



*Media
Representations of
Footballers' Wives
A Wag's Life*

JENNIFER BULLEN



Media Representations of Footballers' Wives

This page intentionally left blank

Media Representations of Footballers' Wives

A Wag's Life

Jennifer Bullen

palgrave
macmillan



© Estate of Jennifer Bullen 2014

Foreword © Eamonn Carrabine 2014

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2014 978-1-137-33568-5

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted her right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2014 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-46319-0 ISBN 978-1-137-33569-2 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9781137335692

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

For John Bullen

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	viii
<i>Foreword</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
1 Introduction	1
2 Framing the Wag	16
3 Methodology	52
4 Wives in Print	71
5 Fact or Fiction	109
6 Auto/biographies – Telling Tales	139
7 Conclusions – What’s in a Name?	179
<i>Appendix A</i>	188
<i>Appendix B</i>	192
<i>Notes</i>	194
<i>Data Sources</i>	196
<i>Bibliography</i>	204
<i>Index</i>	214

Tables

3.1	Newspaper statistics	64
4.1	Number of press articles incorporating footballers' wives	72
6.1	Wives, husbands and their careers	140
A.1	Social grading used by National Readership Survey	188
A.2	National daily newspaper circulation	189
A.3	NRS Readership estimates – women's magazines	190

Foreword

Before her tragically early death from cancer in 2012, Jennifer Bullen had begun the process of transforming her PhD thesis into a monograph by submitting a book proposal to Palgrave. Sadly, she did not live to see the extremely encouraging and positive anonymous readers' reports on her proposal and two sample chapters from her thesis. Both felt that only a little more work was needed to turn the work into an exciting contribution to the field, and as one of Jen's PhD co-supervisors I know this is a challenge she would have relished. It is clear that she was well on the way to developing a distinctive 'voice' and she, no doubt, would have further refined her critical understanding of footballers' wives and their girlfriends, and their place in contemporary British culture.

I often wonder what she would have made of the latest wag's exploits, such as Abbey Clancy's success in *Strictly Come Dancing*, or the way Wimbledon television cameras pan to wives and girlfriends practically every time their partner hits a tennis ball – that in the case of Andy Murray's girlfriend, Kim Sears, is now beyond the obsessive. These are just two examples from 2013, but they are indicative of how young women in relationships with sports players are visually mediated in particular ways. Jen's research meticulously details how these women are depicted across a range of media forms, while offering a theoretical framework that can not only grasp the wag phenomenon in its own right but as a springboard into key areas of contemporary debate in media studies and social theory.

The major editorial intervention made in the book is removing the chapter on 'What the Wives Say', which was originally in the thesis and will be published as a separate journal article, as both reviewers felt it had a different focus that sat uncomfortably with the overall approach taken in the work. I was aware that the original intention was to have a more extensive set of interviews with a wider range of wives and girlfriends. But despite her best efforts, this plan did not come off – not least since the more well known characters ignored Jen's repeated requests to be involved in the project. This was the only chapter in the thesis that departed from what she had initially set out to achieve, so I think she would have used this material in a separate piece, exploring the methodological difficulties and situating her findings in a more

'realist' discussion of the research. For me, and the reviewers, the real strength of what follows in this book is the detailed examination of how the figure of the wag is socially constructed across a range of media forms, which have important material consequences. In doing so, it says much about the changing cultural, political and ideological concerns animating contemporary Britain.

Alongside this charting of the phenomenon the study also provides a wide ranging survey of the literature that might help unravel the peculiar fascination and popular currency of the figure. Celebrity culture, class, gender and postfeminism are among the dynamics explored in the book, which often involves distinctive forms of symbolic violence that produce and sustain unequal social relations. Inviting both envy and contempt the figure of the wag is a mobile signifier condensing important struggles over the moral worth and cultural meanings of these celebrities. The analysis here provides a finely grained study of how celebrity culture is bound up with broader social processes of class formation, operating unequally along gendered lines.

