CELEBRITY ATHLETES AND SPORTS IMAGERY IN ADVERTISING DURING NFL TELECASTS

Dan C. Hilliard
Department of Sociology & Anthropology
Southwestern University

Alexandra O. Hendley
Department of Sociology & Anthropology
Southwestern University

Submitted to the Brown Working Papers Series, Southwestern University, March 2005.

ABSTRACT

In this paper we investigate the contribution of advertising to "the sports-media-commercial complex" (Messner, Darnell and Hunt, 2000:391) through content analysis of a set of 1525 commercial messages contained in a sample of 15 National Football League games from the 2003 season. Games were sampled across four networks and throughout the regular season and playoffs (excluding the Super Bowl). We focus particular attention on ads utilizing a sports setting, employing sports imagery (either visual or verbal), or including a celebrity athlete. Approximately 21% of ads in the data set used a sports setting in a significant way, while nearly 30% employed sport imagery; however, only slightly over 10% of the ads included a celebrity athlete. A simple but significant finding of the research is that sports settings, imagery and celebrity are frequently used to advertise sport itself – future sports telecasts, sports clothing, sports video games, and even public service announcements that serve as public relations for the NFL. We discuss in detail the way sports settings, imagery and celebrity are used to advertise non-sports products. We consider how gender and race are connected to sport in these ads, and drawing on our analysis we speculate about the relationships among advertising, sport, and American culture.

CELEBRITY ATHLETES AND SPORTS IMAGERY IN ADVERTISING DURING NFL TELECASTS

"In fact, there has never been a propaganda effort to match the effort of advertising in the 20th century, in the history of the world."

-- Sut Jhally, "Advertising and the End of the World" (videotape), 1998

"Major sports have such vast audiences, both 'live' and, more importantly, through television, that they have become an almost logical site for advertising."

-- Ellis Cashmore, Sports Cultures: An A-Z Guide, 2002.

The ideological function of mediated sport has long been of interest to sports scholars, and some years ago McKay and Rowe (1987) called attention to the value of a critical paradigm in media studies for analyzing these issues. In the past decade sports scholars have given increasing attention to the role of mediated sport in the production of a globalized popular culture that valorizes capitalism, commodification, and consumption. The significance of sport in this process is captured by Rowe's (2004) identification of the "media sports cultural complex." Analyses of how sport contributes to the development of this culture are examples of "reading sport critically" (McDonald and Birrell, 1999), in that they often consider the mediated representations of sport in their historical, economic and political contexts. The role of advertising in this commercial/cultural nexus is recognized by Messner, Dunbar and Hunt (2000:391), who refer to the "sports/media/commercial complex" that includes "the huge network of multi-billion-dollar automobile, snack food, alcohol, entertainment, and other corporate entities that sponsor sports events and broadcasts." Through this complex, sport is associated with a wide array of consumer goods and services that encompass our entire lives.

While the integral economic role of advertising in the burgeoning mediated sport industry is widely recognized, sport scholars have paid only limited attention to advertisements as cultural texts. For example, Rowe (2004:2), in his recently revised text on sport and the media recognizes the centrality of advertising when he states: "In fact, the activities on fields, courts, courses and other prescribed venues are at the bottom of an inverted pyramid of sports watching, selling, marketing, sponsorship, presentation, and discourse." He discusses the role of advertising and sponsorship revenues in the complex political economy of mediated sport. Yet, in the second section of the book, where sport texts are interpreted, Rowe examines sports journalism, still photographs, and sports cinema, but not advertising. Similarly, in his leading sociology of sport textbook, Jay Coakley (2003) includes discussions of advertising in his coverage of sports and the economy, sports and the media, and sports and politics. He rightly points out that corporations use their associations with sport to sell "a way of life based on consumption" (Coakley, 2001:402). However, analyses of how advertisements function as cultural texts are not referenced. (1) Whannel (2002: 36) states: "Advertising is the hidden hand in the story of the media. While its role is often marginalised in accounts, it is perilous to underestimate its significance." We believe that it is important for sports scholars to focus more critical attention on advertising and its relationship to sport.

A limited number of analyses of sport advertising as cultural texts have been produced, and we hope to build upon that previous work. We seek to explore the relationship between sport and advertising by analyzing a set of commercials contained within broadcast television coverage of National Football League games. We propose, first, to describe the advertising contained within these telecasts: how many ads are there,

what products do they advertise, what proportion of ads use sports references or imagery, or employ celebrity athletes? Second, we propose to focus special attention on commercials that do use sports imagery or celebrity athletes, asking: what types of products are more or less likely to use these images, and how do these images work, in relation to the sports programming and other commercial images with which they are surrounded? Lastly, while attempting to avoid assumptions either about the intentions of the producers of the commercials or about audience reactions to or receptions of them, we offer personal commentaries on a small set of commercials, informed by the critical analyses referenced below.

Previous Studies of Sport and Advertising

A relatively small but important set of works in sports studies provide inspiration and theoretical background for our project. In particular, we draw upon the previous work by Wenner (1991,1994) on "communicative dirt" in sports advertising. In the first study, Wenner (1991) analyzed 189 alcohol commercials appearing during televised football, basketball and baseball games and examined how "sports dirt imported into the context of beer commercials helps associate the positive cultural meanings of sport with what may be seen as an aberrant, out-of-context, 'dirty' setting" (Wenner, 1989:390). Later Wenner (1994) analyzed eleven commercials that aired during NBC's broadcasts of the 1992 Olympic Games and that contained images of members of the U.S. national basketball team made up of NBA stars – the "Dream Team." It is important to note that for Wenner the term "dirt" "has no inherent negative connotation. Rather, the term refers 'to the cultural borrowing that allows one cultural entity to adopt the logic of another'" (Wenner, 1994:29). The concept of "cultural dirt" points to the connection between the

televisual sporting spectacle and the ad contained within it. When corporations choose to place advertising during a sports event, they are not only seeking an audience of a particular size and demographic configuration; they are also seeking to have some of the positive cultural connotations of sport "rub off" on their products.

More recently, the relationship between televised sport action and advertising has been approached through Kristeva's (1984) concept of intertextuality. Applying this concept to an analysis of tobacco company sponsorship of sport in Canada, Dewhirst and Sparks (2003:372-373) define intertextuality as "the condition whereby cultural narratives and texts (such as sponsorship advertising) are constructed and read through a process of sharing and cross-referencing of semantic forms and symbolic contents with other narratives and texts." This suggests that in interpreting the meaning of a given ad, we must place it in the context of the programming and other ads with which it occurs.

Another study that provided inspiration for this work in that it considered sports programming together with the advertising contained in it is the aforementioned study by Messner, Dunbar and Hunt (2000). They examined approximately 23 hours of sports programming across a wide range of sports that contained a total of 722 commercials. By identifying the major themes displayed in both the programming and the commercials, they identified what they refer to a "the televised sports manhood formula." We hope to extend the line of research established by these studies by looking more closely at a sample of television commercials in the context of the sports programming within which they are contained.

