on race and ethnicity in conjunction with the social relevance and socially constructed nature of them.

Their utilisation of a non-generalised, homogenous audience reception methodology aimed to have the same desired effect as Ang's feminist study of *Dallas*, providing voice to an otherwise voiceless demographic. Furthermore, the researchers qualified their methodological decisions to define the audiences by 'racial self-perception' in order to facilitate free flowing discussion of a potentially

sensitive topic (p. 224). Aside from the admirable methodological efforts to involve often marginalised audiences, the methodological decision to utilise focus groups can be critiqued via the same aforementioned criticisms appearing in the previous section (Lunt and Livingstone 1996). The formalised setting provided ample discussion, however a shift towards ethnographic research methods questions would elucidate whether or not the comments arose from natural thought or focus group environment-prompted thought. For this study, McCarthy, Jones, and Potrac's utilisation of the notion of racial self-perception is key and is drawn upon in the methodology section later in the thesis.

Additionally, in a study on rural and non-elite Indian Bollywood audiences, Rao (2007) further emphasises the need for the inclusion of non-traditional audiences noting the non-western audiences in their study. Rao also cites Ang (2003) when discussing critiques of 'definitive and general theoretical answers' albeit in a globalisation context, the concept remains relevant to all frameworks that take multiple levels of intersectionality into account and further informed this study's decision to include a supplemental case study on Heung-Min Son and Mohamed Salah in the methodology as it emerged. Further to this, Edward Said's 'Orientalism' (2023) offers an angle through which the case study can be approached. Said suggests that Orientals are an 'object' of study, exotic and undefined, while vast cultures are essentialised. Said's approach allows for a multitude of angles to be explored: cultural, geographical, and religious notions can be understood in relation to the ways in which Salah and Son compare and contrast to their teammates and to each other.

Selected Theoretical Perspectives

The previously outlined theoretical perspectives vary in their applicability to footballing contexts. The four suitable frameworks, noted earlier in the review, evidence compatibility with football research despite some not originating from footballing or even sporting research. The first and most suitable lens for the study of football media is Hall's encoding and decoding theory (2001). Key to both the theorizations made by Hall and the discourses seen in football, are codes through which meaning is ascribed to situations and people (p. 167). Hall asserts that

discourse and the language used to convey a situation or meaning resides in said codes. The focus required for this study is upon 'naturalised' codes. These are stated as being themes or words that are so vastly distributed and intertwined in the language and repertoire of the population that they 'appear not to be constructed' and rather are considered to be natural. Hall further states that due to the naturalness of the codes, they remain undetected when deliberate ideology is being framed in a situation, the application of naturalisation will undergo further analysis in later sections.

With these ideas contextualised to footballing discourses, the widely researched, stereotypical dichotomy of black physicality and white mental proficiency is seen as an endemic and deep-rooted naturalised code in not only football, but wider sport and wider society as a whole (Rainville and McCormick 1977; McCarthy and Jones 1997; Billington 2018). The contextual footballing information provided with each framework will be briefly discussed in conjunction with each framework and will be further elaborated upon later in the chapter. The naturalisation of the codes of physical and mental attributes, and the disproportional association of the attributes according to race, also relate to other theorizations made by Hall concerning the encoding and decoding processes as detailed below.

The prevalence and accepted nature of this spotlighted stereotype allows it to affect both the encoding and the decoding processes in Hall's media/audience framework. It resides both comfortably and uncontested in what would be described as the 'dominant cultural order' of the discourse and research has identified its abundant use in the media encoding stage of Hall's media/audience relationship. Commentator discourse research conducted in several different decades (Rainville and McCormick 1977; McCarthy and Jones 1997; Billington 2018) evidences the longevity of the stereotype in sporting circles and its usage amongst media outlets. Applied to Hall, it is a firmly entrenched code which leads to a decoding process amongst viewing and listening audiences with which the code is also a naturalised and accepted code evidenced by audience study (McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003). The double ended nature of the acceptance and naturalisation amongst both the media and audience further contributes to its naturalised invisibility.

Applying the physical/mental dichotomy stereotype to Hall's (2001) decoding positions, a hypothesis for each of the encoding/decoding positions is able to be formed for this study in the wake of the contextualisation. By placing the well-researched contextual example of overemphasized black physicality into the first of Hall's three encoding/decoding positions, the 'dominant-hegemonic position', a commentator providing a purely physical description of a player will have their commentary accepted by the viewing audience. Further nuance is required when deconstructing the dominant position, the origins and subsequent entrenchment of the idea of natural black physicality will be expanded upon in the following sections. Applying the 'negotiated position' to the footballing context would result in the same dominant message being provided by the encoding media influence, the commentator, but would result in a slightly different decoding process from the audience. In this negotiated situation, the audience would identify and accept the commentator's physical description of the player due to the legitimacy of the description (2001 p. 172), but in the process of negotiation, the audience would add distinction to the purely dominant view with reference to other characteristics which are displayed or taking place. For example, a negotiating decoder would, alongside the physical praise, note the tactical and mental ability by the player which has allowed for the expression of their physical abilities.

Finally, the oppositional code is Hall's view which is stated as being the ability 'to understand both the literal and the connotative inflection given by a discourse but to decode the message in a globally contrary way' (p. 172). In such a framework, a decoding football audience will receive the dominant physical description of the player, just as the negotiating and dominant-hegemonic decoding audience members have, but will apply an 'oppositional code' and in so doing will reject the physical description and would instead view the situation relating to the player in a purely cerebral way. A theoretical situation would involve a player sprinting past a defender while an oppositional decoder reflects purely on the tactical knowledge required by the player to beat an offside trap.

Adjacent to the Hall theories and framework are the critical mass communications frameworks, two of which will be utilised going forward with the study. Two sections of the framework are applicable to the study while, due to the

nature of several aspects of football, its media outlets, and its audiences, one aspect will not be utilised. Of the three aspects of Fejes' critical mass communications theories discussed earlier, the structuralist approach and the cultural studies approach link closely with Hall's theories and will be placed in consideration for this study. The structuralist approach applies to a footballing context in both an inter-media and intra-media way and will be applied through analysis of media structure and structure of commentary. Firstly, the inter-media application of the theory would involve interactions between the sports media, football organisations such as the Premier League and the FA and the audience as a unit.

Conversely, an intra-media usage of the structuralist approach would involve a structuralist insight into the individual aspects of the inter-media structures. A footballing example of such would be within the football media where aspects such as pundits, commentators, cameras and statistics would be assessed and within the audience, assessment of factors such as nationality and club allegiance would be of note. Linking to the media and audience aspects is the second chosen perspective of the cultural studies approach (Fejes 1984 p. 220). Directly interlinking the media and the audience, the approach in a footballing context for the study, would involve the prior-mentioned racialised discourses in the football commentary (McCarthy and Jones 1997; Billington 2018) and their interaction with 'societal environment in which media messages are produced and received' (Hall 1980 cited in Fejes 1984). Analysis of the intra-media aspects are key to the utilisation of van Dijk's analytical principles and will be outlined in the methodology research design section.

The aspect of the critical mass communications framework which is incompatible with this study and football is the political economy approach. Such an angle places theories of media monopolization at the heart of the approach with conscious and deliberate propagation of ideological media (Fejes 1980). One would suggest this is incongruent with football and football media in England due to the plurality of sports media organizations providing football coverage. Secondly, frameworks of deliberate ideology are inapplicable due to the unconscious and unintended racialisation which takes place in football commentary (McCarthy and Jones 1997; Billington 2018), the mechanisms through which the racialisation in football commentary is generated will be discussed to a greater extent in upcoming

sections. A further area of the framework which cannot be applied to a footballing context is the focus upon an active audience, such a standpoint in critical mass comms research relies on ideology and therefore an understanding that alternative, widely acceptable viewpoints are available to the audience. In football commentary discourses, it has been evidenced that the mental physical dichotomy is entrenched in both the media commentary mindset and the audience mindset. Such an entrenchment of superficially positive remarks (Sage 1990; Cashmore 2013) helps to ensure considerable acceptance and passivity amongst audiences.

The penultimate framework relates the abovementioned ‘marginalised audiences’ subgroup of frameworks with critical race theory (CRT) being utilised to approach the study. CRT has been described as ‘presenting anti-racists with a framework to challenge orthodoxies, narrow “race” thinking, and under-theorized approaches in sport’ (Hylton 2005 p. 336). With this initial precept set out, one can further unpack the CRT in terms of football for this study. Key to the very name of CRT is the understanding of the socially constructed nature of race and how deconstructing it resides key in the efforts of those utilising CRT. Within a footballing setting, CRT provides the framework for the analysis of discourses emerging from the media. Key methodological frameworks, such as the encoding/decoding theories (Hall 1980), serve the purpose of providing the trajectory of the research. While frameworks such as CRT serve to accompany the principal theories and ensure that race, racism, and racialisations are taken into account during the research.

THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA IN FOOTBALL

Television Rights in the Premier League Era

The significant increase in the number of televised Premier League fixtures over the 28-year Premier League period (1992-present) further amplifies the media's ability to influence through its discourses. In order to gauge the increase over a large period of time, statistics from the football seasons which occurred during the previous commentator discourse studies will be utilised and regularly referred to during this section (McCarthy and Jones 1997; McCarthy Jones and Potrac 2003). Because of the consistency of the results in the studies, the television figures provide insights which are pivotal to this study in order to illuminate the full extent that media institutions have power to influence the messages that are being delivered through the commentator discourses. From the onset of the Premier League, English top-flight football became symbiotic with media outlets such as BskyB (Leonard 1998). Television was described as having become increasingly attached to sports and both had the ability to boost each other's profiles simultaneously, dubbed the 'unholy alliance' by Whannel (1986).

The TV deal immediately preceding the advent of the Premier League in 1992 was a four-year deal with a total value of £44 million, £11 million per year, and 18 matches broadcast per season (Williams 2002). Comparing this pre-Premier League deal to the inaugural Premier League BskyB deal in 1992, a gulf in almost all factors is seen. The deal spanned five years and was valued at £191.5 million with an annual breakdown of £38.3 million per year, almost eclipsing the prior four-year ITV deal in a single year (Williams 2002). Again, when comparing the number of televised fixtures, vast increases are seen, BskyB televised 60 live fixtures compared to ITV's 18, demonstrating the beginning of a trend of increases (McCarthy and Jones 1997; Williams 2002). With these increases in both the financial power and the broadcasting reach, media discourses receive the ability to be spread to a larger audience more frequently.

A significant one of these future increases is the immediate successor to the 1992 TV deal in 1997, BskyB's renewal in 1997 significantly increased upon the

already significant increase seen between the two prior deals. The 1997 deal was a contract for four years of rights at a fee of £670 million, broken down into an annual fee of £167.5 million again for 60 matches a season (McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003; Williams 2002). When comparing the same 60 live fixtures per season in the BskyB deals with the fee per match in each deal, the 1992-1997 TV deal allocated £640,000 per match. This is significantly overshadowed by the £2.79 million allocated per match over the 1997-2001 four-year period. Taking into account the age of the abovementioned studies, one must reflect upon more recent research into the area in order to better convey the importance of the TV deals to the production and distribution of media discourses.

With these Premier League-focused commentary studies being over and approaching two decades old, there is a significant increase in a multitude of aspects of the television deals between studied seasons. The 2016-2019 Premier League TV deal totalled £5.136 billion with Sky Sports contributing £4.176 billion of the figure. Comparing this with the second most recently studied season, it represents a total increase of £3.506 billion (Chadwick 2015). Further increases were also seen in the number of televised fixtures. Sixty matches were televised live in the 1997-1998 season, while in the 2017-2018 season, Sky alone televised 126 fixtures. Finally, comparing the figures per game, the recent 2017-2018 TV deal allocates £11.07 million per match weighed against the £2.79 million per match in 1997-1998 (BBC 2015; Williams 2002). The importance of this substantial increase in both funding and coverage cannot be understated and is a key factor in the media ability to frame and convey messages to its audience. Key to the importance is the abovementioned similarity in the results of the commentary studies. Such a similarity in the types and skews of discourses, when combined with significant increases in the number of fixtures and further combined with the financial increases, offers the media a greater forum through which dominant messages and discourses can be perpetuated, as was found in the studies themselves.

Media Decisions and Fixture Selection

With the increases in TV finances and scope of coverage discussed, the reasoning behind media decisions when both selecting and advertising fixtures must be addressed as part of the unpacking of the whole media production effort which is taking place. It has been studied that television viewers and mediated audiences gain the most enjoyment from matches where discourses involve animosity and where commentary describes the athletes in the contest and the teams facing each other as ‘hated foes’ as opposed to describing them as ‘friendly or neutral opponents’ (Bryant et al. 1982). This view is supported with more recent research on the El Clasico between Real Madrid and Barcelona which suggests that media framing can also emphasise the personalities amongst the teams to frame the fixtures as hostile encounters between the players (Lopez-Gonzalez et al. 2014). Media outlets such as BBC Sport and Sky Sports tailor their scheduling and fixture televising decisions based upon which weekly fixtures will either garner the largest audience or which fixture has the most animosity, impact, or rivalry. This increases the media’s capacity to convey its message to a larger audience, and in turn spread discourses to a larger audience.

This selection process is evidenced through the fact that the highest domestic and global viewing figures were achieved by games between Manchester City v Liverpool, Manchester United v Liverpool, and Chelsea v Manchester City, all teams with either historic or competitive animosity and rivalry (Premier League 2019a). Fixtures with little to no significance, in terms of rivalry, and league position in terms of potential relegation, promotion, or competition qualification, offer little interest to potential viewers when applied to the context of the research conducted by Bryant et al. (1982). A further method of increasing the impact, significance, or animosity of a fixture that is utilised by media outlets is to advertise the already mediated and specifically selected fixtures with information, images, and clips which have again been mediated and specifically selected in order to maximise the perceived importance and perceived gravity of the game which has been selected for television (Sky Sports 2019a).

These steps are taken in an effort to ensure the viewer is reminded of a multitude of factors, ranging from prior hostile encounters between the teams, high

scoring games in previous seasons, and impactful moments from players with affinity with fans. All of these methods are unpacked by the aforementioned encoding/decoding theory. Hall's theory suggests that the meanings of the information provided by the media outlet are not fixed and are instead framed in such a way to suggest a certain meaning or meanings (Hall 2001). Hall then suggests that with the framed information, the consumer decodes the media based upon their individual circumstance in relation to the content (2001). Applying these theories to this example of football mediation, one would suggest that the advertisement and description of the televised fixtures, by the media, frames the preferred reading of the content in the most hostile and competitive way possible.

One must also take into account discussions taking place in relation to European club football, specifically relating to media decisions surrounding the balance of competitive integrity and the quality of teams and players. Wills, Tacon, and Addesa (2022) address this when assessing audience demand for Champions League football. Stakeholders from teams with star players and large bank accounts argue that their quality drives high viewing figures while those representing the interests of smaller clubs argue that competitive balance is a key driving force (p. 877). Wills, Tacon, and Addesa find that TV audiences lean towards the views of the bigger clubs and are indeed interested in seeing the star players reach the later rounds of competition and the TV audiences tune in en masse for such high-profile fixtures (p. 890-891). However, one can critique this sentiment by suggesting that without competitive integrity being the driving force behind competitions, two negative outcomes will be seen. There is firstly a diminishing of achievement for the bigger teams if they are simply handed places in a competition such as the recently proposed and rebuffed European Super League and secondly, the aspiration is also entirely removed for smaller clubs that would be barred on the grounds they do not draw as large an audience. Such factors need to be taken into account by broadcasters and by footballing bodies when balancing the competitive integrity of football with maximising viewership of football.

Returning to the notion of advertising football in the most hostile and competitive way, upon decoding of this information, the background and circumstance of the viewing audience affects their unpacking of the content. A

lifelong fan of one of the teams being televised will be well aware of the rivalry and the framed content will reaffirm their existing knowledge of the hostility and competitive nature of the game. On the other hand, a neutral football fan will observe the rivalry and animosity in the advertisement and glean the knowledge that the fixture is likely to provide the same entertaining action as is shown in the advertisement. Conversely, applying the findings of Bryant et al., if the fixture is framed as calm and free from rivalry and hostility in the advertisement, audiences would gather from the information that the fixture will be less interesting or have less at stake (1982). Through this, the incentive for both the broadcasters and the football teams is to portray the game in as desirable a way as possible in order to build as much exposure to the product as possible (Buraimo 2019).

Buraimo further states that through maximised exposure, both the clubs and broadcasters can reach an increased audience in terms of fan appeal, future sponsorship deals for the clubs, and in terms of subscriptions to watch the content for the broadcaster (p. 179). Optimisation of these factors, through decisions such as the increase of animosity and raising the stakes at hand, serves to appeal to as many people as possible whether or not they hold direct investment as fans of the teams, or indirect investment as football fans interested in a fixture with meaning behind it. It can then be said that, with the fixtures being selected to appeal to as large an audience as possible, the media messages within the broadcasts themselves require unpacking to understand the full media event and how the media event is able to portray stereotypes in more ways than just audibly through commentary.

Mediation of Statistics and Their Use in Legitimacy

A less researched aspect of the sports media broadcast is the statistical information which is provided during the fixture. Media research in the past has asserted that audiences are only at liberty to view the footage and consume the information which the media outlet wishes to provide to the viewers (Comisky, Zillmann and Bryant 1977). However in recent seasons, information accompanying the football often includes OPTA, and recently Oracle Cloud, statistics on several factors deemed noteworthy by the media providing the coverage. These factors often include statistics on players who are expected to be influential during the

fixture or statistics on previous meetings between the teams (OPTA 2019). This evidences the media's effort to frame the match as a potentially positive and action-filled event with the mediated information they provide aiming to suggest there will be high levels of action and/or goals to come (Sky Sports 2019b).

Furthermore, it has been found that fixtures which are seemingly destined to end as a draw, or are a foregone conclusion with a team destined to win convincingly, cause viewers to change channel (Alavy et al. 2010). Therefore, the inclusion of statistics, which for instance evidences a players' ability to score late goals or a team's capacity to concede second half goals, serves to entice viewers to remain until the final whistle in anticipation of a goal being scored by said player or team. The combination of these media efforts made to frame events in a particular light, and the aforementioned significant increase in the number of televised Premier League fixtures and finances over the 28-year Premier League period so far, further amplifies the media's ability to influence its audiences.

An area for wider research would involve examining the extent of usage of in-play statistical data to refer to individuals and the way in which those statistics are used to deliver discourse on a player, such a study may involve usage of the same physical and mental precedents as commentator discourse studies (McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003). Commentators during live play often refer to the on-screen statistics when providing description of the action in order to generate a sense of the next concept to be discussed, commentator legitimacy.

The Concept of 'Commentator Legitimacy'

Television as a medium serves to transform a spectator sport, case in point being football, from a live and unaltered fixture into an experience which undergoes high amounts of regulation and develops a significant narrative, which contributes to the process of affecting and controlling the meanings which audiences gather from mediated, televised sports (Duncan and Brummett 2013). Within the media processes and methods of regulation resides the commentator or, more often in football, a commentary and punditry team who form a significant part of the media event and whose discourses and descriptions revolve interdependently around the

creation of legitimacy. Applying Hall's framework to this results in the notion that commentators encode their discourse with their choice of descriptors and metaphors, utilising overt and covert biases, upon which the audience must unpack and decode the discourse.

Within this entire process, in order for the discourses to be accepted and consumed by the audience, the commentators and pundits must command credibility through the key concept of legitimacy (Hargreaves 1986; Sage 1990). Sage describes the process of commentator selection as being key to ensuring the legitimacy of the commentator and their credibility amongst audiences (1990 cited in McCarthy and Jones 1997). Often the selection is centred around one aspect of the commentary team, the ex-professional in the commentary duo, or more recently the commentary trio, which comprises of a media-based career commentator accompanied by one or two former players from the sport being televised, being ex-footballers in the case of this study (Sage 1990). McCarthy and Jones (1997) contextualise Sage's assertion with their assertion that in football commentary teams, defined roles exist between the career commentator and ex-professional. They suggest that it is the role of the career commentator to provide ample description of the events during the game with the ex-professional commentator serving to supplement the commentary with their own description, but also to reaffirm the career commentator's discourse (McCarthy and Jones 1997).

This is further substantiated by suggestions that the ex-professional provides legitimacy to the descriptions, in the eyes of the audience, due to their widely recognised role as an individual that has extensive knowledge and experience in the sport (Hargreaves 1986). Within the context of women's football, Lucy Ward, a female ex-professional commentator, beside the career commentator Guy Mowbray, was seen to have regularly utilised her own personal experiences to supplement her commentary (Kennedy and Hills 2009). Similar instances have also been seen in the men's game with commentators such as Gary Neville providing commentary based upon what actions he would have taken if he were faced with the situation taking place on the pitch. This view is supported by Keene and Cummins's (2009) findings where they state, 'a commentator's prior athletic experience does impact on viewers' perceptions of sportscaster credibility' (p. 75). These suggestions are

complemented by the wider suggestion that the whole media production effort, including camera angles and usage of statistics (Gruneau 1989), combined with discourses from commentators, serves to generate narratives which are supplemented with images, statistics, and verbal affirmation in order to maximise the legitimacy of the commentary, which in turn indirectly maximises the legitimacy of the discourses embedded within the commentary (Maguire 2011).

With the legitimacy of the commentary and an understanding of the methods through which legitimacy is achieved, one must therefore engage with the media's ability to influence audiences, specifically, the discourses they provide with their achieved legitimacy. The visual and statistic-based influences, referenced in the previous sub-section, carry objective legitimacy whereas the descriptive means of influence, often from pundits and commentators, carries subjective legitimacy. This legitimacy can be derived from what has been described as 'competitive meritocracy' (Sage 1990 p. 130). This assertion suggests that the audience affords legitimacy to the commentator or pundit based upon their widely respected status and their level of achievement within the sport. Regular pundits and commentators such as Gary Neville and Jamie Carragher receive high levels of competitive meritocratic legitimacy from audiences on account of their past exploits during their Premier League careers combined now with numerous years of experience providing commentary for media outlets.

An empirical study by Fele and Campagnolo (2021) sought to assess the role of expertise during half- and full-time analysis of football broadcasts. Their method aimed to assess an ability to use the equipment available to them and knowledge of the game in order to form a package as an expert analyst (p. 620). Their study found that through the usage of the aforementioned statistical packages and analytical tools in conjunction with a role of expertise, the pundits were shown to fulfil an explanatory role to the lay person audience with the assistance of technological aides (p. 633). More specifically through the pundit's usage of manifold camera angles, lines and circles overlaid on the screen via a telestrator, and reference to personal experience of the situation being viewed, the pundit makes use of a multitude of ways to both demonstrate and convey their expertise. Such a role is

differentiated from the role of an in-game commentator who must display an ability to keep pace with live action in addition to providing personal expertise.

Two further pundits who arrived at Sky Sports to much fanfare (Sky Sports 2014; Sky Sports 2019c), such as Thierry Henry and Jose Mourinho did, when inserted into Sage's principle, command extremely high levels of competitive meritocratic legitimacy amongst audiences due to their domestic and international feats at the pinnacle of the game. Discourses provided in their analyses, opinions, and descriptions are consumed and when placed in Hall's model, are decoded through a preferred reading by audiences who attribute the punditry to be originating from their vast experience in football. With these concepts of legitimacy identified as being derived from an audience consensus based upon a commentators' merit, one must now focus upon the messages in the commentary and discuss the usefulness of applying the concept of 'Hegemony' to the context of football commentary discourse.

‘Hegemony’ and the ‘Common-sense’: Their Roles in Commentator Discourses

The concept of Hegemony, as set out by Antonio Gramsci, involves discussion of two modes of supremacy: domination and coercion, and two modes of social control: external and internal control (Femia 1987). The modes which constitute his analysis of hegemony are coercion and internal control, specifically internal control in the form of influencing the ‘personal convictions’ turning them into a ‘replica of prevailing norms’ (Femia 1987 p. 24). This view is also echoed by Bates’ breakdown of the concept stating that hegemony involves ‘political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class’ (Bates 1975). While this particular branch of Gramscian hegemony is rooted in politics, the branch more appropriate for this study, cultural hegemony, follows a parallel course to its political equal deviating only by the context of its application. Where political hegemony involves a legislative authority, cultural hegemony centres on an authority over culture and the social reproduction of said culture (Woolard 1985). In the context of this study and the sphere of footballing discourses, cultural hegemony is the most applicable of the hegemonic branches due to sport’s embedded role in the culture of countries worldwide and hegemony’s applicability to the structures and actors within football.

In conjunction with the ideas of cultural hegemony, which must be further unpacked and tailored to contemporary contexts and the situation of the discourses, one can also discuss parallel ideas which have been married together by Woolard (1985) from Bourdieu’s (1991) insights on linguistics. These form a theorization of linguistic hegemony which interlink appropriately with this study into commentary and its content. Such ideas stem from political critiques and hegemony of the state through linguistic frameworks and assertions of intent and domination by social actors and the state. However, the questioning and uncertainty surrounding the use of hegemony and its frameworks for this study revolves around the role of intent amongst the purveyors of hegemony. While a key tenet of Gramscian theory involves consent of ideas, one must unpack scenarios where an actor or actors are not exercising their will to advance hegemony.

Several factors which will undergo further unpacking exhibit a lack of intent on the part of those utilising hegemonic ideas and discourses. The factors that will

undergo further discussion in said chapters are: anti-racism campaigns, prominent footballers such as Raheem Sterling speaking out against overt racism, and the regular reinforcement of opposition to racism from media organisations and commentator teams. Each of these factors, which will undergo further expansion and scrutiny in upcoming sections, point towards a significant and coordinated effort from football players, the media, and the commentators to oust racism and inequalities from football. One would expect the existence of racial stereotypes to be accompanied by a hegemonic system to perpetuate it. However, this is where hegemony becomes inapplicable to the modern context, it is the absence of an effort to reproduce the social domination of racialised attitudes in football where traditional hegemonic theory requires modification. There is, on the other end of the spectrum, a concerted effort by the media to remove overt racism from the game.

In order to utilise aspects of hegemonic theory, a nuanced and context dependent version must be adapted in order to acknowledge the unique nature of the situation. The existence of the “common-sense” dichotomy of black natural physicality and white cerebral proficiency saturates the discourse of commentators. It is this dichotomy which is the hegemon of the situation affecting football and wider sports discourses and will undergo further unpacking in the later sections alongside how its interaction with Hall’s dominant-hegemonic theories and Foucauldian theories of dominant discourse.

RACE: KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Ethnicity, Race, Racialisation and Racial Discrimination

Before discussions of the themes and instances where racism has occurred in sport and sports media, one must discuss the definitions and the evolution of concepts such as colour-blind racism in both contemporary and historical sporting contexts. Within sociological frameworks, Cornell and Hartmann (2007) have expressed the need to distinguish between the terms ethnicity and race. Discussing ethnicity first, they provide a chronology of the usage of the word in academic circles in addition to an etymology of ethnicity. The genesis of the term is in the Greek 'ethnos', directly translating to 'nation' and consequently through the Greek migration to the Italian peninsula and subsequent development of Latin, 'ethnicus' provided a description of those who were considered 'heathens or others who did not share the dominant faith' (p. 16). Sociologically, several historical definitions have been offered as thought and theory have undergone development over time and under ever-changing contexts.

Early attempts to codify a definition involve Max Weber's statement 'We shall call 'ethnic groups' those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type, or of customs, or both' (Weber 1968 p. 389). Notably, the idea of common descent is central to the definition. Cornell and Hartmann note in their analysis that this theme shaped the thought of sociological thinking and definition for several years. The first deviations from this line of thinking shifted from 'common descent' to 'shared culture' and an example of this sociological shift is reflected in the altered suggestion that an ethnic group is 'a group of people who are generally recognized by themselves and/or by others as a distinct group, with such recognition based on social or cultural characteristics' (Farley 2000 p. 8 cited in Cornell and Hartmann p. 17).

Amongst the historically evolving definitions, the definition which Cornell and Hartmann subscribe to is the Schermerhorn definition (1978 p. 12) which states that an ethnic group is 'a collectivity in a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more

symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood'. With the significant cultural and ancestral focus, both subjectively and objectively, surrounding ethnicity, it remains a concept that is less applicable to this study and the wider study of football. This is due to the significant biological focus and lack of distinction between ethnicities during football punditry and commentary (McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003; Billington 2018). With the generalisation which takes place in football media, the definitions of race require differentiating from the lay use of both terms, as both are utilised interchangeably.

Race has been defined in multiple ways over time, evolving with further insights into the field. Initial examinations of race arose with the expansion and colonisation undertaken by significant historical European powers, notably Portugal, Spain, Britain, the Netherlands, and France. Upon encountering non-European societies, race took on a biological meaning (Kidd 2006) with links to taxonomic classifications providing pseudoscientific leverage to assertions surrounding racial difference. Clair and Denis (2015) expand upon this with reference to how biological concepts of race were utilised as justifications for exploitation and dominance of non-white peoples.

However, prevailing sociological ideas reject suggestions of biological differences between races due to the existence of greater genetic variation between people who would be classified as the same race with those who would not be and that phenotypic expressions exist on a continuous scale and do not exist in discrete racial categories (Fiske 2010 cited in Clair and Denis 2015). They further clarify that, between sociologists, race holds no biological significance and is regarded as a social construct. However, they acknowledge the significance that race still holds in wider social reality. Following on from Cornell and Hartmann's analysis and timeline of ethnicity as a concept, Clair and Denis provide comparison of the usage of race and ethnicity and their subsequent differentiation of race from ethnicity requires acknowledgement and comparison.

When grappling with the issue of race as biology (p. 21) the debunking of suggestions of distinct, meaningful biological differences is evidenced by the widespread lack of consensus surrounding both the 'nature and number' of human races (p. 22). A selection of historical American, South African, and Brazilian census

categories which have racial options varying from as low as four distinct races to as many as 126 selectable and combinable options on a census. This outlines the ambiguity and lack of agreement around the subject. It is therefore asserted that the idea of biologically distinct human races remains persistent due to 'popular culture and pseudoscience' (p. 22). Within this claim, the aforementioned colonial ideas and pseudoscientific thought, with the aim of justifying subjugation, are presented by the researchers as the birth of societies determining race along biological lines. To add to the points made by Cornell and Hartmann and the prior researchers' reference to colonial and imperialist thinking, one would link the perpetuation of such ideas to the previous sections' discussion of hegemony and the 'common-sense', an explanation of this would be where surface level biological thinking appears to be a reasonable common-sense assessment, for instance when a person's speed is assumed to be natural. However, with additional sporting context, the biological focus loses credibility when further factors such as the person's training are considered.

With the discrediting of biological thought in academic circles concerning the concept of race, one must discuss the social construction of race and the effect it has on the wider world. Key to the understanding of the social construction is the understanding that races are 'products of human perception and classification' (p. 24) as opposed to having a legitimate biological basis. Cornell and Hartmann cite geneticist James King's (1981) suggestion that 'what constitutes a race and how one recognises a racial difference are culturally determined' (p. 156) and further theorize that as a society 'we decide that certain physical characteristics will be primary markers of group boundaries' (p.24) they exemplify several of the characteristics as including skin colour, hair type, and stature. In sum, it is the societal interpretation of characteristics which socially constructs the categories of race and in giving the categories meaning, through assumption and stereotyping, serves to produce concepts such as racial discrimination and racialisation.

Parallel to the notion of academic discreditation of race is the question posed by Nayak (2006) asking why the term race is still utilised in academic circles post-discreditation. Nayak posits, 'If race is an arbitrary sign used to divide up the human population, with no distinguishing genetic differences of any consequence, why do

social constructionists continue to deploy the term at the same time as they refute its existence?’ (p. 415). In the scope of the context of this study, racial discourses has been widely documented in sporting circles and specifically football commentary, in order to address the non-academic ways in which race, as a notion, expresses itself in what commentators say, one must address it in the research methodology to unpack the ways in which it manifests itself and how it can in turn be rectified to deliver as equitable a discourse as possible.

As stated above, two ways in which race expresses itself upon social reality include racialisation and racial discrimination, both are key concepts to this study and future sections of literature. Racialisation is a term fundamental to the study of sporting discourses due to its embedded nature in said discourses. While the instances of racialised discourse will be assessed later in the review, racialisation as a term itself will be discussed here. Murji and Solomos’ (2005) text that focuses exclusively on racialisation provides numerous accounts of empirical usage of the term and extensive theoretical discussion as well. Chronologically, they attribute its introduction into the field of sociology to Banton in 1977 (cited 2005). In discussing the historical applications of the term, where racialisation was employed without it being named racialisation, Banton derives that such racialisations were an ‘enterprise seeking to explain unequal development’ (2005 p. 51) and that groups were ‘represented as races as if this explained their character and achievements’ (Banton in Murji and Solomos p. 66).

Defining the term within their volume, Murji and Solomos draw upon Banton as well as a wide range of academics from varying sociological backgrounds and viewpoints. Their immediate venture into defining the term states that ‘in introductory textbooks, Fulcher and Scott offer one of the fullest treatments when they say that: ‘A race relations situation exists whenever ethnic relations have been racialised’ (Fulcher and Scott 2003 p. 204 cited in Murji and Solomos 2005 p. 2). Following from this more basic, non-contextualised introduction to the concept, they state the usefulness of utilising racialisation as an idea when discussing ‘the processes by which racial meanings are attached to particular issues and the manner in which race appears to be a key factor in the ways they are defined or understood’ (p. 5). Contextualising this understanding of the topic to this study of football

commentary and its discourses, one must consider the prior sections hegemony and common-sense discourse alongside the racialised description of black bodies and white minds in both commentator discourse studies and wider sport and race studies, both of which will be unpacked with empirical examples in the race and sports media section.

Following racialisation, the term racism has been outlined as ‘an ideology of racial domination’ (Wilson 1999 cited in Clair and Denis 2015) and is further qualified by Clair and Denis stating that ‘presumed biological or cultural superiority of one or more racial groups is used to justify or prescribe the inferior treatment or social position(s) of other racial groups’ (2015 p. 1). A concept under the umbrella term of racism is that of institutional racism. Contextually for sport, it is seen as the ‘number of commonly overlooked racialised factors that obstruct or disrupt participation in sporting spheres for minoritized ethnic individuals and communities’ (Ratna, Lawrence, and Partington 2015 cited in Hylton and Lawrence 2016 p. 5). Racism closely links with the theme of racial discrimination and therefore, for this study and its focus on sports commentary, the concept of racial discrimination is a more applicable lens to develop ideas through.

The selected definition of racial discrimination for this study has been chosen as ‘differential treatment on the basis of race, that may or may not result from prejudice or animus and may or may not be intentional in nature’ (Small and Pager 2020 p. 1). The additional clarification in the definition regarding intent, or lack thereof, aligns closely with the footballing context of this study, as is outlined in the previous section and the discussions of hegemony, dominant discourses, and their nuanced application in a contemporary football setting. The assertion of intent revolves around evident sports media and sports governing bodies’ anti-racism campaigns, which will be unpacked in following sections, and the persistent and vigorous anti-racism messages delivered through sports commentary and punditry.

Via the study of sporting commentary discourses, McCarthy, Jones and Potrac (2003) approached the notion of intent through discussion during focus group research of footballing audiences from a wide racial background. The focus group audiences were presented with commentary to discuss, where the participants stated that they ‘did not consider commentators to be blatantly and intentionally

racist in their use of language' (p. 228). With this perception and the aforementioned campaigns and efforts, one can assert that a conscious and overt "anti-racist intent" exists within football commentary. Addressing the contentions surrounding the concept of intent, notably the ambiguity of intent and the difficulty researching it, the repetitious and potent nature of the opposition of racism within commentary, such as that regarding the TTK, offers a significant indication of anti-racist intent, alongside the above studied audience responses regarding their views on the absence of racist intent. Instances like the TTK will be discussed in later sections.

Colour-Blind Racism

The key concept of colour-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006), which can be outlined as a shift from what Bonilla-Silva notes as the 'Jim Crow' racism involving 'mental, moral and intellectual inferiority' (p. 25) to a much less overt, and much more socially acceptable, methods of demeaning groups and individuals, in an interwoven set of principles which will be expanded upon in the following paragraphs. The concept of colour-blind racism is split by Bonilla-Silva into four key aspects through which the theory is expressed, here each will be outlined and applied in a study-specific context: abstract liberalism, naturalisation, cultural racism and minimization.

The first of these, abstract liberalism, is set out by Bonilla-Silva as being a view which 'involves using ideas associated with political liberalism and economic liberalism in an abstract manner to explain racial matters' (p. 28). The politically and economically liberal ideas that are referenced are further clarified as relating to equality of opportunity, a stance which Bonilla-Silva suggests as being utilised by those whose intentions are to appear 'reasonable and even moral' while continuing to maintain as position which is 'opposing almost all practical approaches to deal with de facto racial inequality' (p. 28). Later references to job inequality and underrepresentation tie into footballing statistics when looking towards coaching and management roles in football, linking to Bonilla-Silva's themes of abstract equality of opportunity hampered by pre-existing unchallenged hegemonic biases.

The second theme within the colour-blind framework is the concept of naturalisation. This is posited as being a frame that allows one to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences. The example provided relates to housing and social segregating along racial lines based upon suggestions that people from certain backgrounds 'gravitate towards likeness'. Bonilla-Silva's application of the theory takes a more overt and more negative stance than is applicable to this study's focus on sporting commentary, this is due to the aforementioned absence of racist intent and the active anti-racist views expressed overtly in sports media and commentary. However, applying naturalisation to this study would involve the covert, well-researched, and racialised discourse of black physical proficiency and white mental proficiencies (McCarthy and Jones 1997; McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003). The significant focus on positive description of black physicality stems from stereotypes of natural black physicality, originating from the entrenched, hegemonic, dominant biases and racisms that were previously discussed and which will undergo further unpacking in future sections.

The subsequent feature concerns the multi-faceted theme of 'cultural racism', Bonilla-Silva suggests that within this framework, it relies upon the usage of 'culturally based arguments to explain the standings of minorities in society' (p. 28). The background of this usage revolves around the transition from 'old racism' to 'new racism', a concept which will be expanded upon in the following section. Old racism, in Bonilla-Silva's context, centres on a presumed biological inferiority, with its usage being provided as reasoning for perceived racial differences and inequalities. New racism is therefore stated as being a concept revolving around the use of cultural racisms, Bonilla-Silva references an example of such usage (Newman 1993) where an interviewee was described by Newman as a person who would 'not see himself as racist and publicly he would subscribe to the principle everyone in this society deserves a fair shake' (p. 29). In a footballing context, suggestions of black sporting laziness and black natural physical proficiency provide examples of the extreme focus on black physical exploits with the absence of praise for black mental exploits. Such a dichotomy of abundant physical description and absent mental description allows for a 'reasonable' and non-racist explanation of black players not featuring in traditionally more cerebral midfield playmaking roles and in a non-playing role as coach or manager.

The final framework of the four is the concept of minimization of racism, where it is the suggestion that ‘discrimination is no longer a central factor’ (p. 29) when it comes to how the life chances of minorities are affected. Bonilla-Silva does not over-elaborate on this point, concisely stating that it relates to the accusations of hypersensitivity amongst minorities when standing up to racial inequalities. It is the combination of these four quadrants of colour-blind racism which combine to elucidate Bonilla-Silva’s standpoint when discussing the shift in the delivery of racial discrimination and the racialisation of social situations and groups. With these concepts and terminologies being key to this study of racialised commentary discourses and the wider racialisation in sports media, examples of said racialisation and stereotyping require unpacking in order to identify the manifestation of the above processes and theories in commentator discourses. The historical origins of racialization and ‘scientific racism’ need to be unpacked, followed by instances of racialization in a range of sporting disciplines and those in a football setting.

RACE: ORIGINS AND IN SPORTS MEDIA

‘Scientific Racism’ and Enlightenment Era Racial Stereotyping

Before discussing the racial stereotypes that exist in sports media and football specifically, the historical origins of the stereotypes that have evolved into what they are today must be outlined. Philosophers such as Smith and Rousseau argued, through their erroneous justification of reasoning and scientific enquiry, that there was ‘a strict bifurcation between man and beast; that it defined what made the Europeans civilized and Africans savage’ (Schrom 2016 p. 6). Schrom further argues that this assertion is key to the thinkers’ arguments that ‘over time, man becomes less attached to nature and more rational’ (p. 6). What is evident from the outset is the attempt to apply scientific rationale and justification for institutions such as the Atlantic slave trade with the assertion of physicality amongst black Africans lending itself to physical labour on colonial plantations and that the savagery of black Africans was asserted to justify enslavement. These notions are unpacked by Fanon’s (1963) works that compile the *Wretched of the Earth*. His notion of ‘reciprocal

exclusivity' (p. 38) in the section "On Violence" lends itself most appropriately to the above examples, separation between the ways in which the colonised and coloniser are treated. One would be able to assert with the above examples that a much-sanitized version of these principles still exists in discourses relating to black bodies and white minds.

Further to the above thinker's views, Kant's universal moral theory, espousing notions of human freedom and equality, is irreconcilably juxtaposed by his heavily racist personal views aimed at dehumanising black people (Allais 2016). Such views have since been quashed in academic circles, as noted in the prior section, however the lingering sentiments of white mentality and black physicality have permeated discourses in the wider world and in sports to this day. However, texts such as the 'The Bell Curve' by Herrnstein and Murray evidence how these ways of thinking have not been totally nullified in discourse on the matter. The following sections provide examples of how these dual notions, particularly the notion of physicality, express themselves in sporting contexts both externally to football and within football for the context of this study.

Racism and Stereotyping in Sport and Sports Media

Racism in wider sporting fields has evidenced several themes when compared to racism in football. However, several key factors remain consistent throughout sport and must be discussed to triangulate the consistent themes across sport in general and the themes which appear sport specific. In their literature review into racism in sport, Hylton and Lawrence (2016) noted several thematic consistencies in the body of research and offered four 'areas of concern' into which they categorized the instances of racism in sport which they reviewed. The first area of note which they identified surrounds the 'vernacular' of racist incidents. They classify this area as including the spoken word and the racialised meanings attached to slurs and chanting at sporting fixtures. Secondly, they categorise 'occupational' instances of racism where issues such as 'stacking', where players are stereotypically chosen for a role based upon their race or ethnicity (Loy and Booth 2004), and the absence of minority ethnic individuals in leadership positions are evident.