Given the breadth of the theoretical ambition in the thesis I have only attempted a light copy edit of the material, as I have no way of knowing how Jen would have developed her arguments in the transition from thesis to monograph. Jen also had the impressive ability to write clearly and accessibly, even when discussing authors and concepts that are inherently difficult. That these skills were already present at this early, formative stage in her academic career, combined with her warm but purposeful single-mindedness, suggests she would have further honed her thinking in the writing of the book. Consequently, I am extremely grateful to Felicity Plester, commissioning editor, at Palgrave for enthusiastically supporting the book through from proposal to contract, and to Chris Penfold for patiently seeing the manuscript through to publication.

Eamonn Carrabine

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank both my supervisors, Eamonn Carrabine and Pam Cox, for their invaluable support and guidance. Thanks also to Sean Nixon for his insights on early chapter drafts and to Katy Wheeler for her friendship and academic support throughout the whole process as well as to my other friends in the Sociology Department at Essex. I would also like to thank the women who agreed to be interviewed for this project for their time and for sharing so much of their lives for this project – I really enjoyed the conversations and the rich data that came from these and they were invaluable to this work. This research was completed with the financial support of an ESRC Postgraduate Award. On a personal note, I would like to give my love and thanks to my family, in particular my mum, Joy Bullen, and Peter and Pat Lawrence for their ongoing support; and my greatest thanks and love to my ever-patient and supportive husband, Mark Lawrence, without whom none of this would have been possible. This book is dedicated with much love to my dad, John Bullen.

1

Introduction

Since the 2006 World Cup the figure of the ‘wag’ (wife and girlfriend) has become a term used to describe all footballers’ wives. The following quote demonstrates how the wag has become a symbol that represents a caricatured and exaggerated female figure and has become a media phenomenon:

A typical WAG is recognised by her fake tan, hair extensions, oversized sunglasses and the arm-breaking, oversized designer bag she is carrying. Some Wags have managed to turn their status into a ‘job’. Wayne Rooney’s bride-to-be Coleen has a reported £8 million fortune thanks to a perfume range, book, TV and fitness DVD deals and a column in *Closer* magazine.

(Sheridan, 2008, *Daily Mail* [online])

The origin of the term ‘wag’ is difficult to pinpoint, as is its precise meaning and connotations. According to the ‘Ephraim Hardcastle’ column in the *Daily Mail*, it was first used by novelist Jilly Cooper in her book *Polo* (2006:17). Another press report claims it was an acronym used by the Football Association (FA) (France 2004 *Observer*) and one of my interviewees was told that it came from the City where workers referred to their wives and girlfriends as ‘wags’. Since David and Victoria Beckham became a couple in 1997, football and celebrity have become heavily entwined and footballers’ wives became part of the staple diet of the celebrity press. Whatever its precise origins, the wag captured the public’s imagination during the 2006 World Cup. Since then depictions in newspapers and celebrity magazines have worked together to construct a number of discourses about women married to footballers and those who aspire to marry them. The wag provides a spectacular figure in the

media and according to sports journalist and author of *The Wags Diary* and *A Wag Abroad* Alison Kervin, the appeal of the wags is:

on a dull day we've got pictures of politicians going in and out of parliament and pictures of rain soaked county halls and then you've got this mad woman with heels like this and she's staggering along and she's, you think who's this?

(2008, personal interview)

Overall however, the term has become a shorthand representation for a specific type of workingclass woman who is deemed hyper-feminine, hyper-consumptive and a gold-digger.

The coverage of these women demonstrates how media representations of certain women can be seen as part of a postfeminist media culture. According to Tasker and Negra (2005:107), 'by the late 1990s representational verisimilitude required an acknowledgement of feminism as a feature of the cultural milieu'. They claim that in popular culture certain kinds of female agency are packaged as commodities and at the same time ideas of postfeminism assume that gender equality has been achieved, while simultaneously associating such equality with loss. McRobbie (2009) goes further and asserts that in a postfeminist world it is seen as a high-risk strategy for women to place their financial security in marriage or a male partner. The treatment of footballers' wives in the media suggests marriage is a means to achieve femininity and this can be an active choice for women in an equal world, but as working class women their dependence on men is seen as pre-feminist and invokes criticism (Negra and Holmes, 2008). Marriage to a footballer seems a precarious career choice – particularly in light of the reporting of their sexual behaviour in the tabloid press, yet the career of a wag has become a popular and aspirational one to many women. This book will seek to explain why this particular symbol of women is so popular and what it means in contemporary British society.