We would be remiss not to mention another line of work on sports advertising that has less direct bearing on this project but which is nonetheless significant. Several

studies have offered close readings of advertising campaigns, often in relation to representations of race or gender, and often considering the mediated construction of sporting celebrities. (2) Given the prominence of its advertising displays and its stable of celebrity athlete endorsers, Nike has been the subject of much this analysis; and, not surprisingly, the role of Nike in fashioning the image of Michael Jordan has received the most attention. Andrews (1996) describes Michael Jordan as a "floating racial signifier" (p. 134) and states: "Jordan is not an example of racial transcendence, rather he is an agent of racial displacement. Jordan's valorized, racially neutered image displaces racial codes onto other black bodies, be they Mars Blackmon, Charles Barkley, or the anonymous black urban male who the popular media seem intent on criminalizing" (Andrews, 1996:140). McDonald (1996) analyzes the positioning of Michael Jordan as a family man in relation to the call for a return to "traditional family values" that marked the Reagan years. Included in this analysis is a reading of an ad for Hanes underwear; this analysis is similar in certain respects to the previously referenced analysis by Wenner (1994) on the "Dream Team" and "communicative dirt." Wilson and Sparks (1996) investigate the impact of commercials for athletic shoes using celebrity athletes including Jordan on youth and youth cultures in Canada; they found that adolescent boys responded to these commercials in the context of interpretive communities in which race played a large part, leading black and non-black groups to respond differently to the commercials.

A recent study by Walton (2004) reverses the concern with Michael Jordan and representations of blackness to consider Nike's role in constructing images of distance runner Steve Prefontaine and representations of whiteness. Comparing media images of Prefontaine immediately following his death in the mid-1970s to images newly

constructed (largely by Nike) in the 1990's, Walton argues: "Nike played a large part in the 1990s reemergence of Prefontaine that subtly transformed his image from the working-class rebel with a cause, created in the media in the 1970s, to a commodified hero" (Walton, 2004:80). She concludes that "In effect, the 1990s video productions of Prefontaine's life serve as extensive commercials for Nike" (Walton, 2004:80).

Still other scholars have examined Nike campaigns and representations of race. Cole (1996) critically interrogates Nike's P.L.A.Y. (Participate in the Lives of American Youth) campaign and its use of Michael Jordan as a spokesperson in the context of the "sports versus gangs" discourse that was part of a larger rhetoric about inner-city youth in 1990s America. Armstrong (1999) employs a symbolic interactionist perspective to analyze how Nike appeals to black consumers, specifically focusing on print advertisements and television commercials containing basketball content. Some of Armstrong's observations are relevant to our analysis and will be referenced later.

Representations of gender in Nike campaigns have also been critically analyzed. Considering Nike's "Just do it" campaign in the context of post-feminist Reaganite American culture, Cole and Hribar (1995) argue that, while Nike positions itself as progressive and pro-woman, Nike's advertising is in fact conservative: "Nike's slogan 'just do it' encourages, in fact, commands 'us' to ignore the historical, cultural, and structural circumstances and constraints through which 'we' make history and history makes 'us'" (Cole and Hribar, 1995:353). Drawing inspiration from Cole and Hribar's work, Helstein (2003) employs a psychoanalytic perspective to explore how Nike advertising uses the apparently contradictory themes of excellence and emancipation to produce desire in women consumers.

Considering more broadly the role of advertising within mediated sport, and returning to the emphasis on globalization mentioned at the outset of this paper, Silk and Andrews (2001) explore the strategies used by global corporations to advertise to market segments in different world regions and having distinct national or regional cultures. They argue that "sport (either in terms of sporting practices, spectacles, or celebrities) is frequently used within advertising campaigns as a de facto cultural shorthand delineating particular national contexts" (Silk and Andrews, 2001:183).

Methods

A convenience sample of fifteen National Football League telecasts was videotaped from the 2003 season. The sample was designed to include games from every month of the season, from September to January (3) and all four networks that currently broadcast NFL games in the United States – CBS and FOX (Sunday afternoon), ESPN (Sunday night) and ABC (Monday night). National Football League games were selected as the context for our study for several reasons. First, football is considered an important American cultural spectacle (Bissinger, 1991; Foley, 1990), and NFL games are the highest rated regularly scheduled sports programs on television in the United States. Furthermore, NFL games constitute a coveted placement by advertisers because they occur on Sunday afternoons when television viewership would otherwise be low, and they attract high ratings from the highly desirable demographic category of 18-34 year old males (Coakley, 2001). Following Silk and Andrews (2001), we argue that televised professional football is a cultural shorthand for American culture (4) and that as such it is a crucial site for understanding how mediated sport functions as ideology.

The sampled games contained a total of 1525 commercials, or an average of slightly over 100 commercials per game. The 1525 units for analysis included 972 different ads. The most frequently occurring ads appeared 8 times in the 15 games, and 16 ads appeared 6 or more times. It is important to note that this figure represents only one element of the advertising content of a televised football game, in that it does not include "branding" (Coakley, 2003), that is, the attachment of corporate names to stadia, programming segments (the "Prudential halftime report"), etc. The figure also excludes advertising by means of stadium signage (including digital or virtual signage) and on-air promotions delivered from the broadcast booth ("See '60 Minutes' tonight on CBS immediately after the game"). Only "commercial spots" that were separately produced and inserted into the telecasts were considered.

We watched the 15 videotapes together and coded each ad on a number of variables. We discussed coding difficulties and arrived at consensus; coding disagreements were actually quite rare. We created an SPSS data file in which each ad was a case. Our data analysis was done in two steps.

First, using the SPSS file we produced a statistical portrait of the entire set of ads; below we present these results in the form of frequency distributions and cross-tabulations. The purpose of this statistical portrait is to give readers a context for the later analyses (to see where the ads we interpret more subjectively fit within the total sample); perhaps equally importantly, it gives readers an "objective basis" against which to compare their own recollections of advertising. (If you are an NFL viewer, which ads do you recall seeing?)

Second, after reviewing both the frequency of appearance of ads across product categories, the use of sports imagery and celebrity across product categories, and the salience of different ads to each of us as sports fans and television viewers, we selected a small set of ads that do use sports imagery and/or sports celebrities for closer reading. However, rather than an attempt to produce a single interpretation of each of these ads, we have begun the interpretive process by separately writing responses to each ad, then engaging in a conversation about our differing responses, following the practice advocated by bell hooks (1994). We hope that comparing the responses of a twenty-something white female athlete sociology-anthropology student with some background in sport media studies with that of a fifty-something white male professor with twenty years experience in sport media studies will produce insights into the ways these ads function as cultural texts in the context of the sports programming and other advertising in which they are viewed. We make no claims that "the audience" reads these ads as we do; recognizing our differing positions as researchers is one step in acknowledging the multiple positions of viewers. However, in the concluding section of the paper, we do speculate as to the role of advertising using sports imagery and sporting celebrity within the "sports-media-commercial complex" (Messner, Darnell and Hunt, 2000).

Findings

Statistical Profile of Ads

The variety of product categories advertised and their corresponding frequencies are listed in Table 1. Media products are the most frequently advertised product category, accounting for over one quarter of all ads when the sub-categories of television comedy, drama and news, sports programs (broadcast, cable and pay-per-view), movies

(in theaters, on cable, and pay-per-view) and video games are considered together. Ads for television comedy, drama, and news account for nearly one-eighth of all ads, second only to automotive ads, which were nearly one-fifth of the total. Ads for other sports programs constitute 8.1% (nearly one in twelve) of all ads. Thus, a major finding of this study is that the media-sports-commercial complex is heavily self-referential. Following a significant distance behind media ads and automotive ads were ads for alcoholic beverages (all for beer and malt beverages, and 7.9% of the total), and foods and soft drinks (7.5% of the total). In descending order follow communications services (cell phones, long distance service) at 6%, financial services (credit cards, life insurance, brokerage firms) at 5.4%, business services (computer services, document delivery) at 4.5%, retail stores (mostly appliances and electronics) at 4.3%, drugs (both prescription and over-the-counter) and toiletries at 3.4%, apparel at 3.4%, dot-com businesses (for example, Expedia.com) at 3.2%, and airlines (Southwest Airlines) at 2%. Public service announcements were only 25 of the 1525 commercial spots, or 1.6% of the sample or an average of 1.67 PSA's per game. Several other product categories, including photographic equipment and fitness products, were less than 2% each of the sample.