Furthermore, suggested by Hylton and Lawrence as being the chief instigator of occupational racisms, the category of 'institutional' racism is identified as their third area of concern in the sphere of literature. As stated in the prior definitions section and directly referred to in this section, one would describe institutional racism as the 'number of commonly overlooked racialised factors that obstruct or disrupt participation in sporting spheres for minoritized ethnic individuals and communities' (Ratna, Lawrence, and Partington 2015 cited in Hylton and Lawrence 2016). Finally, the fourth area of concern related most significantly to the study of racism in sport and sports media, their area of literature focusing attention on the 'culture industry'. For the context of this study, sports media will take centre stage with the stereotypes, covert instances of racism and unspoken assumptions which take place in the media industry on the frontlines of sports reporting and commentary (Hylton and Lawrence 2016).

A large quantity of the research into racism in sports has been conducted into examples occurring in sports media and within this, much of the body of research focuses on the vernacular taking place in the sports media being researched, both spoken and written. When discussing elite men's sport, Andrews (1996) asserted that the media, in its discourses, provides stereotypical, yet common-sense, portrayals of race and difference between races. The genesis of studies into the field of racism in sports media is Rainville and McCormick's study (1977) researching the extent to which covert racial prejudices appeared in American Football commentary. Their findings outlined that the descriptions of white players were comparably more positive and offered less critique than descriptions of equivalent black players being described. These findings provided the basis of their assertion that despite the increasing national distaste for prejudice toward black people, they believe that such overt examples of prejudice have simply been suppressed rather than eradicated (Rainville and McCormick 1977). The suppression has allowed the sentiments and 'common-sense' physical-mental dichotomy to remain in discourses.

Again, in research into American Football media discourses, Murrell and Curtis (1994) stated their intention to replicate and build upon the 1977 work of Rainville and McCormick and to focus upon the position of Quarterback in their research. They state their reason for this focus is that the Quarterback is both regarded as the

'leadership of the team' and that black players are 'consistently underrepresented' in the position (Murrell and Curtis 1994 p. 225). This sole focus on the position of Quarterback allowed for them to gain valuable insight into several key areas of racism in sport. Firstly, the effects of 'stacking' where black players are highly represented in positions such as Running Back and secondly, insight into what they coin as being the concept of a 'counter-stereotypic crisis' (1994 p. 225). This concept involves the inconsistency between the roles of a position on the field of play and the stereotypical assumptions which underpin descriptions and expectation of a player. Therefore, in this scenario, Murrell and Curtis expect that black successes in the white player dominated Quarterback position will be met with notable differences in description. Indeed, in their findings, they discovered that black players were defined by their supposed natural ability while white players were commended for their hard work and efforts in training and during games (1994).

Murrell and Curtis' line of enquiry was again developed further in terms of aim and methodology with Rada and Wulfemeyer's insights (2005) into intercollegiate American Football and Basketball. Their study not only aimed to gain insight into the commentator descriptions of the athletes during their efforts during play, the 'player-as-athlete', but also the commentator remarks made on the athletes' lives off the field and the court, the 'player-as-person'. The research again displays similar findings to the other pieces of research into the field, black athletes receiving praise and description through their 'God-given natural ability' (p. 80) and white athletes again being praised for their hard working and 'intellectually endowed' (p. 80) efforts during the games. In conjunction with the research differing in methodology, the results of the player-as-person study differ from the player-as-athlete results. They found that when describing black players' off-field intelligence, character or personal stories, all 18 of the negative comments were aimed at black athletes (Rada and Wulfemeyer 2005).

A further diversification of methodology and focus is seen in campus stereotype research conducted by Sailes (1993). Sailes' examination included both the 'dumb jock' stereotype alongside the 'black athletic superiority' stereotype. Focusing on the research into black athleticism, Sailes conceptualised the research

to provide observed evidence of discriminatory views being held in order to supplement the body of research that asserts that racist attitudes lead to discrimination (Sailes 1993 p. 91). The findings outlined that respondents were more at ease towards divulging their views on the 'dumb jock' stereotype compared to revealing their views on athletic racial stereotyping. Sailes hypothesised that this may have been due to such responses being perceived as racist responses (p. 96). However, those who did provide responses relating to the stereotype did assert that athletes are less intelligent and take easy courses and that African American athletes are not academically prepared to be able to attend universities and consequently do not achieve the same grades as white athletes.

Focusing specifically on racism in basketball commentary, Wonsek (1992), while introducing her study, offered the suggestion that despite the concentrated efforts undertaken to fight against inequalities in political spheres and employment opportunities, the image of black people in America in the wider media may be worse than it has been prior to the 1970s (Dreyfuss 1980 cited in Wonsek 1992). This assertion echoes the findings of Rainville and McCormick (1977) who also made note of the reduction in overt discriminations but lack of reduction of stereotypical media depictions and discourses. Resonating with the previously discussed literature, Wonsek outlined the observations that commentators 'revel' (1992 p. 451) in the opportunity to describe the physical exploits of black athletes, such as leap and strength, utilising the hegemonic stereotypical assertion that these are naturally bestowed abilities.

Following on from this widely observed reading of sports media racism, some tangential, yet pertinent observations were made by Wonsek regarding socio-economic and cultural factors within the wider discourse of sports and race. The realisation that significant numbers of black males perceive their opportunities to achieve fame and success as residing in professional sports, in spite of a wide range of other careers, has been noted in Wonsek's research (1992). Colloquialised as a 'ticket out of poverty' (p. 452), Wonsek supplements this observation with multiple angles of research which uncover the low feasibility of reaching professional levels in sport and disproportionate representations of earning potential when finally becoming a professional athlete (Welling 1986; Gaston 1986 cited in Wonsek 1992).

These conclusions are accompanied by suggestions from Sailes which infer that the young black males who are enticed by the prospect of fame and fortune are ‘throwing away economic and educational opportunities for a dream that is unlikely to be fulfilled’ (Sailes 1986 p. 440).

Outside of the sphere of American domestic sports, research into Olympic coverage has identified several themes in the media discourses, some themes already witnessed in earlier research and some themes occurring only in international sporting media discourse. Firstly, Billings and Eastman (2002 and 2003) noted while researching media discourses during the 2000 summer and 2002 winter Olympics that white athletes were commended for their commitment to their sport, a discourse widely noted in the wealth of research into racist stereotypes and media discourses while black athletes, again in line with hegemonic discourses, were complimented on their innate natural ability for their event during the games. Alongside these typically seen discourses, a discourse specific to international sporting events was identified by Knoppers and Elling (2001) when discussing the concept of ‘national pride’. They note that when sportsmen and women who are not ethnically native to their country succeed while competing for their nation, they undergo a ‘temporary erasure’ of their native ethnicity and are celebrated. The nationality contextualised in the research is that of native Dutch athletes and Dutch athletes of Suriname or Dutch Antilles decent. The counterpoint provided to the discussion of athlete success is when non-native Dutch athletes fail to succeed. In this instance, it has been noted that they are identified by their native ethnic origin, distancing the Dutch nation from the athletes, rather than identifying them as Dutch (Knoppers and Elling 2001).

The final piece of wider sports discourse research involves the research of dominant discourses which are utilised by people as an explanation for perceived differences between different races and/or ethnicities (van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004). The researchers split their findings along four key categories of discourse: Physical, Mental, Cultural Tradition, and Economic. The participants’ views on physicality and race involve suggestions of genetics and black people being ‘generally physically stronger than white people’ (van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004 p. 307). A black, male participant in their study suggested that he believed the

difference ‘has something to do with the way black bodies are constructed’ (p. 307). Such a statement evidences the embedded nature of the discourses surrounding black physicality and specifically perceived natural black physicality. The discourses seen here are model examples of the discourses seen consistently in the body of research. In the findings relating to mental discourses, stacking was alluded to when a participant stated that ‘white soccer players are often in central positions because they have more organizational capabilities than black players’ (p. 309). Furthermore, supplementing the discussion on an excess of white sportsmen in a particular field, discussion of the excess of black sportsmen in boxing resulted in a participant suggesting that a ‘lack of thinking’ was required to do well in boxing (p. 309). These suggestions encapsulate the discourses of the cerebral white athlete and the black athlete relying on natural physicality.

In the sections of the study relating to cultural tradition and economic discourses, a black female participant asserted that culturally, tennis was a ‘white sport’, and sprinting is a ‘black event’ (p. 311). These assertions were further clarified with the participant’s suggestions of tennis being a sport for the elite, originating in white European culture, while running was undertaken by black people in their culture and countries of origin due to low expense and membership requirements or lack thereof. However, despite this opinion being expressed amongst the participants, a black male participant provided a viewpoint contradicting the typical discourse that ‘black people do not ski’ (p. 311). An opportunity to go skiing, described by the participant as ‘a fantastic experience’, went against the stereotypes which the participant himself identified. Another example of the erroneous nature of cultural stereotypes involves the origins of Cricket and its eventual global spread through British colonialism (James 2013). When C.L.R. James’ discusses West Indies cricket, one sees cricket as a medium through which West Indians could struggle against colonialist ideologies and inequalities. James’ contentions serve to exemplify how arguments of cultural exclusivity are ineffective, when paired with equivalent South Asian examples of Pakistani and Indian sporting and social successes through cricket (Jussawalla 2002).

The diverse ‘racial’ aptitudes for the sport of cricket stand exemplar as instances where perceived racial differences and stereotypes are inconsequential in

terms of capacity to succeed at particular sports. Linking the cultural and economic discourses of van Sterkenburg and Knoppers' study (2004), both the black and white participants associated white people with wealth and black people with poverty (p. 311). Completing their associations, the participants suggested that black sportspeople excel in sports such as basketball and running due to the relative inexpensiveness of those sports in comparison to golf and tennis (p.311-312). The participants reasons for these arguments involve the need for 'passes' to attain membership to golf and tennis clubs which involve high levels of expense, which were stated as being 'historically for the rich [white] people' (p. 312).

Despite these observations by the participants, one would again provide counterargument with the example of cricket where equipment expenses are involved, for example: protective equipment and cricket bats, but also can be inexpensive in the case of 'tape-ball' cricket (Hylton et al. 2015). Involving the use of an electrical tape covered tennis ball, to better simulate a cricket ball, poorer South Asian communities in the UK and in South Asia are able to participate in self-organised, inexpensive forms of cricket and bypass cultural and economic barriers to participation (Hylton et al. 2015).

Research into discourses on footballing banter have evidenced the use of racialised language by both black and white members of teams in what are deemed to be jovial and unspiteful exchanges (Wolfers et al. 2017). This however is a contested assessment, with banter also having been seen to be a route through which bullying and ostracising can be trivialised and justified when challenged. Lawless and Magrath (2021) attempt to encapsulate these two contrasting views on banter with the dual notions of 'inclusionary' and 'exclusionary' banter in their research into cricket. Their inclusionary forms of banter centre on the creation of an 'in group' (p. 1505), where interactions are deemed as light-hearted and inoffensive. This is where their exclusionary forms of banter deviate in direction, their exclusionary forms are defined by how they 'cross the line', a line which the participants in their study deemed to be references to a person's identity. Such identity-related factors were deemed to be a person's sexuality or ethnic background. Lawless and Magrath critically make note of the fluid nature of banter, they present the concept of 'loaded' banter as comments containing implicit

messages. Such a notion mirrors this study's focus on football commentary that contains implicit racial discourses.

Racism and Stereotyping in Football Pre-1992

'Racism came in the form of letters, chanting from the crowds, banana throwing, monkey chanting, songs, and not just one or two but thousands singing racial abuse, chants, that kind of stuff' (Regis 1998 cited in Garland and Rowe 2001 p. 1). This quote from Cyrille Regis, a black footballer with a professional career spanning the late 1970s to the mid 1990s, epitomises the extent to which overt forms of racism were directed at black footballers in the late 20th century. Contrary to scholarly findings into American old and new racism (Wonsek 1992), which suggest that overt racisms declined in the post-war era, racism in English sporting contexts remained prolific throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The racism in English football, during the latter part of the 20th century, consisted of overt forms, as described in the opening Cyrille Regis quote, and covert form of racism in the form of institutional racism, as outlined by Hylton and Lawrence (2016) which was undergoing the process of transitioning from more overt to more covert.

In the domain of overt racism, instances of overt stereotyping were common in the game. While not carrying the vitriol and hatred of some of the instances which will be discussed later, these forms of racial stereotyping evidenced the explicit biases that black players faced during this period of English football. Firstly, a widely documented stereotype involved stating that black players lacked 'bottle' and that they 'gave up too easily' with references made to unsuitability to cold weather and poor discipline (Root and Austin 1980 cited in Garland and Rowe p. 41). These assertions about black footballers serve to perpetuate negative stereotypes relating to work ethic, which are seen throughout the literature discussed in the previous section and also serve to contribute to the 'othering' of black players (Hylton 2008).

The othering of black players is also seen in Ron Atkinson's description of three black players at West Bromwich Albion: Brendon Batson, Laurie Cunningham and Cyrille Regis. Atkinson styled his players as West Brom's 'Three Degrees', in homage to the singers under the same name (Rees 2014). Upon initial observation,

one would view the description as a positive, celebratory one. However, the attention and publicity that the description attracted had the effect of portraying the trio as a 'novelty' (Garland and Rowe 2001 p. 43) and was both a symptom of othering and further cause of othering for the trio (Hylton 2008). A further example of black players being singled out amongst their white counterparts relates to Viv Anderson, the first black footballer to play for England. It had been suggested that he, and all West Indian heritage players by association, would have been deemed 'unreliable' throughout the country if he had made an error during the game which cost the team (Longmore 1988). The suggestion that a player's performance would be representative of an entire cohort serves to again demonstrate the process of othering which besieged black players throughout the late 20th century.

A recurring stereotype noted in the literature involves the suggestion that black footballers, when questioning the white authority or speaking up against discriminatory behaviour, had a 'chip on their shoulder'. This phrase has been defined as suggesting that black players are 'over-sensitive about their race and perceive slights on their character and identity inappropriately' (Long and McNamee 2004 p. 415). With this definition, further instances of players supposedly having a chip on their shoulder include Les Ferdinand's recollection of trials and scouting stereotypes. Ferdinand noted that black players were dismissed by scouts and coaches as showing attitude problems due to having a 'chip on their shoulder' (King 2004; White 1997). Furthermore, King (2004) asserts that Andy Cole alongside Les Ferdinand also resonated with the suggestions of black players having a chip on their shoulder. King further adds that the metaphor proclaims that black players are 'difficult to control' (p. 21) and have issues with predominantly white authority.

With these findings, suggestions of institutional racism re-emerge in the discussion with attention placed upon the lack of black managers in English football. The accounts of black former footballers who ventured into coaching and management echo the suggestions of stereotyped black physicality which are often accompanied by 'common-sense' erroneous assumptions of black mental inadequacy (McCarthy and Jones 1997). An example of a player confirming this stereotype is that of John Barnes' suggestion that there is a view that 'we [black footballers] are athletic but can we think?' (Marshall 2004 cited in Cashmore and Cleland 2011). This

quote from Barnes, in reference to players, relates to the stacking of players in 'cerebral' central positions and 'athletic' wide positions and in relation to coaching, alludes to the existence of institutional racism in selection processes and expectations of black managers and coaches in football.

Cyrille Regis also weighed in on the debate with his suggestions that chairmen are reluctant to trust black managers. He stated 'There are still questions being asked about black British managers and whether or not they will be able to deal with all this [man management and budgets] and produce the goods' (Chaudhary 2003 cited in Cashmore and Cleland 2011). Regis' statement expressing his view on barriers to black involvement in management has been vindicated in comments made by some chairmen of clubs. Notably the chairman of Crystal Palace, Ron Noades, and his comments on the need for white players to provide 'brains' and 'common sense' to a squad and the Brescia chairman Massimo Cellino's suggestion that Mario Balotelli, a black player on his team, is working to 'whiten' himself. These comments evidence the existence of the stereotypes about black athletes and serve as barriers to selection for what are seen as 'cerebral' management and coaching roles.

These examples evidence the overt instances of racial stereotyping by chairmen which would serve to preclude black coaches from being considered for management positions. However, unwitting and covert institutional racism also exists in systems of selection (MacPherson 1999). An example of such unwitting bias is suggested by Putnam (1999) regarding chairmen and coach selection. Putnam's dual statement noted that white chairmen default to coaches who are similar to those who have brought success in the past and to coaches who fit the stereotypical mould of what a successful coach has and will be based upon the hegemonic beliefs in the sport in question (1999). Relating these statements to football, the prevalence of white coaches would serve as a subliminal benchmark for chairmen looking to appoint a coach, therefore impeding the chances of a black applicant for whom no subliminal precedent of success exists in the thought processes of the chairman.

Adjacent to the topic of white chairmen and exclusion of black players and managers, the underrepresentation of minorities in leadership positions in football has been researched by Bradbury (2013). Bradbury initially echoes Bonilla-Silva's

colourblind racism notion of abstract liberalism (2006 p. 28) when stating that football is hailed as being 'an increasingly post-racial, meritocratic, and egalitarian space where 'race' no longer matters' (2013 p. 296). Such a notion evokes the principle of abstract liberalism through the idea that the principles of equality and the appetite for equality is being seen. But in practice, the barriers to participation are still in place. Bradbury's key observations and recommendations identify that actions such as quota introduction offer a 'direct and immediate solution to increasing the representation of minorities in leadership positions' (p. 310). However, he notes that 'the success of such approaches is likely to be greatly enhanced if it is delivered as part of a more holistic package of educational, policy orientated, and legislative action' (p. 311).

With these initial examples of institutional and covert stereotyping, a vitriolic discrimination and overt racism has also been seen in late 20th century football. Firstly, the comparatively benign yet still intolerable, instances of booing aimed at black players such as John Barnes was recounted by an Arsenal fan attending a fixture against Watford. The booing was done despite the offending fans' team, Arsenal, fielding a number of black players themselves. This instance is accompanied by the reprehensible throwing of a banana at Barnes which provided the now-iconic photograph of Barnes kicking away said banana (Hill 1989). When warming up and jogging down the touchline, Vincent Hilaire was subjected to what he described as 'animal noises' (Williams 1992). Such instances of racism directed at black footballers evidenced the continued existence of overt racism despite suggestions of a more covert racism as asserted by Leach (2005).

Several quotations provided in Garland and Rowe raise interesting points for deeper analysis when linked with wider literatures. The quotes from Batson, Crooks, and Regis relating to fighting back against racist attitudes involve seeing sports as 'one of the few areas where you can get on' (Harding 1991 p. 362 cited in Garland and Rowe 2001 p.40). This is reaffirmed by the Cyrille Regis quote on the subject which states that 'Sport is an avenue where you are judged on your talent' (p. 40). These views offered by the footballers provide the assertion that football and sports are the extent of the options available to young black men attempting to forge a path in the world. Discussion on this theme in the previous section would suggest

that Crooks and Regis provided the opinions whilst operating under the hegemonic view of sport being a 'ticket out of poverty' (Wonsek 1992; Sailes 1993). Wonsek and Sailes' views regard the focus upon sporting avenues over educational avenues to be a perpetuation of white commodification and exploitation of young black males in sport (Wonsek 1992).

Racism and Stereotyping in the Premier League Era

With the examples of overt racism and campaign failures to combat such instances, one must discuss the state of affairs from the commencement of the Premier League in 1992 to the present day and evaluate the similarities, differences, and the success or failure of the efforts being made to remove racism from football. The September 2012 report from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (henceforth referred to as the DCMS) provides numerous positive statistics and statements regarding racism in football. Firstly, the opening lines of the report's summary offers a resounding pat on the back to all the parties who have contributed towards racism having '*become significantly less common in the UK*' (DCMS 2012 p. 3). Two of the three reasons for this reduction were cited as being the creation of '*codes of conduct for staff, players and fans as well as promoting anti-racism campaigns by organisations such as Kick it Out and Show Racism the Red Card.*' (p. 3). The third and final reason provided by the DCMS for the reduction relates to crime statistics at football matches, they state that both arrests and '*racial or indecent chanting had "remained low"*' (p. 5).

With this optimistic outlook in 2012-13, statistical evidence has been recorded in recent years indicating continued and increased racism in football. The Guardian provided statistics regarding 'football-related racist incidents' for recent seasons, stating in their headline a, '*Sharp rise in football racism as incidents go up by more than 50% in one year*' (The Guardian 2020). Specifically, 150 incidents were reported to the police in 2018-19 season compared to the 78 in the 2013-14 season, one season after the DMCS report praising the situation. Kick it Out attribute this later in the article to a '*climate of rising hatred and tribalism across the world*' (The Guardian 2020). With this significant increase in overt racist incidents in recent years, discussion of the sources of overt racism in the Premier League era and the

prevalence of the less visible covert racism is required, alongside the efforts being made to combat both the overt and covert examples and whether or not the same issues facing previously discussed campaigns exist in the present day. The need for this becomes even more pertinent with figures from Kick it Out suggesting that 1007 reports of discriminatory behaviour were reported throughout the football pyramid in the 2022-23 season (Kick it Out 2023).

Before examples of overt racism and covert discrimination are discussed, the stereotypes which exist relating to black and white athletes must be established in their historical and subsequent contemporary contexts in order to understand the longevity and entrenched nature of the hegemonic views which reproduce and sustain both overt and covert displays of discrimination and racism. van Sterkenburg et al. (2019), in their research on football talk, made note of the longstanding and still present stereotypes in the media. They state that black footballers are associated with '*natural athleticism and genetic athletic superiority*' and white athletes are associated with '*hard work, dedication and intelligence*' (van Sterkenburg et al. 2019 p. 196). Further to this point, they expand on the description of white athletes in the media by highlighting the often-conspicuous lack of description of white athletes. This is stated to have the effect of placing white athletes as '*the 'invisible norm' against which Black athletes are constructed as extraordinary 'natural' athletes*' (p. 196).

These dichotomies of athleticism and natural ability against hard work and intelligence are ever-present in the discourses of both media outlets and of footballing discussion. Such is the domination of these themes in discourse, they become the normal benchmark against which athletes are described. These regular, innocuous usages of the stereotypes are strongly linked to the themes of racialisation (Satzewich 1989) seen in the previous sections of the literature review and contribute to the longstanding nature of the discourses. With the ever-present nature of the discourses of physicality versus mentality, and the naturalised usage of them being so established, examples of such usage in both the media and in fan circles must be discussed to understand the range of their usage.

An initial angle of insight revolves around a product of the 21st century, social media platforms and online message boards, through which fans can discuss a

multitude of topics. One such topic, as researched by Cleland (2014), is racism in football fan circles. His findings evidence several forms of overt and covert racism being expressed towards a multitude of groups. In relation to the England national football team, themes of 'the Other' arise in the discussions of the makeup of the current England team comparing it negatively with several predominantly white European national teams and the world cup winning 1966 England team. Such discussions serve to create the racialisation of athletes and groups of non-English ethnicities in the discourse and intend to portray them as outsiders (Cleland 2014 p. 426). Cleland notes that such views were once exclusive to the overt abuse from football stands seen in the 20th century and have now transitioned to a more covert forum in the form of the message boards and social media (2014).

In the culture of the game, research into unequal opportunities and the entrenched stereotypes which facilitate the inequality has been conducted. There have been a significant number of statements which relate to the perception that, whether it be in sport or employment, black candidates have to exceed the abilities and effort of their white counterparts in order to be considered for a position ahead of a white candidate (Maguire 1991; Jones 2002; Cashmore 2012). The prevalence of this stereotype is further investigated by Jones (2002) through examination of the sport-specific stereotypes which remain entrenched from the 20th century. Examples of such include supposed black aversion to cold weather (p. 58) and unsubstantiated assumptions that a black winger will almost certainly be quick before a game has even started (p. 57-58) with accompanying shock if a Black winger is not quick. One black forum commenter stated that players have said '*You're not very fast for a Black guy, are you?*' (Jones 2002 p. 57). Such stereotypes, which seemingly expect speed from a black player, which is at face value a purely positive characteristic with speed being a valued attribute in sport, carry obvious negative and disparaging connotation in the example provided. Similar aspects of seemingly positive yet inherently negative racialised discourse will be discussed more extensively later in this section.

In the domain of football commentary, stereotyped description is widespread and ingrained in the discourses. Studies into football commentary discourses evidence the repeated and longstanding habits of stereotypically describing players

based on their physical or mental features (McCarthy and Jones 1997; McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003; Billington 2018). The two initial studies, focusing on late 1990s and the final study focusing on mid 2010s Premier League seasons, identify near identical spreads of physical description of black players and cerebral description of white players despite a difference of 15 years between the studied seasons. This entrenchment of ideas and stereotypes has remained unchallenged due to several factors. Some of the factors are intrinsic to the method of delivery of live sports commentary. With the immediate need for live description, commentators must rely upon their instinctive response which draws from hegemonic stereotypes of race ingrained in social discourses.

Secondly, the inherently positive nature of the descriptions, commenting on a player's good speed or strength, are fundamentally positive observations about the player. Critically, the positive physical descriptions have been noted to identify said player as possessing their physicality naturally, linking to the prominent discourses of natural black physicality (McCarthy and Jones 1997) and secondly, failing to identify the player's mental characteristics serving to identify the player as a purely physical athlete relying on their physicality to achieve in the sport (McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003). This factor is key in the earlier referenced research which suggests black athletes are overlooked for management and coaching positions due to their perceived lack of mental ability (Billington 2018). This is further evidenced by John Barnes in his 'can we think' interview regarding the lack of black coaches in football (Marshall 2004).

With an abundance of overt and covert instances of racism being evident in the literature, the responses and efforts of football governing bodies and anti-racism NGOs to combat such instances must be reflected upon against the literature. Research into the findings, recommendations and actions of a 1997 task force report titled '*Eliminating Racism in Football*' identified a multitude of issues in its response to racism (Bradbury and Williams 2006). Firstly, the report was noted for its successes when addressing matters of racism at local and grassroots levels (p. 73). However, such a focus on grassroots saw the task force fail to address the professional game's earlier highlighted issues with institutional racism. In their research, Bradbury and Williams also remarked that the report engrossed itself with

the overt instances of fan racism, such as the 2004 Spain v England ‘monkey chants’. This had the effect of providing a façade of success in the fight against racism with no focus or attention placed on any covert or hegemonic issues in the structures of the game.

Additionally, focusing their research away from the overt forms of stadium racism to the comparably more covert medium of social media, Kilvington and Price evaluated the organisational responses to social media abuse (2019). Of particular note in their findings, the conspicuous lack of dialogue between Kick It Out and the FA regarding social media is concerning compared to the extensive exchange of ideas between the organisations regarding overt racism. The concern arises from Kilvington and Price’s suggestion that the FA does not take social media racism as seriously as openly expressed incidents (2019). Additionally, Kilvington and Price state that they had previously approached the FA in an effort to rectify the situation regarding the organisations apathy towards combatting social media abuse. In line with their apathy, the FA did not get onboard with the proposal and stated, *‘it was not “closely aligned” enough with its strategy’* (Kilvington and Price 2019 p. 73). These examples suggest an institutional preoccupation and fixation with overt racism and an underestimation of the effects of social media and covert racisms.

Methodology

Introduction

The methodology outlines the research perspectives upon which the approach to the research was based, followed by the research design, principles, and protocols. Beginning with insights into Comte and Durkheim's initial ventures into formulation of social scientific methodology, Comte's work exemplifies the first foray into the process of forming a positivist methodology and informs this study when outlining the key principles of observation, comparison, and experimentation in a research setting. Durkheim's work expanded upon this initial groundwork with the application of the methodologies in a social science setting, most notably through the notion of a social fact. Both scholars provide a basis upon which the expansion of their ideas developed into the thinking of Windelband and Rickert, and the formulation of the key concept of triangulated approaches to social science. Discussion of the introduction of method to the social sciences, adapted from the method of the natural sciences by Windelband and then expanded upon by Rickert's value relevance approach, allows for the progression to Weber's value standpoint methodology and the introduction of ideal types and the applicability of an ideal type of football commentary.

Following the introduction of early thinkers in the field, Fairclough and Foucault's approaches to discourse provide the backbone of the theoretical thinking of the methodology with semiotic insights revolving around the work of Barthes through signs, signifiers, and myth. Key to the discussion of commentators and broadcast organisations is the notion of structure, agency, and the extent to which they affect the decisions and discourses emanating from football. Discussion of Schutz's work on typifications alongside the figurational work of Elias, Giddens' structuration and Bourdieu's work on habitus allows for a rounded discussion of the effect of organisational structure and actor agency on those delivering discourses. The research design outlines the procedures of the research with focus on the notion of triangulating a quantitative, content analysis approach with a qualitative, discourse analysis approach. Within this, the protocols by which the approaches are

undertaken are discussed in addition to outlining the adapted discourse analysis method from van Dijk's analysis of press discourses.

SOCIAL RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

Comte and Durkheim: Beginning and Application

August Comte first utilised the term Sociology in the mid-19th century. His perspective was that of positivism, a concept described as an approach to sociology which aims to synthesise social knowledge through observation, comparison, and experimentation (Giddens and Sutton 2021 p. 12). It is these principles which find themselves applied in this thesis. Comte divided his approach into three stages: the first two being the theological and metaphysical, both of which were a product of Comte's own social setting at the time of writing and lack applicability to the study. The third stage, the positive stage, concerns itself with scientific discovery and is therefore applicable. As Comte himself outlines, 'reasoning and observation, duly combined, are the means of knowledge' (Comte 1858). He applied this view when associating the same research principles of other sciences such as Astronomy and Chemistry to Sociology, or as he coined it, 'Social Physics'. Such thought is key to this study's application of quantitative principles to a social scientific setting, discussed later in the research design, and forms the basis for the insights of those such as Emile Durkheim.

Following Comte's initial outlining of the basic principles through which research should be approached in a social scientific setting, Emile Durkheim began the academic application of the approach in the field of Sociology. He postulated that sociology should be the vehicle for turning traditional philosophical questions into sociological questions which demanded 'real-world empirical research studies' (Giddens and Sutton 2021 p.13). Durkheim notably introduced his concept of 'social fact', which is categorized by Durkheim as being 'a social practice, rule, duty, or sanction that exists *outside of the individual*' (Casteel 2011 p. 35). An example of a social fact for Durkheim would be that of the societal values by which children are raised (Bierstedt 1966 p.103). Outlining this particular view as a social fact relates

to the suggestion that 'all education [for a child] is a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting which he could not have arrived at spontaneously' (p. 103). Further to this, in the case the teaching of children and the collective influence on the individual, parent, and/or child, it is the collective nature of the social fact that serves to place it as social fact in the theorizing of Durkheim. The relevance of social facts to this study and the study of football commentary relates to the continually reproduced nature of discourses in football relating to black and white bodies and minds. As noted in the introduction, van Sterkenburg sees footballing discourses as being able to 'become something of a taken for granted and naturalized form of knowledge' (2013).

The seminal introduction of sociological methods for Durkheim was that of his study of suicide in 1888 (Taylor 1982; Morrison 2006). It not only demonstrated a shift from philosophical to a sociological, but also in terms of the research angle, a shift from a psychological approach to interpreting issues such as suicide to a sociological analysis (Durkheim 2005). Rather than attempting to gather an individual angle on suicide through research, Durkheim's approach made use of statistical evidence and specified social causes which he associated with the statistics gathered, be they religious, gender, wealth or marital significant in his view. With the data collected and analysed, based upon the social factors he identified in the statistics, Durkheim presented four social factors which he viewed as explaining the types of suicide in society (Giddens 1978 p.42). This style of conclusion deviated from the individual-focused psychological explanation to a society-focused one which identified societal changes over time which could not be solely accounted for by analysis of an individual's psychological profile. This method of inductive reasoning, applied to this study of football commentary, aims to result in the identification and understanding of the patterns in the discourses. With Comte and Durkheim's approaches relating to the initial ventures into qualitative thinking and its application in social settings, the application of 'values' in conjunction with scientific objectivity must be discussed.

Windelband and Rickert: Weber's influences

Wilhelm Windelband's influence on Max Weber's approach to sociology and his shift away from positivism can be seen through a framework in which 'historical study' could be considered scientific, and to wrest the concept of methods from being solely in the grasp of the natural sciences (Morrison 2006 p.257). Windelband's primary concern, while dissecting Kant's philosophy for the natural sciences, involved the omission of human historical and ethical motives which he believed should be the focus of social and historical study (Willey 1978). Building upon these beliefs, an effort was made to set out theory which would withstand critique from those practicing the natural sciences. Key to the effort was the principle that the natural sciences study a level of reality which concerns itself with concrete causes and laws, and the social sciences study a differing level of reality which involves ethics, values, and the actions of people through which the particulars and the unique are concerned (Windelband 1998 p.18), information which cannot be determined by the broad general, the laws, and causes, seen in the natural sciences.

Here is where Windelband begins to outline his differentiations of the natural 'nomothetic' deductive methods and the social/historical 'ideographic' inductive methods. Before this, one must address the differentiation of inductive and deductive approaches and how they relate to the order in which knowledge is arrived at. An inductive approach is defined as one which utilises 'detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data' (Thomas 2006 p.238). Conversely, a deductive approach involves 'a theory testing process which commences with an established theory or generalisation and seeks to see if the theory applies to specific instances' (Hyde 2000 p.83). With the differentiation established, Windelband asserts that 'any given object could, in fact, be studied by either of these approaches' and that 'a truer picture of the world could be obtained by using both kinds of method' (Morrison 2006 p.259). This point in particular is key to this thesis on football commentary and is outlined in detail the upcoming research design section. Briefly stated here, the utilisation of both deductive and inductive methodologies aims to approach the research in a way that will ascertain a 'truer picture' of the landscape of football commentary than would be achieved by utilising a singular approach alone. These views on deductive and

inductive approaches would influence the works of a student of Windelband, Heinrich Rickert.

A contemporary of and additional influence on Weber, Heinrich Rickert further expanded on his tutor's differentiation of the natural and social sciences with four key aspects of his own. First among these was a questioning of the theory and accumulation of knowledge. Rickert contended that the natural science's observational methods were a form of judgment, where the item in question is acknowledged as true or rejected as false where this in turn painted judgement as an 'act of valuing' (Rickert 1921 p.165 cited in Staiti 2013), a concept which Weber expands upon. Leading on from this view on judgement and value in the knowledge gathering process, Rickert touches on his mentor Windelband's theories of method around generalising and individualising. Rickert suggested that the nature of empirical reality was so extensive that the generalising tendency of the natural sciences was required to grasp aspects of the totality (Bruun 2016) and to then generate 'concepts' by which to 'bring as many particulars as possible under one precise descriptive term' (Morrison 2006 p. 262). This process of conceptualisation and generalising informs the thinking behind the usage of a quantitative methodology for the initial numerical assessment of the commentator discourses.

Delving further into the notion of concepts, they are seen by Rickert to be integral to both the natural and social sciences while seeing employment in differing ways. As said above, concepts in the natural sciences disqualify the individuality of what is being studied and Bruun goes so far as to suggest that the generalisation can 'lead away from empirical reality' (2016 p. 85). In the realm of the social sciences, the individualising nature that Windelband and Rickert subscribe to leads concept formation, to relate to reality by placing focus on individual phenomena rather than an attempt to represent as much of reality as such (Morrison 2006 p.263). This particular point leads to the decision in this thesis to have a qualitative discourse analysis approach to assess the individual commentator excerpts, alongside the quantitative content analysis approach that will inform the generalised concepts referenced in the previous paragraph.

Rickert's final point of contention relates to the idea of 'values'. His argument opens with a suggestion that under the methods and principles of the

natural sciences, human beings could not operate under such conditions (Berger 1978). This view relates to the aforementioned generalising tendency of the natural sciences which Rickert claims here would contain no particulars or uniqueness, it is here where the concept of values begins to permeate the discussion. Rickert's primary assertion being that humans act in accordance with values: customs, religions and languages being stated examples (Morrison 2006 p. 264). The summation of his points regarding value are that the natural sciences were devoid of value whilst the social sciences and human activity is value relevant (Rickert 1962) meaning human agency involves action on the basis of what is valued in the realm of society and research. Applying these points to football, it is a sport filled with values, customs, and nuance, through which generalisation alone cannot grasp the complexities of. Taking this into account, the views and theorizations of these men had significant impact on the works of Max Weber who expanded upon many of the ideas of Windelband and Rickert and utilised their influences to reach his own distinct approaches.

Weber: Value Relevance and Ideal Types

Much of Weber's work focuses on religion and economy, in these are extractable principles which relate to understandings of wider and more varied subjects than those discussed directly in his works. Chief among these follows on from the work of the prior mentioned thinkers and their writings on values. Weber's use of their notion of 'concepts' in the social-scientific method begins with the value-relevance of concepts, for example whether or not they subscribe to the cultural values (religion, laws, economy) of the society under which the research is taking place (Weber 1978). A feminist researcher utilising a concept such as patriarchy would be relevant to their values for example. When each society and each individual within society has varying value standpoints, one can suggest that each will be approaching with value-relevant interpretations. This thesis being focused on anti-racism would be its value standpoint.

This viewpoint is further elaborated upon twice by Weber in relation to the judgements of the researcher and the method objectivity of the researcher. Weber's strong view on the differences between factual judgement and value judgement

(Hennis 1991) stems from the principle that a value judgement is uncritical and is in effect reproducing the views of the researcher rather than providing an objective and factual account of the topic being researched regardless of personal view. This aspect leads to Weber's methods of being scientific, despite the principles of value-relevance and judgements. It is suggested that a value relevance and objectivity are not mutually exclusive concepts and that one can enable this during research through strict methods and critical usage of evidence and concepts (Turner 2007). Application of these principles would in turn allow a researcher with a differing value-standpoint to discern your approach despite their disagreement. For this study, the value standpoint of anti-racism is enabled to be objectively studied through the adherence to the methodological principles outlined in the upcoming research design.

The Weber-Marx debate surrounding factual judgement and value judgement is a practical example of the conflicting view regarding these theoretical principles. Weber rejects Marx's view that social theory's task was to change society. The Weberian counter to this standpoint relates to the search for historical truth and that a Marxist position of criticising society, specifically inequality, was value loaded and not adhering to the neutrality and objectivity that Weber espoused (Morrison p.215). On immediate assessment of these standpoints, they appear irreconcilable, however if one applies Weber's value neutrality, one is able to firstly apply 'the necessary objectivity required by researchers solving problems in the social sciences and in turn exercise caution in relation to 'value-judgements which coincide with the particular orientation or motives of the researcher' (p.347). In essence, one would be able to hold their 'value-relevant viewpoint' regarding inequality (as an example for this study) and would be able to approach the research in a manner befitting Weber's preferred objective approach through the above-mentioned strict methods and critical use of evidence.

The final takeaway from Weber's theories relates to the notion of ideal types. An ideal type is outlined as a 'conceptual pattern which brings together certain relationships and events of historical life into a concept which is conceived as an internally consistent system' (Weber 1949). Put simply, an ideal type would be a concept which shares familiar attributes in order to distil and understand a vaster,

more complex reality. Examples of ideal types would be capitalism, the nation state or meritocracy, these are concepts not found in isolation due to the intersectional nature of society, yet they provide a method through which a point can be delivered and applied meaningfully. Application of ideal types to football commentary would see the familiar attributes of commentary teams, punditry panels, and broadcast conventions that remain generally unchanged to act as the ideal type of a televised football event. Punditry before a match, analysis at half time, a commentary duo or trio during live play, and discussion at full time would constitute an ideal type of broadcast. Utilising the ideal type allows for the study of football commentary to discern whether or not aspects of the broadcast affect the discourses taking place or structurally contribute to discourses seen in commentary and punditry. The examples of methodological objectivity, value-relevance and concept formation provide a foundation through which to discuss further theoretical standpoints formulated by scholars.

Critical Discourse Analysis as Method

Conceptualisations of discourse are key to all three aspects of the current research and have been approached in manifold ways. One must first discuss some of the definitions of discourse offered by key theorists before elaborating upon their applications of the concept. First among these is the approach of Norman Fairclough who is situated in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with a focus on capitalist society in his works. Fairclough (2013) is reserved in his attempts to provide an outright definition of discourse, however within his reasoning for his restraint to do so, he does offer some possibilities at a definition. He offers that 'discourse' might be seen as some sort of entity or object in of itself but is reluctant to leave the statement unqualified with the view that discourse is also a complex set of relations (p. 3) including but not limited to communication through talking and writing to each other and wider forms such as newspaper articles and for this study, football commentary. Again, exemplifying the complexity of discourse, he makes note of the influence of power relations and social institutions on discourses before coming full circle to again state that discourse is not an entity that can be defined independently and that one must arrive at an understanding from analysis of relations demonstrating

his CDA background (p. 3). A discussion of Fairclough's work on the construction of discourse will take place after further definition of discourses.

Another attempt at definition comes from Michel Foucault, whose theorizing situated itself in discussions of power in society. In *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), he defines discourse as 'the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualisable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements' (p. 80). The 'general domain of all statements' can be seen as the broader aspect of the definition and relate to acts of discourse which hold meaning, before discussion of narrowing the scope of the definition to individualisable groups of statements. Discourses which fall under the concept of the individualisable may include discourses of gender or race. Further in his definition is the notion of 'regulated practices', these involve both the written and unwritten rules and the social structures which govern discourses in a similar vein to the way in which Fairclough's theorizes discourse. Mills (2003) suggests an example of Foucault's ideas with her reference to what she sees as the unsaid conventions of essay writing (p. 53). Noting in her view that there is no outright formal outline to codify exactly what is an 'Essay', students who either had access to a version of an essay format or proceeded without, still both manage to produce work which one would identify as being in an essay format.

One could also include the structure of football commentary under this definition, with no singular method of delivery existing for commentators, the delivery of commentary can be said to fit into a recognizable norm, with individual variances in style of delivery. Such thought links closely with Hall's (2001) encoding frameworks, with a recognizable norm showing parallels to the notion of a dominant encoding. Foucault's later definition in *The Order of Discourse* (1981) revolves around the notion of exclusion and its influence on discourses. He suggests a departure from thinking of discourse as statements which have coherence and instead to focus on the practices which keep statements in circulation and the practices which keep other statements excluded from circulation (Mills 2003 p. 54). Placing this in a footballing context one would refer to the practices employed in commentary, punditry and who is selected to provide it, all of which will undergo further analysis later in the chapter.

Departing from a direct discussion of discourse, the study of semiotics provides an internal analysis of discourses and the signs or meanings within things of interest, specifically signs and meanings within statements comprising the commentary being analysed in this study. Roland Barthes, a semiotician focused on bourgeois cultural signs, utilised several concepts for identifying aspects of signs and analysing them. Before Barthes' analysis of signs, one must discuss the origins of signs as a concept. A sign can take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects (Chandler 2007 p. 2) and the term was conceptualised by Saussure in *Course in General Linguistics* to mean a combination of both the 'signifier' and the 'signified' (2011). One would deem the signifier in a sign to be the words or speech itself and the signified as being the idea which is carried via the signifier (Rivkin and Ryan 2017). Within work on photography, the term 'referent' also became useful for Barthes, referent being that which is represented by the photograph (Barthes 1984). In the context of this study, the live match taking place on viewer's TVs would take the form of the referent.

Alongside these definitions of signs, the definitions of denotation and connotation are required before discussion of how the terms interact. First, the idea of denotation is seen as the most literal meaning of a sign or statement (Cobley and Jansz 2010) however the concept of denotation has come under scrutiny and will be further critiqued. Second is the idea of connotation which can refer to the 'socio-cultural and personal associations' which accompany and provide meaning to the sign outside the denotive (Chandler 2007 p. 138). The critique surrounding denotation as a concept relates to the definitions suggesting that it refers to signs which 'all viewers' would recognise as the literal meaning (Panofsky 1970 cited in Chandler 2007). Firstly, the suggestion of all viewers is doubted through asking if children would recognise the same apparently denotive signs as adults might. The critique provided by Chandler goes on to state that if cultural adjustment is needed, through for example education, as children grow into adults then you are already stepping into the realm of connotation as the aforementioned socio-cultural knowledge is now included. However, this situation can be resolved with a further analysis of the processes surrounding how denotation and connotation interact followed by a footballing example. One such analysis came from Barthes' suggestion that connotations can produce the illusion of denotation (1984 p. 9). Expanding upon

this, denotation can be seen as a ‘naturalising process’ of connotations. This process has been said to lead to the illusion of a literal and universal meaning of what once was a connotation (Chandler 2007 p. 138).

Another pair of studies come from Voloshinov and Silverman, where Silverman states that upon a person’s first learning of what are considered denotations, they are already being positioned in an ideology by what have become the dominant connotations in the culture (1983 p. 30). Voloshinov’s contribution to this argument asserts that even in the process of evaluation, there is first a value judgement, aligning with the works of the prior mentioned German scholars, Windelband and Rickert (1973 p. 105). With these critiques, denotation has been used less to assert an all-reaching meaning and more as the meaning which holds a broader consensus amongst those of a culture. This leads us to the views of Fiske (2010) who includes the idea of dominant and authoritative codes to his assessment of denotation and warns that one can see connotative values as denotative facts, this view being key to the issues involved in this study.

Returning to Barthes, the combination of the terms sign, denotation and connotation in Barthes’ analysis in *Mythologies* (1957 p.224) underpins his conceptualisation. In his first order of signification there is the combination of the signifier and the signified to produce the sign, a contextual example for this study would be the often used, physically descriptive phrase ‘*he used his pace and power*’ when referring to black athletes. The signifiers are the pace and the power in the sentence which evoke a denotive image of speed, strength and physical prowess for the listener. Barthes elaborates upon this first order of signification with a second order of signification where the sign provided in the first order, the pace and power evoking images of speed and strength becomes the signifier in this new second connotive order. With the speed and strength of the black athlete established by the commentator, the signified idea forms from a combination of factors. These can include the absence of mental description and a longstanding stereotype of black natural physicality, both seen in the literature review. The combination of the signifiers of speed and strength, the absence of other mental description and additional embedded stereotypes serve to create and perpetuate a connotive sign in the shape of a ‘Myth’ of black physicality.

The concept of 'Myth' in semiotics is seen as things which help people to make sense of their experiences in the culture through a shared way of conceptualising and Barthes further argues that Myths are not simply a collection of or a strong form of connotation but are an expression of ideological narratives, specifically the dominant ideologies of the time (1957 p. 124). This particular view resonates through the racial biases present in football and its commentary, with studies into commentary, priorly referred to in the literature review, revealing that the Myths still remain, and help to form racial ideologies at the extreme, throughout the decades despite wide ranging efforts to combat racism in sports (Rainville and McCormick 1977; McCarthy and Jones 1997; Billington 2018). Further in his assessment of myth, Barthes states that myths serve the ideological function of naturalising the cultural and make the cultural seem natural, normal and common sense (1974 cited in Chandler 2007), a view echoed again in the body of studies conducted into commentary. An important note made regarding these semiotic processes is that as a researcher, you are often a member of the culture you are researching. With this revelation, one must attempt to be reflexive in their own views when providing an analysis of values which they may hold.

Shifting focus within the field of semiotics, the concept of codes applies significantly in this study. A code can be defined as a set of practices that are familiar to users of the medium - for this study, commentators and football audiences - operating in a broad cultural framework and in the realm of codes and discourse, Hall contends that 'there is no intelligible discourse without the operation of a code' (Hall 1973 cited in Chandler 2007 p. 148). As mentioned in the literature review, the dual concept of encoding and decoding is directly applicable to both the delivery (encoding) of football commentary and the reception (decoding) of football commentary by the audience (Hall 2001) and will feature in the discourse analysis research design.

Returning to the discussion of discourses, the Foucauldian conceptualisation of discourses leans toward a discussion of power relations and in turn has naturally found itself utilised in Marxist theory (Mills 2003 p. 54). However, as per the prior referenced work of Windelband, the usage of one narrow perspective does not serve to illuminate as much of the picture as a combined, wider perspective. Foucault's

(1978) views also concur with this line of thinking with his suggestion that discourses are indeed a means through which those in power can oppress, but one must not hold this view alone because discourses are also the means through which one can resist power and dominant discourses. Another Foucauldian view surrounds the confines that discourse can create, he suggests that discursive practices involve a 'delimitation of a field of objects, definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge and of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories' (Foucault 1980 p. 199).

Elaborating on this in the context of the study, media practices when arranging the delivery of commentary and who is allowed to deliver commentary evidence the existence of these practices. These media practices involve selecting only those with culturally legitimate knowledge, namely career and ex-professional commentators, providing the commentary as studied by Keene and Cummins (2009) noted in the review of literature. Further along this line of thinking, Foucault suggests the existence of 'rituals' before, during and after discourses which naturally exist alongside the content of the discourse (1971). Much like the abovementioned conventions when writing essays, rituals in football commentary become commonplace with commentators old and new delivering their commentary in a more or less standard format, examples being players named only by surname in-play and the more recent addition of the anti-racism messages heard in conjunction with the kneeling of the players prior to the referee commencing the game. The act of kneeling, and the positive commentator reinforcement of the act of kneeling, can be seen as Foucauldian resistance through discourse in action with those involved regaining power over the discourses to assert positive messages and resist oppressive discourse.

In addition to rituals, Foucault asserts the existence of several external and internal factors which affect who and what can contribute to and be the subject of discourses. His external factors include taboos, the mad/sane and finally the distinction between truth and falsehood (Mills 2003 p. 57-58). The first two factors are less applicable to football commentary while the third external factor plays a key role in the discourses surrounding reinforcement of racial bias in commentary. Foucault's expansion of his theory focuses on those who are considered 'experts'

with those considered as such being ones who speak truth and those who are not in a position of expertise or power, are deemed not (Foucault cited in Young 1981). With the methods of media production not allowing lay persons to commentate on matches and the formula of having a media career commentator alongside one or two ex-professional expert commentators set firmly in stone, the discourses being produced can be seen in the Foucauldian style as being entrenched, exhibiting a power structure in place and in turn being afforded expert legitimacy and therefore, truthfulness. This has undergone erosion in the era of social media with lay persons being afforded a medium through which they can challenge expert discourses. However, the structure of commentary and status of ex-professional commentators still holds significant weight in the production and steering of discourses.

Moving on to Foucault's internal factors affecting discourses, the four indicated by him are that of the author, the discipline, commentary and the rarefaction of the subject. Again, not all apply to football commentating, but two of the four can apply to it. The Foucauldian concept of commentary and the notion of rarefaction. Firstly, one must define what Foucault deems commentary and what a commentary in/on commentating can entail. In 'The Order of Discourse' (1981) the idea of commentary relates to how something is spoken about, contextualised this would be the discourses coming from commentators who analyse the football match taking place and then pundits providing mid-match and post-match analysis in the studio. The act of commenting is therefore seen as a manifestation of mastery of the initial action, namely the football taking place. This ties in with the prior principle of truth and in-turn the legitimacy of the commentator and their discourse. A 'good' or discursively 'accurate' analysis from the commentator and pundit confirms their expert status and reinforces the messages in their analysis.

Secondly, Foucault's rarefaction can be seen as the internal companion to the external concept of what discourses get to be considered true or false. Foucault's rarefaction is defined as the limitations which are placed on who can speak as an authority on a subject (1981), namely a commentator speaking on a football match. This is the actioning of the media process of who gets deemed to be an authority and who therefore occupies the role in which one can dispense discourses which get seen as true. A gantry containing lay persons delivering play by play commentary

and a studio full of equivalent lay persons without expert status would provide different discourses and be received by an audience differently to those who have legitimacy bestowed upon them. In the contextualisation of Foucault's concepts to modern day sports broadcasts, the increased diversification of who is involved in the delivery of commentary and punditry with more non-white and female ex-professional and managers offers additional avenues of enquiry, Emma Hayes, Alex Scott, Micah Richards and Ashley Williams being a few notable examples of the diversification. Further innovation on the existing body of research into commentary provided by different demographics is in order and will be outlined in the discourse analysis research design.

Finally, a discussion of Foucault's work on the body and the discourses surrounding the body is key to developing themes in a study on racial biases in football. Many prior studies all note the physical focus on the body of black athletes as stated in the review of literature and this can be assessed in a Foucauldian lens. His analysis of the ideal figure of a soldier in *Discipline and Punish* (1991) can have applications in multiple fields, for this study its application is on that of the ideal type of a footballer. Referenced are several military accounts of what a soldier's appearance, manner and so forth should comprise of (p. 135-136) and these forms of manipulating bodies, and the way bodies are thought of, are the ways in which power and discourses are established.

Applied in a footballing context, the nature of the game itself renders it beneficial, amongst other factors, to have greater strength and speed than your opponent in order to achieve victory. The comparisons between football, warfare and the military are manifold: tactics, formations, attack and defence, captains and numerous other factors link the two and discourses praising physical capability are seen in both also. The abovementioned military ordinances and regulations are a source of discourse for soldier's bodies while commentary and punditry are a source of discourse for footballer's bodies. As has been seen in the literature on football, the positive recognition and discourse on black athletic bodies has numerous knock-on effects beyond the immediate praise during the fixture.

Stereotypes of black athleticism being natural (Murrell and Curtis 1994) and assumption that athletic ability in turn means a lack of mental ability (Sailes 1993)

are both examples of wider connotation. Notably, discourses around black bodies have been studied by Leonard (2009) in relation to commodification. The above ideas of what a black body is, and what it should be, have been tailored in conjunction with sporting expectations and media expectations. Leonard notes, 'the racialized representation of these media spectacles demonstrates the clear ways in which commodity sports culture uses and abuses racialized representations of blackness, all of which emphasize hypersexuality, physicality, and superhuman strength' (p. 186). In the analysis of the discourse in the studied commentary, the nature and description of the body in the commentary will undergo discussion in relation to the discourses involved.

Expanding upon the direct look into discourse from Foucault's perspective, a return to Fairclough's ideas of discourse serves to refocus the lens on discourses towards that of discussing the extent to which discourses construct or re-construct ideas. Firstly, one must consider the degree to which institutions and habitus affect the construction/re-construction process. Briefly defined here, a person's habitus is seen as their dispositions and stances which can become resistant to change (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992 cited in Fairclough 2013). Habitus as a concept will undergo greater analysis in the subsequent structure/agency section. Fairclough reasons that the relative permanences of institutions create internal rigidities which result in resistance to changes, specifically cultural and discursive changes (2013 p. 444). Applied to football commentary, this would encompass the commentary roles, punditry and the methods of production which have remained relatively undisturbed for numerous years. Secondly, the habitus is seen by Fairclough as an additional site of resistance with discourses in a rigid institution with those with rigid habituses will in turn be both difficult to break and be quick to re-construct existing discourse. He concludes in stating that the socially constructive effects of discourse are highly contingent on the resistances faced at the institutional and habitual levels (p. 444). Adjacent to these notions, the concept of White Habitus attributes these rigidities to potentially segregated lifestyles that result in positive dispositions towards white people and negative dispositions towards black people (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006). This initial view on the extent to which institutional structure and individual agency combine with or oppose each other will be discussed to a greater extent in the following section.

Structure/Agency: Usage and Relevance

Modern approaches towards a sociological understanding of issues has taken the form of a ranging application of the structural constraint or the individual's agency be it on a societal or individual level. In this section, each theorist's views have been taken into account for their applicability to this particular study and the field of football/sport research. Their views will be assessed and utilised at appropriate stages of the discussion. First among the selected theorists is Alfred Schutz with his usage of two concepts: Lifeworld and Typification, and its associated aspect, Stereotypification. The first concept of the lifeworld can be described as one's experience of everyday life and their worldly routine (Calhoun et al. 2012) and the recently coined term 'lived experience' would find itself near synonymous with it. Within one's lifeworld, Schutz further distinguished people's typifications. Giddens describes these as being 'the ways in which experienced phenomena are classified according to previous experience' (2021 p. 86). Schutz's ideas surrounding typification were selected due to their applicability to this study as many typifications exist in football regarding players, managers, tactics. Players described as 'number 10s', 'ball playing centre backs', 'target men' and the list goes on. His further expansion into Stereotypification also features heavily, stereotypifications are distinguished from typifications by their use for describing groups of people in typical ways rather than reserving a description of an individual for that individual alone. Researched examples would be stereotypes around strength and black players.

While Schutz's theories took a more agency leaning approach, Norbert Elias looked to combine and potentially even eliminate the structure agency divide with his work on Figural Sociology. Elias was not an advocate of the dichotomy and went so far as to suggest that it is unhelpful and inaccurate and that the terms present the impression that structures and individuals are cut off from each other (Elias et al. 1978). Figurations in his work involved initially setting out what exactly a figuration is: 'people in networks and/or relations of interdependence' (Giddens and Sutton 2021 p. 97). With this established from the outset, Elias' figurations are all part of a long-term continuous process which contributes to the creation of what is considered society. The example of table etiquette in *The Civilizing Process* (1978) exemplifies the need to consider the continuous process as observing the

establishment and evolution of things such as etiquette, or football commentary for this study, one can see where practices appeared and if they undergo change or remain entrenched and unchanged. One need only look to the vast body of research into racism in football to identify what has changed and what has remained unchanged.

Third amongst the theorists addressing structure and agency is Anthony Giddens with his writings on Structuration Theory (Giddens 1984). It is formulated from the premise of the structuring activity of the actions of individuals (Giddens and Sutton 2021). Within the concept of structuring activity, there is the suggestion that people actively make and remake social structure. Giddens exemplifies his thinking with reference to the monetary system (p. 98), stating that an individual utilising money is a contribution that is minor yet essential to the structure of the wider economy. In his effort to demonstrate a deviation from the structure, the notion that if all or a significant number of individuals were to decide to stop using money, then the monetary system/structure as a whole would collapse. Leading from this, the concept of structuration itself revolves around a structure and action (agency) relation where society has structure if those in it act in reasonably regular and predictable ways and on the other hand, action is possible due to existence in a society which has a vast amount of socially structured knowledge to provide the individual. Giddens refers to language as his example with the structure of language existing for centuries and actors remaking to in predictable ways by following said structure when speaking it (p. 98). In a context for this study, one could suggest TV commentary as having become structured, with commentators acting in relatively predictable ways when commentating in order to make and remake the structure of commentary.

Within such a structure, Feagin's Systemic Racism Theory (SRT) posits that at the institutional level, racism is at first instilled foundationally into the workings of organizations (Feagin 2013). Such an approach, when contextualized to football commentary and the changing demographics around the delivery of commentary, allows for the unpacking of how Feagin's theories apply to the discourses in football commentary as opposed to the institution itself. One can consider the body of commentary as being institutional when analysing the discourses within it.

Furthermore, Feagin's notion of the White Racial Frame (WRF) asserts that there exists 'an overarching white worldview that encompasses a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, images, interpretations, narratives, emotions, and reactions to language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate' (Bracey et al. 2017 p. 44). These notions allow for the commentary to be unpacked in relation to the assertion that whiteness is seen as the benchmark in the commentary, by which all others are measured and often racialized physically (Rodriguez 1998).

The final theorist chosen is Pierre Bourdieu, his ideas share some similarities to the abovementioned theorists when conceptualising how he sees the social world. Two terms chosen from his work by Cashmore and Dixon (2016) for their work on football are Field and Habitus. In their discussion of fan racism (p.75) a Field was described as 'a structured system of social positions occupied by either individuals or institutions engaged in the same activity (Cashmore and Dixon 2016) and a Habitus was described as 'an embodied series of internalised dispositions, perceptions, tastes, habits, rules and expressions' (p.75). These terms are already being applied in a footballing context by Cashmore and Dixon and can therefore be easily applied again in a slightly different area within the sport.

The 'Field' of sports commentary can be accurately assessed with the concept through inspection of the defined roles for match commentators, pundits and so on. Habitus can also be easily translated from the fan context to a commentary context, the mentioned internalised factors which consist of one's Habitus can be said to exist in the commentary of football matches through the backgrounds and experiences of the commentators themselves, whether or not they are from a media or ex-professional background or the level of success or experience they have all will influence their Habitus. Branching off from this line of thought, one can include Bourdieu's concept of Capital, which is broken down into Social, Cultural and Economic Capital (Giddens and Sutton 2021 p. 648). Contextualised to the Habitus of the commentator, their capital through their standing in the footballing world can have an effect on their own viewpoint during commentary. A high cultural capital, from being at the pinnacle of the game during a playing career, could

produce a different form of commentary to that of a lesser ex-professional as an example.

These chosen theorists and their approaches outline a number of ways that the structure agency issue can be leant closer to structure, closer to agency and, in the case of Elias, attempted to be bypassed with figurational thinking. As with the prior thinking of Windelband and Weber, these approaches will all be utilised in the study when appropriate rather than deferring to only one of these theoretical approaches to present a 'truer picture' as Windelband viewed it (Morrison 2006 p. 259).

RESEARCH DESIGN

English Premier League and Euro Commentary Content Analysis

The initial analysis of the commentary from the 2021/22 Premier League season and from Euro 2020 takes the form of a content analysis. This methods section will provide the definitions of content analysis which have informed the study, followed by an overview of the procedure for the analysis, and will conclude with the basis and justifications for the content analysis and the chosen procedures.

One can define content analysis as ‘the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics’ (Neuendorf 2017 p. 1). A further definition from Smith (2000) views content analysis as a technique for extracting information from [verbal] material by identifying characteristics of the material in a systematic and objective way. The two above definitions take precedence for this study however a third from Holsti and Stone (1966) provides a further observation, they outline content analysis as being ‘a research technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics in a text (p.5). This definition is critiqued by Krippendorff (2018) based upon the definitions’ absence of stating how the inferences made in the study will relate to other phenomena (p. 23). This suggestion therefore contends that the results of content analyses need to be related to external contexts. For this study, this critique forms part of the rationale for selecting a discourse analysis to accompany the content analysis in order to provide wider contextualisation.

Procedure

Building upon prior study into domestic league commentary (Rainville and McCormick 1977; McCarthy and Jones 1997; McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003), the content analysis is designed to assess the similarities and the differences between both domestic and international commentary. An a priori hypothesis based upon the existing body of literature was established, and the hypothesis states the belief that there will be *‘a negligible difference in the percentages of positive physical*

descriptors describing black players between the sampled domestic and international commentary'. Using this hypothesis as a benchmark, findings that support it and differ from it can form the backbone of the analysis.

The sampling process was hindered by the postponement of the Euro 2020 competition to summer 2021 where purposive sampling was to be utilised in order to acquire commentary on key players who play in both the Premier League and European national teams, players such as Raheem Sterling (*Manchester City/Chelsea and England*), Romelu Lukaku (*Chelsea/Inter Milan and Belgium*), Harry Kane (*Tottenham Hotspur and England*) and Adama Traore (*Wolves/Barcelona and Spain*) being notable selections at the time. Further to this, it emerged during the Premier League season that a further two notable players would need to undergo sampling. The joint golden boot winners Mohammed Salah and Heung-Min Son received significant coverage and do not fit into the procedural categories. A case study on both players has been added to elucidate the types of discourses on each player. Due to said time constraints in the period of study caused by the postponement of Euro 2020, convenience sampling was utilised to audio record 60 total hours of football commentary split between 30 hours of the 2021/22 Premier League season and 30 hours of Euro 2020 football. The matches were audio recorded from the commencement of commentating in the moments before kick-off until the full-time whistle.

The content analysis procedure was adapted from the commentator study of McCarthy, Jones and Potrac (2003), with descriptors being given one value and the frequency recorded initially into three tabular categories: 1) player performance, 2) mental characteristics and 3) physical characteristics. Each of the three categories is divided into a positive and a negative column to further analyse the percentage skew towards praise or criticism in the remarks. Prior studies have noted the difficulty in providing a rigidly defined, a priori codebook and have instead utilised a twofold method of achieving intersubjectivity, this being the endeavour to achieve an agreement on what is believed to be true (Babbie cited in Neuendorf 2017). In those studies, first, a selection of anticipated phrases for each of the data categories was compiled and second, an inter-researcher consensus was sought between the three researchers when a piece of commentary could be seen as applicable to

multiple categories (McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003 p. 223). As an inter-researcher consensus is not applicable for this study, a selection of anticipated phrases will be utilised.

The list of anticipated phrases for this study is split sixfold amongst the positive and negative sub-categories of the three performance, mental and physical categories. Firstly, anticipated remarks relating to positive performance would include 'he's having a good game', 'excellent piece of play' and 'superb football from him' while negative remarks are anticipated to consist of 'he's having an off day', 'hasn't had an effect on the game' and 'really poor play from him'. In the physical category, commentary relating to players bodies, speed and/or strength will be noted. Positive physical commentary may include 'he's shown his pace and power', 'great turn of pace' and 'he's a great shielder of the ball'. Negative physical remarks may involve commentary such as 'he's been knocked off the ball', 'really slow off the mark' and 'he's weak in the tackle'. Finally, the mental category of commentary will involve remarks relating to skilful actions and reference to players' minds. Examples of positive mental statements will include 'excellent vision from him', 'great anticipation off the ball' and 'an intelligent reading of the game'. Concluding the anticipated commentary, the negative mental commentary will involve comments such as 'no concentration from him', 'he's lost his head there' and 'poor understanding of the game'. These anticipated coding remarks are placed in tabular format below.

Table 1: Anticipated Phrases:

	Positive Remarks	Negative Remarks
Performance Remarks	'he's having a good game' 'excellent piece of play' 'superb football from him'	'he's having an off day' 'hasn't had an effect on the game' 'really poor play from him'
Physical Remarks	'he's shown his pace and power' 'great turn of pace' 'he's a great shielder of the ball'	'he's been knocked off the ball' 'really slow off the mark' 'he's weak in the tackle'
Mental Remarks	'excellent vision from him' 'great anticipation off the ball' 'an intelligent reading of the game'	'no concentration from him' 'he's lost his head there' 'poor understanding of the game'

Procedural Justifications and Rationale

This section provides the rationales, limitations and justifications for the above-outlined content analysis design. Firstly, it has been noted that many studies which utilise content analysis omit one or more key methodological requirements in the development of the procedure (Neuendorf 2017 p. 8). Neuendorf's examination of 133 media content analysis studies identified a limited use of: reliability assessment, no indication of coder training or familiarity with the field, no establishment of a hypothesis and finally an absence of sampling rationale.

Beginning with reliability, it is defined as the extent to which the research design, and the data resulting from it, represent the content rather than the circumstances of data collection, any idiosyncrasies of the analyst or any biases in the procedure (Krippendorff 2018 p. 129). Krippendorff offers three reliability designs to address the issue: Stability, Reproducibility and Accuracy. Stability is the

‘degree to which a process is unchanging over time’, this undergoes application when the researcher repeats a research design and compares the data sets to identify changes or inconsistencies (p. 130). Reproducibility refers to the use of different coders under different circumstances to assess inter-coder reliability when comparing the data sets, this involves the establishment of a consensus between the coders and has been evidenced in the procedures of prior commentary content analyses (McCarthy and Jones 1997; McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003). Accuracy is deemed the strongest form of reliability and involves the establishment of an expert standard by which coder’s compare their data sets. The qualitative nature of sports commentary renders an establishment of a ‘correct’ measure impossible. Due to this study being individual, a reproducibility design was not possible where inter-coder reliability would be utilised. Therefore, intra-coder reliability was necessary with reference to both the Premier League and Euros data sets providing a test-retest stability for the research design.

Coder training again is limited by the individual nature of the study, coder training and familiarity with the field of study relates only to the researcher. Reflexivity in the reporting of the data set is required to outline the decision-making processes taking place due to, as stated above, consensus not being able to be sought with additional researchers. Coder familiarity with the field is addressed with the prior review of literature. The issues seen by Neuendorf regarding the establishment of hypothesis are plainly navigated with the above stated, a priori establishment of a hypothesis based upon the body of research into sport commentary. The sampling for the study was also referred to in the above research design and due to Covid-19 postponement of the Euros and the postponement and rearrangement of Premier League fixtures, the purposive sampling method that was initially chosen was replaced with convenience sampling due to time-based restrictions.

The decision to utilise content analysis revolves around the principles of approaching research which were discussed in the theoretical section at the start of the methodology. The principle of triangulation, seen as utilising more than one method of analysis to achieve a greater understanding, is key to the two parts of the study and will be further clarified in the following discourse analysis section. Applied here to the content analysis, Fink’s (2009) discussion of measures revolves around

the use of counts and amounts to allow for precision when attempting to relate data to a hypothesis in a hypothetico-deductive model (p. 390). As this part of the study involves both the quantitative use of counts and involves the study of a qualitative spoken media, Neuendorf's insights into the quantification of forms of qualitative media are key. They state that one can 'distinguish between the quantitative nature of the analysis and the qualitative attributes of the phenomenon under examination.' (p. 21). The usage of quantitative methods to discern information about a qualitative medium serves to provide the more encompassing, wider aspect of the triangulated insight. As noted by Neuendorf, 'the content analysis uses a broader brush and is typically more generalisable. As such, it is also typically less in-depth and less detailed.' (p. 22). This leads into the research design for the discourse analysis section, which provides the more in-depth and more detailed angle of the triangulation approach.

EPL and Euro Commentary Discourse and Semiotic Analysis

Following the initial content analysis of the commentary from the 2021/22 Premier League season and from Euro 2020, this section will provide the definitions of discourse analysis which have informed the study, followed by a contextualisation of media discourses and procedural outline for the analysis of the discourses to provide more in-depth discursive insight in conjunction with the wider reaching content analysis.

Firstly, Gunter (2000) identifies Discourse Analysis as being an aspect of semiotics used 'to assess the meaning of language in terms of its implicit ideological assumptions' (p. 87). Gunter makes reference to the discourse analytical approach of van Dijk (1991) who states a definition that asserts his particular brand of discourse analysis as being an 'approach to the study of language use and communication in their socio-cultural contexts' (p. 44). Consistent across both definitions is the analysis of language situated in a context, and for this study that context is football commentary and punditry. In his above-referenced study *Racism in the Press*, van Dijk opens with a contextualisation of his approach referring to the increasing subtleness and indirect biases in both the public and media discourse, a characteristic that is shared by the discourses seen in and around football in the

footballing literature and in commentary studies. This study shares the same aim to answer the question, through the use of discourse analysis, of 'how exactly the press (commentary for this study) is involved in the continuity of the system of racism' (van Dijk 1991 p. x preface).

In the realm of the analytical approach, van Dijk notes that content analysis is useful in discerning the prevalence and distribution of a phenomenon while the analytical approach towards discourses requires a more incisive qualitative approach. He elaborates that this differentiation resides in the aim of the discourse analysis to elucidate the 'discursive mechanisms involved in the reproduction of ethnic prejudices and racism' (p. x). The ways in which the approach serves to examine these processes is threefold: Structural Analysis, Contextual Analysis followed by an analysis of the semantic macro-structures in place in the discourses. The approaches are differentiated from a mass-communication approach by taking the content in its context, as football commentary, rather than as an 'unanalysed message' (van Dijk p. 44). Elaborating on the 'contextualising' of the discourse, this is the placing of the discourse in the social and cultural contexts and discussing how they influence the content and structures being displayed.

Procedure

The sampling process for the discourse analysis involves a twofold approach. Firstly, using recommendations from van Sterkenburg's et al.'s (2010) methods critique, which aims to improve content analysis methods with a more open and discursive approach, notable instances of commentary during audio recording which do not immediately fit into the three key categories of the content analysis will be taken note of and discussed at further length in the discourse analysis. This is done to ensure a more complete picture of the discourses as van Sterkenburg's critiques note that remaining too rigid in methodology and coding sees additional noteworthy discourses missed in the research. Secondly, the main content analysis categories form the backbone of the sample, and the content analysis audio recordings will be returned to in order to examine and extract excerpts of commentary which relate to said three main categories from the content analysis.

The additional usage of commentary phrases which do not fit the categories provides further analysis of any discourses which may slip through the net of the key categories as per van Sterkenburg's above critique and suggestions on improvement of methods. The sampling will be purposive to retrieve examples of commentary which can be ascribed to each of the three positive and three negative categorizations. Included will be a short case study on the joint golden boot winning players Heung Min Son and Mohammed Salah as they are prominent players in the Premier League and demographically will not feature in the data set otherwise, this will be done to assess any changes in discourse around them in comparison to the black and white discourses. Additionally, the inclusion of TTK commentary was undertaken in order to delineate the scope and reach of its message, understanding whether or not it's message remained solely on overt racisms or permeated covert discourses as well.

Following this, the analysis will be adapting van Dijk's *Racism in the Press* protocols for the analysis of football commentary as opposed to print media. First among the aspects of the structural analysis are the 'surface forms' of the discourse. This entails an analysis of the 'expressions' which contain underlying meaning, these expressions are categorized by van Dijk as 'speech acts' (p. 45). Example speech acts include assertions, questions, promises, threats and accusations and each contextual form of message can contain multiple types of said speech acts. For his analysis of the press, van Dijk refers to the assertive nature of a news report and the accusational nature that an editorial can take (p. 46). A contextualisation for this study on football would be the differing speech acts seen in the in-game commentary compared to the speech acts in the half time/full time punditry.

Second in the category of structural analysis is the 'superstructure'. This involves the abovementioned speech acts and expands into the way they are used over the course of the discourse. The discourse in commentary for example utilises speech acts in different ways to normal conversation would or a news article in van Dijk's study (p. 46). Analysis of the superstructure aids in the analysis of how the surface forms of discourse are placed in the whole or wider discourse to formulate a point and/or perpetuate biases and stereotypes.

The third aspect of structural analysis is the assessment of the rhetorical structures in the discourse, these include sounds in the form of alliterations and rhymes, individual sentence structures such as parallelisms and forms which express a particular meaning such as metaphors, understatements and ironies (van Dijk p. 47). These forms are seen by van Dijk as being aimed towards the reader's understanding of the thing being discussed and to 'enhance the effectiveness' of the discourse (p. 47). A prime example of this in the footballing literature would be the regular description of black athleticism as being 'pace and power'.

Finally, the fourth aspect of structural analysis is the interactional analysis, key to this is the concept of 'turns' in the discourse. Put simply it is the frequency of the turn taking in the discourses which will differ across the in-game commentary and the punditry due to the number of participants and the aim of the discourses taking place. Key to this is the 'strategic analysis' of the discourse (p. 47). This is seen as the optimisation of the speaker's turn to speak and how they communicate their point before it is another speaker's turn to agree or to counter their point. In a footballing context, the back and forth between pundits and presenter or the two co-commentators would entail different speech acts and different amounts of turn taking.

The second part of the discourse analysis takes place in the wake of the above set of structural analyses. The contextual analysis concerns the ways in which the structures are influenced by the prior knowledge at play and the encoding process taking place, entering the realm of Hall (2001). The contextual analysis assesses the prior knowledge and encoding through the analysis of the social contexts of those delivering the discourses. In the football setting, these contexts would include differentiating career commentators from former players, the demographical attributes of the actors involved including ethnicity, gender and age (van Dijk p. 48). Assessment of these factors aims to assist with identifying the origin of biased discourses and the extent to which they are associated with a particular group's discourses or are spread across multiple demographics.

With the analyses of both the structure and contexts of the discourse established, a topical analysis in the form of insight on the semantic macrostructure will assist directly with the assessment of one of the primary aims of this study,

clarifying how commentary distils more complex actions into a short and often incomplete description. Van Dijk notes that topics, in a Press context, 'represent what newsmakers construe to be the most important information about a news event' (1991 p. 71). This can be mirrored in the form of commentators discussing what they deem noteworthy during the play-by-play descriptions and then by pundits deciding what segments of the match deserve analysis and then how they decide to analyse it. An example provided by van Dijk to portray the phenomenon in action would be the act of taking a train journey and reducing it to that instead of stating that you had arrived at the station, bought a ticket, headed to the platform and then stood waiting before taking the train (p. 72).

In football, this would involve a commentator simply stating that a player 'used his pace and power' to beat a defender instead of stating that the player had anticipated a pass from a teammate, assessed the defender's position, timed his run to beat an offside trap, judged the weight of the pass and controlled the ball while holding the defender's tackle off. Acts which require as much brain power, anticipation and skill as physical power, yet are reduced only to the speed and strength of the player. The combination of the structural, contextual and semantic macrostructure analyses will aim to complement the initial content analysis with a deeper understanding of the discourses which are identified by their amount in the content analysis. Within the procedure of analysis, the theoretical perspectives outlined earlier in the methodology will all serve to supplement the understanding of the processes in the commentary, including analysis of the level of structure or agency affecting the discourse. This alongside analysis of the connotations and denotations appearing in the phrases and descriptions will serve to analyse the discourses from multiple directions to provide different possible viewpoints with the aim of a more complete analysis.

Results

QUANTITATIVE TABULAR RESULTS: PREMIER LEAGUE

Introduction

This section will unpack the quantitative results of the Premier League and the Euro 2020 analyses gathered from commentary and punditry during fixtures from each competition. This quantitative section of the study's results gives a wide-reaching insight into both the amount of and the extent to which dominant discourses and racial biases appear in each competition's commentary. This begins with the numerical data gathered on the Premier League followed by that of Euro 2020. The later qualitative sections will provide the deeper, more focused analysis of the discourses present in the commentary, with both sections combining to achieve a more detailed, triangulated approach to the issue than if either aspect was conducted separately. As per the demographic rationale in the methodology for selecting a black/white focus, a situational qualitative case study approach was chosen towards two key players, Heung-Min Son and Mohammed Salah. These players appear outside these demographics and the numerical data in this section focuses on the key categories seen in the research design and below in the tables. The later qualitative results section contains the case study commentary on Son and Salah.

In the buildup to Euro 2020, both the BBC and ITV released their presenting and punditry lineups in anticipation of the start of the tournament and in the context of this study, several key points were found. The BBC's presenting team and lead commentator roles comprised entirely of white presenters and career commentators, with two male and two female presenters followed by six male and two female career commentators. This is contrasted with ITV who featured one white male presenter and two female presenters of south Asian ethnicity. Where greater levels of diversity are seen is in the punditry and ex-professional commentator roles. The BBC employed 14 white males and eight black males in these roles with three white female and one black female pundits and ex-pro

commentators. ITV respectively employed 10 white male and five black male pundits alongside one white female and one black female pundits. Notably the entire ITV in-game commentary team was white and male across both the career and ex-professional roles (BBC 2021; ITV 2021). Further unpacking of the commentator demographics will take place in the contextual analysis section of the adapted van Dijk discourse analysis.

Tables 1 and 2 include the Premier League data (Table 1) and Euro 2020 data (Table 2) respectively. The three category columns (Player Performance/Physical Descriptors/Mental Descriptors) are divided into subsections that outline the total number of descriptors (Total) and the amount of each total that are negative or positive (-ve/+ve). The percentages of each category are also shown below the numerical count and display the skew of how positive and negative the commentator remarks are in each category. An example reading of the Player Performance data for Black Premier League players in Table 1 below would consist of: 322 total commentator remarks for Black Premier League players, with 107 remarks for negative performance and 215 remarks for positive performance resulting in a skew of 33% negative and 67% positive comments.

Premier League: Commentator Remarks

Table 2: Premier League Commentary/Punditry

PL	Player Performance			Physical Descriptors			Mental Descriptors		
	Total	-ve	+ve	Total	-ve	+ve	Total	-ve	+ve
Black	322	107	215	210	48	162	144	59	85
		(33%)	(67%)		(22%)	(78%)		(41%)	(59%)
White	417	149	268	132	49	83	211	94	117
		(36%)	(64%)		(38%)	(62%)		(45%)	(55%)

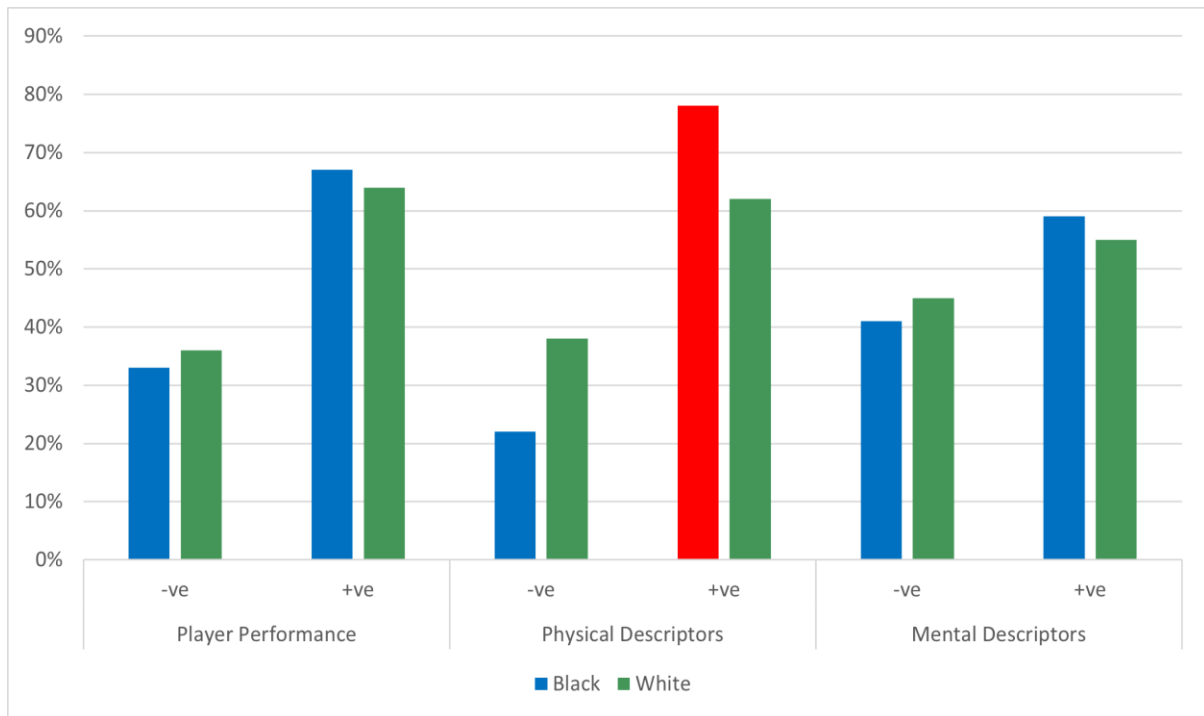
(30 hours duration)

Initial insights into the data show that the majority of comments made towards players, both Black and White, were performance related comments. This follows the similar trend from prior studies conducted over 30 years (McCarthy and Jones 1997; McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003; Billington 2018 and 2019) with all prior studies also identifying a majority performance-based set of commentary remarks. The significance of this lies with the notion that football commentary has

remained relatively consistent over a considerable span of time, with few major changes to the flow of and proportions of descriptors. It can also be noted that in no category did Black or White players receive more negative description than positive, a trend seen again in the above-referenced commentator studies.