Ads were coded for the presence/absence of a sports setting, sports imagery, and celebrity athlete. In coding both sports settings and sports imagery, a broad definition of sport that included recreational physical activity was used. In addition to obvious sports sites such as football stadia and dressing rooms, outdoor recreation sites were considered sports settings if there were images of physical activity (kayaking, hiking, rock climbing, etc.) in the ad; however, an outdoor setting such as a mountain or a river was not coded as a sports setting in the absence of human physical activity. Sports imagery refers to both

visual imagery and to dialogue or graphics that refer to sport. Sports imagery can exist apart from a sports setting (Jim Belushi wearing a Chicago Bears jersey in an ad for his sitcom, or Miller Lite including dialogue and graphics about an athletic accomplishment in an ad that only pictures a beer logo), but a visual of a sports setting was defined as a sports image (an empty locker room or basketball court). Perhaps the most subjective aspect of the coding process involved identification of athlete celebrities. Not all professional athletes were necessarily categorized as celebrities. The key criterion was whether we both thought the athlete would be recognized in the ad by a typical viewer (that is, the viewer of a weekly NFL telecast). We assumed that athletes would be recognized if they had extensively circulated media images (Michael Jordan, Donovan McNabb), or if they were positioned in the ads as someone who should be recognized for their athletic prowess (such as Sasha Cohen and James Blake in ads for Citizen watches). In either case, we are assuming that the presence of this particular, recognizable athlete in the commercial produces "cultural dirt" (Wenner, 1991, 1994) that benefits the product being advertised.

A total of 336 ads, or 22% of the sample, used a sports setting in the ad (see Table 2). While a small number of ads used a fleeting sports setting among multiple settings for the ad (an SUV ad with a soccer field as one of several sites in the ad), most (321 or 21% of the total sample) used the sports setting extensively. Similarly, 523 ads (34.3% of the total sample) used sports imagery, and in the vast majority of cases (452 ads, or 29.6% of the total sample) used sports imagery extensively (see Table 2). Thus, the use of sports setting and imagery is a common element in the production of advertising aired during NFL games.

We were somewhat surprised at the relative absence of celebrities within the sample of ads. Only 11% of ads (n=167) contained a celebrity athlete; of these, 10 ads also included a non-athlete celebrity (TV, pop music or film star). Another 159 ads (10.4% of the total) included a non-athlete celebrity but not an athlete celebrity. So, association with some kind of celebrity was an element in 326 ads (21.4% of the total), with athlete and non-athlete celebrities being used almost equally (see Table 2).

It is worth noting the extent to which sport settings, imagery and celebrity are used to advertise sport itself. We identified seven product categories that were sports products: sports programming on network television, sports programming on subscription channels, sports programming on pay-per-view, sports video games, sports clothing, sports-related public service announcements (mostly for the NFL's sponsored philanthropy the United Way, these spots are as much commercials for the NFL as for the philanthropy), and fitness products. We found that sports advertising content was extensively used in the spots for these products (see Table 3). Out of 188 ads for sports-related products, 77% used a sports setting, 99.5% used sports imagery, and 53.2% used celebrity athletes. One effect of these ads is to increase the apparent seamlessness between the sports programming and the advertising that refer to one another. Through these ads, viewers become accustomed to seeing athletes and sports imagery in ads; therefore, when athletes and sports imagery are used to advertise non-sport products, it does not strike the viewer as inappropriate. We now turn to analysis of the use of sport to advertise non-sport products.

We were particularly interested in whether sports settings, imagery and celebrity were used in association with certain product categories, and we used cross-tabulations to

explore these relationships (see Table 4). Of a total of 1285 ads for non-sport products, 164 (12.8%) included a sports setting, 250 (19.5%) included sports imagery, and 48 (3.7%) used celebrity athletes. Beer ads were likely to include both sports settings (32.2%) and sports imagery (34.7%), but did not use celebrity athletes (5). Ads for food products and soft drinks were likely to include sports imagery (30 ads, or 26.1%) and did use some athlete celebrities (10 ads, or 8.7%). In contrast automotive ads used celebrity athletes very rarely (2 ads, or 0.7%) and had limited use of sports settings or imagery (30 ads, or 0.7% each). In fact, the automotive ads that did use sport were almost all either for motorcycles (these used motorcycle racing as the setting/imagery for their ads, even though they were advertising street bikes) or for SUV's (these featured physical recreation in outdoor settings). Ads for passenger cars, minivans, and pickups almost never used any sports imagery.

Although fewer in total number, the product categories of financial services and drugs and toiletries made considerable use of sports imagery. Of 83 ads for financial services, 22 (26.5%) used sports imagery and 15 (18.1%) included a sports celebrity. The ads using sports celebrities were mostly ads for VISA cards that featured NFL players, including Donovan McNabb and Ricky Williams. Ads for business products were somewhat likely to use sports imagery (21 of 69 ads, or 30.4%) but were unlikely to use a sports setting (only 1 ad) and did not include sports celebrities. This pattern largely reflects a series of ads for Microsoft business products that placed sports imagery in the workplace in interesting ways. Among 53 ads for drugs and toiletries, 14 (26.4%) used a sports setting, 15 (28.3%) used sports imagery, and 12 (22.6%) contained a sports celebrity. This product category actually consisted of ads for three types of products: (1)

prescription drugs for erectile dysfunction, (2) over-the-counter drugs for indigestion, and (3) male grooming products (mostly razors and shaving creams) (6). While ads for erectile dysfunction drugs were less than 1% of our sample (n=13), 46.2% of them used a sports setting, 53.7% of them used sports imagery, and 46.2% of them contained a celebrity athlete.

Personal Interpretations of Advertising Texts

We selected four thirty-second commercials for personal interpretation and subsequent discussion. Two advertised beer (one for Budweiser, the other for Coors Light), while the other two advertised foods and soft drinks (Campbell's Soup and Frito-Lay products). These ads were selected because they represented product categories where sports images are more frequently used, because we found them arresting (they "broke through the clutter" and caused us to remember them), and because we believe that they offer insight into how advertising operates intertextually in a televised sports setting. Below, a brief description of each commercial is followed by our individual responses.

Commercial #1: Budweiser. The scene is a football locker room. From a distance we see an interview being conducted and videotaped. The white interviewer, standing, asks the African American player, seated on a dressing bench wearing shoulder pads and football pants, "Leon, your reaction following today's devastating loss?" Zoom in to close-up of player, who replies, "Football's a team game, so I gotta put the loss squarely on my supporting cast." Leon looks directly into the camera and continues, "Man, I been carrying these guys all season long, but Leon can't do it all. I need some help." Camera pulls back; interviewer: "So your four fumbles weren't a factor in your mind?" Close-up of Leon with microphone in his face; he says, "Not if one of those other guys would've jumped on the ball." He looks directly at the camera and says, emphatically, "Again, Leon can't do everything." He smiles broadly into the camera. Against a dark background, the Budweiser logo appears, with the word, "True." Cut back to the locker room, where interviewer concludes sardonically, "There is no 'I' in team." Leon turns toward his locker and mutters, "There ain't no 'we' either."