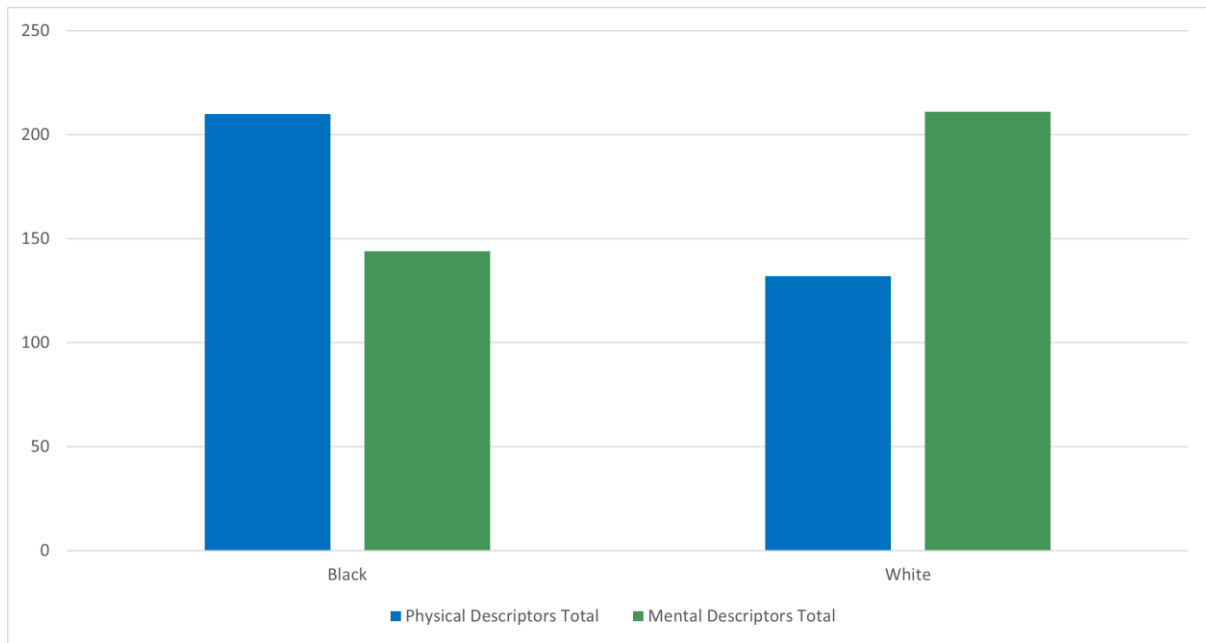
A statistic where differences do begin to appear between categories is the skew of the percentages of positive and negative comments. Firstly, both the player performance and mental descriptor categories show similar levels of positive skew with 67% of Black player performance descriptions being positive and 64% of White player performance descriptions being positive. This is seen alongside 59% positive Black player mental descriptions and 55% positive White player mental descriptions. Both sets of data differ by 3% and 4% respectively while notably, the physical descriptor data set difference vastly increases to a 16% difference with only 62% of White player physical descriptions being positive but a significantly higher 78% of Black player physical descriptions were seen. Graph 1 overleaf shows this percentage difference visually, with the largest percentage spike being signified with the red column displaying the positive physical description of black players, the percentage skews far higher than any other form of description. This substantial difference and positive skew towards Black physical description is not a new phenomenon in football discourses and has been widely noted in the literature including the abovementioned football-specific commentator studies.

Graph 1: Premier League Commentary Percentage Skew Graph



A further aspect of the data relates to the total numbers of Black and White physical and mental commentator remarks, the figures for each almost exactly mirror the inverse of the other with the total Black physical descriptors (210) and the total White mental descriptors (211) only differing by one. This is combined with a similar situation seen with the total Black mental descriptors (144) and the total White physical descriptors (132) mirroring each other with only a difference of twelve. This is visually represented in Graph 2 overleaf where the columns and figures portray an overall focus in the discourse on Black physical attributes and White mental attributes irrespective of any positive or negative skew that is noted in the above data and graph.

Graph 2: Total Number of Premier League Mental and Physical Descriptors



With the discourses divided between Black and White players this way, it illuminates the fact that despite further antiracism efforts in the form of the *No Room for Racism* campaign, the Black Lives Matter protests, and the acts of kneeling prior to kick-off in an attempt to bring focus toward racism and anti-racism efforts, the racial biases in commentator discourses have remained unseen, unrealised, and unchanged.

QUANTITATIVE TABULAR RESULTS: EURO 2020

Euro 2020: Commentator Remarks

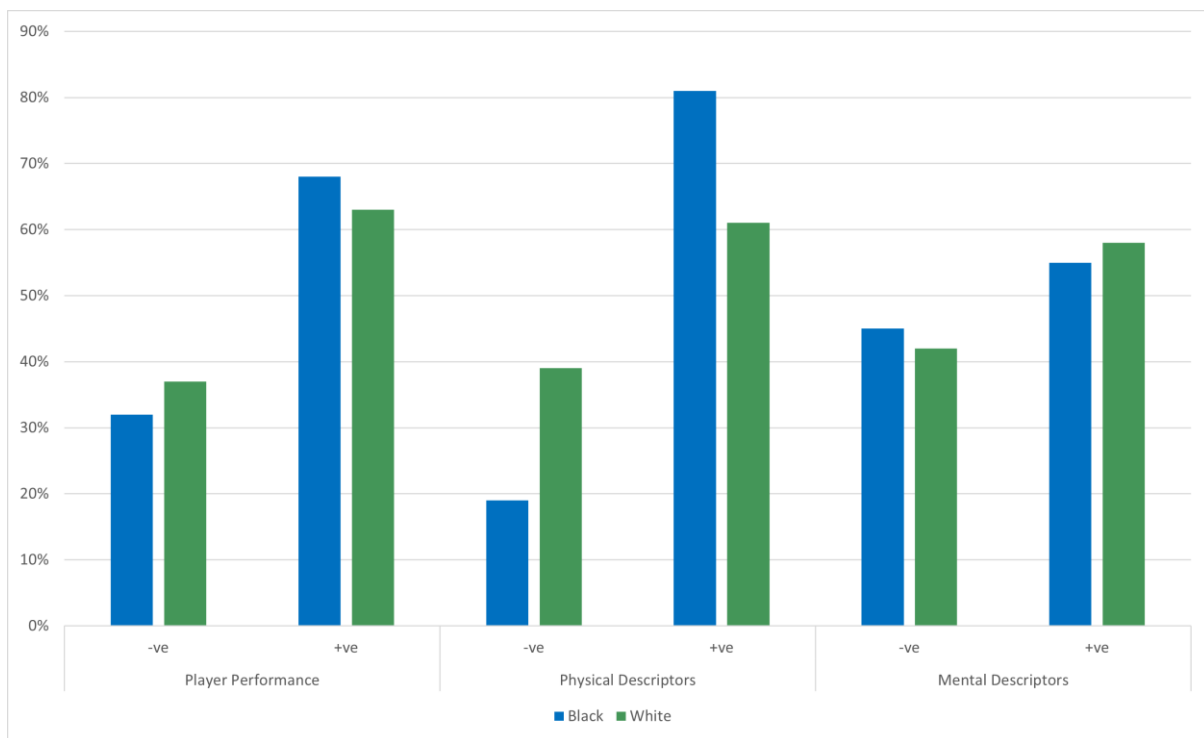
Table 3: Euro 2020 Commentary/Punditry

Euro 2020	Player Performance			Physical Descriptors			Mental Descriptors		
	Total	-ve	+ve	Total	-ve	+ve	Total	-ve	+ve
Black	132	42	90	94	18	76	58	26	32
		(32%)	(68%)		(19%)	(81%)		(45%)	(55%)
White	326	121	205	153	61	92	187	80	107
		(37%)	(63%)		(39%)	(61%)		(42%)	(58%)

(30 hours duration)

Similar statistical themes were evident in the Euro 2020 data with again the vast majority of comments being related to player performance and within each sub-category, there was again a universally positive skew in the percentages. Further to this, similar splits in percentage difference were seen again between Black and White player performance with 68% and 63% giving a 5% difference and mental descriptors and 55% and 58% giving a 3% difference. These evidence a relatively consistent intra-discourse between both the descriptors on Black and White players within the Euros commentary and a consistent inter-discourse between the Euros and the Premier League discourses as well. Looking at the physical descriptor percentages, there is another large skew in the same vein as the one seen in the Premier League data and prior studies. For this particular set of data there is an even further increase in percentage skew. Compared to the 16% skew of the Premier League dataset, a 20% skew difference in the physical description of Black players is seen with 81% of the Euros Black player physical comments being positive compared to only 61% being positive towards Euros White players. Graph 3 visualises the percentage skew for the Euros overleaf and allows for visual comparison with the representation of the Premier League's percentage skew data in Graph 1.

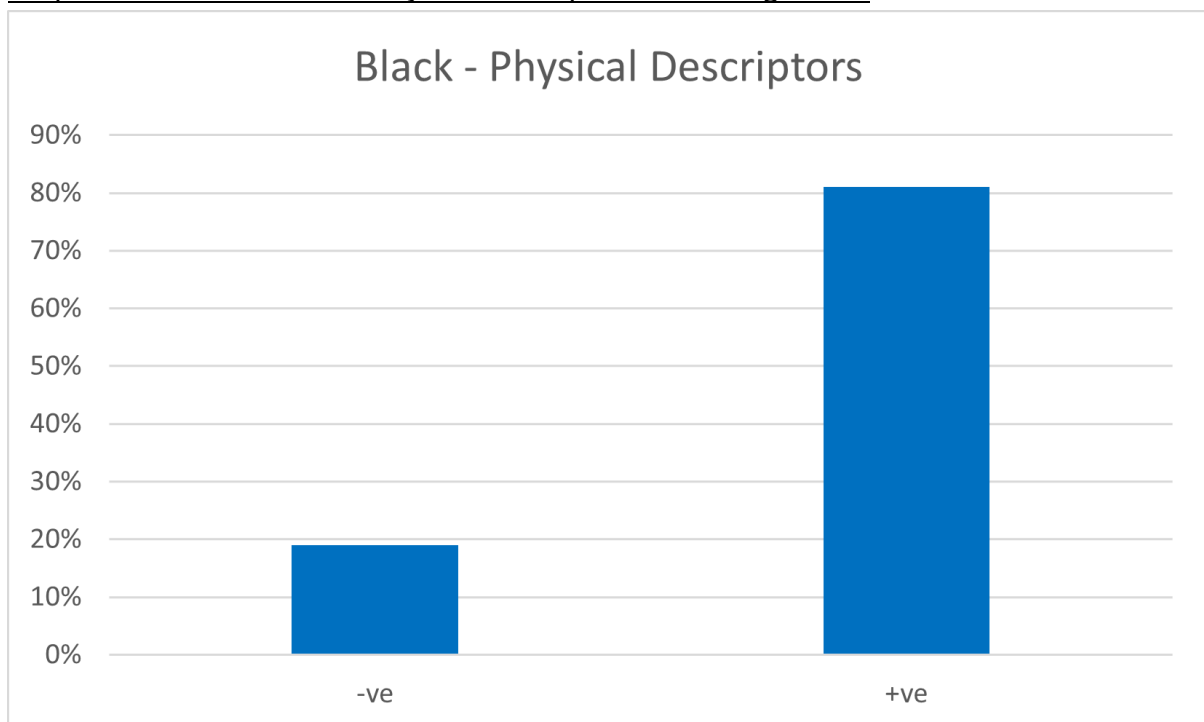
Graph 3: Euro 2020 Commentary Percentage Skew Graph



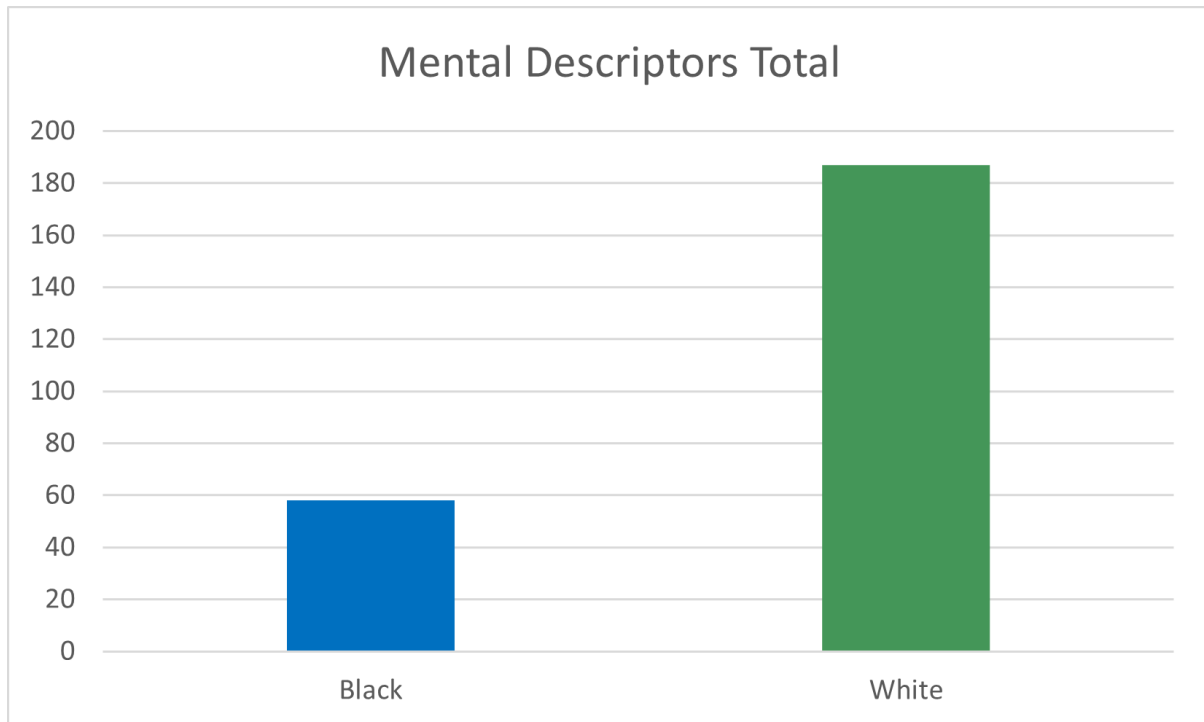
Notable differences across the Premier League and Euro data sets relate to the quantities of total remarks in each sub section. Firstly, the Premier League and Euro data sets for White players contain a similar number and spread of remarks in each of the subcategories with the largest proportion relating to performance (417 and 326 respectively) followed by the physical remarks showing a fewer number of instances (132 and 153) compared to instances of mental remarks (211 and 187). Secondly, consistencies begin to deviate within and between the Black player data sets. Due to the proportionally whiter demographics of the several Euro 2020 nations and their teams compared to Premier League squads, the total number of remarks relating to Black players in the Euros is much lower across all categories compared to the Black Premier League data. Further to this, the resulting spread of the data in the Euros meant that White player descriptions were more frequent in all categories. In the Premier League dataset, Black physical description as a whole (210) eclipsed the number of White physical descriptions (132) while White performance and mental description were following the same trend as the Euros with more White instances.

The relevance of these data comparisons between domestic and international football commentary can be seen threefold and advances the body of knowledge ahead of studies which are solely focused on only one competition. The first comparison relates to the higher frequency of physical description of Black players in the Premier League data. This aspect of the three aligns most closely with the established academic viewpoint on commentator discourse with the Black body being the focus of commentator above and beyond focus on either White bodies or Black minds. This is further exacerbated in the Euros by the significantly reduced number of Black mental comments in the Euros compared to both White mental comments and Black physical comments. Not only is there the high 81% skew towards positive physical description of Black players but there is also a simultaneous lack of mental description of Black players. Black players received stereotypical description in the Euros from both ends of the spectrum alongside there being 129 more instances of white mental description. Both of these factors, visualised in Graphs 4.1 below and 4.2 overleaf respectively, combine not only to continue to situate Black players in a physical discourse, but also diminish them in the mental discourse while simultaneously promoting White players in the mental discourse.

Graph 4.1: Euro 2020 Black Physical Description Percentage Skew



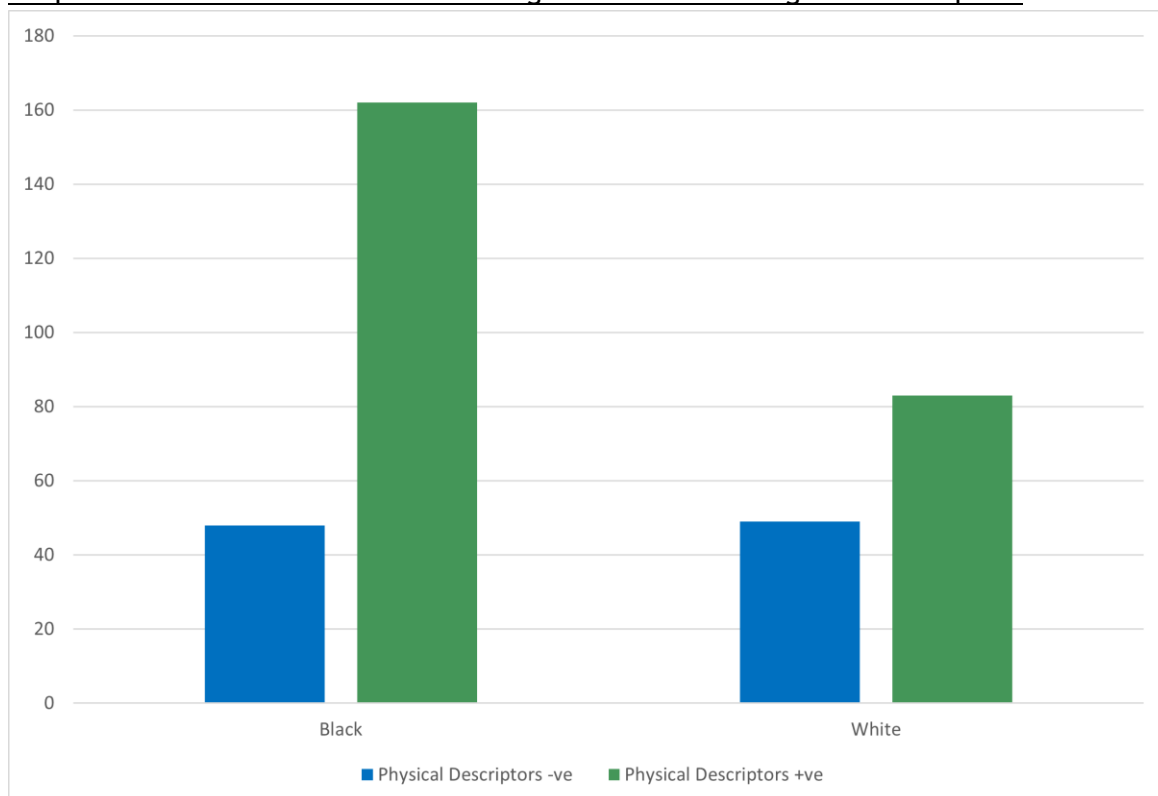
Graph 4.2: Total Numbers of Euro 2020 Black and White Mental Description



Secondly, relating to the frequency of total comments for each table section (in bold), the Euro 2020 data sets saw a higher total of white comments across all categories due to demographics of several teams at the Euros being all or majority white as stated above. However, what is consistent across both the Premier League data and the Euro 2020 data is that irrespective of positive or negative skew, references to black physicality and references to white mental characteristics were both higher than the respective black mental descriptions and white physical descriptions. With all the data sets showing varying degrees of positive skew, one can state that the focuses of the discourse across the Premier League and the Euros was one of describing black players in terms of physical characteristics and white players in terms of mental characteristics. As the point in the paragraph above notes, the discrepancies showing a significantly skewed black physical description combined with a reduced mental description in the Euros, the overall situation across both competitions still shows a concurrent skew towards black physical description and white mental description serving to situate the discourse again around black bodies and white minds even if skew is not taken into account.

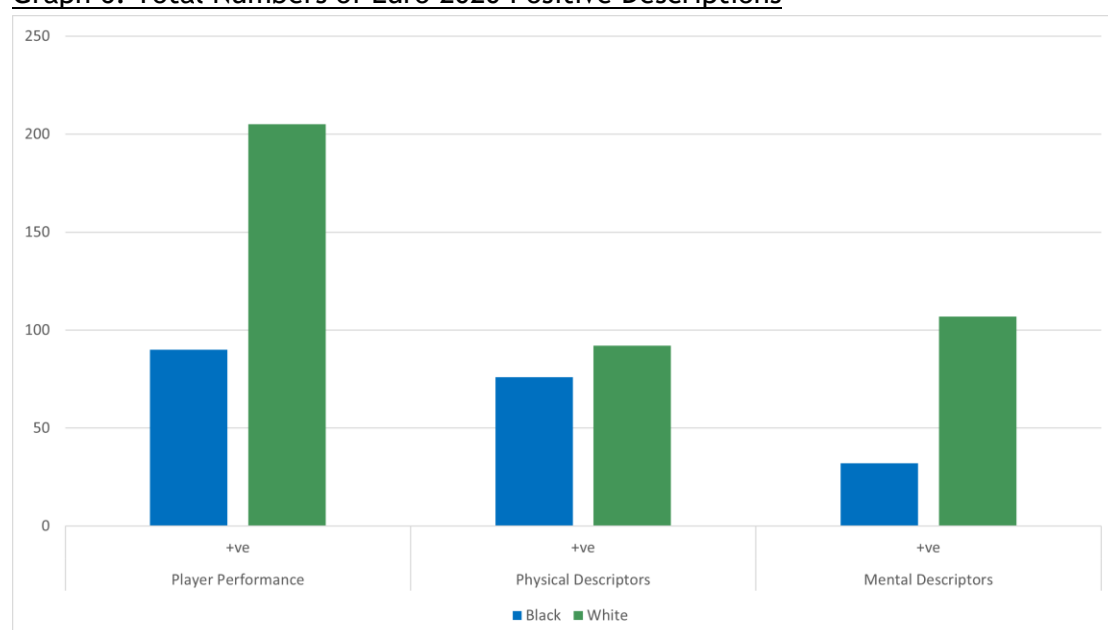
The overriding discourse across both competitions follows historically biased trends towards black bodies and white minds, with the Euros showing an especially biased situation. A comparative drought of black mental description exacerbates the disparity between black mental description and the copious black physical description. This numerical line of thought, rather than through percentages, leads into the third way in which the data expresses a bias. The physical descriptor data in the Premier League data set sees a comparable number of negative physical remarks for both black and white players with 48 and 49 respectively evidencing a relatively uniform approach to the negative representation of black and white player physicality or lack thereof in certain situations. Where the significant difference appears is in the positive description of physicality. It almost doubles for black players compared to the number noted for white players, with 163 instances of black player physical praise compared with only 83 instances of white player physical praise. When including percentages alongside the numerical, as stated above, this creates a significant 78% skew towards the positive physical description of black players in the Premier League in line with the patterns seen in the wider literature. This is visualised in Graph 5 with the left green bar signifying black positive description reaching considerably above all the other quantities.

Graph 5: Total Numbers of Premier League Positive and Negative Description



A comparative difference emerges in the trend of the Euro 2020 descriptor data. Instead of a comparable negative representation of physicality we see a significantly reduced amount of negative physical representation for black players at Euro 2020 with a figure of 18 compared to the 61 negative remarks for white players. This can be attributed to the reduced quantity of black players at the Euros due to the above stated demographic reasons. However, a more comparable number of positive physical descriptors is seen for positive remarks like the negative Premier League remarks. 76 positive remarks were seen for black players at the euros and 92 positive remarks were seen for white players. The similarity of these figures, when contextualised with the reduced number of black players at the Euros, evidences a significant over-description of the physicality of a smaller pool of black players at the competition. For a substantially larger number of white players to receive only 16 fewer positive physical remarks, it shows that when black players were being described at the Euros, they were being situated more regularly into a physical discourse. Referencing these results alongside the positive remarks relating to performance also shows a significant over-description of black physicality with only 90 positive performance remarks made towards black players and 205 positive remarks made towards white players. The same is seen mentally with 32 positive mental remarks made towards black players and 107 made towards white players. Graph 6 visualises this with considerable difference between Performance and Mental totals while physical description of Black and White players is much closer.

Graph 6: Total Numbers of Euro 2020 Positive Descriptions



Conclusion

To conclude, the Premier League data resolved to show similar trends to those seen in the studies which undertook a Premier League commentary analysis as their aim (McCarthy and Jones 1997; McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003). A majority performance-based set of data was seen with consistent percentage skews in each category towards positive in the 50 and 60 percent region except for the Black physical category. The Black physical category evidenced a positive percentage skew in the high 70s (78%) which is a reduction compared to prior studies, but still significantly above the rest of the key categories displaying evidence of a biased discourse towards the positive portrayal of Black players and their physical attributes. When including the Euro commentary data set, both comparatively and as a standalone data set, the evidence of a consistent intra-category trend appeared between the Black player data sets of each table and the White player data sets of each table, evidencing relative consistency between domestic and international commentator discourses.

The significant comparative differences relate to the increased percentage of positive physical discourse towards black players compared to the Premier League data (81%). This was seen to be involved in a triple-biased situation with not only an increased positive physical discourse, but also secondly a decreased amount of mental discourse which was then topped off with, thirdly, a comparatively increased white mental discourse to result in a situation where Black players in the Euros were described in the discourse in an overly physical fashion while simultaneously being under-described mentally at the same time as white players were receiving an abundance of mental commentary. The discursive situation in the Euros can be seen to hold many of the characteristics of the well-researched Premier League commentary with several of the above aspects exhibiting even more heightened levels of bias with overall a discourse of physicality when commentating on Black players and a discourse of mentality when discussing White players.

QUALITATIVE DISCOURSE RESULTS: PREMIER LEAGUE

Introduction

Reviewing and comparing the findings of earlier works in the field (Rainville and McCormick 1977; McCarthy and Jones 1997; McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003), the overall findings of this study have evidenced a slight trend away from the historically well evidenced dichotomy of physically describing black athletes and mentally describing white athletes in the domestic form of the game and a slight exacerbation of the trend in the international form of the game. However, despite the slight reduction in the skew toward these kinds of commentary in one form of the game, it nevertheless still exists, and the dichotomy still remains firmly entrenched in the above quantitative tables. The inclusion of this discourse analysis aims to supplement the wide-reaching quantitative results with a more insightful and deeper look at the phrasing, the structure, and the context of select instances of commentary. The structures and subtleties, which cannot be gathered by a numerical content analysis, provide further insights into the ways in which the entrenched physical/mental dichotomy is expressed, how the nature of in-game live broadcast commentary facilitates the reproduction of the stereotypes, and how commentators draw upon the entrenched discourses to say immediately what comes to mind and decide what is deemed to be the most relevant paraphrased information for describing proceedings.

This section of results will initially assess the black physical/white mental dichotomy in the commentator remarks. Several selected pieces of commentary will be analysed, chosen from amongst the numerous short instances of description which make up the numerical data in the previous section. This will entail a review of the speed and strength phrases about black athletes followed by commentary that directly juxtaposed the black/white dichotomy and ending with commentary relating to white mental proficiency. Secondly, commentary which resides outside the black physical and white mental dichotomy of stereotypes by which the study is contextualised will be discussed alongside the pre-match commentary regarding TTK after the murder of George Floyd in America. An additional insight was conducted into the golden boot sharing players of the studied Premier League season, Heung-

Min Son and Mohammed Salah, in order to provide a limited insight into two high-profile players which do not reside in the black and white categories specified by the study and takes into account two high profile players to incorporate a more varied racialisation.

Premier League: Black Players Positive Speed Remarks

In the sample of recorded matches, twelve context-rich phrases in the Premier League commentary involved instances of description of black players expressing speed and strength on the football pitch. Four of the twelve relate to the speed of the players, the first of these relating to Steven Bergwijn, a Dutch Black winger playing for Tottenham Hotspur at the time of writing. The commentary simply stated '*Bergwijn, he is so so fast, he runs*'. Within this description, briefly made due to the fast nature of the phase of play taking place, the established white male commentator summarizes a set of actions which comprise dribbling with the ball into a short sentence emphasising the speed of the player, omitting the skill that the play is demonstrating when dribbling with the ball and drawing upon the established stereotypes. This type of paraphrasing and reduction of complex actions into a singular aspect of the action evidences the concept of the semantic macro-structure where complex actions with multiple steps or aspects are instead concentrated into a singular description which omits the detail of many of the individual steps. The issue with this concentration relates to the removal of any notion of skill in the act of dribbling to a mere expression of speed which perpetuates the entrenched stereotypes at play.

The second of the phrases relates to Ismaila Sarr, a black Senegalese winger currently playing for Watford. The commentary describing his actions noted that it was '*Difficult [for teammates] to keep up with Sarr*'. Without context the phrasing still evidences the consistent physical description of black footballers absent of any relation to cerebral aspects of the passages of play undergoing description. Placed in the context of the match and his Watford teammates, the white female ex-professional footballer providing the commentary compares Sarr to the white midfielders on his team who she says cannot keep up with his speed. This indirectly draws upon and perpetuates a number of existing stereotypes, chief among them

being the dichotomy of the natural, physically adept black athlete and the less physically adept white athlete. The connotation of it being difficult for Sarr's white teammates to equal his physical output is reminiscent of historically ingrained discourses which attempt to erroneously explain black physical ability as being natural rather than the black athlete needing to have trained for his abilities and in turn serves to place white physical inability as being due to lacking this supposed natural advantage. Again, the description of the action is made quickly due to the high-speed nature of the passage of play taking place but it again, like the Bergwijn commentary, is a reductive description focusing on a physical attribute rather than Sarr's beating of an offside trap with anticipation or the vision to be in a position to be on the receiving end of a pass. The inconspicuous absence of the mental in place of the given physical description is another stereotypical short excerpt of a more complex action.

The next two pieces of commentary combine strength and speed in their description of the players involved. The first of the two relates to Michail Antonio, a Jamaica international forward playing for West Ham United, the commentary description of his attributes stated '*The pace and strength of Antonio, he'll simply run through you*' further qualified moments later by the statement '*that's what he offers*'. Taking the first part of the passage of commentary in isolation, it is a direct usage of the often repeated and well researched figure of speech 'pace and power' when describing black footballers. While the direct usage of the pace and power phrase has reduced with it being a more noticeably heavy handed and stereotypical description pointed out in prior research by interviewees as standing out conspicuously alongside other forms of commentary (Billington 2018). The sentiment is less directly used in commentary through differing vocabulary such as strength instead of power, avoiding the noticeable and alliterative buzz phrase. The usage of pace and power as well as synonyms to the same effect also reside in the entrenched structure of the established biases from which commentators draw upon.

Analysing the denotation of the phrase 'pace and power' and more specifically the above phrase describing Antonio's 'pace and strength', it is an inherently positive description of the player where the commentator is outlining beneficial attributes which help towards winning a game of football. However, it is

the connotation which we must look into in order to understand more deeply the issues surrounding what, on face value, is a positive remark about the player. When simplifying a description of a player to a suggestion that they have pace, strength and that he will run through you, the commentator in their role as expert confers only a snapshot of knowledge to the listening audience and in line with existing stereotypes, encodes their view of the player according to said stereotypes. When it comes to the audience decoding the commentary, they hear a valid and positive appraisal of a player and reasonably assume the dominant/hegemonic position is the appropriate one while there is the polysemic option for the audience to identify the incomplete nature of the comment. It is here that the omission of anything mental and technical about the player begins to form the issue at hand. The consistent omission over time has served to perpetuate the dichotomous black/white, physical/mental stereotypes and in turn results in players being viewed in this way both by the commentators and by the fans.

The second of the two excerpts of commentary on both speed and strength expresses many of the same facets of the Antonio commentary. Wilfried Zaha, an Ivorian forward playing for Crystal Palace was featured in commentary saying '*Once Zaha gets a feel for how quick you are and how strong you are, he'll beat you*'. Like the Antonio commentary, this excerpt involves only the physical aspects of the passage of play. Where this particular piece of commentary deviates is in the inclusion of reference to the opponent he is facing, Emerson Royal, a black full back playing for Tottenham Hotspur. The commentary is portraying both of them in terms of how quick and how strong they are and asserting that Zaha will use his speed and strength to overcome the speed and strength of Emerson. Again, it is the omission of any mental, technical or skilful ways in which Zaha may overcome his opposition or conversely how Emerson may utilise his mental or technical skills to prevent Zaha from overcoming him. Such phrasing places both as purely battling with their physicality, perpetuating the same pre-existing stereotypes. One can also decode the item of commentary in a mental sense regarding the remark of 'getting a feel' for the defender, evidencing the sense in which audiences can decode from multiple standpoints as per Hall's (2001) multiple decoding models. Despite this, the commentary immediately resituates itself into the physical by referring to that feeling as quickness, strength and the eventual overcoming of it.

Premier League: Black Players Positive Strength Remarks

Following the four speed related excerpts of commentary, eight examples of commentary were identified relating to the strength of the black players being described in the passage of play. First of these excerpts involves promoted side Brentford's Nigerian midfielder Frank Onyeka. Onyeka was singled out for description by the established white commentator stating that *'He's come with a nickname, Frank the tank'*. Contextually this links to international Euro 2020 commentary with commentators more readily offering greater description of non-Premier League players in a similar vein to the way Premier League newcomer Onyeka and newly promoted Brentford can also be considered new to viewers and therefore undergo additional description. The international commentary will be discussed in detail after the Premier League commentary.

This Onyeka example evidences the othering of players and team who are not established Premier League teams or players. The inclusion of *'he's come with a nickname'* preceding the reference to the player comes with a multitude of connotations, firstly that the audience would be unaware of the nickname due to the fact the player is both from a new club to the Premier League combined with the player being a debutant at his club from an overseas league. Secondly, it empowers the commentary after it with additional legitimacy suggesting that Onyeka has an established reputation and from that, a nickname has developed for him being a *'tank'* which again comes with connotations of strength and overall physicality. The triple combination of the legitimized description of only his physical attributes in the form of the nickname, the longstanding reputation of the commentator and the new introduction of the player to the Premier League serve to give the audience a view that this player fits in the stereotypes of black central midfielders as being strong and physical rather than playmakers.

The next four items of commentary relate to Romelu Lukaku, a Belgian striker playing for Chelsea at the time of recording and a player widely quoted in the commentary and alongside others, such as Adama Traore. These players are described in terms of their strength and muscularity so much so that one could consider them the archetypal examples for the expression of the black natural physicality stereotypes. Firstly, the most simple and overt of the four excerpts,

Lukaku is noted for *'using his strength and bullying defenders'* as with all the examples it is another reduction of a player's skillset down to one aspect and it is again a physical aspect. Often the act of 'using one's strength' will involve backing into an opponent and cutting them off from access to the football, positioning yourself facing in such a way that options are available for you and the play can continue quickly after the player passes the ball on. Van Dijk would see the mental aspects of the action as being less prioritized by the commentators in the semantic macro-structure of the action being described and the physical aspect, the strength to hold off the opponent as being the highest priority for the commentator. The prioritization can be seen to develop from the bedrock of stereotype which exist and then are drawn upon in the commentary. As the player is noted for possessing the attributes which coincide with the stereotype, the common-sense application of the stereotype is done with the adverse effect of once again categorising the athlete purely physically.

The second description of Lukaku was provided in the following fixture that Chelsea played and elaborates further on the stereotypes seen in the first item of commentary. It was stated that Lukaku would *'bring strength to the attack'* and moments afterward, the co-commentator made note that the opposing team had *'chosen three strong players to counter his strength'*. In addition to this context, Chelsea's main attackers from the previous season had all been white forwards, Timo Werner and Kai Havertz. Firstly, the initial piece of commentary not only has the face value reference to Lukaku's strength, replicating the issues seen in the previous paragraph, but it also juxtaposes Lukaku with the rest of the Chelsea attacking players, the other two members of the Chelsea attack were white players in the squad from the prior season as stated above. The suggestion that Lukaku is going to bring strength frontstages strength as Lukaku's attribute that will be of the most benefit to Chelsea and has the secondary connotation that the white attackers he is joining would not have provided strength in their play.

The second aspect of the commentary, relating to the opposition players being chosen for their own strength to counter Lukaku's, is also significant to the stereotype of black physicality. The three opposing centre backs were all black and the suggestion of them being chosen specifically aids in the further stereotyping that

black physicality trumps that of white players. This exact scenario initiates with a frontstage focus on a black player and his strength, suggests that other black players and their strength are required to stop him and results in the connotation that the strength of the white players of the team would have been unsatisfactory. However, one must not begin to see such comments as being negative or detrimental in of themselves, taken at face value these are all positive appraisals of the four described players. But again, it is the absence of anything but physical praise which places it at the forefront of the discourse and in pole position to perpetuate the reductive stereotypes. No mention is made of the skill and intelligence that Lukaku may use to defeat the defenders and vice versa no mention is made of the awareness and ability the defenders may use to curtail Lukaku.

The third piece of commentary referring to Lukaku came later in this game indirectly through a reference to one of the centre backs he was facing, the white ex-professional centre back commentator began a description of Axel Tuanzebe, a black centre back playing for Aston Villa at the time of recording, by stating that *'He's [Tuanzebe has] got the pace, got the strength best equipped to counter Lukaku'*. This description, much like the previous two, situates itself in the existing stereotype but has the additional legitimacy of being an ex-professional centre back providing discourse on a centre back during the match. As per the literature on media organizations and their match production decisions, the inclusion of an ex-professional alongside a career media commentator is done to add authority to the commentary rather than a layperson providing their insights on the match. The effect that the figure of authority has on the discourse, in the form of the ex-professional, involves the exertion of their knowledge and expertise on the audience (Whannel 1986) who will be more likely to perform a dominant decoding of the physical description of the black player (Hall 2001) based on the selection of utterances of the commentator leading towards the preferred reading.

Not only is the commentator drawing upon the bedrock of racialised discourse and stereotype when formulating the commentary to describe the player in terms of his strength and speed, the audience can draw upon the same discourses and entrenched stereotypes to decode the commentary which fits into what has become a widely accepted stereotype. It is this combination of encoding the commentary

with the long-established discourses followed by an audience decoding situated in the same discourses which produces the common-sense perpetuation. However, the audience can also decode away from the preferred in recognition of the stereotypes at play but with the choice of descriptors, metaphors and analogies by the commentators, the audience is consistently swayed to the dominant discourse (McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003).

The fourth and final article of Premier League commentary on Lukaku itself being the fourth instance on only one player evidences the fixation on his physical characteristics and evidences the extent to which the stereotype of black physicality is drawn upon. Not once in the body of sampled commentary was reference made to another attribute of his, mental or otherwise. This excerpt stated during the game that *'It took two to stop him [Lukaku] there, it would be wise not to get into a fight with the big Belgian'*. There is a combined usage of strength equivalences by the commentator suggesting two players are required to curtail Lukaku and finalising the piece of commentary by calling him the 'big Belgian' rather than simply by his nationality alone, which is a common form of referring to a player other than his surname. One can also note the alliterative 'big black' racialisation which carries again the physical connotations already seen surrounding Lukaku. The comparative wealth of examples specific to Lukaku evidence a structure within both the commentary and the footballing sphere where a player has been typecast into a certain role both on the pitch and in the description of him by the commentary.

The final two examples of commentary on black players reference physicality alongside aggression, with the above example on Lukaku linking connotatively to aggression with the suggestion of it not being wise to get into a fight with him however the following pieces of commentary directly reference aggression. Firstly, Everton's two black strikers Richarlison and Salomon Rondon were referenced by the white, ex-professional striker commentating when he noted that *'Everton's forwards are being aggressive and physical; they really should be ahead'*. Looking back to the Lukaku example, there is a direct link to aggression through the dual reference of a fight and needing two to stop him however here 'aggression' is directly stated immediately followed by stating that the two players are being 'physical'. The close linking of the two themes places them at the forefront of the

discourse, it provides a further angle by which the physicality of the black footballers is highlighted and expressed on the pitch.

Rather than a suggestion of a cool head or a thoughtful use of physical attributes, shielding the ball and holding up play being an example, they situate the players with the connotation of physical attributes being imposed on the opposition. Additionally, aggression has a connotation of being juxtaposed with a calm and cool head and the use of mental attributes so, as said above, it is a further angle through which the commentary focuses the lens of physicality on black footballers. Further to this, the fact of an ex-professional striker commentating on strikers lends the notion of legitimacy to the commentary being delivered, the context of the person delivering the discourse having played in the role adds additional weight to what is being said as a person who is speaking from a position of competitive meritocracy (Sage 1990).

Finally, a piece of commentary from a black ex-professional player evidences that drawing upon the entrenched black/white stereotypes is not limited to white commentators and ex-professionals. This has also been noted in prior study of football commentary (Billington 2018) and it stems from the aforementioned inherent positive denotation of the comments despite negative connotations. The piece of commentary relates to the right sided winger and right sided defender of Tottenham Hotspur, Lucas Moura and Emerson Royal respectively, the black ex-professional commentator notes '*There's an energy to Lucas Moura and an aggression to Emerson Royal*'. Relating this to the idea of inherent positivity, both comments about each player are complimentary in terms of attributes for being successful in a game of football. It is objectively beneficial to be able to outperform your opponent through speed or stamina and in the same way it is beneficial to be able to outperform you opponent with greater strength and force. The argument surrounding how this becomes a discourse that connotes racism still revolves around the absence or un-prioritised description of the mental aspects of their play.

As noted above, it has become an inconspicuous absence of mental characteristics due to how longstanding the stereotype is and the fact that each description is positive, it differs from negative comments like the hateful messages towards Bukayo Saka seen on social media in the wake of the Euro 2020 final. The

difference is found in the way that these remarks are complimentary on the surface and taken as an individual instance, and it is utilisation of these discourses in such quantity where they become negative in their connotation and perpetuate the discourses of pure physicality. The following section relates to discourses where commentators have directly used the discursive dichotomy of black physicality and white mentality in the same passage of the game.

Premier League: Direct Use of the Black/White Dichotomy

The following three instances of commentary directly combine references to black and white players in terms of their physicality and their mental attributes respectively. The first involves the previously mentioned Adama Traore, a black Spanish winger playing for Wolverhampton Wanderers at the time of recording, he is referred to in the commentary alongside Francisco Trincao, a white Portuguese winger who is a teammate of Traore's at Wolverhampton. They are described as the '*quick strong adama and tricky trincao*'. This is the first item of commentary that directly provides the audience with the entire black/white physical/mental dichotomy in the same instance of commentary, as the prior examples had been more focused on exemplifying the black physical side of the stereotype. Here this issue relates to how the commentary gives the connotation that the physical attributes of Wolverhampton's attack will be provided by Adama, and the mental/skilful side of the Wolverhampton's attack will be facilitated by Trincao. The reductive semantic macro-structure is seen in both descriptions; first of quickness and strongness and secondly of trickiness respectively. Complex actions which the players may perform with said attributes are, like earlier in the analysis, condensed into one aspect of the entire action and it is through the application of the stereotypes about black and white athletes we see these two descriptions given.

While the above commentary took place prior to the kick-off of the match during the announcement of the line-ups, the next piece of description was noted in-game regarding Everton teammates Abdoulaye Doucoure, a black French central midfielder and Michael Keane, a white English central defender. The passage of play, described by the established white career commentator, states '*Doucoure, well found by Michael Keane, he can drive now at Burnley*'. This example of commentary

refers instead to in play actions rather than characteristics when drawing on the stereotypical discourses. The initial action of the Keane 'finding' Doucoure, finding someone with a pass being a traditionally skilful connotation in a footballing context, invokes the mental stereotypes of a well-placed pass before Doucoure can then 'drive' towards the Burnley goal, driving in football connoting running with the ball but from a physical standpoint.

Driving and dribbling often are applied to the same action but the former holds physical merit, and the latter holds mental, technical merit. Here we see the physical version of the discourse attributed to the black midfielder. Word selection in many of the above examples can carry differing connotations based upon the angle through which the wider action is being approached, driving and dribbling being the current example. One can suggest that, in terms of the extent to which these phrases are structurally attributed via stereotype to players or there is agency on the part of the commentator to choose these phrases, it will be an unconscious utilisation of the stereotypes to attribute the physical form of description to the black player and the mental/technical form of the description to the white player.

The third piece of commentary elaborates on the usage of the stereotyped discourses by indirectly acknowledging the physical characteristics of the white players involved while focusing directly on the way the black player overcomes them. During the Watford and Brighton fixture, the commentator made note of Emmanuel Dennis, a Nigerian forward playing for Watford, when saying '*Dennis, strength enough to hold off Trossard and pace enough to take him away from Webster*'. This is a slight differentiation of the traditional form of how the stereotypes are expressed in the discourse by inclusion of the two being beaten with both strength and speed. It differs contextually as Trossard is a quick forward player for Brighton and Webster is a stronger centre back for Brighton, the way in which Dennis is shown to have overcome them is done so in a physical way despite the fact he has overcome them by utilising his attributes against their weaker attributes. Strength against the quicker opponent and speed against the stronger. Rather than make note of the thought processes of exploiting the situation cleverly to choose strength against speed and speed against strength instead of matching them up in both situations, the commentary purely focuses on his use of each and how they

overcome the white players. It situates the discourse in exerted physicality rather than the clever usage of physicality, again we can return to the ideas of structure and agency combined with the semantic macro structure to note that the discourses were drawn from the stereotypes and do not deviate from the traditional reductive in-game structure of commentary.

Finally, the most direct usage of the stereotype dichotomy and what is also a factually incorrect usage of the stereotype, further reinforcing the nature of how it is so ingrained into the world of football. The two Southampton FC central midfielders James Ward-Prowse, a white English player, and Ibrahima Diallo, a black French player were compared during the match when the commentator observed *'Southampton's midfield mastermind James Ward-Prowse alongside the engine Diallo'*. First of all, there is the obvious usage of the physical/mental dichotomy but what is contextually most interesting about this piece of commentary is that James Ward-Prowse has statistically covered the most kilometres in a Premier League season before the commentary was delivered. With this context, it would be accurate to describe Ward-Prowse as the engine of the team as an 'engine' in the footballing sphere would be a player with the connotation of great stamina and the ability to cover the most ground, a feat which Ward-Prowse has achieved but is not recognised for.

He is most recognised for his range of passing and his set-piece delivery and when considering the semantic macro-structure from that angle, black players have their descriptions reduced to what are deemed the most important ones, physical ones, while Ward-Prowse and white players have their descriptions reduced down to mental and technical ones even when physical feats are noteworthy. It is the ability for the stereotypical discourse to transcend the statistical and factual side of the game to compare a player to another in such a way that does not have a basis in truth or, like many of the above examples, provides a correct positive appraisal notwithstanding the negative connotations that have been discussed above. With this foregrounding of the mental side of the game noted when describing white players despite physical achievement also being present, the next section will assess specific examples of commentary relating to white players.

Premier League: White Players Positive Mental Remarks

While a significant amount of the perpetuation of the stereotypes of black athletic proficiency is directly related to the consistent discourse front staging the physical side of the game when referencing black footballers in the commentary, the focus of commentary on white players being largely intelligent and technical serves to further entrench the common-sense dichotomy that physical and mental proficiency are preserves of black and white footballers respectively. The first piece of commentary relates to an action seen several times above in the commentary on black players, a winger running in behind the defence. However, this excerpt of commentary relates to Emile Smith-Rowe, a white central attacking midfielder for Arsenal FC, the commentary describing his action states '*Well timed run from Smith-Rowe*'. Rather than a description of the physical feat on display, the commentary from the established white male commentator exemplifies the mental side of the action, the timing and the awareness. The distilling of the set of actions taking place in the move down into the semantic macro-structure has taken actions that were often omitted and used them to describe the whole, a black player's run in behind the opposition defence has the timing of the run removed and the strength and speed placed front and centre, while Smith-Rowe has the exact opposite. Whether intentional or not, it plays straight into the black/white dichotomy and further solidifies the discourses from where the description was itself based on.

The second piece of commentary involves three quickly stated instances of mental description each reinforcing the prior statement. Additionally, immediately after the white male career commentator delivered the commentary description, the white female ex-professional co-commentator affirmed the commentary with here agreement with the sentiment. The commentary relates to Scott McTominay, a white Scottish central midfielder for Manchester United. They commented on him when suggesting that '*The more mature he [McTominay] gets, the more experience he gets, the more of a presence he becomes in that central role*'. Each of the three instances making up the whole excerpt aim to characterize mental characteristics involving the understanding of the game. While this example is indicative of the stereotypes at play, the main factor for this example is the commentary style and subsequent reinforcement of the message during delivery. The excerpt indicates

how commentators can assert their view during the match and while it can be left to the audience to decode the commentary in whichever way they see fit to do so based on their contextual understanding of what they are seeing and hearing, the reinforcement from the ex-professional commentator serves to add weight and guide the audience in their understanding and unpacking of the situation. If such a piece of commentary involved the above seen direct black/white dichotomy, the repetitive reinforcement and subsequent agreement from the expert would solidify those views.

Finally for the commentary on positive white mental discourse, the Brighton and Hove Albion central midfielder Adam Lallana was noted by the black ex-professional pundit when he said, '*Lallana is the heartbeat of the team, conducting things for Brighton*'. Both halves of the commentary connote that of passing ability, leadership and experience, all mental characteristics in the same style as that seen regarding James Ward-Prowse in the previous section. The nature of this being said during half time analysis and punditry allows for specifically chosen clips to accompany the analysis to reinforce the message being delivered, this media technique alongside other techniques such as displaying statistics during the match which corroborate the statements being made serve to add another form of legitimacy in the media event process, like the use of ex-professionals. With the combination of media processes aimed at validating what is being said, and the discourses at play originating from and perpetuating the social structures and stereotypes, discourses like these remain firm and unchallenged.

Premier League: Extra-contextual Commentator Remarks

The following six examples of commentary, as per the recommendation of van Sterkenburg et al. (2010) where items of data which do not conform to the specified categories should be noted for later analysis, were chosen for this section as they did not conform to this study's categorization of the black/white stereotype dichotomy. The first of these was noted for how it perpetuates a discourse surrounding a particular player, much like the discourses surrounding Romelu Lukaku and Adama Traore for instance. The player in question is Granit Xhaka, a white central midfielder for Arsenal FC, a player with a consistent narrative of being

temperamental and erratic. During play, the white ex-professional commentator stated that he *'Didn't have a clue Granit Xhaka'* contextually when Xhaka received a caution for a foul committed when mistiming a tackle. The consistency of this type of discourse surrounding Xhaka shows how a player can become caricatured to the point where one can become hypersensitized towards viewing the player in a certain way, this has been seen in the four instances of discourse on Lukaku alone earlier in the section and such a situation can result in a further entrenchment of discourse regarding the player. Such a situation where a player becomes known for one thing can hinder efforts to disrupt established stereotypes when it comes to the black/white dichotomy and is a significant factor that requires addressing alongside any efforts to counter established discourses.

Juxtaposing the first item of commentary where discourses are firmly entrenched around a player, Bukayo Saka a black English winger for Arsenal FC, received a deluge of racist bile and vitriol on social media platforms in the wake of failing to convert his penalty kick in the final of the Euros against Italy. In their opening fixture, Saka received both a supportive standing ovation from the entire stadium at Brentford from both the home and away fans and supportive remarks from the commentary team calling Saka a *'charming young footballer'*. This discourse external from the physical/mental focus of this study, is evidence of the ability for audiences and commentary teams to provide a counter to discourses which are overtly harmful towards a player. Such sentiment would also suggest that with appropriate focus on discourses which are covertly harmful, the same principles of delivering a commentary encoded with oppositional discourses to that of the entrenched dominant stereotypes is possible. The issue still remains that the social media abuses of the England players were so vile and overt that opposition to the discourses was both obvious and necessary. Opposing the discourses seen above requires for them to be noticed as containing harmful connotation behind the positive surface of positive physical praise.

The next example was of much interest as it is an instance of a pundit directly delivering an oppositional discourse (Hall 2001) about a player that has already been seen above and been spoken about physically in the stereotypical discourses section. A newer black ex-professional pundit made note of Michail Antonio, the Jamaican

forward for West Ham, during analysis when saying '*People know him [Michail Antonio] for his pace and power but it's his intelligence*'. This was the only example of a pundit or commentator directly referencing the entrenched discourse on 'pace and power' and immediately offering an oppositional discourse in order to broaden the perception of the player from simply his physical attributes. This excerpt of commentary is an example of what would be required to begin to dispel the common-sense discourses which surround certain players and descriptions of black athletes. Much like the evidence above of oppositional discourses being delivered for players like Saka in the face of overt racism, this type of analysis and commentary is seen to be possible but is at the moment rare, being the only instance of this style of oppositional encoding.

Despite this one instance evidencing that the discourses can and have been opposed during commentary, in the next West Ham fixture the newer white male ex-professional commentator covering the match reverted to utilising the bedrock of stereotypical discourses and described Antonio in terms of his '*strength and athleticism*'. If taken as an individual instance, this would feature in the section relating to physical description of black players. However, it is significant when contextualised with the comments on Antonio's intelligence as, in the very next fixture, commentary description of Antonio had returned to the established, dominant discourses. It is evident from this that one cannot simply offer the occasional piece of oppositional commentary and that a concerted and acknowledged effort, featuring multiple cerebral instances like the one above, must be made in order to acknowledge the racialised discourse and begin to counter it regularly.

Premier League: 'Taking the Knee'

The following section is key to the study and relates to commentary on the pre-match act of 'taking the knee', done by teams in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in America to demonstrate a unified anti-racism message as stated in the review of literature. The section juxtaposes the other surrounding discursive sections by the nature of it referencing the direct, anti-racism commentary taking place. This is while the remainder of the in-game commentary and punditry still

contains a wealth of racially biased discourse. A total of eleven instances of commentators delivering commentary that references the TTK were noted during the research and the majority of messages provided by the commentators were of a direct support and included reinforcement of the message behind the action. Such comments from the recorded audio included: *'The players continue to do so [take the knee] as part of the ongoing fight against racism'*, *'Every fan wants to watch a fair game, taking the knee again emphasises football's drive for a fairer society'* and *'The players will continue to unite in their fight against racial injustice and inequality'*.

The aim of the commentary to reinforce the messages of unity alongside the act of taking the knee can be interpreted in multiple frameworks. Viewing them from the lenses of the structure and agency theorists, Giddens and Fairclough would view the actions and discourses of the commentary as having been intended to make social structure through the commentator's agency of delivering a discourse of unity, to the extent of cementing it directly in the structured discourse. One cannot directly apply it to the focus of this study because the TTK was in response to and in conjunction with overtly seen and publicised acts like the murder of George Floyd and the social media abuses of black footballers. In the context of covert racial biases, the commentary on the TTK, which is aimed at being against overt racism and hate, offers little to no value towards dispelling the entrenched, sub-surface stereotypes for the numerous reasons stated in the above sections, as they are not noticed through causing an overt issue. This is alongside the fact that the very same commentators that deliver their messages about taking the knee then proceed to deliver several biased stereotypes during the remainder of the match.

An additional aspect of the knee commentary relates to players who have chosen to refrain from taking the knee. Prominent footballers in both the Premier League and Football League have either spoken out against the TTK or simply remained standing during the action. Football League players such as Britt Assombalonga and Liam Bridcutt, both captains of and leadership figures at Middlesbrough and Lincoln City at the time of their statements, have stated their belief that the TTK has to lead to something and that it has become a 'token gesture' (Daily Mail 2020). These responses are revealing as they mirror some historical

responses to efforts such as Kick Racism Out of Football which later rebranded to Kick it Out. Furthermore, a piece of commentary that contextually followed an advertisement which featured many prominent footballing figures expressing their support and outlining the meaning of the knee to audiences, made note that *'the players will continue to unite in their fight against racial injustice and inequality'*.

This has been said during Premier League commentary in spite of prominent players for Crystal Palace and Brentford, Wilfried Zaha and Ivan Toney respectively, choosing to refrain from taking the knee and conspicuously remaining standing during the knee. Zaha has stated to the media that 'he will stop taking a knee and instead 'stand tall', further elaborating that 'these things are not working' and that 'unless action is going to happen, I don't want to hear about it' (Daily Mail 2021). These statements from Zaha mirror the sentiments expressed by the football league players above suggesting that the anti-racism campaigns like the current one, No Room for Racism, provide no meaningful action alongside the words and sentiments being expressed. While it is evident that the willpower to make efforts towards combatting racism is there demonstrated by the volume of commentary supporting and championing the efforts of the anti-racism campaigns, the failure to identify the racial stereotypes present in commentary, due partly to the face value positivity towards players, hinders any efforts to begin to alter perceived stereotypes towards black players.

An additional item of commentary also makes note of how commentators can perceive that racism and racial bias is a problem external to their discourses. One commentator discussing the social media company inquests to ban or prevent overt racism on social media platforms noted that *'In a week where social media companies have been grilled by the authorities over their current practice, taking the knee is a continued reminder that this issue will not go away'*. The connotation that football players suffering overt abuses on social media platforms 'will not go away', while football commentary is such a significant force in reinforcing the bedrock of physical stereotypical discourse, evidences that this issue remains firmly out of sight and out of mind of those commentators and pundits who are an active participant in perpetuating the situation. The face value abhorrence and negativity of social media racism renders those forms of racism clear for all to see, while the

inherent positivity of praising a footballer for his speed and strength renders it very difficult to see that it holds negative consequences.

Case Study: Heung Min Son and Mohammed Salah

Alongside the discourses surrounding black and white footballers, two of the most prominent footballers in the studied Premier League season are unaccounted for. A case study around the joint golden boot winning players Heung-Min Son and Mohammed Salah, hailing from South Korea and Egypt respectively, was decided upon as a late revision to the methodology to provide a brief insight into the discourses surrounding them and players to which they have been compared to and contrasted with in the commentator discourses. A total of six instances of commentary were noted in the discourse on the two players, four for Salah and only two for Son due to his injury partway into the time of commentary recording. As per the methods section, this aspect of the study is limited by its later introduction to the study following the standout goalscoring seasons for both players. A more comprehensive future examination of the discourses around both players is needed to provide greater detail as to the full extent of their description.

Beginning with the four instances of commentary on Mo Salah, he was twice juxtaposed in the commentary with his Liverpool teammate, at the time of recording, Sadio Mane. The commentator in quick succession referred to Salah's 'trickery and dribbling' while Mane would be noted for his 'darting runs'. Salah's commentary more closely resembles that of the descriptions seen in the positive white mental category while Mane's commentary shares unsurprising similarity to that of the positive black physical commentary. Whether or not this is contextually symptomatic of the fact they are the two prominent Liverpool attackers, Salah is certainly described as conducting his play more cerebrally than Mane when they are mentioned. The entrenched nature of the black physical stereotypes evidently leads to Mane's description, and it would suggest that comparatively, Salah's North African Egyptian heritage removes him from the physical commentary focus that Mane's West African Senegalese heritage has.

Secondly, when Salah alone is commentated on, speed is referenced indirectly during his commentary and skilful aspects of the play are front staged in the discourse. One such instance noted that *'The speed of the play and the touch from salah, gets the goal that his performance deserves'*. Note that it is the play which has the speed attributed to it rather than Salah himself and then it is the touch from Salah contextually referencing his control of the ball and then finishing with scoring a goal and praise for his performance. All aspects of this piece of commentary lead away from a physical description of Salah and place merit on his mental attributes. Additionally, when Salah is directly referenced in commentary in such a way, it is for his movement. The excerpt of commentary containing this stated that *'Mo Salah's movement is brilliant, he wants this one, he's not happy [at not getting the first] but he stays alive to the second one'*. Movement in a footballing context would hold connotation of a slower action and a more considered mental action to show good positioning and anticipation rather than speed or strength to facilitate the 'movement'. Following this, he is noted for 'staying alive' to the second one which is again a contextually mental piece of commentary praising his awareness of the situation.

All of the aspects of the above commentary relating to Salah are two sided in that they relate to actions involving movement and what would be considered physical acts like those seen in the commentary on black players. However, they are framed and discussed in the commentary in relation to their mental merits, like the white players' commentary. It would suggest that Salah, being from a North African country, is removed from the same stereotypes that many Sub-Saharan Africans, like his teammate Sadio Mane, are subject to. The stereotypes of black natural athleticism appear to not apply to him despite arguably his speed and strength equalling that of Sadio Mane's speed and strength. It is reminiscent of James Ward-Prowse being more physically adept than his teammate Diallo and Diallo receiving the physical commentary due to the entrenched stereotype.

Moving to the two excerpts on Heung Min Son, much like the Salah having Mane as a teammate with whom he can be compared, Son in one of the instances of commentary was compared with his teammate Harry Kane, an England international striker. The instance of commentary made note that Son *'has a central striker's*

instinct'. This was contextually said in the absence of Kane where Son was chosen to fill the absence, the connotations of Son having an instinct for playing in the central striking role invoke ideas around adapting well to moving away from the winger's role wide on the pitch which itself carries connotation of speed as seen in the commentary of many wingers earlier in the section. With Son moving from a role which carries connotation of speed, to a central role on the pitch which in turn has connotations of more mental skill, the suggestion of him adapting to that also suggests that the commentator believes he is showing the mental skills required for the role. Contextually, this was said during a passage of play where Son ran behind the opposing defence and in turn, the commentator made note of his central striker's instincts rather than the speed, pace or any other physical attribute.

These above descriptions of Salah and Son reside in a discourse outside that of the physically stereotyped black footballers. The commentator discourses also do not evoke notions of Said's oriental essentialism, with much of the focus being comparative between them and their teammates at the time, Mane and Kane respectively. They aren't reduced to 'objects of study' in line with Said's theories, however this could also be due to their status as key players for their teams. Future expansion of the case study may uncover Said's 'oriental' discourses in relation to lower profile players than Salah and Son.

QUALITATIVE DISCOURSE RESULTS: EURO 2020

Introduction

Following the section of results on the Premier League commentary, this section will provide an insight into the commentary of the Euro 2020 commentary with an additional insight into the similarities and differences in the domestic and international commentary to ascertain what themes emerge as being consistent across both and what themes appear exclusively in commentary on each form of the game. This section will retain the same structure as the Premier League section consisting of an initial black physical stereotype section divided into speed and strength subsections followed by instances of commentators using a direct black/white comparison of mental and physical characteristics. Subsequently, the commentary on white mental stereotyping will be addressed followed by sections on extra-contextual comments not fitting the key dichotomy categories and a discussion of the commentator remarks on the knee. In addition to these sections, a further section on commentator remarks about home nation players and teams compared with non-home nations was added to the Euros section.

Euro 2020: Black Players Positive Speed Remarks

In the sample of Euros matches, fifteen context-rich phrases in the commentary involved instances of commentators describing black players in terms of expression of speed and strength on the pitch. Ten of the fifteen relate to the speed of the players. In the opening minutes of a Belgium fixture, the Belgian striker Romelu Lukaku, an Inter Milan player at the time of recording who had also spent time in the Premier League at numerous clubs, was described twice almost immediately before even receiving the ball. The commentators made note of the attacking threats for the team and after providing relatively descriptor-less assessments of two of Lukaku's teammates, the career commentator noted Lukaku's impressive goalscoring record for the national side which was then commented upon by the ex-professional commentator, stating that such a goalscoring tally was due to Lukaku's '*natural instincts*' and his '*pace and power*'. The usage of well

documented ‘pace and power’ physical stereotype was also seen in discourses on Lukaku and other black players in the Premier League commentary above and evidences a purely physical assessment of Lukaku’s ability to achieve an impressive goalscoring record for Belgium.

The connotations of pace and power are not immediately seen as residing in the stereotype of natural black athleticism but are certainly residing in that of purely physical stereotyping of black players. However, the initial decision from the commentator to preface the description of pace and power with stating Lukaku uses his ‘natural instincts’ has manifold connotations and situates the pace and power comment in a naturally physical discourse. The connotations of natural instincts invokes suggestion that any skill or ability that is being utilised is not learned through training or through mental, skilful means. The connotation of instinct conjures thought of existing naturally and thoughtlessly as though it simply exists in the player. Furthermore, instincts can also be seen to connote depictions of animals and their behaviours in nature, doing things which are simply programmed from birth without learning or practicing them. Where white footballers may be discussed for their off the ball movement or anticipation, Lukaku is instead said to have ‘instincts’.

Later in the same fixture, the career commentator makes note of a passage of play where Lukaku skilfully takes the ball under control and turns to make use of a gap in the opposition defence. Rather than make note of the ball control and assessment of the situation ahead of him, the commentator states ‘*Lukaku has pounced here ... look at Lukaku go*’. The discourse returns to the concept of the semantic macrostructure, where a complex action is simplified down to a brief summarizing description. Alongside this concept, the decision to select description which invokes thought of animals or predators catching prey with the Google definition of pounce prefacing the definition with ‘(of an animal or bird of prey)’ (Google 2022). The commentary summarizing a more complex action down to not only a physical description, but an overtly animal discourse serves to not only further situate discourses around Lukaku and black players deeper into a natural physical location especially with the immediate assessment of Lukaku at the start of the game utilising the well documented ‘pace and power’ stereotype.

In the same game during the half time punditry, a black ex-pro pundit focused on Lukaku with his analysis providing a large excerpt of description stating that *'When he [Lukaku] gets into this state, he's like a freight train ... when he left England, he was often ridiculed about his touch but now we're seeing a different player'*. There are three aspects to this particular item of analysis which contribute to the sum of connotation around physicality. Firstly, the suggestion of Lukaku getting into a 'state' links into the discourse from the commentary at the beginning of the game suggesting he utilises natural instincts. The combination of the immediate assessment of Lukaku at the beginning of the game setting the tone for the discourse furthered by the half time analysis perpetuating both the in-game discourses and the wider societal discourses surrounding black athleticism serve to continue the entrenchment of the stereotypes as seen in the Premier League commentary discourses. Secondly in this particular piece of analysis, the concept of describing Lukaku as a 'freight train' provides significant physical connotation, another look at the Google definition (2022) states that freight train is quote 'used in reference to a phenomenon regarded as powerful and unstoppable'. Even before addressing the footballing connotations, the denotation of the phrase freight train when used outside of its literal locomotive application conjures discourses of physicality and physical power. Furthermore, it can be seen to be objectifying the player into something that simply travels forcefully in a direction in a way that is unstoppable as per the definition. There is no thought assumed in the actions of the freight train, only the direction and the power behind it.

The third aspect of this particular piece of punditry relates to the reference to Lukaku's time in the Premier League, the ex-pro pundit makes note of the ridicule Lukaku received regarding his ball control, a mental/technical attribute evidencing the existence of a discourse not only on his physicality but also of poor technical ability surrounding Lukaku. This is referenced in spite of the context of a title winning season in Serie A and a short remark at the end of the analysis saying that *'we're seeing a different player now'*. This remark aims to redirect the discourse but makes no overt reference to any mental qualities shown by Lukaku during his time in Italy and is overshadowed by the significant and entrenched discourses spoken by both the commentary team and the pundit themselves.

Another item of commentary residing in the discourse of the semantic macro structure is that of a comment on substitute Marcus Rashford, said contextually during the second half of an England group game in which the players on the pitch had struggled to make inroads. The commentator noted that *'We talked about the substitutes, someone like a Rashford coming in, make those runs with the pace'*. In the semantic macrostructure, Rashford is reduced by the commentator into someone who will 'make those runs with the pace'. The situation is also contextually relevant regarding the personnel already on the pitch for England, two of the three forwards for England were white, Harry Kane and Phil Foden, with Raheem Sterling completing the trio of attackers. The connotation from the commentator that an England attack, which is two parts white, is lacking runs with pace. With the added suggestion that the introduction of Rashford will therefore bring pace into the attack, the commentary is drawing directly upon the stereotypes of black physicality and indirectly drawing upon the black/white dichotomy stereotypes where black players bring their 'pace and power', and white players bring mental qualities.

In the same vein and drawing upon the same stereotypes as the Rashford commentary, Adama Traore on the substitutes bench was described by the white ex-professional commentator commentating on a Spain fixture as having *'Pace, Strength and Directness'*, further qualified by the suggestion that Spain, as a team, were *'lacking pace and power'* with Traore on the bench. First of all, the overtly stated suggestion that Traore's play involves three purely physical attributes expands on the commentary about Rashford by driving home the point of his physicality with further qualifying remarks purely about physicality. What is different regarding the Rashford and Adama remarks is the demographic of the two teams, the England line-up is a relatively diverse squad, while the Spain squad with the exception of Adama himself is entirely white Spanish-born players. Additionally, the Spain team has carried the long-held connotation of skilful passing football cemented through the domestic teams Barcelona and Real Madrid with their styles of play.

The understood connotation is conveyed through the commentary that this passing and possession style, which will be referenced in the section on white mental commentary, situates Adama Traore separately as bringing his 'pace strength and

directness' as stated by the commentator, directly juxtaposing Adama against his white teammates who themselves carry a mental stereotype of lacking physicality and excelling mentally and skilfully. With Adama conspicuously being the only black player in the Spain squad for the tournament, the intersections between race and nationality will undergo discussion in the section on Naturalised Nationalism.

Another player in similar circumstances to Adama in the Spain squad was singled out for his physicality amongst his white teammates was Renato Sanches in the Portugal squad. Contextually in a midfield containing Joao Palhinha and Joao Moutinho, Renato Sanches received commentary from both the career commentator and the ex-professional commentator stating that *'He's [Renato Sanches has] always been that kind of player that ghosts into the box, he's a lot quicker than you think he is. I know he's a very clever player and a good passer of the ball'* reinforced by the ex-pro saying, *'Great energy levels as well'*. This excerpt of commentary begins with two references to Sanches' physicality setting the tone of the discourse in the preferred dominant coding towards a physical stereotyping of the player. However, it is then followed with positive mental praise for his cleverness and passing ability which provides a much more rounded assessment of the player and dispels some of the purely physical discourse and stereotype which surrounds black footballers. This type of holistic commentator description is an exception rather than the rule, as seen in the prior remarks and the numerical data and is further exemplified by the ex-professional commentator adding their view to the description. The ex-professional referring to Sanches' energy levels rather than making additional note of the mental praise given by the career commentator returns the discourse to a physical one when concluding the in-game description of the player and that particular passage of play.

Furthermore to the discourse around Renato Sanches, like Lukaku before him, he received additional physical commentary during the half time punditry to reinforce the discourses which begun during the first half of football. The black ex-professional pundit, who contextually was a former midfielder adding further legitimacy to the ex-professional discourse, made note saying, *'How about Renato Sanches driving from midfield ... he ran through the midfield with his power, we need to see more of this type of drive because he's capable of doing it'*. The

structuring of the discourse in this particular match originates from the entrenched body of stereotypical discourse and is then re-structured by both the in-play commentary and further to that, the half time punditry. Each actor draws upon the established common-sense stereotypes of description and in turn becomes part of the perpetuation of the biased commentary. One must again note that such discourses can remain unnoticed and entrenched by their inherent positivity towards the player, describing a player as being able to drive with the ball and run through the midfield with power is, on face value, a positive assessment of the player. However, it is the absence of reinforced mental praise which creates, perpetuates and solidifies the stereotypes of black physical athleticism by the absence or lack of significant positive mental discourses.

The next piece of commentary on positive speed remarks relates to the high-profile France forward Kylian Mbappe. Contextually, the piece of commentary was delivered during the first televised France fixture and involved Mbappe beating the offside trap at high-speed causing the commentators to begin a lengthy segment solely on his 'pace'. They noted, *'Mbappe, that's what he can do... wow'. 'Now you see me, now you don't, he's been electric in the first half, you can't get near him'*. These quotes from the extended segment involve an exchange between the two commentators firstly with the career commentator stating, 'that's what he can do', which said alongside a passage of play providing a context of Mbappe running past a player serves to being the process of stereotyping that we have seen in the excerpts of commentary which have preceded this one. The process is then finalised by the media setup of having an ex-professional to add legitimacy to the commentary by the addition of him focusing only on admiration of the speed aspects of the action. It is again a situation where the commentary process is summarized down into a quick, incomplete phrase or set of phrases which draw upon the established stereotypes and omit mental aspects of the action taking place.

The penultimate item of commentary on a black player's physicality and speed is that on Djibril Sow, a Swiss central midfielder. Contextually, Sow was introduced into the game as a substitute late in the game and upon entering the field of play, was described by the commentator stating, *'Djibril Sow, he's a very combative, very energetic midfielder with a brilliant engine to get up and down*

and disrupt. They're going to need all the legs they can get'. Further context surrounding the game and the situation involve Sow's teammates and the midfield into which he was being introduced, the midfield that the commentators believe he is bringing combativeness and energy to contains three white midfielders and the connotation from the commentary strongly situates Sow in the black physical stereotype both of black players being purely physical as it was not stated that Sow would be bringing his own mental attributes and the indirect connotation that the white players in the midfield both require Sow to run for them and that they are the ones providing the mental characteristics and the skill. What can be seen on face value as being a positive assessment of Sow, when it is placed in the context of the situation and is viewed with the connotations of those around him and the entrenched biases, the assessment becomes another situation where a black footballer is only recognized for his physical attributes and the commentary becomes another instance of stereotyping. Stereotyping which both creates and recreates the stereotypical structure of commentary as the commentators exercise no agency outside of drawing upon existing discourses, without understanding or knowing about the negative connotations which follow covertly in parallel with their face value positive assessments of players.

The final passage of commentary focusing solely on a black player's speed relates to the Belgium winger Jeremy Doku during their fixture against Italy. The context behind the piece of commentary involves an incident between Italy full back Giovanni Di Lorenzo and Doku where Doku was fouled after dribbling past Di Lorenzo. The excerpt from the commentator states *'Di Lorenzo [foul] on Doku, there's the pace we talked about. A push in the back, frightening pace there ... when you play international football you need to be prepared for this kind of pace, he's [Doku is] lightning'*. The commentator makes multiple notes of just the 'pace' of Doku: frightening pace, needing to be prepared for this pace at international level and describing him as being 'lightning'. The whole focus coded by the commentator for the audience is that of Doku's speed, the commentator provides three close together examples all of which reside in the stereotype of physicality rather than praising his speed and another praising the mental assessment of the situation and the defender's poor positioning. The setting of the tone of the discourse initially on pace is derived from the background bedrock of positive physical description of black

athletes and is then twice reinforced and reproduced by the two further references to the pace of Doku. Efforts to dispel such stereotypes need to not only overcome the absence of mental praise for black athletes, but also overcome repeated reinforcement of the stereotypes simultaneously.

Euro 2020: Black Players Positive Strength Remarks

With the majority of the comments on black physicality alone relating to the speed of the players being commentated on, the remaining five of the fifteen examples relate to the strength of the players. Four of the five examples of commentary relate to a single player who contextually received all four in the space of two matches evidencing a very consistent narrative around the physicality of the player. The player in question is Denzel Dumfries, a Dutch wing back who, at the time of recording, played for PSV Eindhoven in the Netherlands. In a method atypical of prior examples, the commentator made note of a magazine publication in which Denzel Dumfries received description before the game. The commentator stated, *‘world soccer magazine described Dumfries as a ‘running freight train’* before moments later adding his own assessment of Dumfries describing him as a *‘powerhouse right wing back’*. Firstly, the approach to beginning the description of Dumfries is indicative of commentary seen in an upcoming section in the results on discourse ‘othering’ non-Premier League players. A brief explanation of this would be a comparatively extensive description or analysis of a player who does not play in the Premier League and therefore does not feature on English football broadcasts often. This concept will be elaborated upon further in the dedicated section.

Regarding the commentator’s reference of world soccer magazine, a contextually respected publication, the commentator is not only using his own legitimacy to reinforce calling Dumfries a freight train, but he is adding the legitimacy of the magazine to his own which serves to further reinforce that description of the player. The act of then describing him as a powerhouse right wingback both reinforces the statement said moments before and solidifies both discourses around the player, front staging Dumfries’ physical attributes ahead of any mental attributes which appear in his play. For context, Dumfries scored two goals and assisted another over the course of the two televised Dutch fixtures. With

this context, the commentators have purely focused on his physicality in spite of any mental attributes which contributed to his performances and goal involvements for the Netherlands. In addition to the initial establishment of the physical discourse of being a freight train and powerhouse, later in the game the ex-professional commentator exchanged interactional discourse with the career commentator referencing the world soccer magazine remark earlier.

Recalling the initial discourse, they both said, *'Who was it that wrote that piece about Dumfries again?'*. *'World soccer magazine'*. *'Well, they know their stuff'*. *'They [the magazine] always do a great preview, I highly recommend it'*. The exchange begins with the foregrounding of the magazine publication again returning the discourse to the freight train assessment of Dumfries made by them before the game and then reiterated by the commentators during the play. With the interactional exchange, the commentators both reinforce the discourse in immediate succession of each other legitimizing each other, the magazine and the discourses of physicality that have been established now and beforehand about Dumfries. Not only is it a case of the discourse being drawn from the bedrock of existing stereotype and then remaining a one-time utilisation of the bias, but it is also a multitude of different sources all carrying their own legitimacy in the footballing and media framework and placing that legitimacy behind a specific stereotype targeted around an individual player.

Not only will the existing stereotypes around Dumfries be present but have been reinforced threefold on multiple occasions serving to further cement the discourse around him in a solely physical way. All of this being done in spite of the context that Dumfries was the club captain for PSV therefore occupying a leadership role in the team, none of which is made note of for the listening audience, a further exemplification of the semantic macrostructure simplifying what could be a holistic discourse into a stereotypical one. Finally, the fourth instance of discourse solely on Dumfries in the space of two matches again relates to the freight train stereotype. As seen in the discourse on Lukaku earlier, the decision on the part of the commentators and pundits to say freight train, rather than simply describing them as a train alone, is indicative of the stereotype and its connotations. The connotations of the freight train compared to a standard train is that of size and

being seen as unstoppable which, when personified through application to a footballer, invokes the power and strength stereotypes.

The further instance is a further reinforcement of the prior discourse, the commentator simply states, *'Hello, hello, hello the freight train has arrived again, on time'*. A short and simple phrase carrying the weight of the multiple prior instances of stereotyping discourse, with the further legitimacy creating effect of coinciding with the goal contributions of Dumfries. The listening audience are therefore given the established stereotypes, the reinforced discourse from three legitimacy carrying sources and the visual reinforcement of the discourses being delivered alongside goals and assists. During the play, multiple opportunities for holistic commentary referencing the mental side of the game in the build-up to Dumfries' goal contributions alongside his physical side of the game were available to the commentators: the anticipation of the ball being delivered into the penalty area for him to score his goals and the vision and passing skill to provide the assist he got at the competition. It is the absence of these which further entrenches the discourses from which the commentators and the magazine are drawing upon.

The final instance of strength related discourse again involves Renato Sanches, the Portuguese midfielder seen referenced above in the speed discourses section. The pundit during analysis referred to a multitude of aspects relating to Sanches, stating that *'There's a lot to like about Renato Sanches and it was on show for all to see there ... a great show of strength, durability, drive and vision'*. The structuring of the phrase is key to the discourse around Sanches with the prioritization of each aspect by the pundit. The analysis starts with reference to his strength followed his durability and drive and finally discussion of his vision. The inclusion of the initial sentence serves to set the tone of the discourse as being a total description of Sanches by saying 'it was all on show for all to see' referring to his attributes, the decision then to prioritise his physical attributes and leaving the mental praise until last is indicative of the pundit drawing upon the established discourses when structuring his analysis. It can be said that this analysis is more holistic with it actually including a reference to a mental characteristic but with it being left until the end following three purely physical assessments, the description still remains heavily skewed towards physicality.

Euro 2020: Direct Use of the Black/White Dichotomy

The following six items of commentary involves the direct usage of physical description of a black player preceded or proceeding a directly mental reference in commentary about a white player. The first instance involves Raheem Sterling and Phil Foden, both teammates at club and international level at the time of recording. Contextually in the game scenario, Sterling was the player currently dribbling in possession of the football with Foden ahead of him, running without the football. Despite this context, the commentary on Sterling made note of him *'running'* rather than dribbling as would better convey the connotation of running with the football rather than without. Immediately after this, Foden was described as *'moving nicely in front of him [Sterling]'* and when he received the ball from Sterling and shot on goal, the commentary made note of it being a *'first glimpse of Foden's fantastic talent'*. Across the three comments quickly delivered by the commentators, several connotations are conveyed, and the usual stereotypes are drawn upon in the delivery of the comments. Even with Sterling carrying out a skilful action and Foden carrying out a physical action, the prevalence and depth of the stereotypes is highlighted, and the commentators draw upon the physical biases to describe Sterling and running and Foden as displaying *'movement'*, a commonly used term to describe physical actions of white players in a more mental connotation than for instance *'running'*.

Additionally in the same fixture, in an instance where Raheem Sterling, Calvin Phillips and Declan Rice were all referenced, Phillips and Sterling were noted by the commentator as *'having licence to run'*, while immediately following this, Rice was stated to have instead been there to *'stay and cover'*. Looking at both comments, it is self-evident that despite Sterling and Phillips occupying different positions in the team, a winger and midfielder respectively, they are still beholden to the stereotypes at play in the commentary. Furthermore, the suggestion of having *'licence to run'* when directly paired with the suggestion that Rice will therefore *'stay and cover'* serves to situate Sterling and Phillips in an even more evidently physical discourse paired with the mental discourse and connotation of Rice providing the safety net for when they exercise their licence to run. One of the main aspects of the direct use of the black/white biased dichotomy, in comparison to a

lone physical or mental description, is that both discourses are placed at the forefront simultaneously and in direct opposition which deepens the 'common-sense' assumptions which are derived from the longstanding stereotypes.

Returning to the discourse on Denzel Dumfries and the narrative of being likened to a freight train above, the notion of directly concurrent use of both physical and mental stereotypes in the same passage of commentary was evident alongside the individual instances of physical stereotyping of Dumfries seen above. Directly following one of the four instances of physical discourse on Dumfries, Marcel Sabitzer, a white midfielder for Austria, was described in the next sentence as being 'so creative'. Not only does the stereotypical discourse on Dumfries have the reinforcement of four instances of being regarded as a freight train, the discourses and racially biased dichotomy has the reinforcement of immediate mental praise for a white player to solidify the existing structure of biased thinking towards white mental proficiency and in turn, black physical proficiency.

In a similar passage of discourses, two teammates were described in such terms, both Dutch forwards Donyell Malen, a black striker playing for PSV Eindhoven at the time of recording, and Wout Weghorst, a white striker playing for VfL Wolfsburg at the time of recording, were remarked upon by the commentators as they contextually discussed how the Netherlands were going to score a goal in the final minutes of the game. In their assessment, the commentator stated, *'He just looks lively, Malen ... of course [Malen] is a different type of player to Weghorst in terms of his movement, running in behind always on the move'*. First of all, the discussion is brought to the forefront through the focus on the Dutch efforts to score a goal, placing focus on their strikers, which is then expanded upon with the commentator's assessments of Malen with the added comparative locus of Weghorst. First of all, stating that Malen is a different type of player to Weghorst begins the process of placing them in a position of comparison. Following that, Malen's skills are summarized as being movement, running in behind and being always on the move. Not only is Malen being described in the same bodily sense that has been seen numerous times above, but the suggestion of Malen also being a 'different type of player' to Weghorst carries all the connotations of the mental/physical stereotype

even without the commentator then reaffirming the fact with the physical focus on Malen.

The two remaining instances of black and white players being compared in a physical stereotype directly involve suggestion of a black player overcoming a white player with their physical attributes and with no mention of any further attributes they may possess. The first of these involves Kylian Mbappe, a player already seen above in the speed stereotypes section. The commentary in question pits Mbappe's speed against that of Mats Hummels, a German centre back, when stating '*He's [Mbappe's] just lightning quick, whether it's a little five-yard, 10-yard burst or longer. As Mats Hummels got to experience the other night, you just can't get near him*'. The immediate reference to Mbappe being lightning quick sets the tone for the discourse and is then followed with further qualifying remarks around the topic of his pace rather than additional attributes. Reference to Hummels not being able to cope with the pace carries the connotation of black physicality, specifically speed to overcome a white player who does not possess similar speed. The section of commentary immediately situates itself in the stereotypical discourse through its absence of anything other than physical praise for Mbappe's speed, the commentary draws from the existing stereotype around Mbappe and other black athletes with only consideration for their physicality. It then contributes to the perpetuation of the stereotypes upon which the commentary is drawn from, exhibiting characteristics of Fairclough's structuring and re-structuring process.