Hendley's response: "Football's a team sport man, so uh I gotta put the loss squarely on the shoulders of my supporting cast…Look man, I've been carrying these guys all season but I can't do it all. I need some help!" So says Leon, the protagonist of a Budweiser ad series. In this particular commercial, Leon, an African American football player, is being interviewed post-game in the locker room by a white male reporter. The preceding quote was his response to the reporter's question of his reaction to the "devastating loss" just experienced. When prodded further about his four fumbles (and partial responsibility for the loss), Leon only reiterates his point that his teammates are the ones to blame.

Part of the Budweiser "True" ad campaign, this commercial offers a humorous change to the traditional hero/team player/good guy image of the professional athlete. Leon contrasts sharply with Michael Jordan, for example, whose media image capitalized on his "humility, inner drive, personal responsibility, and moral righteousness" (McDonald and Andrews, 2001: 26). While I doubt Budweiser is implying that "true" athletes behave and think like Leon, their goal was probably to give a more truthful, though satirical, dose of reality. Perhaps this gives the average-Joe-beer drinker who never could quite live up to that ideal someone with whom to identify – a (comic) relief for him. While this ad is meant to be an exaggeration, it does follow the recent trend of portraying athletes in the media as more human, and less god-like.

Understandably shocked by Leon's responses, the reporter concludes by remarking, "There's no 'I' in team." The use of this old adage seems backwards in the context of Leon's attitude and words. While the saying traditionally instills a sense of

teamwork and deference to authority, its meaning is twisted here because Leon, in rejecting all personal responsibility, does indeed see no "I" in team (Sage, 1998: 265).

Another dimension to this commercial that cannot be ignored is the fact that Leon is played by an African American actor. As black masculinity has often been classified as deviant, Leon does indeed deviate from the norms expected of and the values held by most athletes. However, his deviance is not threatening, and involves none of the hyper-sexualization or hyper-masculinization commonly associated with black males. Instead, he is more of a charmer, comparable more to P. Diddy than 50 Cent. For example, several times during his interview, Leon pleads his case directly to the camera, and he smiles widely after saying "Again, Leon can't do everything." So, while this character does play on the stereotype of an egotistical athlete, he is not a frighteningly looming force that some may associate with black masculinity. Obviously today there is more than one popular image of African American males, with Leon fitting somewhere within those. Nevertheless, no matter how they change, I wouldn't consider these images complimentary, and the choice of an African American for this role effects how viewers will respond to it. Some people may see it as less appropriate to have a white player behaving so arrogantly, and if not expected, at least funny to see a black player behave the same way.

Hilliard's response: I interpret this ad in the context of the general controversy surrounding personal and collective end zone celebrations in the NFL and the specific controversies that developed in response to African American players planting Sharpies and cell phones to be used in celebrations. I see this as an expression in American sport culture of the tension between heroism and celebrity as discussed by Whannel (2002),

who connects the conflict to an alleged "crisis in masculinity." Since most of the running backs and receivers who score touchdowns in the NFL are black, this issue may be viewed as a racial one by various audience segments. In this ad, "Famous Leon" is a celebrity who is distinctly non-heroic; he fails to respect the "American sports creed" (Edwards, 1973) communicated through locker room slogans (Snyder, 1972) that acknowledge the importance of teamwork. Leon is at home in front of the camera; moreover, he is much too neat and clean to have just completed a grueling pro football game, especially one in which he has fumbled four times. He represents appearance without substance.

At a broader level, the ad draws upon concerns in American culture about the loyalty of sports stars and, more generally, about appearance and reality. In the era of free agency, fans who are frustrated by rapid and continuous changes in player personnel may relate to the notion that many pro athletes are like Leon, concerned only with their own image and their own pay check. Fans who are all too familiar with political spin and advertising half-truth may be tempted to conclude with the ad that only the consistent taste of Budweiser is "true."

<u>Commercial #2: Coors Light.</u> The ad begins with the distant shot of a football stadium where fireworks are exploding. Cut to shot of Kid Rock entering playing field through falling confetti; he is singing "Somebody's Got to Feel This." Cut to shot of cheering fans, then to game action – it is a Cleveland Browns v. Oakland Raiders game. Cut to close-up of attractive blonde female fan cheering. Cut to Kid Rock on sidelines (each time we see Kid Rock, his song provides loud, energized background music), then to more game action. Cut to Kid Rock in stands with Raiders fans; he signals concession worker to serve Coors Light all around. Cut to stadium Jumbotron, which shows Kid Rock handing cups of beer to fans. Cut to cheerleaders dancing. Cut to more game action, then to Kid Rock in the announcers' booth, holding a microphone with the NFL logo. Cut to close-up of cheerleader giving the camera an exaggerated "come on" look.. Cut to Cleveland fans, then to Raiders player leaping into the stands filled with Raiders fans; Kid Rock is among them. Cut to Coors Light graphic with NFL logo, identifying Coors Light as "official beer sponsor." NFL logo and Coors Light logo then appear in

rapid succession before the ad ends with a graphic that says "Rock on" over a stylized mountain.

Hendley's response*:* The Coors Light commercial featuring Kid Rock starts off with a bang…literally. Opening with an aerial shot of a stadium, we first see an explosion of fireworks and confetti, through which walks Kid Rock. The musician makes his entrance, slowly swaggering out of the tunnel, and singing the words that are repeated throughout the ad – "somebody's got to feel this." And feel it, I did. For someone who is admittedly not much of a football fan, this commercial got me excited each time I saw it. I *did* feel the action, excitement, and intensity that are a part of a football game (or at least the game created within this commercial) when I watched it. What makes this commercial so effective? I think its similarity to modern music videos is a large part of its appeal, assuming of course, that it is targeted towards a younger, MTV-viewing audience. Besides the rock-and-roll soundtrack, the ad moves quickly and is composed of many short clips. In a span of thirty seconds, it follows Kid Rock as he makes his way from the field, to the stands, to the commentary booth, and back to the stands. This format resembles music videos commonly seen today – entertainment made for an audience with limited attention spans.

Additionally, considering the target audience of 18-35 year old men, this commercial works well because as I said, it's full of intense action. The violent nature of football highlighted in this commercial is an important part of their masculine identity. It symbolizes strength, power, and skill – all qualities seen as desirable for most men. As for the women in the commercial, the majority of them are part of the action, but merely as sideline sexual objects. The Raiders' cheerleaders are featured most prominently, and the shots of them show these scantily clad women cheering and shaking their hips. There

is one particular close-up of a woman who, as her hair whips around her face, looks straight into the camera with a come-hither look in her eyes. The first thing that came into my mind after seeing this portion of the commercial was a 1980's hair metal music video. Exaggerated sexuality exudes from her, almost to the point of absurdity. Although this image of a woman seems ridiculous and unfortunate to me, we must consider the fact that many men *and* women may see this, and use this image as a model for an ideal femininity. In contrast to the cheerleaders, there is actually one female fan in the audience shown cheering loudly in a close-up. Though it is encouraging that she is featured, I recognize the fact that she will not be the woman people will remember from the commercial.

As for Coors' use of Kid Rock for this musical advertisement, I think it was an important choice. Also known as the "American Bad Ass," Kid Rock represents particular values that Coors may or may not also support. First of all, he is known for his American pride. In this time of war, patriotism is highly valued, so choosing an artist who displays that quality is an effective way of reaching an American audience and showing the company's support for the nation. Connecting Kid Rock to football even heightens the patriotism because sport in modern societies has traditionally helped form a national collective identity: "National loyalty and patriotism are fostered through sport rituals and ceremonies that link sport and nationalism" (Sage, 1998: 117). Additionally, because of its great popularity and the fact that it is only played in the U.S., it seems like football has almost replaced baseball as the All-American sport.