The second instance of a white player being challenged by a black player's speed and that being the sole focus of the commentary involves again a white centre back and black forward in Giorgio Chiellini and Romelu Lukaku. The context of the piece is provided in the commentary where Chiellini had recovered from a hamstring injury that led to a short absence leading up to the fixture against Belgium. The commentator states, '*Here's the returning Chiellini, he needs to make sure his hamstring is prepared because he's going to be up against Lukaku who's pace and power is going to test that hamstring this evening*' ... *you saw how quickly Lukaku was on to that in a flash*'. Rather than a focus on the subject at hand being Chiellini, the commentary is spun into a physical description of Romelu Lukaku with the often-repeated pace and power phrase rooted in the strong and quick black athlete

discourses. It refers to no option for Lukaku to ‘test’ Chiellini’s hamstring with dribbling and changes of direction but simply his speed and his strength. Not only was Lukaku drawn into the item of commentary on Chiellini with only physical description, but it was also almost immediately reinforced by commentary on an instance of Lukaku running onto a through pass. Both instances set the scene and discourse around physicality, having drawn upon stereotypical physical discourse in the first place and then reinforce the discourse in the structure of commentary seen in the numerous examples above.

Euro 2020: White Players Positive Mental Remarks

The final section relating to the black/white physical/mental dichotomy involves the positive mental remarks made towards white players in the commentary. There were 15 context rich remarks made by commentators portraying the mental traits of white footballers in a positive light. Six of which involve reference to Italian players and the team as a whole. The first remark of the tournament, made in the opening fixture, involved reference to the all-white Italian 11 collectively. Making note of the passing from the Italians, the commentator noted ‘Pleasing movement and tempo to the passing from the Italians’. The excerpt utilises the previously seen discourse of ‘movement’ in relation to the physical output of white players where speed pace or another physically connotive word would instead be used in discourses on black players (as seen above). The connotation of movement in the footballing sense when compared with pace or speed is that of a more thoughtful and considered action, one where the running of the player is done so as part of a passage of play, whereas the connotations of pace or speed deliver a physically focused discourse and connotation. When partnered with praise for the Italians’ passing and tempo, it conjures a wholly mental picture when describing the interplay and the movement off the ball that the players are carrying out. With the entire 11 of the Italian team being white, the discourses draw upon the comparative stereotypes that the black physical commentary draws upon and then situates the white players in the mental discourse further widening the dichotomy from both sides of the spectrum.

The next three instances of white mental commentary related directly to the Italian centre backs Giorgio Chiellini and Leonardo Bonucci, both contextually are veteran players for the national side and their club side Juventus at the time of recording. All three comments were made relating to the young Dutch centre back Matthijs de Ligt who, at the time of the euros, was a junior teammate of the aforementioned Italians at Juventus. The first comment made note of the roles of the Italians as mentors for the younger de Ligt. The commentator noted, *'[De Ligt is] Learning the defensive arts from Chiellini and how to play out positively and build from the back from Bonucci'*. The overriding connotations are that of mental proficiency, experience and mentoring on the part of the senior Italian defenders which further solidifies the white mental stereotype surrounding them and the team as a whole as seen in the initial example. It also has the connotation of the young de Ligt accumulating experience and knowledge from Chiellini and Bonucci and therefore building the discourses of mental proficiency around him from a young age also. These themes are reinforced by the commentator also making the suggestion that playing with such learned veterans is *'like Harvard for centre halves' ... 'Learning, learning, learning all the time as a Juventus defender'*. The twice repeated themes of learning, alongside the additionally emphasising use of the rule of three, provide ample reinforcement for the discourses of mental proficiency on behalf of the older white centre backs and budding mental proficiency on the part of the younger de Ligt.

The final three instances of mental praise relating to the Italian team and its players involve Marco Verratti, a central midfielder playing for Paris Saint Germain at the time of recording. Immediately preceding the item of commentary on Verratti, he had completed an incisive pass through the Welsh team to a fellow Italian resulting in the commentator noting *'Wales can't allow Verratti to be on the ball in the middle of the goal 25-30 yards out because he will destroy you, he's that talented ... world class player'*. The initial description of Verratti sets up the discourse to portray him as a competent and dangerous player when passing the ball. With the addition of explicitly referring to him as a world class player, the discourses around his passing in the context of the action he performed along with the evident threat he poses to the opposition all prepare the discourse to be praising and positive towards him.

The two following pieces of commentary build upon the established praise for Verratti and dive deeply into discourses on mental proficiency directly. The first of the two provides a short and simple appraisal of both Verratti and his teammate Matteo Pessina, *'Verratti clever, very clever ... Precise from Pessina'*. Both short statements invoke connotations of mental ability, with cleverness and precision both being prime examples of skilful description and perpetuate the running discourse of skill and mental proficiency. The final instance of commentary again relates to a combination of play between Verratti and Pessina and goes into greater detail than the aforementioned excerpt. The commentator states again, *'Verratti, so many touches ... look at that for a clever ball in almost provided another goal for Pessina ... again its great running off the ball from Pessina'*. More detailed description of characteristics which hold mental connotation in football are seen in this excerpt: the frequent touches of the ball, further description of *'a clever ball'* referring to a quality pass almost resulting in a goal and finally a slight physical description of Pessina when referencing his running. However, the description of the running and the connotation of the phrasing re-situate the discourse in a mental way. Regarding the running as *'running off the ball'* provides connotation of anticipation and awareness compared to simply stating that Pessina was running. It fits into the category of similar cognitive descriptions of white physical actions such as referring to *'movement'* or *'dribbling'* while black players are described in terms of strength or speed when running.

Following the numerous repeated and reinforced examples of mental praise for the Italian side and its players, three instances of similar discourse on the Belgian squad were seen in the commentary. The first two refer again, like the Italian examples, to the centre backs of the team. Jan Vertonghen, a veteran centre back who formerly played in the Premier League and was playing for Benfica at the time of recording, was made note of during a break in play which allowed for a more in-depth item of commentary stating, *'I think he's [Vertonghen] an intelligent footballer, we talk about some his deficiencies which is maybe pace and not being able to cover ground but the intelligence with which he plays in covering those spaces is so important for his team'*. In light of all the above examples of black footballers being described in terms of their physical proficiency, this example of a

white player having his pace being described as one of his deficiencies approaches the stereotypical discourses from the opposite direction.

There is a front staging of the fact that the player lacks physically and following it, an affirmation of his mental abilities which are seen to compensate for a reduced physicality. In a national team setting where players such as Romelu Lukaku are being pictured in a solely physical light, the juxtaposition of his white teammates being described as both physically lacking and instead using their mental attributes serves to entrench the dichotomy between black and white player descriptions and discourse. These themes were reinforced later in the same fixture in relation to both of the white Belgian veteran centre backs, Jan Vertonghen and Toby Alderweireld, when it was again noted by the commentators that *'The brain puts you where the legs can't sometimes'*. It is another example of a particular theme being returned to during the course of the same fixture, as was seen in the repeated 'freight train' physical discourses surrounding Denzel Dumfries in the Dutch fixture.

The following two examples involve pundits dovetailing their analyses during half time, adding further legitimacy to each other's discourses. The first concerns Luka Modric, the Croatian captain and high-profile midfielder for Real Madrid at the time of recording. The studio pundits both noted that *'At 35 he's still such an elegant footballer'* ... *'we just saw one or two bits of top quality to remind us of what he can do'* ... *'they need Modric to link the play and get them up the pitch'*. Each back-and-forth sentence contains a further affirmation of his mental abilities: 'elegant', 'top quality', 'link the play', each increasingly situating the discourse in a mental and skilful sense. With the interaction of the ex-professional pundits specifically, these choices of descriptions by the commentators combine to sway viewers in the direction of accepting this encoded discourse as being the preferred discourse (Whannel 1986) and with the pre-existing entrenched stereotypes around white mental proficiency, a preferred reading faces even fewer obstacles. Even when commentators are not combining their analysis, their discourses and the phrases used to describe players still have the effect of leaning audiences in the direction of a preferred dominant decoding, notwithstanding the option for an

oppositional decoding in spite of the bedrock of stereotypes already present and the expert analysis directing viewers in its direction.

A second example of pundits taking turns to develop a thread of analysis and discourse is that of the punditry on two Ukrainian footballers, Ruslan Malinovskyi of Atalanta and Oleksandr Zinchenko of Manchester City at the time of recording, now playing for Arsenal. The female manager and male ex-professional pundits described both when saying, *'Him [Malinovskyi] and Zinchenko are creating problems for north Macedonia ... [he has a] great left foot'*. The connotation of 'creating problems' in tandem with having a 'great left foot' presents the notion of the players having high technical ability primarily through their passing and dribbling which are the prime connotations of causing problems in a footballing sense.

Again during the half time punditry, the sense of the Ukrainian players having skill and quality was returned to during a comparison to their North Macedonian opponents. The same set of commentators observed that *'They've [North Macedonia] got that spirit and work ethic while Ukraine have the quality'*. Within these observations, not only is there the overt theme of Ukraine's players having quality as per the directed punditry on Malinovskyi and Zinchenko, there is also the additional theme of work ethic in their description of North Macedonia. The connotations surrounding work ethic in a footballing sense lead towards professionalism and mentality despite the physicality needed to carry out a good work ethic through running without the ball and defending. The two-pronged nature of the comments in the punditry look at work ethic, which has both a physical and a mental side, but only refers to it in a purely mental way with no reference to any running or physical exertion that is needed to demonstrate a good work ethic in a football match. This leads audiences in the direction of a dominant mental reading, whilst providing a directly mental assessment of the Ukrainian team saying they have 'the quality'.

The final three instances of mental focus during the commentary and punditry in Euro 2020 revolve around the Spanish national team and its players. Like the Italian seen above, the Spanish national team and Spanish footballers are commonly stereotyped as being more skilful and less physical in their philosophy towards playing the game epitomised by the tiki-taka style. As was often seen during the

Euro 2020 half time punditry, multiple pundits combine their views and result in a strongly reinforced discourse around a team or player. Regarding the Spanish, the pundits noted, *'Spain doing what they do, good possession, good passing, good chances created' ... 'yeah, they dominated the passing' ... 'they always dictate the play'*. Every individual item on the agenda of the pundits in their description plays into the discourse of Spain being a technical and mentally skilful side of players. With the constant utilization of the established stereotypes about Spain and the three informed expert analysers all providing a reinforcing discourse, the perpetuation of the narrative around the Spanish national team and Spanish players is drawn upon and built upon continually. Again, there is no mention of Spain's white players demonstrating their physicality and there is no mention of the numerous black players in the above examples demonstrating their mental qualities, despite each of the actions on the field of play requiring the unmentioned characteristics.

A further example of commentary on Spain was provided at the start of one of the games, serving to set the tone of the discourse around the team. The career commentator and ex-pro note in succession, *'Spain expected to keep most of the possession ... Spain will pass you to death'*. The context of this being said in the opening moments of a fixture highlights the fact that there is both a discourse on Spain and that the commentators will draw upon the discourse in their descriptions as evidenced in the punditry above. It both delivers the opinion of the commentator in the expectation that Spain will approach the game with skill and passing to retain possession of the football and it delivers the dominant discourse around the team of mental proficiency and technical ability. The addition of the ex-professional expert voice stating that Spain will 'pass you to death' only serves as reinforcement to the already delivered discourse which has drawn from the established discourse.

The final item on Spain and Spanish players details an individual during the play. Sergio Busquets, a veteran deep lying midfielder playing for Barcelona at club level, is noted during the commentary by the ex-professional commentator, *'A great example there of Busquets, he shows himself to the centre back and it doesn't look like there's a ball on. He's already seen the pass, what options he's got before the ball arrives and whips the ball up to the centre forward and all of a sudden Spain are out [of the pressure]'*. Starting the description by stating it is a great example

adds weight to the action under examination and the discourses within, followed then by four concurrent instances of mental praise. Praise that is towards the player both from a technical standpoint through his passing and an experience standpoint through his vision and awareness on the field. No mention is made of any physical attributes that Busquets may or may not have in relation to his teammates or his opponents however no negative connotation comes from being categorised as brainy and lacking physicality in a footballing sense. The established stereotypes and the bedrock of discourse around mental and physical attributes has a significant sway towards a negative mental stereotype in the presence of solely physical praise.

Euro 2020: Extra-contextual Commentator Remarks

The following examples of commentator remarks involve discourses which do not fit into the above white mental/black physical entrenched stereotype that exists in the discourse. As per the methodological critique of van Sterkenburg et al. (2010). These remarks were noted for a more comprehensive insight into the discourses at play in football commentary. Two arose in the very first fixture of the Euros and relate to two Italian players, Mario Balotelli and Giorgio Chiellini. what is notable about the commentary on Balotelli is that his last appearance for the team was in 2018 yet he still features in the commentary three years later. Contextually, Balotelli is a former Premier League striker having played for both Manchester City and Liverpool and had a reputation for being 'enigmatic' (BBC Sport 2012). During the Italy fixture, Balotelli's relationship with Roberto Mancini was made note of due to Mancini being the current Italian team manager and formerly manager of Manchester City during Balotelli's time there. The commentator stated, '*I think he frustrated a few managers in his time, Balotelli*'. The brief note was made in and around positive mental remarks about white Italian players as seen in the above section on positive white mental remarks in the commentary and stood out as a negative mental remark relating to Balotelli who was not even playing in the fixture.

In the same opening fixture, Italy captain Chiellini was described as a '*Roman Centurion*' and in conjunction with his fellow centre back partner Leonardo Bonucci, they were described as '*the old gladiators*'. Following these two short remarks, the commentator elaborated by saying '*You could see ancestors of Giorgio Chiellini in*

a roman legion couldn't you, the helmet, the works, a true commander'. All three instances rely on national stereotypes of Rome and Italy and play into the same principles seen in the discourses around Spanish players and their football-specific established stereotypes. They provide the same approach to entrenched ideas and stereotypes seen throughout the commentary and while one can see them as positives, the principles around national stereotypes carrying negative connotations as will be discussed in the following examples.

In descriptions of Eastern European teams, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian players were often seen as being physical in terms of their strength but less so in terms of their pace and less so in a natural sense, as is seen in the descriptions of black players. Russian and Ukrainian centre forwards were described as being 'big and powerful target men' and Polish players were remarked for 'standing strong' against the 'quick feet' of the Spanish opposition. Like the oft-repeated World War Two stereotypes when England face Germany epitomised by the 'Achtung Surrender' front page of the 1996 Daily Mirror, the presence of lingering Cold War stereotypes of being rudimentary and rugged still surround former Eastern Bloc nations, Russia and their players (van Doorslaer 2021). While some mental praise filters through to players such as Zinchenko from Ukraine in the previous section, the consistent themes for Eastern European nations are that of low mental proficiency and high physical proficiency, specifically strength over speed. This is exacerbated when the teams face opponents who are seen as mentally proficient as the divide becomes further apparent in the commentary between the stereotypically skilful and the stereotypically robust across a now non-existent political border.

Shifting away from national stereotype, Austria captain David Alaba, a black central defender who plays for Real Madrid having formerly played for Bayern Munich, received multiple instances of mental praise. After successive short instances of praise for passing and composure, Alaba was compared by the ex-professional commentator to Franz Beckenbauer. Contextually, Beckenbauer is one of the most highly rated German footballers of all time having the nickname 'Der Kaiser' for his leadership and skill. Both Alaba and Beckenbauer share the characteristic of being former midfielders who moved to a central defensive sweeping role requiring their passing and skill as midfielders to perform in the

formation, comparison to Beckenbauer by the commentator is an overt suggestion of praise, quality and skill on behalf of Alaba. Additionally, Alaba is both seen as the standout player above all others in the Austrian team being a multiple Bundesliga title winner and champions league winner with both Bayern and Real Madrid featuring in a comparatively low internationally ranked Austria side. The mental praise for Alaba stands out against the volume of physical only praise for black footballers above in the results. As noted in prior studies, black footballers tend to only receive regular mental praise when they are at either the pinnacle of the sport or the pinnacle of the group of players featuring (McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003). Alaba here is both highly regarded as one of highest quality centre backs in the world at club level and the standout player for Austria at international level.

Euro 2020: 'Taking the Knee'

The following section analyses the Euro 2020 examples of commentary relating to the act of 'taking the knee' mirroring the pre-match act done in the Premier League in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. Much like the Premier League section on the knee, it juxtaposes the other sections by involving a direct anti-racism message yet still the commentary during games exhibits significant naturalised racially biased commentary. Of the seventeen fixtures recorded for the Euro 2020 sample, only five made reference to the knee or had the knee taken before kick-off compared to eleven instances from sixteen matches in the Premier League sample. The first instance of commentary on taking the knee occurred in the Russia v Belgium fixture. The commentator noted, *'The Belgian players take the knee to send the message that there is no room for racism, it is not met with universal applause in the stadium, rather met with crude whistles'*. Contextually, this was a home fixture for Russia with a large proportion of the crowd being home fans at the Krestovsky Stadium in St Petersburg. Furthermore, with Russian fans having been reprimanded for monkey chants in previous international fixtures involving black opposing players, 'crude whistles' towards the knee follow the same trend. It should also be noted that a significant proportion of the Belgian team play their football in the Premier League or had done so priorly in their careers, which is a theme apparent amongst the nations participating in the act of taking the knee.

The second instance appears in the England v Croatia fixture at Wembley Stadium. The commentator observed, *'Temperature of around 28 degrees at the start of the game as England's players take the knee'*. Notably, no mention was made of the Croatian players as they did not join the English players in the act. Rather they stood and pointed to the UEFA Respect badge on the sleeves of their shirts as their form of demonstrating anti-discrimination. Again, the situation of large portions of the England squad all playing in the Premier League is apparent with the majority of the Croatian players playing in leagues around Europe who did not have the precedent of taking the knee prior to kick-off. No mention was made to the crowd in comparison to the Russia Belgium game however the knee was received well by the majority England crowd being a home game at Wembley Stadium.

The third instance involves Scotland at home at Hampden Park against the Czech Republic but also includes reference to England when discussing the knee. The commentary before kick-off stated, *'Scotland will show solidarity with the England players at Wembley on Friday, but here at Hampden they continue to stand against racism'*. Notably, Scotland hold their own policy towards anti-racism and the act of taking the knee depending on the setting and the opponent. When at home in Scotland, the commentator notes that they 'stand against racism', an act mirrored by the Czech team, however it was prefaced with the information that when facing England, a team that does engage in the act of taking the knee, they will follow suit and join them. It evidences a further way in which anti-racism and anti-discrimination messages are delivered and that there is no uniform approach from governing bodies or national associations when addressing the messages being delivered prior to kick-off.

The final two instances take place in Welsh fixtures with the first involving Italy in the final match of the group stages. The commentary makes note of both sets of players when stating, *'The Welsh players take the knee, some of the Italian players join them, bit of confusion there. The message of anti-discrimination is still there'*. Regarding the mixed involvement of the Italian players, the players who participated play domestically in the Premier League and therefore are more exposed to the act of taking the knee before games with some but not all of the

other Italian players following suit. The Welsh players on the other hand all play in Britain either for Premier League, Scottish league or English football league sides. Alongside the second line of commentary about Wales taking the knee where it was said, '*The players of Wales take a knee, no room for discrimination or there should not be in our game*', there is a distinct correlation between involvement in football in Britain and the act of taking the knee. No further instances of the knee being taken were recorded in games which did not feature a home nations side (England, Scotland and Wales) or a side like Belgium with numerous Premier League players.

Euro 2020: Owing and Othering

The following section was added into the research as per the procedural critique of van Sterkenburg et al. (2010) advising the inclusion of information not fitting into the key categories of the research. This category appeared exclusively among the Euro 2020 commentary and is an example of the differences between domestic and international commentary trends. With the overall categories of Owing and Othering, four subsections address distinct trends in the commentary with the first looking at home nation bias and 'owning' in the commentary followed by the second section on Premier League instances of owing relating to international players not playing for a home nation, the third section relates to the preferential treatment of home nation players when facing non-home nation opposition and finally a section on the othering of teams and players who do not feature for either a home nation or a Premier League side. 'Owing', in research terms, will be defined as the act of preferentially treating a player or team in commentary based on an affiliation towards the player or team while 'Othering', in the context of this study, is defined as those who are spoken about in terms of being external to the Premier League or the home nations at the tournament.

Prefacing the first section, it was noted that the commentator selections for the home nation fixtures (England, Scotland and Wales) involved the utilisation of English, Scottish and Welsh ex-professional players for their respective nations' games. It was also noted that commentary was welcoming and defensive of home nation players and teams, three examples of which appeared in the Scotland v Czech Republic fixture. Firstly, the Scottish ex-professional commentator appraised the

Scottish performance during a break in play by stating, *'I think we've shown enough in spells, but there's been sustained periods where we can maybe ask a few more questions'*. In the context of Czech pressure on the Scots, suggesting that there has been 'sustained periods where we can maybe ask a few more questions' indicates a reticence to critique the Scottish play too heavily under the circumstances of Czech dominance during the preceding play. A sentiment that was echoed in the not too far distant future in the match following a Czech goal prompting the career commentator to state, *'And its Patrick Schick who rips up the Scotland script'*. Such commentary provides the direction and suggestion that the goal was scored in spite of Scottish domination of the play and places the focus on Scotland instead of the Czech build-up to the eventual goal.

The discourses at play, while not directly involving the themes of the research, evidence the existence of structural biasing which can in turn aid in the production of the biases in the wider study. Relating to the structure of the media event, all three of the studio pundits for the fixture were Scottish providing no neutral or Czech representation in the analysis with the majority of insights being on the Scottish actions during the first half. Furthermore, the production utilised additional pitch-side pundits who were again Scottish to reinforce the discourses around the Scottish play. The total slant towards one nation in the commentary, analysis and punditry encodes all the discourses in the direction of the Scottish team. It should be noted that the broadcasting companies are British and will therefore have an interest in promoting the home nations. However, the structural biases that evolve from it can overflow into further biased discourses as seen above relating to various nationalities.

A further aspect of home nation bias involves a series of commentary on Raheem Sterling, a player notably stereotyped in the print media historically and physically in commentator discourses. A consistent discourse referring to Sterling as the 'Boy from Brent' was evident in both the commentary and the punditry during England fixtures. There was a concerted effort to portray Sterling in a positive light which may have arisen from the overly negative discourses that have come from the media about him in the past. Furthermore, an additional piece of commentary directly following a Sterling goal stated, *'Made in Yorkshire [Phillips assist] and*

finished in his own neighbourhood ... Raheem Sterling MBE'. Both players are referred to in terms of their places of residence and birth in an overall discourse of nationhood and welcoming to two non-white players in the national squad and the item of commentary was finished with reference to Sterling's knighthood both front staging his award and continuing the discourse of nationhood with the honours list being an overtly national institution. Both the boy from Brent discourse and the nationhood discourses are symptomatic same principles seen in the above discourse in the Scottish fixture where the exploits of the team and the associated players are emphasised. These aspects of 'Owning' in the commentary and analysis juxtapose with Othering of non-home nation teams and their players which will be analysed later in the section.

The second section continues with the theme of Owning, overviewing the international players (not playing for England, Scotland or Wales) that were mentioned in the commentary solely in the context of their Premier League affiliation rather than their role in the international squad. An item of commentary that exemplifies the style of reference towards these players is, *'Brentford fans, one of yours is coming on. Halil Dervisoglu*'. Here there is no mention made of Dervisoglu's role in the Turkish national team or his position on the field and instead he is associated only with his Premier League affiliation in Brentford. The aim for the commentators is to add familiarity for audiences based in the UK with reference to Premier League allegiances however the discourses obliterate any information or interest towards the overseas team being televised and solely situates the discourse with home nation or domestic football themes. Two further examples were seen in one game about one player, Mateusz Klich, where he was spoken about twice when the commentator stated, *'Tracked well by Klich of Leeds United*' and *'That's a yellow card for Klich of Leeds*'. It was not simply enough to state his name and continue with the commentary, the affiliation to Leeds United had to be mentioned both times to return the discourse of the familiar Premier League aspect for the broadcast on British television. This sees itself further exemplified in commentary on two players, chosen from twenty-two, in the Austria v North Macedonia game where they were referred to by the career commentator as, *'Watford's Bachmann and Leeds's Alioski*' followed later in the half by the ex-professional commentator stating, *'For the people watching the Premier League a lot, they have a really good*

left sided player in Alioski'. As above, the regular Owning of players from international teams gives rise to an artificial creation of a dichotomy between certain players being known Premier League domestic players and those who are not and are therefore the Other.

Linking the Scottish owning discourses above to the discourses of overseas Premier League player Owning, several former and current Czech Republic players were referenced in the context of the Premier League rather than any Czech context. Prior to the start of the match, the commentator made note of the composition of the Czech team however did so in a way that emphasised the retired Premier League players over any of the current players. He stated, '*Gone are the days of Petr Cech and Tomas Rosicky*'. 'Gone are the days' provides an inferred connotation that the quality of the Czech national side had reduced in the absence of these stated Premier League players and makes no note of any other non-Premier League player who formerly would have added quality to the ranks of their national side. Additionally, in the early moments of the game the ex-professional commentator made note of the only current Premier League players featuring in the Czech side stating, '*Obviously they've got one or two players that we're more aware of in Soucek and Coufal*'. This was done in spite of other representatives of the Czech side playing in high profile European leagues such as Patrick Schick, who did receive mention later in the game when he scored, as seen in the above commentary focused on Scotland, and Vlad Darida who captains the side above Soucek and Coufal. The constant reference back to the Premier League or to the home nation sides continues to passively sway the discourse towards a sense of the opposition being the Other and those with either a direct home nation link or an indirect Premier League link as being afforded a sense of Ownership in the discourses.

The third section makes note of the preferential treatment received by home nations teams and players during the commentary serving to add to the theme of Owning. One example of this style of commentary featured in England and Scotland games each while six instances of preferential treatment in the commentary were seen in Wales games. The majority of the items of commentary focus on fouling on the part of a home nation player and it being downplayed as not seemingly being as bad an infringement. The English and Scottish commentators made note of a

succession of an English player's fouls and an individual Scottish foul respectively, stating in relation to the English player that *'He does it in a cute way, breaking up the play'* and *'I'm telling you there's an art to it [fouling]'* and for the Scottish player stating *'Stuart [Armstrong] just slips and I'm not sure there's too much in that'*. The defence of the home nation players in these items exhibits the same defensive Owing discourses as the ones seen in the Scotland v Czech Republic match where the home team as a whole receives commentary downplaying failures and poor play.

Further to these, the six instances of preferential treatment of Welsh play include topics like fouling seen above but also the quality of the players and reference to opposition fouling in comparison with Welsh fouling. The first among these exhibits the same discursive themes when the commentator states, *'That's unpopular with the Stadio Olimpico [Italian] fans'*. *'If there's a thing as a good foul, that's a good foul ... wasn't too cynical'*. The commentary includes the downplaying and preferential treatment, as seen in the English and Scottish examples, but also makes reference to the rightful remonstrations of the Italian fans due to the Welsh foul, but yet still attempts to suggest that it was a 'good foul' if such a foul is possible. The discourse of defence, in spite of the fact of the situation, sets the same Owing precedents as seen in the above player descriptive commentary with actions or comments always being linked to the familiar actors in the situation with the opposition remaining Othered. This is further reinforced in commentary following the red card dismissal of the Welsh player Ethan Ampadu after a bad tackle, again the Welsh commentator downplays the severity of the incident and states, *'Yes, he's late but I'm sticking up for Ampadu in a way because I don't think it's a red card ... personally I think it's a harsh decision'*. Once more, the preferential discourses around the home nation players are seen and set precedent for an unequal treatment of players in the commentary.

The final instances of commentary all feature in the Wales v Denmark fixture in the knockout rounds of the competition and again feature a Welsh ex-professional commentator. These commentary excerpts focus on the quality of the players and the opposing side of the above fouling discourses via questioning why an opposing player was not reprimanded for a foul on a Welsh player. Firstly, much like the

Scottish discourses of praising phases of play where their team is in the ascendancy, the commentator notes that *'Wales probably have the best two players on the pitch ... they [Denmark] can't deal with Wales at the moment'*. The note of both the quality of the players, which is subjective on the part of the commentator with a personal stake in Welsh success, followed by the comment on the dominant play by Wales at the time, all continue the biased themes that have been seen throughout this Owning and Othering section. The principles at play in the discourse are consistent across all home nation commentators and their commentary with the effect of always placing the opposing team as being such rather than a neutral and unbiased appraisal of the events unfolding.

Finally, the commentary relating to fouling in this fixture deviates from the defence of a home nation foul and rather focuses on an opposing Danish foul with the same home nation defending effect. The commentator emphasizes, *'The Welsh are protesting about the earlier foul that wasn't given, Denmark and Dolberg have two [goals] and Wales have a massive problem now'*. *'Yes, it was a foul but terrible defending ... there's the foul, how is that not a foul, surely that's got to be checked'*. Contextually, Denmark had scored their second goal of the game and a potential foul had been committed and not given by the officials. With the commentator holding a vested interest, the discourse of defence around a Welsh foul has instead become a discourse of defence toward a fouled Welsh player. Once again, the repeating discourses of Ownership of a particular player or team in the match results in the Othering of the opposing side despite legitimately scoring a goal in the viewpoint of the match officials. Until the restart of play, the commentators and media production repeatedly play the footage of the alleged fouling incident leading up to the goal stating *'How is that not a foul'* on multiple occasions during the accompanying video replays.

The fourth subsection relates to the Othering of players at the competition due to them not playing for either a home nation or playing in the Premier League and therefore, in the eyes of the commentator and broadcaster, would be less familiar to British audiences and therefore be considered an Other. Notable instances occurred where players were described in this way with the first being referenced twice in the same match in relation to a sibling who had played in the

Premier League, Thorgan Hazard was noted by the commentators as being '*Thorgan Hazard, the brother of Eden*' and '*Thorgan Hazard, thought of as the little brother of Eden, has come up with a big moment there*'. The failure to make note of Thorgan Hazard on his own merit and the need to refer to his Premier League alumni brother Eden shows the reverse side of the discourses seen in the second section where players were given special attention due to their Premier League affiliations. Here we see two instances where a non-Premier League player is competing in their own right but in the discourses is linked tenuously to the Premier League through a sibling.

Furthermore, a player playing their football outside of the Premier League sphere at club level received more description and analysis than different players on the same international team who did feature in the Premier League. Romelu Lukaku, who was playing for Inter Milan at the time of recording, underwent a lengthy piece of commentary outlining his goalscoring record in the Italian league while players with feats that are more familiar to Premier League audiences such as Kevin de Bruyne received no such analysis. In addition to these, numerous players were made note of as being 'the former [Premier League team] man' such as Lukaku being noted for his Manchester United and Chelsea affiliation amongst others rather than being referred to as a current Inter Milan striker at the time of recording. Both the extended reference to his Italian league statistics and the Premier League orientated notion of him being a former Manchester United player over being a current Inter Milan player all distance Lukaku in the discourse and contribute to his Othering in a Premier League and home nation dominated discourse.

Finally, in the same vein as players being referred to as being former Premier League team players, overseas club players were often described in the formula of being '[Player Name of Overseas Club]' an example of such being 'Thomas Muller of Bayern Munich'. Several instances of this formula of commentary became notable in their repetition and comparatively few home nation players received commentary stating the current Premier League team they play for. These Owning and Othering discourses, when viewed separately, appear normal and not out of the ordinary. However, when observed together they evidence a consistent pattern of inclusion for those who have affiliation to the home nations at the tournament and those who

play in a home nation league or team which is juxtaposed with an abundance of additional description and discourse for those who reside outside of the familiar accepted sphere of players and teams. These discourses, despite not being racially biased in the same style as the physical/mental black/white dichotomy discourses, evidence the same principles of dichotomous description towards differing groups of people and are rooted in the same practices and structures of sports commentary.

Conclusion

To conclude, the wealth of examples above in the qualitative half of the study, taken alongside the numerical data in the quantitative part of the study, combine to portray a picture of widespread and deep-rooted racial biases in football commentary. The data displays a consistent, physically focused discourse towards Black footballers and a mentally focused discourse towards White footballers. The data evidences the continued existence of what was deemed by Giulianotti to be a 'routinised racist vernacular' (2001) which has formed a bedrock of dominant commentator discourse from which commentators draw upon to utilise often-repeated soundbites such as 'pace and power', completely removing any mental aspect of the player or the actions of the player. The often-repeated physical descriptions, despite the inherent positivity, carry negative connotations relating to assumptions of natural physicality of black athletes (Cashmore 1994). Furthermore, assumptions of natural physicality, where it is assumed the athlete has therefore not had to work hard for their strength or speed, can juxtapose with descriptions of white athletes where due to not possessing the supposed natural physicality of black athletes, white athletes are seen as possessing more mental attributes which has resulted in phenomena such as stacking as seen in the review of literature.

Further to the idea of juxtaposition between black and white players, the reinforced focus of the descriptions on the speed and strength of players can serve to create a 'common-sense' assumption in audiences of the discourse (Miles 1984), especially if the provider of the discourse is both considered an expert in the field and the discourse is consistent and reaffirmed. This can therefore cause the audience to focus wholly upon the described attribute, in this instance the speed and pace of the black athlete. Therefore, the repeated and expert focus on black

speed and strength creates the common-sense assumption amongst the reader or viewer that the player in question may lack the attributes which have not been described due to the absence of description of it in favour of consistent physical description (Miles 1984). The discourses seen in the commentary are consistent with those seen in prior studies and evidence the continued existence of the physical black athlete stereotypes (McCarthy and Jones 1997; McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003).

VAN DIJK DISCOURSE ANALYSIS APPROACH

Introduction

This section aims to provide an analysis of the qualitative results when they are placed in the context of both the research design and the adapted van Dijk discourse analysis approach that was outlined in the methodology section. As noted by Tuchman (1978), the way in which the media frames what is being seen and heard by the audience is based on the constituent parts which make up the media, which in this study's case is the commentary and commentator teams. She further states that 'the view through a window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear' (p. 1). This notion from Tuchman, of varying factors through which framing is conducted, is key to the van Dijk discourse analysis. The section will approach the use of language in its socio-cultural context alongside the analysis of factors that van Dijk suggests are 'discursive mechanisms involved in the reproduction of ethnic prejudices and racism' (1991 p. x). The discourse analysis approach will take the form of a Structural Analysis, through which commentator interaction and ex-professional perspectives will be analysed. Following on from this, the analysis will examine the rhetorical forms in the commentary. Rhetorical forms are suggested to be used to enhance the effectiveness of discourses being delivered and encompass aspects such as metaphor, alliteration, repetition and parallelism.

A contextual analysis will provide demographic analysis of the commentators to establish the depth and breadth of the biased discourses in the pool of commentators followed by assessing how contextual visual footage is utilised by the commentators alongside their commentary to enhance it. Finally, a usage of the van Dijk notion of the Semantic Macro-structure will aim to identify which aspects of the play and the players which are prioritised by the commentators and what effect the prioritisation has on the discourses. The Weberian notion of Ideal Types, discussed in the methodology, offers a framework through which the analysis of the structure and content of the commentary and the football broadcast can be conducted. Analysis of how the structured and re-structuring remarks act together to perpetuate

a discourse is key to applying van Dijk's principles in a setting adapted from analysis of the Press to analysis of football commentary. Each section offers insight into the ways in which framing is layered in the commentary.

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

This section aims to apply van Dijk's discourse analysis (1991) as an 'approach to the study of language use and communication in their socio-cultural contexts' (p. 44) with the aim to providing a contextual insight into how commentary 'is involved in the continuity of the system of racism' (p. x). This will be outlined through a structural analysis that will provide insights first into the 'Surface Forms' of the commentary: van Dijk notes Surface Forms as being 'expressions with underlying meaning as acts of speech such as assertions, questions and accusations' (p. 45).

The surface forms of the commentary combine closely with the concept of the 'superstructure' of the discourse, where a superstructure comprises the whole set of surface forms. Of the 107 instances of discourse recorded in the qualitative results, the vast majority comprise of assertions from the commentators with scattered examples of questions being posed by the commentator. Critically, the Surface Form examples provided by van Dijk of assertions, questions and accusations are more suited to being press-specific examples from his analysis of the written press (1991 p. 45), surface forms that are sports commentary specific must be sought in order to gather more meaningful insight than simply stating for this set of data that 'assertions are the dominant form of discourse delivery'. Consequently, a Surface Form that can be applied to this study's football commentary is 'interactional' form discourse. Such forms of commentary involving back-and-forth interaction between commentators or pundits often develop in a way that provides additional reinforcement to the initial item of discussion. This therefore adds further legitimacy to the discourse being delivered. Where an issue is created is if the initial discourse is one that contains racial biases, if the racial bias is then agreed with by the second commentator or another pundit, that racially biased discourse is then reaffirmed rather than challenged or discredited.

Interactional Discourses

Eleven examples of interactional discourses were seen in the results with in-game commentary accounting for seven of those interactions and four occurring during half-time punditry. Of the seven in-game instances of interactional discourse, two were seen in the Premier League dataset with one providing a physical description of a black player and the other providing a mental description of a white player. The first involves a commentator reinforcement interaction with the co-commentator describing the situation taking place stating, *'The pace and strength of [Michail] Antonio, he'll simply run through you'*. As a standalone item of commentary, the excerpt fulfils the role of reinforcing the hegemonic stereotypical discourses but receives further validation from the ex-professional commentator sitting in the next seat when they add, *'that's what he offers'*. The addition of the expert commentator's validation, a validation that specifically focuses only on the suggestion that Antonio offers 'pace and strength', has the effect of discounting any aspect of the passage of play that does not involve the pace and strength of the player. When said immediately following the initial assertion from the career commentator, it serves to both reinforce and to justify the solely physical assertion of the initial excerpt and acts as a seal of approval from a person of expertise.

The second of the Premier League examples again involves an interactional situation with the ex-professional providing a short agreement with the longer item of discourse from the career commentator. The career commentator, in a break in play, provides a longer piece of commentary on Scott McTominay, a white central midfielder, stating that, *'The more mature he gets, the more experience he gets, the more of a presence he becomes in that central role'*. The discourse mirrors the one seen above on Antonio with a white player receiving an extended piece of discourse on his mental attributes and maturity contrasted with the physical discourse on the black player. The short agreement from the ex-professional in the wake of the longer assertion again acts as a seal of approval from the expert figure in the commentary team providing the reinforcement for the discourse.

The five remaining instances of in-game commentators interacting back and forth across a discourse occurred in the Euros dataset. Each example contains further discourse than a simple agreement or reinforcement from the ex-

professional, as was seen in the two above Premier League examples. The first relates to Renato Sanches, a black Portuguese central midfielder, beginning with the ex-professional commentator rather than the career commentator. The ex-professional states, *'He's always been that kind of player that ghosts into the box, he's a lot quicker than you think he is. He's a very clever player and a good passer of the ball'*. The description provided is a balanced one about Sanches, beginning with a physical description and following it with an assessment of his mental and skilful attributes. However, the career commentator responds to the ex-professional's analysis with a solely physical addition when he adds, *'Great energy levels as well'*. The discourse is now skewed towards a physical direction, firstly with the final point being one focused on physicality and secondly with the majority of the talking points in the excerpts being physical with three of the five notable descriptions mentioning a physical aspect of the player. In only mentioning a physical aspect, the career commentator has recentred the discourse onto the player's physical attributes whilst also not acknowledging the mental attributes or providing any additional ones of his own to the analysis.

One standout item of interactional reinforcing discourse from the commentators relates to the excerpts of commentary on Denzel Dumfries, a black wing-back for the Netherlands, when he alone was the recipient of four instances of commentary in only two games. The excerpt involves four instances of interaction beginning with the ex-professional referring back to a piece of physically biased commentary earlier in the game. He asked the career commentator, *'Who was it that wrote that piece about Dumfries again?'* to which the career commentator replied, *'World Soccer Magazine'*, again providing the source of the heavily physically biased discourse on Dumfries. Further to this, the ex-professional commentator reacted saying, *'well they know their stuff'* offering a direct validation and reinforcement of what was a purely physical, drawn-out assessment of Dumfries to which the career commentator also added a reinforcing discourse expressing that *'they always do a great preview, I highly recommend it'*. These interactional instances of commentary combined to offer a significant platforming of a biased physical discourse of a black player and two back-to-back instances of validation and reinforcement of the discourse. Such focus and approval serve to not

only present the already hegemonic discourse to the viewing audience but also emphasise the discourse with more than one instance of approval of it.

The remaining three items of commentator interactional discourse all revolve around the concepts of 'Owning' and 'Othering', referenced in the results section, with commentators combining to reinforce a view for or against a home nation or non-home nation respectively but still utilising the same discursive principles as the commentary seen above. The first two are items of commentary displaying Ownership of the home nation team with a home nation player being the one committing the foul in the passage of play. The career commentator in excerpt one states, *'He does it in a cute way, breaking up the play'* to which the ex-professional lends their informed viewpoint stating, *'I'm telling you there's an art to it'*. This is echoed in the following excerpt where again the career commentator makes a note of the home nations player's fouling incident and the reaction of the opposing crowd when commenting, *'That's unpopular with the Stadio Olimpico fans'*. The career commentators remark is met with a defensive discourse from the Welsh commentator towards the Welsh player when he stated, *'If there's such a thing as a good foul, that's a good foul ... wasn't too cynical'*.

Both instances of commentator interaction serve the purpose of limiting the negative reaction to an infringement from a player with whom the commentary duo share a vested interest. This utilisation of interactional discourse to highlight and downplay a passage of play resonates with the interactional discourses where a player's physical or mental characteristics are being discussed. The same patterns are seen where the instance in the match being brought to the forefront, followed by informed expertise from the partnering commentator to provide additional reinforcement to the direction that the discourse has been aimed. Whether it is dampening the discourse around a home nation player's fouling or a physical description of a black player the principle of both commentators interacting to add weight to the discourse is present.

The final instance of commentator interaction provides the reverse of the previous Owning examples by taking the form of an Othering discourse. An incident where a foul was not given for the home nation team (Wales) against the non-home nation side (Denmark) was being discussed in the aftermath of a goal conceded by

Wales. The career commentator addressed both the goal and the alleged fouling incident when noting, *'The Welsh are protesting about the earlier foul that wasn't given, Denmark and Dolberg have two and Wales have a massive problem now'*. This commentary sets up a discourse of ambiguity about the fouling incident with the Welsh still disputing the referee's decision alongside the Welsh focus in the aftermath of the goals that rather than Denmark being placed in a good position to progress, it is rather that the Welsh who have a deficit to overcome. With the dual discourse set up in the initial half of the interactional, the Welsh ex-professional furthers the discourse around the foul stating, *'Yes, it was a foul but terrible defending ... there's the foul, how is that not a foul, surely that's got to be checked'*. Juxtaposing the above discourses, where fouls committed by English and Welsh players were brushed aside and downplayed by the commentators, this item of expert analysis instead highlights the alleged foul committed by the non-home nation Danish on multiple occasions in a short space of time.