Besides Kid Rock's national pride, there is also another side to his image. He is widely known for his wild antics, partying, and women. While his behavior is not

representative of most American males, I can guess that many 18-35 year old men wouldn't mind experiencing that hard-rocking life style at least once. With that assumption, my question is, do we really want Kid Rock to be a model for manhood and patriotism in this country?

Hilliard's response: Earlier ads in this series were the motivation for me to begin studying television commercials as cultural texts. When a series of these ads, including "The Twins" and appearing at the same time as the controversial Miller Lite "Catfight" ad, aired during the 2002 season, I was struck by how blatantly sexist they were and hypothesized that they represented a post-feminist assertion of traditional masculinity, an American parallel to what Garry Whannel (2002) has called "new laddism" in Britain. In addition, when I mentioned these ads in my classes, I discovered that almost all of my students, and certainly all of my male students, remembered the ads; they had succeeded in "cutting through the clutter."

In cinematic style, the ad draws heavily from the conventions of music video, which in turn draw heavily from the conventions of television commercials (Jhally, 1990; 1994). The quick cuts, loud music, and vivid action sequences generate energy that is hard for audiences to ignore. A rock'n'roll celebrity is inserted into the "narrative" of the football game, as is the brand of Coors Light beer. In its shot of the cheerleaders' dance sequence and in the close-up of the single cheerleader flirting with the camera, the ad utilizes the conventions of soft-core pornography so common in rock music videos (Jhally, 1990; 1994). I think it is important to note, however, that these conventions are very much a part of routine television sports coverage, including coverage of the NFL. The lead-in to ABC's Monday Night Football features celebrity musicians asking, "Are

you ready for some football? A Monday night party?" Every telecast pans the stands to pick out attractive young female fans as well as male fans with their bodies painted or dressed in wild costumes. Every telecast includes multiple shots of cheerleaders, often close-ups shot from below waist level to accentuate their cleavage. In other words, while the ads may be highly sexist, in the context of television sports production, they are not at all unusual. Recently I noticed that even conservative CBS has utilized these cinematic conventions (sans the flirting cheerleader) to promote their "NFL on CBS" weekly telecasts.

In addition to their representations of gender, I find these ads interesting because they present the football game as a site for hedonistic expression. The conflict between demands for hedonistic display and ascetic discipline for the sake of athletic performance is an important feature of sport today, as Whannel (2002) has shown. In this and several other ads in our sample, pro football exists as a stimulus for hedonistic excess.

Finally, while I fully recognize the long and significant relationship between sport and the alcohol industry (Johnson, 1988; Collins and Vamplew, 2002), I am bothered by the notion of an "official beer sponsor" of the NFL, which seems to allow Coors Light to claim more of the "cultural dirt" of sport than it deserves. And, I am particularly bothered that Coors, which has a poor record in terms of labor relations and race-ethnic relations, is the beneficiary of this association.

<u>Commercial #3: Frito-Lay</u>: Two twenty-something white persons – guy with short hair and trimmed beard dressed in rugby jersey and khaki pants, girl with long brown hair dressed in sleeveless top and slacks – are sitting on a love seat watching a football game on television. He holds a bag of Lay's potato chips; she holds a can of Pepsi. Other people in the background suggest a party is in progress. She, emphatically: "There's no way this guy's gonna make this kick.. I mean, he hasn't made one over 45 all year, it's not a domed stadium, you've got the wind. Forget it, there's no way he's gonna make the kick!" Shot of TV, kick being taken; TV announcer: "It's up. He missed it!"

She: "What? How do you miss that? How do you miss that kick? There's no excuse for missing that. I mean, the guy's got one job – make kicks!" TV announcer: "What a disappointing end." Graphics appear over shot of couple on love seat: "It's not whether you win or lose." She, matter-of-factly: "My name's Jessie, by the way," offering to shake hands. He, looking befuddled: "Hi." She: "Hi." New graphic appears: "It's how you watch the game." NFL logo, Lays logo, and Pepsi logo all appear beneath the graphic. Voiceover: "Pepsi and Lay's, proud sponsors of the NFL."

Hendley's response: Two adults are watching a football game on T.V. One, is rather opinionated…

"There's no way this guy's gonna make this kick. I mean, he hasn't made one over 45 all year. It's not a dome stadium, you've got the wind. Forget it, there's no way he makes this kick…What?! How do you miss that?!"

Most people would imagine a man making those comments; however, in this Pepsi/Lays commercial, the vocal viewer is a woman. Are they crossing gender role boundaries? Probably not as much as you may initially think. The woman sits casually, gesturing at the T.V., next to a man who looks visibly uncomfortable with her behavior. Leaning away from her, he makes sideways glances at the woman with an expression of disgust, annoyance, or maybe just fear on his face. The commercial concludes with the woman quickly straightening up, smiling, and offering her hand to the man: "My name's Jessie by the way."

The behavior displayed initially by the woman is not usually seen. Therefore, the man's reaction is expected, especially considering that he did not portray qualities of an All-American male sports fan (to be completely frank, he's a dork). Perhaps sitting next to this boisterous woman causes him to have insecurities about his own masculinity. Besides being unexpected, however, this commercial implies that the woman's behavior is unacceptable and/or undesirable. Surely this is indicative of women's marginalized role in the sports world. Even when she does change and acts in a traditionally feminine

way (displaying the female apologetic), the man still shows discomfort. I interpret this reaction as illustrative of the assumption that there are certain behaviors that women can display – anything outside these behaviors is abnormal, and some are simply contradictory and should not be displayed together.

Text over the picture at the end of the commercial reads, "It's not whether you win or lose…It's how you watch the game." Pepsi/Lays adapts the sports saying to fit the context of this commercial. In using this old saying, they reach a large number of people who are familiar with it. However, by changing the words to "it's how you *watch* the game," they add to the irony of the ad. What's important to them *is* how you watch the game, for ideally you are watching it with a Pepsi in your hand and a bag of Lays on your lap, just like the characters in the commercial. Food seems to be an integral part of watching sports for the American audience; snacks and beverages abound at most any gathering for a sports game. While I still think it's rather contradictory to associate chips, soda, and beer with physical activity, they still manage to be "Official Sponsors of the NFL," feeding the masses of fans and appropriating the "cultural dirt" of sport.

Hilliard's response: In the broadest context, I view this commercial in light of the cultural assumption that sport in general, and football in particular, is a "a man's world." (Messner, Dunbar and Hunt, 2000: 382; see also, Nelson, 1994). As Garry Whannel (2002: 10) says, "Men are expected to be interested in sport; women are not." The ad plays with this assumption by presenting a highly knowledgeable and engaged female fan, juxtaposed with a disinterested male, thus reversing the cultural stereotype. I see the ad's handling of this reversal as ambiguous. On the one hand, the female's "fanaticism" seems to be commended by the graphics stating: "It's not whether you win or lose. It's

how you watch the game." Indeed, these graphics may suggest that the pleasure she derives from the game is more significant than the pleasure she might get from a relationship with a man, especially a man as flat in affect as the one seated beside her. On the other hand, the ad could be interpreted as re-affirming the traditional stereotype by showing how women who are too fanatical about sports turn off men.

In a more specific context, this ad is surrounded by numerous others that play upon the "natural" differences between men and women. That men and women inhabit different worlds that are largely incomprehensible to each other is a standard assumption across commercials for all kinds of products. For example, a couple separately discuss the merits of their new Dodge Durango SUV with same-sex friends; she values the room and interior appointments, while he values the power of the "hemi" engine. Interestingly, the male in the Dodge ad is just as dorky as the male in the Frito-Pepsi ad – he catches his mitt on fire while grilling and has to stick it in the ice chest to extinguish the flames. Since men and women cannot understand each other, their relationships must be based on mutual manipulation, as in a Bud Light ad where a couple's cell phone conversation involves each trying to convince the other that they should spend the night "out" with their same-sex friends. In this context, which assumes that men and women inhabit different worlds, the female sports fan's attempt to enter the male world of sport may be seen as inevitably unsuccessful.

The other feature of this commercial that is striking is the sheer unattractiveness of the young man. He seems to have nothing going for him. He has a confused or befuddled look on his face throughout the ad, he does not seem to be particularly engaged either with the televised football game or with the party that is going on behind him, and

he offers only an unenthusiastic, "Hi" when the attractive girl next to him introduces herself. While it is certainly true that "men are foregrounded in commercials" (Messner, Dunbar and Hunt, 2000: 383), it is not the case that the foregrounding is always positive. Males are sometimes presented as emotionally in control, physically powerful, and conventionally attractive, but they are also presented as geeky and emotionally immature. It is hard to understand how such representations are expected to appeal to a predominantly young, male football viewing audience.

Commercial #4: Campbell's Soup: Donovan McNabb, in Philadelphia Eagles uniform (but without helmet), and his mother walk down a sidewalk. Voiceover: "Donovan McNabb and his mom are coming to your house." They knock on a front door which is answered by a thirty-something white male. Introductions are made. Voiceover: "And they're bringing dinner." Donovan: "Where's the kitchen?" Shot of host enthusiastically eating a bowl of soup. Voiceover: "Campbell's hearty chicken corn chowder, now hardier, with even more chicken." Camera draws back to show all three at the kitchen table, smiling as they eat their soup. Voiceover: "Sure beats another frozen dinner." All three adjourn to the living room; Donovan and host sit on couch to play video football. Donovan: "No, I'm McNabb." Host: "Come on, Donovan, I'm always McNabb." Donovan: "I am McNabb!" Mrs. McNabb, with Boston Terrier in her lap: "Boys, play nice." Host: "I'm McNabb, it's my house, I'm McNabb." Voiceover: "Have chunky soup for dinner. Make it Campbell's instead," over a still of a Campbell's Soup can.

Hendley's response: In a Campbell's Chunky Soup commercial, Donovan McNabb and his mom make a house call, soup in tow, to an unsuspecting man's home. This average white-collar man greets the McNabbs enthusiastically, and the three of them have lively conversation while sharing some Chunky chicken corn chowder. The appearance of McNabb's mother in this commercial is important because it is an illustration of the football player's family values, or at least that's the goal. It's commonly said that a man who respects his mother will respect other women, so this commercial frames McNabb in a positive light. Just as the media emphasized Michael Jordan's family, here too we see the creation of a family man image which opposes

stereotypes of black male hypersexuality and deviance (McDonald and Andrews, 2001: 29). Despite his imposing size and strength, McNabb is portrayed as congenial and non-threatening.

After eating dinner, the two men hurry to the couch to play a football video game. "I'm McNabb," says the homeowner, to which Donovan replies, "No, *I'm* McNabb." This bickering continues until Mrs. McNabb interrupts by saying, "Boys, play nice." This exchange resembles something you might witness between elementary-aged boys. In that sense, the two men are infantilized through their dialogue and mom-McNabb's scolding. Additionally, in the context of this commercial, Donovan's donning of his full uniform is ridiculously unnecessary, making the uniform seem almost costume-like. The infantilization of McNabb again serves to create a kind, non-intimidating image of the player. Putting him in this domestic setting makes him seem accessible and real, and it takes away any of the danger associated with black masculinity. Moreover, the fact that the homeowner is an un-extraordinary everyman makes him easy with which to identify. Playing video games and eating frozen dinners (until the McNabbs brought the soup), he is a typical guy, but he does hold his own against Donovan. This commercial puts the football star on the same playing field as the average man.

Hilliard's response: I view this ad in a complex cultural context. First, prior to the appearance of this ad midway through the regular season, there was the controversy surrounding Donovan McNabb's performance as starting quarterback for the Philadelphia Eagles. The Eagles and McNabb performed below expectations early in the season, and there was discussion in the media about whether McNabb should be benched. During this controversy, Rush Limbaugh, just hired by ESPN, asserted that McNabb was over-

rated and that he was being hyped by liberal media figures who were desperate that a black quarterback succeed in the NFL; Limbaugh promptly lost his ESPN job. By the time the ad aired, McNabb and the Eagles were playing well, and they ended up winning their division before losing in the NFC title game. Second, McNabb is representative of a group of physically imposing and successful African American quarterbacks (others are Steve McNair, Daunte Culpepper, and Michael Vick) who have become the prototype of the "new NFL quarterback." The incredible athletic feats of these super-stars are seen in pixelated form on video games (and television advertisements for them) and on sports television and internet highlight reels. Such mediated images may feed into longstanding cultural perceptions of African American males as hyper-athletic and hyper-masculine (Hoberman, 1997). While the commercial in question draws upon the name recognition and star appeal that follow from Donovan McNabb's athletic success (he wears an Eagles uniform throughout the commercial), he is presented in a domestic setting, sitting at a kitchen table and later on a living room couch, enjoying a simple bowl of soup and engaging in good-natured competition with his non-athlete, every man friend, under the supervision of his mother. (7)

It is interesting that another of the few ad campaigns that use NFL stars to advertise non-sports products also presents Donovan McNabb in a domestic setting. Here, in an ad for VISA credit cards, a misguided white male fan tries to get a ticket to the game by trimming McNabb's shrubbery; a second ad in this same campaign shows another white male fan returning Ricky Williams' dog. It is tempting to argue that producers of commercials feel the need to "take the edge off" African American athletic stars to make them less threatening and more acceptable to white audiences. And while

this may be the general case, in this particular ad campaign there is more to be considered, namely, a parallel ad featuring white NFL star John Lynch and his mother. I find it interesting that Lynch is a linebacker (a predominantly "black" position), while McNabb is a quarterback (a traditionally "white" position), so that the pairing of them in parallel ads plays at reversing racial stereotypes while offering a domestication of all NFL players.

Comparison of Personal Interpretations

We largely agreed about how race and gender were represented in the ads. We were both appalled by the limited roles available to women in the ads, and we both recognized the multiple representations of masculinity present in the ads. Some of these could be considered different representations of hegemonic masculinity – the violence of NFL game action, the swagger of Kid Rock, the hard-partying fans with their faces painted. Other images were more ambiguous (Famous Leon and Donovan McNabb); still others (the dork in the Frito-Pepsi ad) were negative images (but images that did not offer an alternative to hegemonic masculinity). While monolithic images of masculinity may have characterized advertising in the 1980s (O.A.S.I.S., 1988), they no longer do so today.

We also were both concerned about how African American men were represented in the ads. While the fictional football star Leon and the real-life football star Donovan McNabb are depicted quite differently, both depictions offer alternatives to the image of the African American male athlete as hyper-athletic and hyper-sexual. However, they accomplish this "softening" of the African American athletic male image in disturbing ways. Even as parody, Leon presents the image of style without substance, debunking

the notion of the heroic athlete. Donovan McNabb's domestication is perhaps less disturbing (he is, after all, still Donovan McNabb in his Eagles uniform), but we became keenly aware that we could not even begin to imagine how African American audiences would read these ads. Our experience points to the need for audience research that takes race into account, especially given existing research suggesting that white and African American audiences read references to African American cultural materials differently (Jhally and Lewis, 1992). Specifically, we would advocate research employing the use of race-and-class homogeneous focus groups to explore audience response to these ads, following on the work of Jhally and Lewis (1992).