Moving on to the interactional discourses between pundits during half time analysis, the four examples all appear in the Euros dataset. Three of the items involve mental praise for white players that is again reinforced by one or more figures holding a position of expertise. The first relates to the Croatian Luka Modric, who contextually is a Ballon D'or and multiple champions league winning midfielder, the pundits at half time note, *'At 35 he is such an elegant footballer'*, *'We just saw one or two bits of top quality to remind us of what he can do'* and *'They need Modric to link and get them up the pitch'*. All three instances, combined with video replays to add further weight to the analysis, provide a mental bias to Modric's play. Similarly to the mental bias shown towards James Ward-Prowse in the results section, where he had a higher physical output than his black midfield teammate who had received only physical praise, Modric's physical output underwent no analysis. The frontstaging of the mental praise acts as the other side of the coin of the black/white, physical/mental dichotomy and with an absence of any physical reference, mental attributes are singled out and contribute to the common-sense assumptions of the dichotomy. With multiple expert figures providing repeated reinforcement of the mental attributes of the player, the discourses combine with the supporting video to confirm the already existing biases.

The next example involves both a former player and current manager, providing two avenues of expert discourse from both a playing and coaching perspective. The comments relating to Ukraine players Oleksandr Zinchenko and Ruslan Malinovsky portray them in a positive mental light with contextual football discourse where they note, *'Him and Zinchenko are creating problems for North Macedonia ... He has a great left foot'*. As noted in the results, the football contextual suggestion of creating problems can allude to both physical or mental attributes whether it is creating problems via running or strength or creating problems through passing or skill. As seen above, the punditry often is accompanied with visual aids and the passages of play alongside the comments were that of accurate passing, furthered by the addition praise for his 'great left foot' connoting quality of passing or dribbling.

The third example sees three pundits reiterate the same skill-focused discourse towards the Spanish national team, a team noted for both their skill on the ball and simultaneous lack of physicality. The pundits state, again with reinforcing footage, *'Spain doing what they do, good possession, good passing, good chances ... yeah they dominated the passing ... they always dictate the play'*. Between the three of them, five instances of mental praise were provided alongside stating Spain were 'doing what they do' contextually relating the comments to this being part of their national footballing identity. The reinforcing interactional discourses are seen threefold and with numbers of pundits varying from two up to four plus a presenter, the possibility for discourses to be continued and greatly reinforced is far higher than what is seen from a career commentator and sole ex-professional providing in-game commentary.

The final instance of interactional discourse does not relate to a specific phrase undergoing an analysis, but rather a media practice involving both the selection of pundits and focus of the pundits' commentary. During the Scotland v Czech Republic fixture, the in-game commentary saw a Scottish ex-professional player alongside the career commentator in addition to three Scottish studio pundits and a further utilisation of two additional Scottish pitchside pundits. In total, six expert viewpoints from three avenues providing discourse with a vested interest. No Czech or neutral representation featured in the analysis and despite the context of

the Czech Republic winning one-nil at half time, the punditry exclusively aimed at discussing how Scotland could reverse the current scoreline. Despite the absence of a specific instance of physical or mental discourse, the media decision to select a significantly loaded set of expert analysts highlights an avenue from which footballing discourses can be affected by the media companies and the pundits perspectives. The following section will dive deeper into the effects of the ex-professional's discourses from their personal experience and what weight is added from that perspective.

Ex-Professional Perspective

This section aims to illuminate the specific discourses in which the ex-professional commentator, in the commentary team or studio punditry team, utilises their own experiences of playing the game to further underpin and add legitimacy to their commentary on the play taking place. When such expertise is applied to comments which may contain racial biases in their discourse, the discourse is less likely to be challenged by the audience as it has been delivered by an individual from a background of expertise. Conversely, a lay person's viewpoint, such as that of the career commentator or TV presenter, would lack this implicit reinforcement to their comments. However, due to the earlier mentioned notion of 'common-sense' dichotomy and the dominant status of the black/white physical/mental dichotomy in football discourse, a discourse affirming the current widely held stereotypical viewpoint would likely be accepted coming from the lay person also.

Several examples appeared in the Euros data set of commentators delivering a direct input of personal experience into their discourse. The first of these involved the ex-professional referencing their experience of international football to elaborate on the discourse on Jeremy Doku's pace. The ex-pro specifically references his 'pace' on numerous occasions stating, *'Di Lorenzo on Doku, there's the pace we talked about. A push in the back, frightening pace there ... when you play international football you need to be prepared for this kind of pace, he's lightning'*. Firstly, the wider discourse of a black winger receiving repeated reference to his 'pace' is the most widely documented stereotype in the literature on racism in football in the first place. However, here it also receives the additional

reinforcement of the ex-pro's addition of his own international football experience alongside the repeated usage of the widely seen racial bias. The addition of the personal experience builds legitimacy as the discourse is being delivered not only by a former player, selected to provide expert insight, but also with the expert commentator directly referencing their own international expertise. The discourse of black footballers and their 'pace' has not needed additional expert leverage to gain traction in footballing discourses, but the inclusion of the increased level of international expertise from a figure already included for their role as expert can only further legitimise the discourse.

A further example focuses on the reverse of the black physical stereotype with discussion of the passing and skill of Sergio Busquets of the Spanish national team. The ex-professional pundit takes the lead in the analysis from the presenter when describing the actions of Busquets. They note, '*A great example there of Busquets, he shows himself to the centre back and it doesn't look like there's a ball on. He's already seen the pass, what options he's got before the ball arrives and whips the ball up to the centre forward and all of a sudden Spain are out [of the pressure]*'. With the added context of this being said by a former midfielder, the analysis of the play by Busquets again receives additional legitimacy. Rather than seeing a simple description from a career commentator or the presenter of the show noting the reception of the initial pass and subsequent pass to the striker, the former footballer utilises their expertise to break down the analysis into a much more detailed set of descriptions. The principle of a discourse being offered greater reinforcement through a commentator's use of personal experience is again present.

A third example of the principle of expert personal experience enhancing the influence of a discourse involves both Giorgio Chiellini and Romelu Lukaku, a white centre back and black striker respectively. The ex-pro commentator begins the excerpt before any significant action has taken place and is referring to the contextual event of Chiellini returning from an injury to play against Lukaku. In referring to Chiellini's return from injury, the ex-pro commentator states, '*Here's the returning Chiellini, he needs to make sure his hamstring is prepared because he's going to be up against Lukaku who's pace and power is going to test that hamstring this evening*'. This excerpt was said contextually by a former centre back,

who's own insights into the demands of the role in the team lead him to provide both a racially biased description of Lukaku's 'pace and power' and the personal expertise on a centre back returning from injury. The twofold noting of Lukaku's physical attributes combined with an item of expertise on another player offer a package that contains a well-established racial bias alongside an offering of expertise on a player from a former player of that position. The principles are again seen with the expertise being used, this time indirectly, to reinforce a point that contains a significant racial bias.

To conclude, the above examples of interactional and ex-professional perspective Surface Forms each have a specific topic at their centre through which the discourse is begun. Often the topic involves reference to the incident or the player and then is ratified or validated by the expert or affirming commentary being provided afterward. As stated above, the principles of commentators combining to provide additional weight to a discourse, whether it is national bias or racial physical/mental biases, are seen throughout the example commentary. These frameworks allow for the commentator discourses to approach, deliver and reinforce biases through either the back-and-forth interactional comments facilitated by the media practice of using two (or more) career commentators and ex-professionals or through the usage of expertise as leverage for additional legitimacy for what is a racially biased discourse. Critically, these practices of interaction and expertise are inherent factors of football commentary which allow for the proliferation and reinforcement of the dominant covert biases evidenced in the quantitative and qualitative results.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

The rhetorical analysis aspect of the van Dijk discourse analysis focuses on language forms of the commentary which act as discursive mechanisms to help reinforce the reproduction of biases (1991 p. x). Analysis of rhetorical forms involve expressions of meaning such as metaphor, sound aspects such as alliterations and repetition, and sentence structure aspects such as parallelisms. The analysis will detail how they enhance the effectiveness of a discourse. Twenty-seven individual excerpts were seen to contain one or more significant rhetorical forms with thirteen containing metaphor, ten alliterations, eight repetitions, five parallelisms and one rhyme. Of the twenty-seven items, ten appear in the Premier League dataset and the remaining seventeen appear in the Euros dataset.

Metaphor

Starting with the examples with metaphor, only two of the thirteen total were seen in the Premier League dataset, and both provide one example of each side of the black/white physical/mental dichotomy. The opening example contains not only an example of metaphor in the description of Ibrahima Diallo but also an example of alliteration in the description of James Ward-Prowse stating, '*Southampton's midfield mastermind alongside the engine Diallo*'. With Diallo seen as an 'engine' and Ward-Prowse seen as a 'midfield mastermind' the footballing contexts of an engine invokes imagery of high stamina and work rate, and a mastermind invokes imagery of skill and passing ability. As was noted in the results section above, the reality of the situation is that Ward-Prowse is the player with consistently higher running distances, yet Diallo receives the physical description showing that the racial bias can transcend the fact of the actions of the players to portray the opposite of what has actually taken place.

The second example of commentary follows a similar direction to that of the Ward-Prowse description with the metaphors use to describe Adam Lallana, a white midfielder at Brighton. The commentator states, '*Lallana is the heartbeat of the team, conducting things for Brighton*'. Once again, the contextual metaphors of

heartbeat and conducting for a footballing audience generate imagery of someone who is heavily involved in the passing and tempo of the play taking place. Both aspects centre on mental proficiency in the context of football despite critically, one would be able to suggest that heartbeat could be a physical metaphor. However, to a footballing audience with the addition of conducting by the commentator as a secondary metaphor, mental praise and focus remains at the forefront.

Moving on to the examples in the Euros dataset, the notion of players being a metaphorical 'freight train' was seen on three occasions with all of the instances involving black players being referenced in that fashion. The first to be referred to as a freight train was Romelu Lukaku, a black ex-pro pundit made use of the metaphor when stating, *'When he gets into this state, he's like a freight train ... when he left England, he was often ridiculed about his touch but now we're seeing a different player'*. Both aspects of the excerpt focus on two aspects of Lukaku, his physicality and his skill. The first amplifies stereotypes that have been long held towards Lukaku with physical description and attribution being front and centre regarding his play and his physique. The second serves to address the stereotypes that suggest his play is simply physical via the indirect reference to how his ability on the ball was ridiculed. It is however an indirect reference to his increased skill on the ball combined with the very direct metaphor of being a freight train, a phrase which is defined by google and oxford languages as being 'used in reference to a phenomenon regarded as powerful and unstoppable' (Google 2023).

Powerfulness and being unstoppable again invoke connotation of physicality rather than mentality in a footballing context and can also be attributed to the second player to receive the description, Denzel Dumfries. The item of commentary again relates to the commentator reference and reinforcement of the World Soccer Magazine article calling Dumfries a 'running freight train'. As above, the connotations are wholly physical in the metaphor and when the commentary is followed up with the statement, *'Hello, hello, hello, the freight train has arrived again, on time'*, the description is returned to and reinforced. Additionally, the repetition of hello, hello, hello, invokes the rhetorical rule of three providing additional emphasis and pattern. The excerpt is delivered in an engaging way and then has the physical focused assessment of him placed at the forefront of the action

as contextually the commentary was delivered immediately after scoring a goal. With the combination of factors, the situation of scoring the goal is encoded by the commentary as being a result of Dumfries being solely a freight train complete with the accompanying physical connotations and an absence of any mental aspect.

Alliteration

Moving to the notable examples of alliterations in the results, the well documented phrase ‘pace and power’ features heavily in this study’s findings as well as many prior studies into sports commentary. The use of the alliteration rolls off the tongue for commentators and provides what is seen as a positive assessment of the speed and strength of the player on the surface level. Twice Romelu Lukaku was noted for his ‘pace and power’ alongside Adama Traore and Michail Antonio receiving the description once each however it is the reference involving Antonio which offers an oppositional aspect to it. During punditry, a black ex-pro pundit overtly made note of the stereotypical description by invoking the alliterative physical assessment to counter the narrative by stating, *‘People know him [Antonio] for his pace and power, but it’s his intelligence [that leads to the goal]’*. Notably, the pundit directly provided an oppositional encoding of the hegemonic stereotypes in his analysis first by drawing attention to the dominant encoding position of describing a black footballer in terms of speed and strength and then dispelling it with direct reference to intelligence.

Despite this, in the following fixture, description of Antonio from the commentary team immediately made reference to solely the physical attributes of his game returning the discourse to that of the dominant stereotypes. Several of the examples directly use the mental/physical dichotomy in the alliteration itself. Examples include *‘tricky Trincao’*, *‘midfield mastermind’* and *‘precise from Pessina’* referring to mental and skilful exploits of white players and *‘the big Belgian’* being used to describe Romelu Lukaku. All are used to emphasise a particular characteristic of each player and all are directly linked to the associated stereotypes. The rhythm and emphasis of the alliteration has the effect of further embedding the characteristics being used in the commentary as they are made more memorable through it.

Repetition

The next aspect is a use of repetition by commentators to provide instant reinforcement and additional highlighting of the aspect of the play or the player receiving the description. A physical example where repetition was seen involves commentary on Djibril Sow for Switzerland where he was described as a *'very combative, very energetic midfielder with a brilliant engine'*. The dual use of very for both aspects serves to enhance the description which is then followed up with the above seen metaphor of having an 'engine'. Simply stating that Sow is 'very combative and energetic' carries less weight than utilising repetition for each individual assessment. A mental example relates to three white centre backs Chiellini, Bonucci and de Ligt where the two elder defenders are seen to impart their wisdom on their younger clubmate. The commentator describes, *'Learning the defensive arts from Chiellini and how to play out positively and build from the back from Bonucci ... it's like Harvard for centre halves ... learning, learning, learning all the time as a Juventus defender'*.

This quick succession of three excerpts provides multiple examples of different language techniques, all which add memorability and emphasis to the individual content and overall message of the commentary. Firstly, the mental focus of the commentary is evident throughout with the references to learning, playing out and the metaphor of Harvard featuring from start to finish in the excerpt. Secondly, the employment of alliteration with *'play out positively'* and *'build from the back from Bonucci'* make both more memorable and finally the triple repetition of learning, utilising both the rule of three alongside the repetition adding significant emphasis to the mental praise on display for both the teachers and the taught.

Parallelism

Similar in effect to the repetitions, the use of parallelisms by the commentators and pundits adds a particular pattern and adds additional emphasis to the phrases being uttered. It is defined as being successive verbal constructions which correspond in sound, metre or meaning. Example commentary such as, '*Once Zaha gets a feel for how quick you are and how strong you are*', provides an extra bit of emphasis for both of the physical descriptions of Zaha compared to the commentator instead simply stating, 'quick and strong'. The language technique is also seen extended over a longer excerpt on Scott McTominay with three separate instances following the principle when the commentator asserts, '*The more mature he gets, the more experience he gets, the more of a presence he becomes in that central role*'. The employment of the pattern of delivery adds the flow to the commentary which ensures additional emphasis is placed on the appraisal, an appraisal which provides a glowing mental report on the player. Both phrases exemplify the physical/mental dichotomy and evidence the principle behind how commentary discourses can be amplified and recreated through use of particular language techniques.

To conclude, like the structural analysis identifies surface forms of interactional and expert discourses that add weight to the manifold stereotypes in the commentary, the rhetorical analysis identifies and outlines the principles and mechanisms through which commentators enhance the effectiveness of their commentary. A by-product of which is that through the enhancement of their descriptions and analyses, they are also contributing to enhancing, reinforcing, and re-using the covert biases that appear throughout the body of commentary.

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The contextual analysis will take the form of firstly an insight into the demographic spread of the commentators and pundits, with the aim of assessing the origins of the discourse excerpts seen above in the qualitative results. Following this, a consideration of the actions taking place on the field at the time of the commentary will be undertaken, in order to further contextualise the commentary and how the discourses can be affected and accompanied with visual aids, in addition to the particular language techniques seen in the prior section.

Commentator Demographics

From the qualitative section's commentary excerpts, a total of 111 individual commentator/pundit remarks were noted with some taking place in the same flow of discourse or concurring with another item of commentary. Of the 111 self-contained remarks, when broken down by race, 85 were uttered by white commentators and the remaining 26 were spoken by black commentators. Secondly, when accounting for gender, 107 of the remarks were by a male commentator and 4 were by female commentators. Finally, when accounting for whether or not a commentator is an ex-professional or a career commentator/TV presenter, 60 remarks were made by actors originating from a footballing background and 51 were by career commentators or TV presenters from a non-footballing background.

Beginning with a surface level analysis of the data, the demographic sphere of commentary is still a space led by white male voices with over three quarters of the discourses uttered by a white commentator or pundit. Furthermore, the data shows an even greater skew towards commentary being a male dominated space with all but four of the discourse excerpts originating from a male commentator or pundit. In relation to whether or not a discourse originated from a footballing or non-footballing commentator or pundit, the media process of who comprises a commentary team or punditry panel is at the forefront of the matter. The media decision making process to have a career commentator accompanied by one or more ex-professionals in the gantry during live commentary and a career presenter

alongside ex-professional pundits in the studio for analysis, creates a relative balance in the number of comments originating from either group. 60 of the 111 remarks came from people from a footballing background and the remaining 51 came from a career commentator or presenter.

Delving deeper into the statistics, it should be noted that all 51 of the career commentator and presenter remarks were uttered by white male commentators and presenters. With this taken into account, adjusting the number of black and white remarks to determine black and white ex-professional remarks results in the same 26 black ex-professional remarks with only 34 white ex-professional remarks. This demonstrates that, in terms of race, the demographic situation regarding ex-professionals, who are invited to provide their expertise, has become much more balanced and that the white-only demographic of career commentators greatly skews the statistics. With this in mind, the relative similarity in number of black and white ex-professional commentators and pundits demonstrates that the racially biased mental/physical stereotypical dichotomy is uttered by commentators regardless of their race with some black pundits freely utilising phrases such as ‘pace and power’ and describing black players as ‘freight trains’ in similar amounts their white counterparts. The significance of black ex-professional commentators utilising biases with similar frequency to white ex-pro commentators shows how the racially biased stereotypes have become so commonplace to the extent that they are universally utilised by commentators from any racial background.

To conclude this section, the key to the argument is that an overtly racist discourse or insult is immediately challenged, as has been seen with the vocal opposition to social media abuses of players, the No Room for Racism campaign by the Premier League, and its commentators when describing the TTK. On the other hand, covert and superficially positive discourses, such as that of solely praising a black player’s speed and strength or solely praising a white player’s mental attributes, fly under the radar and are frequently spoken by commentators of all demographics, having the effect of reinforcing the already entrenched stereotypes and dominant discourses.

Commentary with Visual Context

The second section of contextual analysis takes the points further by assessing the discourses in the commentary alongside the visual play taking place, providing additional insight into how the visual action synergises with the spoken commentary and how it may proliferate and reinforce the stereotypical discourses. Seven examples of commentary overtly evidence the accompaniment of visual context alongside the discourse provided by the commentator or pundit.

The first provides a short discourse on both the player in question and his teammates, the ex-pro commentator briefly states, *'Difficult to keep up with Sarr'*. Taken alone it would occupy the role of being a positive physical description of a black player, Ismaila Sarr. However, in the context of a breakaway counterattack for Watford, with late arriving teammates being white midfielders, the commentary along with the match contextual and visual contextual information turns into both a positive physical description of Sarr and a negative description of the physicality of his white teammates providing a dichotomy between them and reinforcement of established physical stereotypes. The choice of the phrase 'difficult to keep up with' is centrefold in creating the dichotomy with it casting a negative light on the teammates who are being adjudged to be unable to match his speed and with the context of them being white, the established black/white dichotomy is on full display in a way that is not apparent without the additional visual context accompanying the commentary.

The second example of the seven involves a direct usage of the black/white stereotypical dichotomy with the commentator immediately referencing a skilful action from a white player and asserting a physical action from a black player with accompanying visual aids. The commentator states, *'Doucoure, well found by Michael Keane, he can now drive at Burnley'*. As said before, the commentator directly juxtaposes the two players even before the action takes place as Keane has passed the ball precisely and Doucoure has not yet begun an action, whether it would be a pass or a dribble. The assessment of the commentator comes from the visual situation with space in front of Doucoure into which he can run, and it guides the usage of physical reference towards him without then referencing the action afterwards of a pass to a teammate not dissimilar to the pass from Keane. The

principle of the visual situation and context leading the commentator to utilise the black/white physical/mental dichotomy is on full display, with the availability of space to run into in addition passing opportunities, the commentary utilises the established stereotypes.

The next instance of commentary occurred in the opening minutes of the particular fixture in which it was seen with reference being made towards Romelu Lukaku, the commentator begins by making note without context of Lukaku's '*natural instincts*' and '*pace and power*', both stereotypes which have been analysed in the prior section. Where the commentator contextualises these initial contextless assertions is when Lukaku initiates a run forward which is accompanied by the commentator stating, '*Lukaku has pounced here ... look at Lukaku go*'. The combination of the early comments setting the tone and discourse of the commentary with then a direct reference to actions taking place and said in a purely physical manner, both the initial commentary 'hypothesis' of expecting to see Lukaku's 'pace and power' is effectively vindicated with a complex dribbling action being distilled down to a purely physical description including connotive animal discourses of pouncing which have been elaborated upon in the qualitative results. Once again the same principles regarding the ex-professional player's role in the delivery of commentary are on display but instead of the career commentator providing the hypotheticals and suggestions, the ex-pro has begun the game with his own suggestions for what may take place and then vindicates them later with a visual contextual example.

The fourth instance is seen during replays of a foul that was being reviewed as to whether or not a penalty was to be given. Such a context allows for the most direct analysis and commentary on a particular instance to be delivered by the commentator. The commentator's analysis states, '*there's the pace we talked about. A push in the back, frightening pace there ... when you play international football you need to be prepared for this kind of pace, he's lightning*'. With the context of the penalty being won by Jeremy Doku, a black Belgian winger, the commentary contains a number of aspects. Beginning with a reference to earlier description of his pace, the context is entirely set in the dichotomy of black physicality against white lack of physicality, specifically speed for this instance. All

three segments of the analysis, delivered by a black ex-professional commentator, make either a direct or indirect reference to the speed of Doku. All of the factors combined: the established stereotypes, replayed footage several times and ex-professional informed analysis lead the discourse in the direction of a reinforcement of pre-existing black physical stereotypes.

The next two instances of discourse relate to the Italy midfielder Marco Verratti and make direct reference to instances of the game where his passing ability has been on display. The first was contextually made during Italy's fixture against Wales and was spoken by the Welsh ex-professional that was selected as part of the media decisions to have home nation commentators and pundits covering home nation fixtures. The ex-pro commentator noted, *'Wales can't allow Verratti to be on the ball in the middle of the goal 25-30 yards out because he will destroy you, he's that talented ... world class player'* and the second instance also states, *'Verratti, so many touches ... look at that for a clever ball in almost provided another goal for Pessina'* The discourse as a whole follows the trend of mental praise being the aspect most highlighted for a white midfielder and carries further contextual weight in two ways. Firstly, the context of Verratti's passing was seen on screen moments before the commentator's analysis of the passage of play and secondly, the commentator being Welsh was chosen to provide a positive assessment of the Welsh football and contextually has a vested interest in his own team's success, therefore any praise for the opposition carries increased sincerity and encoded validity as it directly opposes his vested interests.

The final example of commentary follows the same pattern and principles as the rest with an ex-professional providing a contextual insight into the actions taking place on the field. This particular instance involves punditry analysis with accompanying replayed footage of Spanish midfielder Sergio Busquets with the pundit noting, *'A great example there of Busquets, he shows himself to the centre back and it doesn't look like there's a ball on. He's already seen the pass, what options he's got before the ball arrives and whips the ball up to the centre forward and all of a sudden Spain are out'*. The combined factors of the ex-professional viewpoint, contextually a viewpoint from a former midfielder who has direct personal experience of the role, added video footage with multiple camera angles

and agreement from others in the punditry panel all conspire to reinforce the viewpoint. Critically, as the player is a veteran white midfielder with an expansive trophy cabinet in a Spanish team, stereotypically noted for their passing ability and skill on the ball, the analysis does not require the multi-angle replays or expert appraisal in order to reproduce the dominant stereotypical views at play. What is noteworthy about this particular example is the base principle of the combination of factors which all aim towards providing reinforcement to the discourse at hand.

To conclude, the principles of the contextual analysis identify instances where a discourse is reinforced through the use of visual contextual media processes. A side-effect these processes and principles is again that the racial biases that permeate the commentary are also offered reinforcement, as was seen in the above structural and rhetorical analyses also. The combination of factors offer multiple avenues for commentator speech and audio/visual media production aspects to become natural and unintentional carriers and transmitters of the racial biases. The following section will discuss how the discourses that utilise the racially biased physical/mental dichotomy serve to proliferate the already entrenched biases partially through how commentary is conducted.

Semantic Macro-Structure

The concept of the semantic macro-structure is concerned with how commentary is delivered and in particular, how the commentary takes a complex set of actions and distils them to be short and to the point. This is conceptualised by van Dijk with the notion of a pyramid, with the base of the pyramid being the complex and in-depth detailed information and the top of the pyramid being represented by the shortened summary and what is considered key information (p. 72). An example of semantic macro-structure outside of the footballing sphere used by van Dijk is that of a train journey. Rather than a long sequence of statements outlining the entire process such as 'I went to the station', 'I bought a ticket', 'I walked to the platform', 'I waited for the train', one would summarize the sequence down to its key information by stating 'I took the train to...'. This section will aim to assess the discourses in the commentary to determine the extent to which complex

actions are being distilled or summarized and the extent to which it contributes to the physical/mental dichotomy in commentary.

Eight examples of commentary clearly exhibit the principles and process of the semantic macro-structure with the majority of instances loosely exhibiting the process of summarizing information down to what are considered key details. The first five take place in the Premier League commentary and the first relates to Michail Antonio. The commentary states, '*The pace and strength of Antonio, he'll simply run through you*'. Within the short summarizing statement, two notions arise with firstly the reference to pace and strength and secondly the assertion of Antonio simply running through you. Both segments complement each other in the sphere of the stereotypical black physical discourse and in terms of the semantic macrostructure, they occupy the space at the top of the van Dijk pyramid providing what is considered to be the key information. If brought down to the in-depth and detailed base of the pyramid, a multitude of further aspects of Antonio's play must be mentioned to provide an appraisal of both the physical and mental characteristics of the player and of the action being performed. His assessment of the situation, his vision to identify the opportunity, to make the run and so on.

The dribbling skill and reading of the game needed to assess and then notice the opportunity ahead of him to run with the ball are omitted entirely. It is undeterminable whether or not the omission of further detail is due to the commentators either drawing upon the common-sense physical stereotypes or, for sake of brevity, the commentators are highlighting what they consider to be the most important factors, or if it is a combination of both. However, what can be determined is that the description of a black footballer is being reduced to that of purely physical, stereotypical description and their physical attributes are being placed in the position of being the key information provided about them. This is the key principle behind the notion of the semantic macrostructure, whether inadvertently or for succinctness due to live, fast action or through drawing upon the bedrock of stereotypical discourse, commentators are prioritising purely physical characteristics of black footballers at the expense of a more holistic and balanced viewpoint. Such prioritisation of physicality, combined with omission of mentality, facilitates the processes of reproduction and reinforcement of dominant biases.

The second item follows the same principles and relates to two black forwards for Everton. The commentary notes, *'Everton's forwards are being aggressive and physical, they really should be ahead'*. The sole reference to the forwards being aggressive and physical situates the discourse directly on that of black physicality. The short excerpt provides two specific descriptors however instead of one focusing on any potential mental praise and the other referring to physicality, both connote or directly suggest physicality and omit any reference to the application of their physicality. Mental applications of the aggression and physicality such as tactics for pressing or running off the ball to win the ball or create opportunities are not prioritised. The same situation as seen in the Antonio commentary is seen in the Everton commentary, preference towards physical description at the expense of any mental description.

The third excerpt of commentary again follows the same consistent trend with the focus this time being on Emmanuel Dennis, another black forward player. The aspects that are consistently prioritised by commentators for praise and description are physical in both instances with commentators stating, *'Dennis, strength enough to hold off Trossard and pace enough to take him away from Webster'*. Again, applying the principles, any positive mental actions by Dennis are absent. Notably, Dennis assessing his opponents as being quick but weaker in the form of Trossard and slow but stronger in the form of Webster and then utilising the opposite aspects of strength and pace to overcome them. The sole description of the physical outcomes, at the expense of the initial mental proficiency, again arises as seen in the two prior examples. However, making note of a significant number of actions, thought processes, and combined mental and physical aspects would take a significant amount of time during live commentary, critically it can be suggested that selection of racially biased, hegemonic stereotypes can be attributed to both the need for brevity and the commonality of the stereotypes working in tandem.

The next instance juxtaposes former teammates Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane with Salah noted for *'trickery and dribbling'* and Mane instead being noted for several short instances of physical praise for similar exploits. It can therefore be suggested that the act of commentators drawing upon the bedrock of dominant physical discourses takes the most prominent role in the production of semantic

macrostructure biases. With this situation, the structure of live commentary, and the need for brevity in said commentary, results in the regular omission of any praises or discourses other than that of the biased stereotypical discourse. Mane receiving commentary stating that he makes '*darting runs*' while Salah exhibits actions that is deemed to be skilfulness, in the form of trickery and dribbling, typifies this utilisation of the black physical stereotype that is seen consistently towards black players.

The next three instances are seen in the Euros dataset and again relate to three black forwards. The first relates once more to Romelu Lukaku, this commentary was initially viewed under the lens of structural and contextual analysis. Now when passed under the lens of the semantic macrostructure, with the reference to his '*natural instincts*' and '*pace and power*' followed by the longer excerpt stating, '*Lukaku has pounced here ... look at Lukaku go*', the commentary can be seen to be another significant simplification. An omission of any characteristic that does not involve stereotypical physical description. The suggestions of natural instincts and pace and power entirely preclude any reference to his tactical role and assessment of the situation, especially with the second instance of commentary stating that he has '*pounced*' connoting no assessment of the state of the game through which he can impact the match.

Another Euros excerpt relates to Marcus Rashford and the distillation of his skillset that that of speed alone when the commentator states '*We talked about the substitutes, someone like a Rashford coming in, make those runs with the pace*'. A simple assessment that is overlooking what mental aspects are needed to '*make runs*', timing to beat an offside trap or game awareness to see when a teammate is in a position to provide a pass onto which he can make the run. Several aspects which are de-prioritized in place of a short, purely physical assessment. The same symptoms are seen in the commentary on Kylian Mbappe, with the commentator noting purely physical aspects. He is described through the statement, '*Mbappe, that's what he can do, wow. Now you see me, now you don't. He's been electric in the first half, you can't get near him*'. Despite being one of the foremost goal scorers in the world, Mbappe receives note only for his speed rather than dribbling or finishing ability, both of which require mental proficiency in abundance. It is

again another instance of a black athlete reduced to physicality through employment of the bedrock of stereotype.

Conclusion

Application of van Dijk's numerous lenses allows for the above secondary factors which reside around the main factor of discursive content to be assessed. The interaction between commentators offers both affirmation to and legitimization of the regularly utilised racial biases within the commentary. The notion of competitive meritocracy is also present in combination with the commentator interactions and is projected through the use of ex-professionals in the studio and commentary gantry. The Rhetoricals, seen by van Dijk in print media, are also seen in this spoken commentary and act as discursive mechanisms to help deliver the discourse to the audience in inventive and more memorable ways. Finally, the contextual factors outline numerous demographic insights that will be discussed more in the following sections and make note of how visual context, with replays and technological aides such as touch screens allowing for what is being said to be delivered with reinforcement. The following discussion section will bring together notions seen throughout the results with reference to the combined and contrasting Premier League and Euro 2020 findings.

Discussion

Introduction

Following the adaptation and application of van Dijk's discourse analysis approach, assessing the Structural, Contextual and Semantic Macro-Structural aspects of the discourses, the discussion aims to posit a trio of theories to understand the processes taking place in the commentary. The first theory is that of Naturalised Racialisation as a combination of the dual concepts of naturalisation and racialisation. Following this, utilisation of the theory of whiteness being an unmarked marker in discourses is key to further understanding how football commentary is racialised. The second theory emerged from the comparison of Premier League and Euro 2020 commentary and involves a theory of Naturalised Nationalism expressed through the dual concepts of Owning and Othering seen in the results. Alongside this, Billig's Banal Nationalism is referenced for its applicability to several instances seen in the results. Furthermore, the actions and mediation undertaken by broadcasters is discussed in order to assess ways in which the media environment for naturalised nationalism is cultivated.

In the wake of the sections on naturalised discourses in commentary, the section on the hegemony of the discourses serves to approach how the biases in the commentary remain steadfast despite acts such as the TTK and despite campaigns such as No Room for Racism. The notion will begin with the unpacking of Hall's concept of the dominant/hegemonic with reference to Foucauldian dominant discourses contrasted with theories of hegemony. These will then be discussed through the notion of racism being a problem for the 'individual'. Following this, the barriers to the effectiveness of anti-racism efforts are unpacked through Foucault's notions of resistance discourses, rituals, and regulated practices, followed by Bonilla-Silva's concept of Abstract Liberalism.

Naturalised Racialisation

In this section, the dual concepts of Naturalisation and Racialisation will be defined and in turn, the way in which they combine to become Naturalised Racialisations will be defined in the context of football commentator discourses. Following this, a number of examples from the results will be applied to and unpacked in the framework of Naturalised Racialisations and in the context of the theories of 'Whiteness' posited by Dyer (1993), Rodriguez (1998) and Frankenberg (2020). Firstly, the term racialisation has been defined for this study with two examples, the first representing one of the earliest chronological examples of instances of racialisation being described with the word racialisation and secondly, a definition originating from a text dedicated to the topic of racialisation. Definition one originates from Banton (2005) discussing historical racialisations before instances were specifically described as racialisations. Banton states that racialisations were 'an enterprise seeking to explain unequal development' (p. 51) with groups of people being 'represented as races as if this explained their character and development'. A further definition arises from Murji and Solomos' (2005) work on racialisation with the definition being compiled from a range of academic viewpoints. They see racialisation as being 'the processes by which racial meanings are attached to particular issues and the manner in which race appears to be a key factor in the ways they are defined or understood' (p. 5). The stereotype of natural back athleticism is the key example where a racial meaning is attributed to the topic of black sporting successes. The stereotype is expressed heavily through the dichotomy of commentator description relating to black physicality and white mentality seen in the results section.

Adjacent to the definitions of racialisation, the concept and definition of racial discrimination applies to the discussion. The comparison of the terms 'racism' and 'racial discrimination' takes place in the literature review and the applicability of racial discrimination over racism is outlined here. It is defined by Small and Pager (2020) as being 'differential treatment on the basis of race that may or may not result from prejudice or animus and may or may not be intentional in nature' (p. 1). The additional regard for the notion of intent in the definition of racial discrimination is important due to the wealth of examples of vociferous overt anti-

racist discourse in the sphere of football coming from media outlets. The TTK prior to kick-off and No Room for Racism campaign being notable examples of such an intent. The data collection found commentators delivering pre-match commentary alongside the knee stating phrases such as *'The players continue to do so [take the knee] as part of the ongoing fight against racism'* and *'The message of anti-discrimination is still there'*. These evidence examples of the media and commentator efforts to do their part in promoting anti-racist discourses. The notion of intent in this context will be further unpacked later in the section on hegemony of discourse.

The concept of naturalisation is seen in Bonilla-Silva's (2006) colour-blind racism theories where it is asserted that naturalisation is a frame through which one can explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences. In the context of the study, the stereotypes of natural black athleticism seen in the review of literature and the wealth of commentator remarks seen in the results are examples of naturalised colour-blind racism in action. Secondly, the notion of codes and encoding from Stuart Hall (2001) offers the suggestion that media outlets 'encode' their programmes and discourses with influence from 'topics, agendas, events ... within the wider socio-cultural and political structure' (p. 163). He suggests that they can either arise from deliberate encoding from the organisation or be unknowingly added from naturalised social discourses. Here is where naturalisation and codes converge to result in 'naturalised codes'. Hall notes these as being themes (black physicality and white mentality) or words (most notably 'pace and power') that are so vastly distributed and intertwined in the language of the population that they appear not to be constructed and are considered to be natural.

This interlinks closely with the theory of Myth from Barthes (1974) where Myths are seen as devices which help people to make sense of their experiences in the culture through a shared way of conceptualising. This takes the form of conceptualising footballing matters through the dichotomy of black physicality and white mentality in the process of naturalisation. The theory of Myth also states this when Barthes notes that myths serve the ideological function of naturalising the cultural and making the cultural seem natural, normal and common-sense (1974). The combination of Myth, codes and naturalisation provides a framework in which

commentary racialisation and racial biases can be understood in the way they form and the way that they are perpetuated with the dichotomy of black natural athleticism and white mental proficiency, being a deeply rooted and racialised naturalised code of connotations. Connotations relate to the socio-cultural and personal associations which provide meaning outside of a denotation (Chandler 2007 p. 138), with a denotation being seen as the most literal meanings of a sign or a statement and a sign being speech or an item that conveys a meaning (Cobley and Jansz 2010).

While the concept of naturalised racialisation was being exhibited regularly throughout the dataset, one of the clear examples in the commentary occurred in a Southampton fixture making note of two Southampton players James Ward-Prowse and Ibrahima Diallo. The commentator remarked about both players stating, *'Southampton's midfield mastermind James Ward-Prowse alongside the engine Diallo'*. Contextually, despite Diallo receiving a physical description in the form of the connotation of being an 'engine', Ward-Prowse boasts higher statistics for distance covered (Premier League 2022). The fact that Diallo instead receives the physical appraisals evidence how naturalised the codes of describing black players in terms of their body are. It also leans into the closely aligned theories from Frankenberg (2020) and Rodriguez (1998) where Frankenberg states that whiteness is the unmarked marker of others with its ideology becoming actualised and normalised to the point of invisibility by way of language, media and culture. Whiteness, in this instance of player commentary, would form the description of Diallo while he is being judged according to the unmarked marker of Ward-Prowse's unspoken physical statistics.

Rodriguez states that whiteness 'comprises the yardstick with which others are compared' (1998 p. 44). When applied to the above commentary excerpt, as Diallo is not seen to have the passing quality of the unmarked yardstick Ward-Prowse and must therefore, in the discourse of the commentator who is utilising naturalised racialised codes, possess physical characteristics over Ward-Prowse. The most significant aspect of the naturalised racialisation is that Diallo does not possess the 'engine' stereotype that is applied to him, but he is still attributed it due to the prevalence of the stereotype. Dyer (2013) reinforces this view with the suggestion

that whiteness is the norm as if ‘it is the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human’.

These three positions on whiteness are echoed in another excerpt of commentary directly involving four black Premier League players and indirectly referring to two white players. Romelu Lukaku, Chelsea striker at the time of recording, was referred to as though he would ‘*bring strength to the [Chelsea] attack*’. Contextually, the two white players, Timo Werner and Kai Havertz, are indirectly referenced here through the connotation that they were not bringing strength to the Chelsea attack. They form the unmarked white yardstick by which Lukaku is judged to be stronger because without them as an invisible connotive comparison, there would be no measure by which Lukaku would be judged to be stronger. Furthermore, Tyrone Mings, Ezri Konsa and Axel Tuanzebe of the opposing team Aston Villa, were said to be the ‘*chosen three strong players to counter his strength*’.

With all four black players being referred to by their physicality, the invisible yardstick of whiteness provides the reference through which the Aston Villa defenders are described, ‘chosen’ as the players with the physicality to deal with the physicality of Lukaku. There is a totality of physical description for the four black players in the commentary, combined with the invisibly connoted lack of physicality that Lukaku’s white teammates had. This is in addition to any white Aston Villa players that were not selected ahead of the three black defenders who were selected to counter Lukaku. This appraisal of the invisible yardstick of whiteness aligns with the notion that commentator discourse often only focuses on the physical attributes of black players therefore providing an environment for black players to be solely seen for their physicality.

A set of four significant instances of Naturalised Racialisation occurred regarding one player, Denzel Dumfries, at Euro 2020. The deep-rooted stereotype of black physicality was utilised to portray Dumfries as being a ‘*powerhouse right wing back*’, moments after beginning a description of Dumfries saying, ‘*world soccer magazine described Dumfries as a ‘running freight train’’*. Both the commentators and magazine exhibit Naturalised Racialisation in their discourse with the purely physical assessment beginning with the magazine piece writers in advance of the

fixture, followed then by the acceptance of and repetition of the stereotype by the commentators broadcasting live during the fixture. One of the two remaining comments focused back on the prior references stating, *'Who was it that wrote that piece about Dumfries again?'*. *'World soccer magazine'*. *'Well, they know their stuff'*. *'They [the magazine] always do a great preview, I highly recommend it'* and the other, in the wake of Dumfries scoring a goal, noted, *'Hello, hello, hello the freight train has arrived again, on time'*. The reinforced and repeated attribution of physical connotation to the success of Dumfries has the effect of heavily racialising the discourses around him both with recurrent physical reference and a concurrent absence of mental connotations. Due to how vastly distributed the codes of physical connotation and description are, Hall's (2001) theories of naturalised codes notes that the codes do not appear to be constructed when used in the language of those applying them.