We discussed how we arrived at such similar conclusions about representations of race and gender in the ads, despite our age and gender differences. We concluded that our similar readings were likely due to our common exposure to the academic discourses of feminist and anti-racist theorizing. We think it is important to recognize that persons who share our racial-ethnic and socio-economic positions but who have not been exposed to these academic discourses may read these ads very differently. We make no claims in this paper about how "the audience" might read these ads; rather, we offer our own readings as a stimulus to audience research that considers intertextuality.

Even though we ultimately read the ads quite similarly, we used somewhat different cultural contexts to interpret them. Hendley used more references to current popular culture, such as rock and hip-hop music, to interpret the ads, whereas Hilliard used sports news/events and other television ads. We believe that these differences reflect daily routines and lifestyles that are strongly associated with our different age and gender positions. It would be interesting to speculate whether these different contexts

would have led us to different interpretations of the ads, in the absence of our common academic backgrounds. Again, this question points to the need for audience research that explores intertextuality.

Finally, we should note some differences in the intensity of our responses to the sexism contained in these ads. Specifically, while Hendley was more incensed by the Frito-Pepsi ad, Hilliard was more outraged by the Coors ad. We attribute these reactions to differences in personal experience that reflect, but go beyond, our age and gender differences. Hendley found the Frito-Pepsi ad particularly offensive because it was "real," in the sense that it potentially reflected her experience as a female athlete and sports fan; in contrast, she saw the Coors ad as parody, having seen "much worse" on MTV throughout her lifetime. On the other hand, Hilliard saw the Frito-Pepsi ad as yet another representation of the truism that "sport is a man's world," based on his twenty-plus years of study on gender differences in media coverage of sport; however, he was more disturbed by the Coors ad, which he interpreted as indicative of a post-feminist cultural backlash (Faludi, 1991) that was inappropriate in twenty-first century American culture.

Conclusions

Looking at both the quantitative and qualitative findings of our research, and without speculating on either the intentions of the producers or the responses of the audience, we believe the following conclusions are warranted. First, sports imagery is used very extensively to advertise sport programming and sports-related products (see Table 3). We believe that these ads serve to "naturalize" the presence of sports imagery

in advertising, so that when it is seen in ads for non-sports products, it does not appear out of place.

Second, sport imagery is used to a significant degree to advertise certain product categories, such as beer, snack/fast foods and soft drinks, drugs and toiletries, and business products (see Table 4). In these ads, producers seek to appropriate the positive "cultural dirt" (Wenner, 1991, 1994) of sport, even if the products advertised are potentially unhealthy. They frequently use four techniques to encourage the "cultural dirt" of sport to "rub off" on their products:

1. they present celebrity athletes or fictitious athlete celebrities in a non-threatening relationship to the (mostly young, white, male) audience;

2. they represent sport as a site for hedonistic consumption;

3. they make reference to sports cliches and slogans that circulate widely in American culture; and,

4. they position the product as an "official sponsor" of the NFL, causing the brand logo to appear beside the NFL logo.

Third, the ads in our sample (both those that used sports imagery and those that did not) draw heavily upon race and gender stereotypes that circulate widely in the culture. Even when the ads debunk the stereotype, they depend upon viewers' awareness of the stereotype to make sense of the ad. Therefore, through the process of intertextuality the stereotypes are kept in circulation, even when they are not directly represented. This may help to explain the persistence of race and gender stereotypes, even as cultural texts come and go.

We began by arguing that sport media scholars should take advertising more seriously as a form of cultural text, and we hope we have offered a suggestion as to where such work might lead. We believe that future work in this area could benefit from the insights of two sociologists who work outside of sports studies, Todd Gitlin and Jeffrey Alexander. In calling for a "strong program" of cultural sociology, Alexander (2003: 14) says, "…it is only by resolving issues of detail – who says what, why, and to what effect – that cultural analysis can become plausible according to the criteria of a social science." We have argued here that the study of detail – looking at individual ads, what they say, and how they work – is important scholarship. Gitlin in his book *Media Unlimited* says, "The programs, ads, songs, and stories exist in passing. One by one, they can be taken lightly. They are made to be taken lightly, to fill their moments in time but yield gracefully to their successors" (2002: 8). Warning that we may not see the forest for the trees, he argues, "The buzz of the inconsequential is the media's essence" (2002: 9). So, even as we study the details, we must not forget that it is the sum of these thousands of details, interpreted in the context of one another, that makes advertising a powerful ideological force.

Notes

1. These comments should not be interpreted as criticisms of the quality of either the Rowe or Coakley texts. Quite to the contrary, we find them to be excellent texts. The point is that both high-quality texts recognize the importance of advertising yet do not analyze it in any detail.

2. In addition to the specific sources cited, we are indebted to the articles contained in the special issue of Sociology of Sport Journal (Volume 13, #4, 1996) guest edited by David L. Andrews and focusing on Michael Jordan, and to the essays anthologized in David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson (Eds.), Sports Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity, New York: Routledge, 2001.

3. Early round playoff games constituted the January games in the sample. The 2004 Super Bowl was intentionally excluded because commercials especially produced for and debuted during the Super Bowl were thought to be unrepresentative of advertising contained during weekly NFL telecasts. Consequently, we do not have in our video archive a record of Justin Timberlake/Janet Jackson's halftime revelation.

4. Consider recent debates about whether the Green Bay Packers have replaced the Dallas Cowboys as "America's team." More analytically, while we acknowledge that the notion of a unified "American culture" is problematic, football seems to be more closely connected to United States nationalism than do either basketball or baseball, both of which have been broadly internationalized. Furthermore, NFL telecasts draw audiences across the major racial-ethnic and gender categories into which audiences are often segmented.

5. The absence of celebrity athletes in beer advertising is presumably due to production codes that prohibit their inclusion. However, it is worth noting that Coors has in recent years run a series of ads featuring retired celebrity athletes, including NFL greats John Elway and Barry Sanders, and is now running an ad featuring pro golfer Sergio Garcia. None of these ads is included in our sample.

6. As we worked on the coding we began to joke that an alien anthropologist viewing these ads would conclude that humans suffered from only two afflictions – heartburn and erectile dysfunction! However, it is significant to note the products in this general category that are not advertised during NFL games: over-the-counter pain medications and allergy medications, prescription medications such as statins, and grooming products such as soaps and shampoos.

7. While it cannot be considered part of the context for interpreting the ad under review as it was viewed in 2003, a new ad in the Campbell's Soup series risks not just domesticating, but infantilizing African American NFL players, as Mrs. McNabb serves as "team mom" to the Philadelphia Eagles, refusing their requests to stop at fried chicken joints and serving them Campbell's Soup instead.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meetings of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, Tucson, AZ in November 2004. We gratefully acknowledge the helpful comments of colleagues who listened to a rehearsal of that presentation, including Jay Baglia, Traci Giuliano, Ed Kain, Maria Lowe, Sandi Nenga and Francie Larrieu Smith. We also benefited from discussion of the earlier paper by members of the Southwestern Writers Group, including Florence Gould, Walt Herbert, Ed Kain and Gwen Kennedy Neville. Lastly, the paper was greatly improved by the editorial suggestions of Eric Selbin. We appreciate the financial support of the Brown Foundation of Houston, Texas, which made it possible for us to work intensively on this project during the summer of 2004.

References

Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2003). *The meanings of social life: A cultural sociology*. New York: Oxford.

Andrews, David L. (1996). The fact(s) of Michael Jordan's blackness: Excavating a floating racial signifier. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, **13**, 125-158.