With these individual examples forming the basis for the qualitative approach to the study, the quantitative results paint a picture that provides a sample-wide assessment of the collected data to understand the scope and reach that the discourses achieve in wider commentary. The dual study of the Premier League and the Euro 2020 commentary allows for the contrast and comparison of the spread of the data where prior studies have been unable to discern differences and similarities due to the individual domestic or international focus. When applying the theory of naturalised racialisations to the Premier League dataset, the wealth of physical remarks evidences the focus of the discourses being centred on the black sporting body, with the above qualitative excerpts making up a small number of the total examples, the numerical count elucidates how extensive the stereotype and bias towards physicality is in the body of commentary. When compared to the Euros dataset, as noted in the results section, a reduced total of remarks was seen at the same time as a greater skew towards the black/white physical/mental dichotomy. Again applied to the notion of naturalised racialisation, this shows both a trend towards a greater focus on black physicality when faced with reduced black representation in several European teams. This was seen in conjunction with a greater focus on the mental characteristics of white players due to more if not all white representation in several European teams.

The demographic makeup of Euro 2020 provides an environment where teams such as Spain who had one black player, Adama Traore, to receive commentary focusing on the whole team. The commentator noted that Spain were, *'lacking pace and power'* with Adama being on the bench while an all-white team was playing from the start of the game. This was combined with the statement that Adama would bring, *'Pace, Strength and Directness'*. Providing not only a judgement of Adama, but also a judgement through absent commentary on the Spanish players who were playing. Stating that Adama would bring those characteristics to the side gives the connotation that the players on the pitch are not bringing those characteristics and with national stereotypes of possession and passing football existing around Spanish players and the side as a whole, it further exacerbates the dichotomy between the white Spanish players and Adama. When Spain are referred to as *'Spain doing what they do, good possession, good passing, good chances created'* ... *'yeah, they dominated the passing'* ... *'they always dictate the play'* followed by *'Spain expected to keep most of the possession ... Spain will pass you to death'* in a later fixture, an existing discourse of passing, skill and possession is drawn upon and then reconstructed by the commentators through regular reinforcement of it. When Adama is singled out for physical characteristics while his team is noted for everything else, the discourse surrounding him is entirely one-sided. The notion of national stereotypes being evident and contributing towards stereotypical connotations will be explored further in the following section on what has been termed 'Naturalised Nationalism'.

Naturalised Nationalism

A theme emerging from the dual study of a Premier League season alongside the Euro 2020 competition was that of Naturalised Nationalism in the Euro 2020 commentary. The term finds both its expression in the results and its definition through the dual concepts of Owing and Othering, 'Owing', for the study, is defined as the act of preferentially treating a player or team in commentary based on an affiliation towards the player or team while 'Othering', in the context of this study, is defined as those who are spoken about in terms of being external to the Premier League or the home nations at the tournament. While Naturalised

Racialisation can be expressed through whiteness as a yardstick by which black players are judged, the concept of Naturalised Nationalism can likewise also express the same principle by substituting the home nations for whiteness. Such a situation has overseas players and teams judged in accordance with the particular home nation featuring in the coverage.

This aligns very closely with Billig's concept of Banal Nationalism (1995), seen as being 'an ideological consciousness of nationhood' that is at play, containing a 'complex set of themes about 'us', 'our homeland', 'nations, both ours and theirs', themes which are said to be 'widely diffused as common sense' (p. 10). Billig takes special note to approach people's definitions and theories with caution when they see nationalism as being limited to the fringes such as political separatists and other extreme ideologies. Those assessments of nationalism avoid the unseen and naturalised ideological habits which reproduce established nations rather than destabilise them (p. 11). Therefore, Banal Nationalism can be seen as a 'reminder of nationhood that is so familiar and so continual that it is not consciously registered as reminding' (p. 13). Footballing instances such as the singing of national anthems, an act that is so synonymous with the moments leading up to kick-off, is a prime example.

Before assessing the first passage of commentary, it was noted in the results that in accordance with each particular home nation side at Euro 2020, those being England, Wales and Scotland, commentator and pundit nationality selections aligned with their associated home nation side, with English, Welsh and Scottish commentators and pundits appearing for England, Wales and Scotland fixtures respectively. The first and most prominent example of this is the Scotland v Czech Republic fixture, where the above principles were seen in full force with the ex-professional commentator being Scottish, all three studio pundits being Scottish and the additional inclusion of two pitch side pundits, again both Scottish, to provide further one-sided analysis. As seen in the results, there was an absence of any Czech or even neutral representation on the gantry, in the studio or pitch side evidencing a media decision to not only have solely Scottish viewpoints in the usual roles of commentator and pundit, but also to include the rarely seen pitch side role during the broadcast. Both the media decision to have all Scottish voices and the discourses

seen in the results that focus entirely from the Scotland perspective encapsulate the theory of Naturalised Nationalism. These decisions and discourses evoke theorizations around the proportions of structure and agency within media productions and the way in which it leads to naturalisation.

Fairclough's theories of discourse construction and re-construction revolve around the permanence of institutions, for example: established practices and methods of operating that create internal rigidities, resulting in resistance to change whether they are cultural changes or changes in discourses (p. 444). The established practice of utilising associated commentators structures the commentary in such a way that all avenues of discourse are delivered from a Scottish perspective. The yardstick of whiteness from Falkenberg, Rodriguez and Dyer, applied here as a yardstick of home nation Scottishness, sees commentators provide statements such as, *'And its Patrick Schick who rips up the Scotland script'*. Suggestion of the Scotland script provides all the focus from the Scottish perspective, othering the Czech perspective and praise, despite the action taking place being as Czech focused as possible in footballing terms, the scoring of a goal. Billig's Banal Nationalism also assesses the commentary with the naturalness of how the commentators reference Scotland, situating the Scottish commentators' discourse around 'us' as the home nation.

Additionally in Welsh fixtures, again with Welsh commentators and pundits, the home nation perspective is present with the Owning and preferential treatment of Welsh players and the vilification and scorn of opposing players serving, like the Scottish to the Czechs, to once again Other the non-home nation side. Preferential treatment reared its head in the form of the commentator stating, *'Yes, he's late but I'm sticking up for Ampadu in a way because I don't think it's a red card ... personally I think it's a harsh decision'*, contrasted by outrage at the failure to give a foul in favour of the Welsh when the same commentator stated, *'Yes, it was a foul but terrible defending ... there's the foul, how is that not a foul, surely that's got to be checked'*. Both statements relating to fouls, looked at through the lens of the home nation as a yardstick, evidence how the media production has produced an environment in which objectively similar instances of foul play can be then subjectively turned into acts of Ownership and defence of a home nation player and

then outrage and Othering of the opposition when the vested interests of the commentator are not met. With the notion of the home nation yardstick applied to home nation discourses, one must look at instances where the opposing nation is referenced in the discourses.

The actions and agency of media producers to select a unanimous Scottish, Welsh or English representation has the structuring effect of creating the environment of discourse akin to an echo chamber with only home nation opinion being provided. On the occasions where views are given on the opposition players or team, distinct styles of discourse and commentary are seen in the results. While Owning is present in the defensive Scottish and Welsh discourses seen above, Othering is present in discourses relating to opposition players. Commentators noting the Belgian player Thorgan Hazard referred to him twice as *'Thorgan Hazard, the brother of Eden'* and *'Thorgan Hazard, thought of as the little brother of Eden, has come up with a big moment there'*. In the context of the structuring of the media event, the usage of home nation commentators has produced an environment in which an overseas player is mentioned in reference to his brother, Eden Hazard, who played for Chelsea in the Premier League.

With no Belgian presence in the commentary box, commentators familiar with football in the UK make reference to a player which UK viewers are more likely to recognise. A further example relates to Romelu Lukaku, who having played in the Premier League in prior seasons had contextually been playing in the Italian league during the season which coincided with the Euros. Due to his football being played overseas in Italy and therefore outside the immediate scope of British footballing eyes, the commentators provided greater analysis of his goalscoring statistics when referring to him during play. The reverse of this form of commentary was also seen on numerous occasions, while Lukaku was playing overseas and receiving additional commentary and context, several international players who play in the Premier League domestically received commentary differing from the usual convention. Billig's theories make note that while the tendency in examples of Banal Nationalism to welcome into the national sphere is readily present, the reverse is equally implied in the way discourses are delivered.

Commentators refer to players such as Halil Dervisoglu not simply with his name but with reference to his club link to home nation football. The commentator stated, *'Brentford fans, one of yours is coming on. Halil Dervisoglu'*. The need to link the player to the Premier League serves to subtly highlight the notion that the player is playing for a team that is the Other through reference to his link to something more familiar in the UK. It is a style of commentary seen towards other players for example, Mateusz Klich who is also described in relation to his English team, *'Tracked well by Klich of Leeds United'* and *'That's a yellow card for Klich of Leeds'*. Aside from the direct reference to these players, the absence of reference to non-familiar players has the effect of leaving them in the role of being an unfamiliar, unmarked Other.

Commentary which directly expresses this theme was seen in the Scotland Czech Republic game when the home nation commentator stated, *'Obviously they've got one or two players that we're more aware of in Soucek and Coufal'*. This style of discourse evokes a sense of Frankenberg, Dyer and Rodriguez's Racialisation theories of whiteness but instead with a Nationalism focus, with the home-nations and the Premier League being the marker by which others (non-home-nation Czech players) are left without mention. Instead it is home nation football being the marker by which opposing international footballers and teams are judged. Like above, this is a clear and directly applied example of the principle of Owning familiar 'home nation-linked players' while Othering those who are outside that footballing sphere. The decision to overtly state that there are two players that *'we're more aware of'* centres the discourse on the notions of Owning the familiar and Othering the unfamiliar.

Further to this, the Foucauldian theories of regulated practices and rituals tie into the commentator practices above. Firstly defining these terms, regulated practices are seen by Foucault as being things which involve 'written or unwritten rules that govern discourses' (Foucault 1972). An unwritten rule taking the form of a regulated practice would be the commentator tendency to deliver their descriptions in the style of stating a player's name, followed by their club affiliation, and also making specific note of players who have domestic English football ties. Mills analyses Foucault's suggestions for 'de-regulating' regulated practices as

involving a dual focus: firstly on the practices which keep statements in circulation, such as those seen extensively in the results, and secondly a focus on which practices keep other discourses out of circulation (Mills 2003 p.54). A regulated practice which Foucault would see as keeping discourses of Owning and Othering in circulation, is the practice of having home nation biased commentators unanimously featuring as the deliverers of discourse. It fosters a situation where the commentators are all familiar with the players affiliated with Scottish, Welsh or English football while lacking the familiarity that an opposing nation representative will have for their side and players. The following section expands upon these notions through discussion of national stereotyping.

Following on from the concepts of Owning and Othering and returning to the notions discussed above regarding Adama being physical and the Spanish national side being technical, several instances of National discourses were seen in the commentary that could be considered to be instances of Owning and Othering through the use of national stereotypes. Most notably, Italy captain and central defender Giorgio Chiellini was remarked as being a *'Roman Centurion'* an unmistakably national stereotype evoking connotation of soldiers and battle alongside it being an Italo-centric discourse of not simply being a soldier, but a centurion. It was further elaborated upon when both Chiellini and his centre back partner Leonardo Bonucci were labelled as being *'the old gladiators'*. Again a Roman stereotype and a martial stereotype conjuring ideas of nation and combat. Further adding to the connotations of nation and leadership seen in the Roman centurion discourse, a longer excerpt on Chiellini from the same commentator stated, *'You could see ancestors of Giorgio Chiellini in a roman legion couldn't you, the helmet, the works, a true commander'*. The manner in which the discourses are naturally delivered by the commentator are direct evidence of Naturalised Nationalism featuring in the discourses of commentators.

On face value, these notions may seem to be simple usages of entertaining alternative descriptions to simply describing the players as 'veteran' centre backs as was also seen in the results about Chiellini. The notions of nation and national stereotype become relevant to this study when they are used in the way they are in relation to Adama, Spanish national possession and skill being dichotomised against

what the commentators deem pace and power of Adama. Such was seen when the majority white Switzerland team was contextually in the act of substituting a white player for the black midfielder Djibril Sow, the commentator provided his appraisal of Sow stating, *'Djibril Sow, he's a very combative, very energetic midfielder with a brilliant engine to get up and down and disrupt. They're going to need all the legs they can get'*. In the context of an all-white midfield, the notion that Sow was going to bring four traits: combativeness, energy, an engine and disruption has the effect of portraying him as an entirely physical player and that the current all-white midfield does not possess those qualities when it is stated that he will bring those qualities to the midfield.

These ideas are unpacked further in the work of Balibar and Wallerstein (1991) where ideas of race and nation intersect, their concept of reciprocal determination in the field of nationalism posits that as nationalism develops, it twists antagonism and persecutions that have differing origins into racisms (p. 52). They offer examples from varying periods in history ranging from the Spanish Reconquista, making note of theological intolerances between Catholics, Jews, and Muslims that combine with racial and ethnic intolerances and hatred resulting in the persecution and banishment of the Andalusian Moorish in favour of the hegemonic Iberian precursor states to Spain and Portugal. More recently in history, Balibar and Wallenstein make note of nation-state ideas of German and Russian nationality amongst others in the 19th and 20th centuries, focusing on their cultural dominance over minorities to be assimilated or otherwise. Where these political notions align with national footballing discourses is through the dominant national stereotypes and philosophies of play. The Spanish philosophy of possession and passing being dominant and at odds with the way in which Adama plays football being the prime example above.

The above notions of Naturalised Nationalism can also appear in the discourses of Owning and Othering around individual players and their place, welcome or otherwise, in the national sphere. Beginning with Hobsbawm's (1992) application of Anderson's imagined communities, 'an imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people', the notion that those on the field of play are embodying the nation as a whole is key to the

discourses of Owning and Othering. Key examples revolve around Raheem Sterling, a player synonymous with having received disparaging media coverage around his spending and actions in the wake of England national team failures. Here at Euro 2020, Sterling was remarked as being ‘the Boy from Brent’ when scoring goals at Wembley, in the London borough of Brent. Such a discourse paints him as the archetypical home-grown talent and local boy, with both holding connotations of national pride and success with Billig’s principles highlighting the small, natural ways in which the commentators identify his nationhood through his place of upbringing.

The praise and jubilation around Sterling’s successes directly contrasted with the disparaging media coverage in the past mirrors the sentiments expressed by Germany’s Mesut Ozil when he discusses his successes and failures in the eyes of German media. Ozil stated while announcing that he was quitting the German national team and retiring from international football that, ‘I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose’ (The Independent 2018). Such a sentiment echoes the winning and welcoming discourse around Sterling, a discourse of the home grown and celebrated ‘Boy from Brent’ compared to the discourse of hate and the overt racist remarks ostracising Bukayo Saka and Marcus Rashford around the failure to win in the final penalty shootout. These final examples exhibit the more overt examples of Owning and Othering and have undergone significant media scrutiny and push back. However, one must assess the factors which contribute to how the discourses of Naturalised Racialisation and Nationalism have flown under the radar and have remained in circulation in the era of the Black Lives Matter and No Room for Racism campaigns.

Dominance and Hegemony of Discourses Despite Anti-Racism Efforts

This section aims to address the processes and theories behind how the racial biases and discourses seen in the results still remain firmly entrenched in the commentary despite numerous anti-racism efforts in football. The discussion will begin Hall’s notion of a dominant/hegemonic position with definitions of hegemony and dominant discourse permeated with required nuance for the context of the study. With the definitions established, Scheurich’s (1993) notion of racism as an ‘individual problem’ will be analysed in context and assessed alongside its parallels

to Billig's (1995) Banal Nationalism. Following this, the TTK, done prior to Premier League and Euro 2020 fixtures, will be discussed through the lenses of Foucauldian rituals, regulated practices, and resistance discourses. In conjunction with these lenses, the ways in which the knee has failed to gather momentum as an effort to combat the racial biases will be discussed. Finally an assessment of the myriad methods of mediation and structure will be undertaken to analyse the factors that are external to the direct commentator discourse which contribute to the overall process.

As stated in the review of literature, Hall's notion of the dominant/hegemonic position requires contextualisation with notions of hegemony and notions of dominant discourses. The notion of hegemony for this study requires nuance, and contextualization to the study of football commentary. This is due to the typical use of hegemony as relating to both ideology and deliberate control. Femia (1987) notes that this typical hegemony expresses itself as influencing people's 'personal convictions' and turning them into a 'replica of prevailing norms' (p. 24). Bates' (1975) political definition of hegemony provides further insight into hegemony stating that it is 'political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class'.

With football being embedded in the worldwide cultures, a notion of cultural hegemony is required. Woolard (1985) states that cultural hegemony is rather an authority over culture and the social reproduction of a culture. There is a concerted effort on the part of media organisations, as noted in the review of literature and the results, to deliver and instil anti-racist messages and sentiments by the commentators and pundits within the organisations. The TTK, the No Room for Racism campaign, and the social media vilification of the perpetrators of racist acts comprise a small segment of the visible and overt actions that are taking place to combat overt racist acts in football. Despite this intent from organisations and those representing them, the naturalised racialised discourses remain. Here is where the notion of hegemony needs to be adjusted as above.

Hegemony sees itself applicable to the instances where actions are being taken by actors and organisations, while theory of dominant discourse sees itself

applicable to the pervasive racial biases in the discourse. Foucault stresses that power is diffused in discourse, as opposed to it being wielded coercively by actors and organisations (1978), and asserts a regime of truth that society, or in this case, the footballing world, accepts as being true. Utilising both hegemony and dominant discourse where appropriate to discussing the actions of organisations and the diffusion of biased discourse provides more angles of analysis when discussing commentary, anti-racism campaigns and other acts such as the TTK which incorporate aspects of both.

One such notion as to why individual acts of overt racism, such as social media hate, are swiftly dealt with and pervasive, underlying, racially biased discourses are not dealt with and remain dominant is through Scheurich's concept of racism being a problem on the part of the individual (1993). The notion posits that racism is thought of 'in terms of the overt behaviours of individuals that can be readily identified and a person who does not behave in these identified ways is not considered to be a racist' (p. 6). With racism constructed as an individual concept, it is very easy to therefore believe that it has no association with the vast majority. This notion is much like Billig's Banal Nationalism theories on 'archetypal' nationalism, where it is deemed by most as being emotional and irrational (p. 39). Both nationalism and racism are therefore deemed only for the extremes and therefore for the heated minority and individuals, but instead there is the pervasive banal nationalism in normal people's discourses and therefore one could apply its principles to the racialisations in the commentator discourses to form a theory of a banal racialisation, racialisations that are continual, normalised and widespread.

A novel occurrence in this study is the Premier League and Euros football being recorded contains the TTK by the players and the accompanying commentary. As stated in the results, it is a brief pause in the widespread racial biases of the commentary to focus on an overt anti-racism message. While the different instances of knee commentary and the fluctuating levels of player and team participation in taking the knee have been discussed in the results, here the theoretical discussion behind the knee and knee commentary will be undertaken. The three Foucauldian notions find themselves applicable to the TTK and the commentary on it: resistance discourses, rituals, and regulated practices.

A resistance discourse arises from the initial notion that discourse is involved heavily in power relations. Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1987) noted that while discourse serves as a means to oppress, discourse is also a means through which one can oppose dominant discourses, therefore resulting in the concept of resistance discourses. Commentator remarks showing support for the TTK are a direct exemplification of a resistance discourse. Regularly taking the form of support for anti-racism efforts and championing inclusivity, the aims of the discourses were clear. Commentators in the Premier League stated, *'The players continue to do so [take the knee] as part of the ongoing fight against racism'*, *'Every fan wants to watch a fair game, taking the knee again emphasises football's drive for a fairer society'* and *'the players will continue to unite in their fight against racial injustice and inequality'*.

Both this sentiment amongst commentators and the act of taking the knee amongst the players was seen more consistently in the Premier League examples but when compared to the Euros knee instances and commentary, a wide variety of responses and alternative acts were seen. In the Belgium-Russia fixture, the Russians remained standing while the Belgian players took the knee with the commentator stating, *'The Belgian players take the knee to send the message that there is no room for racism, it is not met with universal applause in the stadium, rather met with crude whistles'*. Contextually several of the Belgian players were playing domestic football in the Premier League, which was a consistent factor as to who took the knee. Many other teams and players did alternative inclusivity messages or did nothing. Looking at the Premier League and Euros comparatively, a flaw in the TTK was the failure to get universal engagement held the message behind the TTK back.

The act of taking the knee developed into both a Foucauldian ritual and a regulated practice. Foucauldian rituals are seen as practices that can occur before, alongside or after the discourse taking place, naturally existing beside the content of the discourse (Foucault 1971). Contextually in the most recent Premier League season years after the initial TTK, the act is done much less frequently during the 2022/23 calendar with a few select 'anti-racism days' in the schedule featuring the knee being taken. This is where the notion of regulated practices becomes more

pertinent to the knee, regulated practices involve the notion of identifying 'written or unwritten rules that govern discourses' (Foucault 1972). Simple and widespread examples would be the practices of player naming (being that of surnames only) and regular use of the semantic macro structuring principles to provide short sharp information. The Premier League decision to limit the TTK to a select few days can be considered a regulated practice that has governed the discourse around the knee, limiting it significantly.

As the message has waned both amongst decision makers and the public, Bonilla-Silva's (2006) notion of abstract liberalism offers insight. It is defined as 'using ideas associated with political liberalism and economic liberalism in an abstract manner to explain racial matters' (p. 28). In addition to this, Bonilla-Silva further qualifies the position as being utilised by those whose intentions are to appear 'reasonable and even moral' while continuing to maintain as position which is 'opposing almost all practical approaches to deal with de facto racial inequality' (p. 28). The act of taking the knee fits into this framework because the intentions of the governing bodies, players, and commentators are all aligned towards that of anti-racism, but the anti-racism sentiment is being delivered via a surface level act that leans heavily into Scheurich's notion of individual racism. Taking the knee has the effect of absolving the individual of their 'responsibility for racism' as they are signifying their anti-racist intent with the knee.

Accompanying the act of abstract liberalism are a multitude of barriers and problems, the lack of engagement from other nations, players and fans at the euros and even some backlash and booing, as was seen in the results, limits the scope of the efforts. The near instantaneous return to using racially biased commentary phrases by the commentators mere moments after voicing their anti-racist support highlights the abstract nature of the knee. The covert and naturalised racism in football discourses is not highlighted by the TTK and therefore one sees a scenario where a commentator lists off numerous physical assessments of a black footballer not long after uttering their support for ending racism in football. One must discuss the structures and mediation that takes place within football broadcasts to understand ways in which these discourses remain hegemonic.

Fairclough's (2003) theories on structure and re-structuring revolve around the notion that the permanence of institutions, for example: established practices and methods of operating that create internal rigidities, resulting in resistance to change whether they are cultural changes or changes in discourses (p. 444). In the methodology, this was contextualized to football via looking at the roles and usage of career commentator and ex-professional commentators being structural rigidities that have been unchanged for decades. The discourses between commentator and co-commentator have been discussed at length in the above application of van Dijk's discourse analysis principles as to how they gain legitimacy, distribute the racially biased discourses and further contribute to the hegemony of said discourses.

Key to the hegemony of the discourses is the development over time of the structures and processes which maintain the discourses. For this, the theories of Elias and Giddens are used as principles by which the structures are examined. Elias's work focuses on the figurational, people in interdependent networks (1978), and the evolution of such networks over time as to understand how practices appear and the extent to which they have changed or remained entrenched. Giddens' work looks into the processes taking place during their evolution over time by suggesting that the actions and agency of individuals has a structuring effect on the institution (2021). The rationale for closely aligning these two approaches involves their applicability to the notions of development over time and specifically the structuring which enables development of hegemony to take place.

Elias' theories, with a focus on figurations as interdependent networks of people, would see sports media broadcasts as figurations containing multiple layers of development. In the live broadcast, the interdependent figurational relationships between the commentators, pundits and pitch side analysts in the above example of the Scotland v Czech Republic fixture comprise one layer of figuration. A further layer would include media producers and staff making production decisions, such as decision makers selecting all Scottish representation. The combination of these interdependencies has produced a situation that has fostered an environment of one-sided discourses. Bringing Giddens into the example, one would see a situation where the actions of all involved have a further structuring effect of reinforcing the institution as the only voices and influences present are Scottish in the example.

Factors discussed in the applied van Dijk discourse analysis section include the proliferation of funds amongst broadcasters with the effect of allowing for things such as more camera angles, statistical packages and analytical tools. All of which allow for the legitimacy of the messages and discourses being delivered by commentators and pundits to be increased with data and visual reinforcement. When the discourses being reinforced and legitimised are discourses containing racial bias and banal nationalist sentiments, a situation is fostered where those discourses become even more deeply engrained. Compared to previous decades where commentators and pundits had vastly fewer resources available to them to reinforce their discourses, a commentator in the present day can contribute significantly to the hegemony of naturalised racial biases through not only drawing on those biases, but also backing up the commentary with statistics, replays and analysis.

To conclude the discussion, football commentary and broadcasts have fostered an environment in which racialisations and nationalism have become typical and natural. Having been cultivated through what has been deemed the subconscious use of whiteness in the domain of racialisations, and home-nations in the domain of nationalism (Rodriguez 1998). These have been actioned through their use as a measuring post by which descriptions are delivered to other demographics, most notably black athletes. In the realm of nationhood, it is the subtle and accepted instances of nationalism that make up the backbone of the sentiments seen that contribute to the Owning of home nation players and Othering of those who are foreign. Subtle and accepted instances comprising of the national anthems, the home nation remaining the subject of commentary despite opposition action, and the subtle use of unanimous home nation voices delivering said commentary.

As Billig (1991) notes above of the typical definitions of Nationalism, as opposed to his Banal Nationalism, it is seen as emotional and irrational when it is defined in terms of political extremes and xenophobia. But such definitions fail to identify the accepted, naturalised nationalisms seen throughout the commentary. When applying this to both the nationalism and racialisations, here is where both the definitions of hegemony and the focus of hegemony must be adapted alongside notions of Foucauldian dominant discourse where actors are not seen as exerting hegemony over discourse but instead, the discourse holding hegemony or dominance

over those who are drawing upon it. With racialisations and nationalism in the commentary flowing freely, one must pivot the focus of anti-racism efforts towards the discourses that have remained unchanged and entrenched, considering that the visible and concerted efforts on the part of commentators and broadcasters to combat racism have largely been effective in doing so.

Conclusion

By analysing concurrent Premier League and International European commentary, this thesis has made steps towards understanding how domestic football commentary and international football commentary deliver both similar and differing racialised discourses on players. The conclusion aims to provide summary of what has changed and what has remained the same in these racialised commentator discourses since McCarthy and Jones' first (1997) academic foray into the research of football commentary. Firstly, the insights from the quantitative findings will be summarised followed by the qualitative findings. Within these, the comparative and contrasting data from the Premier League and Euro 2020 will be summarised. Alongside these findings, the insights relating to the novel act of Taking the Knee are discussed in addition to the effect it had on commentator discourses. Furthermore, the theoretical notions relating to intent, the nuances of football commentary discourse when applied to the theories of intent, and the entrenched nature of the discourses will be summarised. Following this, the effect of the media's ever-increasing funding and TV deals will be assessed alongside the effect it has on both the scope of discourses and the legitimacy of the discourses.

Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The methodology of triangulating a quantitative content analysis approach and a qualitative discourse analysis approach allowed for effective coverage of both a breadth and depth of the commentary taking place and a further angle through which the research question of *'What are the differences and similarities between domestic and international commentary?'* could be answered. Both the spread and the scope of the discourses in the commentary were able to be studied through the wide-reaching quantitative approach, with the depth and specificities of the discourses being appropriately unpacked through the qualitative approach as per the triangulation theories of Windelband (1998). In advance of the quantitative study, an a priori hypothesis was formed based on the findings of the earlier commentators studies from which the research protocols were previously utilised (McCarthy and

Jones 1997; McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003). The hypothesis of *'a negligible difference in the percentages of positive physical descriptors describing black players between the sampled domestic and international commentary'* was found to still be accurate in a modern setting and matched the prior expectations for commentary on a Premier League season as the abovementioned prior studies researched Premier League seasons.

The application of these protocols to European football allowed for the main research question of the study to be accomplished, that being the comparison of discourses between domestic and international football commentary. The total percentage of 78% positive physical descriptors in Premier League commentary tells us that the landscape of domestic football commentary has remained fairly static in terms of underlying racialised discourses as this number aligns closely with the findings of the studies from the turn of the century (McCarthy and Jones 1997; McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003). The Euro 2020 comparison resulted in findings of increased 81% of positive physical commentary towards black players in international fixtures.

The approach of assessing both physical and mental descriptors allowed for a further level of analysis and comparison between the two competitions. The comparison of the findings from the Premier League and Euro 2020 datasets unveiled a spread of discourses that alluded to two notable patterns that offer answers to the research question regarding differences and similarities between the competitions. Firstly, a comparatively reduced demographic of black footballers in the Euro 2020 teams received a significantly higher proportion of physical remarks in the commentary, a figure that nearly equalled the number of physical remarks towards a considerably greater number of white players. To summarise from the results, there was a significant over-description of the physicality of a smaller pool of black players at the Euros. This most notably resulted in a double-edged sword of a further reduced amount of description of mental characteristics of black players at the Euros resulting in an over-physically and under-mentally described population of black footballers at the Euros.

Cambell and Bebb (2020) found in 2018 World Cup commentary that acts of physical proficiency by white players and acts of mental proficiency by black players

were 'not recognized or noticed' by the commentators in their study (p. 155). Conclusions from the findings of this study, and from findings such as Campbell and Bebb's, suggest that a combination of naturalised racialisation in addition to a naturalised nationalism, further compounding the biases, could have played a part in the greater skews toward increased physical and reduced mental description. While Campbell and Bebb's research focuses on global World Cup football, the majority of squads from the countries in Euro 2020 featured none or very few black players. Such a situation provided a player demographic which only further exacerbates the discourses such as those seen for example towards Adama Traore of Spain.

Furthermore, the emergent case study on Heung-Min Son and Mohamed Salah, as two prominent players who do not feature demographically in the study protocols, showed that the two received commentary that would relate more closely to the commentary delivered towards white players, involving more mental praise and reduced physical praise, even when their feats on the pitch were physical feats. An example of such involved Salah receiving commentary praising his 'movement', a descriptor regularly reserved for description of white players when they are running. As stated in the results, such physical acts from Salah, if undertaken by a black player would have more likely than not have been described in with connotations of physicality. Again when commenting on Son, reference to his injury absentee teammate Harry Kane saw commentary remarks praising his adaptation to a central striking role in the team when even when performing physical running feats on the pitch. Wider study into the discourses of British Asian footballers offers a view more focused on the realm of exclusionary discourses (Kilvington 2012). However, it offers a viewpoint from which to analyse the discourses seen on Salah and Son. The discourses around Salah and Son in this thesis showed no reference to their physicality evoking notions of what was found by Kilvington to be the assumed lack of physicality amongst British Asians (p. 207). The small scope of the Salah and Son case study, having emerged from the main focus of the thesis, offers an evident need for future research into these discourses.

The Taking of the Knee

A notable discourse in the study, not seen in prior football seasons, was that of the discourse on taking the Knee. The research question of '*What effect, if any, does overt anti-racist commentary on the TTK have on the covert biased discourses seen in wider commentary?*' provided a dual approach through which the study could assess what the commentators included in their commentary on the Knee and what they failed to include when discussing the Knee. It was found that the knee discourses provided commentators a novel way through which they could directly address issues of racism and discrimination. However it was found that the reach of the message, in relation to racist discourses in football, was limited to the overt. The dual approach to domestic and international football allowed for comparative analysis of the actions of home and overseas players and supporters alongside the discourses from the commentators during the act of taking the Knee in both the Premier League and at Euro 2020.

The Premier League fixtures saw an overwhelming majority of support for the TTK amongst both the players, supporters, and commentators. While Euro 2020 fixtures saw a much wider variation of responses: combinations of players either taking the Knee, refusing to do so, or performing an alternative message of inclusivity. Focusing on the commentator responses, Premier League commentators provided a unanimous support for the TTK in the sampled Premier League fixtures while the Euro 2020 commentary maintained the approach of unanimous support, while making note of any supporters, teams, and players who either dissented or undertook alternative actions. All of the commentator remarks on the TTK were firmly situated in the realm of opposing overt racism. An evident lack of self-awareness of their own naturalised discourses was apparent when, in one instance in particular, the commentators were blaming social media outlets for their policies towards overt social media racisms in the wake of the Euro 2020 final.

The failure by commentators, in relation to their awareness of their own physically biased discourses towards black players, provides evidence supporting suggestion that naturalised discourses surrounding black physicality have become unseen and commonplace over time and that they reside as a dominant discourse, even alongside overtly anti-racist commentary delivered by commentators such as

the commentary on the TTK seen in the results. This study aims to elucidate these naturalised biases so that they receive recognition equal to that of the overt anti-racist discourses by the commentators.

Additionally, during the period of time where the Knee was being taken on a regular basis, at least four prominent black Premier League and Football League players were seen to be questioning the effectiveness of the Knee and its potential to effect lasting change in football. Wilfried Zaha, Ivan Toney, Britt Assombalonga, and Liam Bridcutt all expressed sentiments doubting the Knee, branding it a ‘token gesture’ (Daily Mail 2020) with Zaha making the most significant statement denouncing the Knee. It was reported that ‘he will stop taking a knee and instead ‘stand tall’, further elaborating that ‘these things are not working’ and that ‘unless action is going to happen, I don’t want to hear about it’ (Daily Mail 2021).

Summarising the points made in prior sections, the effectiveness and potential of the Knee to be a catalyst for change towards overt racism is greater than the potential for the Knee to be a catalyst for changing covert and entrenched discourses that are seen in commentary and wider footballing discourse. Research conducted since by (Black et al. 2023) has made note of the mixed reactions and focused on discourses external to those within football broadcasts, further analysing the pushback and lack of unity in the messages being delivered. Further to this, the act of Taking the Knee has since been reduced to being done on designated ‘No Room for Racism days’ and the first fixture weekend of the season, which reduces the reach and the strength of the message greatly. A recommendation for future study would involve researching the views of footballers and stakeholders as to their views on the effectiveness of the Knee, in both its original state and its current iteration, alongside efforts towards illuminating the existence of the entrenched discourses that the Knee fails to uncover. With vocal condemnations from the above three footballers, research on additional responses to the Knee from those in football would provide insights into improving anti-racism policy and actions going forwards.

Theoretical Perspectives and Nuances of Intentionality

Hall's (2001) notion of the dominant cultural order is seen throughout the results of the study, with naturalised codes embedded throughout the commentary discourses. The notion that the naturalised codes remain undetected, when deliberate ideology is being framed in a situation, holds partial truth and the theory requires nuance for its application to footballing discourses. Nuance, in the form of intentions, is required when considering anti-racist actions on the part of broadcasters in the form of the No Room for Racism campaign and the overt instances of anti-racist discourse from commentators when supporting the TTK, as seen in the results with unequivocally anti-racist commentary. The intentions of the broadcaster and the commentators can be comfortably suggested to be anti-racist. This conclusion can be partially gathered from the results where commentators directly address the post-Euro 2020 racist acts on social media and denounce them unequivocally.

Where it can be conceptualised that naturalised racialisations remain unrealised by commentators is through the notion that racism is seen as a problem specifically on the part of 'the individual' (Scheurich 1993). The focus on the highly visible and overt racism creates a situation where that form of racism is deemed to be the sole problem and the problem of the individual who is committing the act. It therefore abdicates any responsibility or focus on the commentators and their discourses that contribute to the perpetuation of racial biases in football commentary. As said above, it must be recognised that this has the effect of doubly focusing on the considerably more visible social media racisms and therefore even further reducing the likelihood that the relatively invisible and naturalised biased commentator discourses will be addressed in the future. It allows for significant focus to be placed on those discourses of overt hate, and the platforms on which the hate is spread, while very little focus is placed on the stereotypes and racialisations that have become naturalised.

Giulianotti's (2001) notion of a 'routinised racist vernacular' encapsulates this sentiment that the dominant racialised discourses and commentator phrases have become part of commentary routine and therefore out of sight and out of mind when placed alongside overt hatred towards players. Notably for future research,

Giulianotti's notion of a 'routinised vernacular' emerged in discourses around the Women's World Cup in relation to the sending off of Lauren James for England against Nigeria. Multiple publications and commentators online referred to the female England team as having gone 'down to 10 men' (Sports Brief 2023; Sports247 2023). The gendering faux pas could be hypothesised to be due the short phrase existing in a long reinforced and routinised 'male-football' vernacular with high profile Chelsea striker Sam Kerr also repeating the same short phrase when speaking about her own team at the Football Writers Association awards stating, '*when we went down to 10 men at Tottenham probably everyone wrote us off*' (SheKicks 2022). Most recently, Chelsea Women's manager Emma Hayes referred to her defensive tactics as 'man-to-man marking' during a post-match interview on Sky Sports.

Further to this, the summary of the demographic figures for the commentators that are delivering discourses that contain racist stereotypes suggests that the discourses have remained firmly in place despite significant efforts on the part of broadcasters to diversify the demographics of who is delivering footballing discourses. What these findings would suggest is that Giulianotti's theory of a 'routinised racist vernacular' explains footballing discourses irrespective of what demographic is delivering it. Key to how this occurs is the surface level positivity of the black athletic discourses. Building on this with findings from the study, the description of positive physical qualities is seen on a case-by-case basis as being a totally positive act. However, when delivered over a significant period of time and with significant consistency, stereotypes are formed, are consistently restructured, and are reinforced with the assistance of the legitimacy afforded to the actors who are delivering the stereotypes in their roles in the media event. Future study into commentary delivered on both the women's game and direct study focused on different commentator demographics would provide greater insight into how commentator demographics affect or fail to affect the naturalised discourses in football.

Mediation, TV Rights and Discourse Legitimacy

In the domain of mediation and TV rights, Comisky, Zillman and Bryant's (1977) assertion that audiences are only at liberty to see what media organisations provide to them remains key to the notion of legitimacy of commentator discourses. The financial figures for TV deals during seasons that had their football commentary studied by McCarthy and Jones (1997) and this study differ vastly in amount and scope. The TV deal from 1992-1997 comprised of 60 games televised and a fee of £191.5 million while the 2016-2019 TV deal in effect for this study provided coverage of 126 games with a fee of £5.1 billion in addition to overseas TV rights bringing the entire total to a £9.01 billion deal (The Athletic 2023). Such a vast increase in both the finances involved, and the vast increase in the number of fixtures being televised and commented upon, has the effect of spreading the discourses seen in commentary to a much greater audience and with significantly more financial backing on the part of the broadcasters.

The financial increases have resulted in more actors, in the form of pundits and commentators, being in a position to deliver racially biased discourses to vastly greater audiences and in vastly more fixtures each season resulting in the proliferation of the commentator discourses. In addition, to greater numbers of voices, the summary of these increases in finance are that they have greater access to analytical tools, statistical packages, and camera angles that can lend further visual and statistical legitimacy when delivering commentary which contains the biases seen in the results sections. Conclusions drawn by commentators with statistical backing cannot be scrutinised in a vacuum, if a player has performed physical feats and there is statistical evidence to reinforce the fact, there is no question of the legitimacy of such an instance. Where the disparity arises is in the semantic macro-structure of commentator discourses. Summarising the assertions around semantic macro-structure, commentators distilling complex, multi-faceted actions into purely physical descriptions has the effect of focusing discourse purely on physical attributes. When this is done on a persistent basis, it has the effect of generating and perpetuating the stereotypical discourses of natural black athleticism.

Notably at the time of writing, a new 2022-2025 TV deal has come into effect with a further total increase seen on top of the already vast increases seen in the 2016-2019 deal. This new TV deal signed in 2022 sees an increase in total finances to £10.05 billion total, with overseas deals providing the increase in funds as the domestic deal saw a slight decrease from £5.1 to £5 billion (The Athletic 2023). Where the extremely notable potential for the spread of the dominant biased discourses is seen is in the number of televised fixtures proposed by the broadcasters. While the previous deal saw 126 games televised a season, this current deal will see 260 games televised. The perfect storm of high funding, vastly more fixtures, and discourses that still remain firmly entrenched and unnoticed, will allow for the reproduction of the stereotypes to continue unabated.

In the domain of diversification of those who deliver commentary, Campbell and Bebb assert that, 'greater diversity within commentary teams may go some way to providing important counter-narratives, which disrupt and challenge the dominant racialised discourses present within much 'football talk' on British television' (2020 p. 159). Despite this assertion, key findings from the data of this study suggests that, more often than not, diversity of commentators does not alter the dominant discourses that are entrenched in the commentary as commentators from all backgrounds have delivered racialised stereotypes in the commentary and punditry.

Campbell and Bebb do address this in their study when stating that, 'caution is required on this last point, as greater ethnic or gender diversity *in a simple or superficial sense*, does not always guarantee diversity of ideas' (2020). Most notably, this study's application of van Dijk's discourse analysis principles offered analysis of the ways in which the structure and the format of in-game commentary and studio punditry can act as a barrier to the changes in discourses and facilitate the structuring and reinforcing of discourses. Summarized here, factors ranging from the reinforcing interactions of commentators to the use of technological aides all contribute to empower and entrench the discourses that are drawn upon by the commentators unwittingly. As noted in the commentator demographics analysis, even with significant diversification of commentators since the studies of McCarthy,

Jones, and Potrac at the turn of the century, the discourses remain as entrenched as they always have.

Recommendations

Recommendations for broadcasters and journalistic practice would involve both the identification of and subsequent acknowledgment of these naturalised racialisations and for steps to be taken toward a conscious effort towards a more holistic descriptive practice. As for actions during commentary, this research would recommend for broadcaster executives and/or commentators directly to begin with a conscious effort towards delivering more consistent mental praise for complex feats on the football field, in an effort to begin to dispel the already existing and consistent bias towards black physicality in the discourses. Society and broadcasters are making steps towards having more awareness towards different forms of overt racism and are putting measures in place to combat them, however until these lesser-seen discourses are both identified and acknowledged by those delivering them, the unrealised nature of the naturalised, racialised discourses leaves footballing broadcasters in a position to unwittingly proliferate racialised discourse.

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