Andrews, David L. and Steven J. Jackson (Eds.). (2001). *Sport stars: The cultural politics of sporting celebrity*. New York: Routledge.

Armstrong, Ketra L. (1999). Nike's communication with black audiences: A sociological analysis of advertising effectiveness via symbolic interactionism. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, **23**, 266-286.

Bissinger, H. G. (1991). *Friday night lights*. New York: Harper Collins.

Cashmore, Ellis. (2002). *Sports culture: An A-Z guide*. New York: Routledge.

Coakley, Jay. (2001). *Sport in society: Issues & controversies*, 7th edition. New York: McGraw Hill.

Coakley, Jay. (2003). *Sport in society: Issues & controversies*, 8th edition. New York: McGraw Hill.

Cole, Cheryl L. (1996). American Jordan: P.L.A.Y., consensus, and punishment. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, **13**, 366-397.

Cole, Cheryl L. and Amy Hribar. (1995). Celebrity feminism: Nike style: Post-Fordism, transcendence, and consumer power. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, **12**, 347-369.

Dewhirst, Timothy and Robert Sparks. (2003). Intertextuality, tobacco sponsorship of sports, and adolescent male smoking culture: A selective review of tobacco industry documents. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, **27**, 372-398.

Edwards, Harry. (1973). *Sociology of sport*. Homewood, IL: Dorsey.

Faludi, Susan. (1991). *Backlash: The undeclared war against American women*. New York: Crown.

Foley, Douglas. (1990). *Learning capitalist culture: Deep in the heart of Tejas*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gitlin, Todd. (2002). *Media unlimited: How the torrent of images and sounds overwhelms our lives*. New York: Henry Holt.

Helstein, Michelle T. (2003). That's who I want to be: The politics and production of desire within Nike advertising to women. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, **27**, 276-292.

Hoberman, John. (1997). *Darwin's athletes: How sport has damaged black America and preserved the myth of race*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Hooks, bell. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.

Jhally, Sut. (1998). *Advertising and the end of the world* (video). Amherst, MA: Media Education Foundation.

Jhally, Sut. (1994). *Dreamworlds 2: desire/sex/power in rock video* (video). Amherst, MA: Media Education Foundation.

Jhally, Sut. (1990). *Dreamworlds: desire/sex/power in rock video* (video). Amherst, MA: Media Education Foundation.

Jhally, Sut and Justin Lewis. (1992). *Enlightened racism: The Cosby show, audiences, and the myth of the American dream*. Boulder: Westview.

Johnson, William O. (1988). Sports and suds. *Sports Illustrated*, **69** August 8), 68-82.

Kristeva, Julia. (1984). *Revolution in poetic language*. New York: Columbia University Press.

McDonald, Mary G. (1996). Michael Jordan's family values: Marketing, meaning, and post-Reagan America. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, **13**, 344-365.

McDonald, Mary G. and Susan Birrell. (1999). Reading sport critically: A methodology for interrogating power. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, **16**, 283-300.

McDonald, Mary G. and David L. Andrews. (2001). Michael Jordan: Corporate sport and postmodern celebrityhood. In David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson (Eds.), *Sport stars: The cultural politics of sporting celebrity*, New York: Routledge, (pp. 20-35).

McKay, Jim and David Rowe. (1987). Ideology, the media, and Australian sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, **4**, 258-273.

Messner, Michael, Michele Dunbar, and Darnell Hunt. (2000). The televised sport manhood formula. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, **24**, 380-394.

Nelson, Mariah B. (1994). *The stronger women get, the more men love football.* New York: Harcourt Brace.

O.A.S.I.S. (1988). *Stale roles and tight buns: Images of men in advertising* (video). Brighton, MA: OASIS.

Rowe, David. (2004). *Sport, culture and the media*, 2nd edition. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Sage, George. (1998). *Power and ideology in American sport*, 2nd edition. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Silk, Michael and David L. Andews. (2001). Beyond a boundary? Sport, transnational advertising, and the reimagining of national culture. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, **25**, 180-201.

Snyder, Eldon. (1972). Athletic dressing room slogans as folklore: A means of socialization. *International Review of Sport Sociology*, **7**, 89-102.

Walton, Theresa A. (2004). Steve Prefontaine: From rebel with a cause to hero with a swoosh. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, **21**, 61-83.

Wenner, Lawrence A. (1991). One part alcohol, one part sport, one part dirt, stir gently: Beer commercials and television sports. In L. R. Vande Berg and Lawrence A. Wenner (Eds.), *Television criticism: Approaches and applications* (pp. 388-407).

Wenner, Lawrence A. (1994). The dream team, communicative dirt, and the marketing of synergy: USA basketball and cross-merchandising in television commercials. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, **18**, 27-47.

Whannel, Garry. (2002). *Media sport stars: Masculinities and moralities*. London: Routledge.

Wilson, Brian and Robert Sparks. (1996). "It's gotta be the shoes": Youth, race, and sneaker commercials. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, **13**, 398-427.

Table 3: Use of Sport in Ads for Sports Products (N=188)

Product	Sports Setting	Sports Imagery	Sports Celebrities
Sport on network TV (n=94)	81 (86.2%)	94 (100%)	63 (67%)
Sport by subscription (n=12)	6 (50%)	11 (91.7%)	0 (0%)
Sport on pay-per-view (n=18)	10 (55.6%)	18 (100%)	2 (11.1%)
Sports video games (n=4)	4 (100%)	4 (100%)	3 (75%)
Sports clothing (n=27)	25 (92.6%)	27 (100%)	15 (55.6%)
Sports PSA's (n=19)	5 (26.35%)	19 (100%)	17 (89.5%)
Fitness products (n=14)	14 (100%)	14 (100%)	0 (0%)
Total (n=188)	145 (77.1%)	187 (99.5%)	100 (53.2%)

Table 4: Use of Sport in Ads for Non-Sport Products (N=1285)

Product	Sports Setting	Sports Imagery	Sport Celebrity
Beer (n=121)	39 (32.2%)	42 (34.7%)	0 (0.0%)
Food and Soft Drinks (n=115)	18 (15.7%)	30 (26.1%)	10 (8.7%)
Movies (n=101)	14 (13.9%)	15 (14.9%)	0 (0.0%)
TV Shows (n=180)	5 (2.8%)	9 (5.0%)	1 (0.6%)
Non-Sport Video Games (n=3)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Automotive (n=299)	30 (10.0%)	30 (10.0%)	2 (0.7%)
Communication (n=92)	13 (14.1%)	16 (17.4%)	2 (2.2%)
Financial Services (n=83)	3 (3.6%)	22 (26.5%)	15 (18.1%)
Retail Stores (n=66)	2 (3.0%)	9 (13.6%)	0 (0.0%)
Drugs and Toiletries (n=53)	14 (26.4%)	15 (28.3%)	12 (22.6%)
Non-sport Clothing (n=11)	6 (54.5%)	6 (54.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Business Services (n=69)	1 (1.4%)	21 (30.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Airlines (n=30)	1 (3.3%)	8 (26.7%)	0 (0.0%)
Cameras (n=7)	3 (42.9%)	3 (42.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Dot-coms (n=49)*	14 (28.6%)	23 (46.9%)	6 (12.2%)
Non-Sport PSAs (n=6)	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)
Total (N=1285)	164 (12.8%)	250 (19.5%)	48 (3.7%)

*Our coding categories did not distinguish between sport and non-sport dot-coms;
hence, sport dot-coms such as NFL.com and ESPN.com are included here.
Most of the sports imagery and all of the sports celebrities were used in ads for sports-related dot-coms.