Certainly the spectacle of these women has captured the media and the public's imagination in a range of ways. However, despite the popularity and celebration of these women in some areas of the media, on a closer look much of it appears to be negative and they are regularly denigrated on the basis of appearance, taste and intelligence. It seems that the wags exemplify what Tyler and Bennett (2009/2010) have described as a cynical turn in celebrity culture, where pleasure is found in contempt and envy rather than through admiration and desire, and the

research for this book also found such cynicism in the representations of certain kinds of working class women.

Despite feminism providing women with opportunities to pursue their own careers and alternative lifestyles these images depict a return to a more traditional and conservative world, with women clearly placed as adjuncts to their husbands upon whom they are dependent for their income and status. The wives are shown to be conspicuous and glamorous consumers and discussed by some as if living in a fairy tale world. This fairy tale has become inspiring to some young women and it is symptomatic of a 'wannabe' culture where wags are prominent role models. Through analogies with fairy tales, the wives provide a moral education to young women about how to live their lives in contemporary Britain, providing cautionary tales about the 'right' types of femininity and behaviour to adhere to.

Although the wags are portrayed in a domestic and marital setting, they are rarely passive women and despite having symbolic capital in the eyes of some young women, in much of the printed media they are seen as a distasteful distraction to the important and masculine world of football. According to one commentator,

the sports celebrity scandal is one of contemporary life's most contradictory morality plays, with media, sportspeople, fans and onlookers representing an ensemble cast adopting multiple and sometimes antagonistic roles.

(Rowe, 1997:206–7)

Although not always part of a scandal the wags are often viewed in a similar way. Footballers' wives now play a major role in celebrity and football reporting. In discussing the 2006 World Cup England team selection, White claimed that it 'seemed driven by the requirements of *heat* magazine's picture desk' and that the team was

supported by a preposterous gaggle of micro-skirted Marie Antoinettes, they were living testament to the fact that unearned fame is the most corrosive of sporting influences.

(2006:S7 *Telegraph Sport*)

According to Gitlin (1998:82), we 'are not only enamoured of celebrities, but fascinated by the means by which they become and remain celebrated'. The wags prompt debates in the media around celebrity and who deserves symbolic recognition and wealth. The wives' ubiquitous

coverage has provoked envy in many who question why women who are dependent on their partners for an identity and money should obtain celebrity. Their lack of productive work leads them to be denigrated as the undeserving rich.

Using a semiotic and discourse analysis, outlined in Chapter 3, this research examines the symbol of the footballer's wife and the discourses surrounding it, across a range of media including magazines, newspapers, television series and auto/biographies to unpack what the stereotype of the wag entails and how and why it has been generated and sustained. When this project began in 2006, it was unclear whether the term 'wag' would still have any resonance in popular culture or if anyone would know what it meant by the time the book was completed. Rather than the ephemeral concept that it seemed likely to be, running only for the duration of the World Cup, it has become an enduring and pervasive categorisation of a certain type of woman. As Alison Kervin, author and sports journalist, notes they are such a phenomenon that

people would probably be able to name more England wags than England cricketers. It's just ridiculous you know certainly more wives than England female players, I could you know, because they are in the papers day after day after day after day.

(2008, personal interview)

This book will set out how the media has helped to generate a career path for a wag which women can follow. It looks at how some women have exploited their position to create a niche career for themselves as a celebrity 'wife of' – providing gossip and private details of the family life of professional footballers – a glamorous but hitherto largely closed world. This 'wife of' career provides untold opportunities for some wives and the representation of these women involves creating conflicting symbols for the audience and these will be analysed here. The book will seek to understand the paradox of these women, who on the one hand are seen as aspirational role models to young girls whilst simultaneously being denigrated as a grotesque figure invoking disgust. It will also explain how this figure has emerged through the blurring of exaggerated fictional representations and media reporting of real life wives and their lives.

Celebrities are not intimate and spontaneous as suggested in the media but are meticulously mediated constructions (Rojek, 2001). The emergence of wags as a media sensation was not created by chance reporting and is clearly bound up with a zeitgeist of a celebrity- and

sport-obsessed media. It is likely they were invited to the 2006 World Cup by the FA for the first time as a calculated decision to deflect attention away from the England team following concerns over the impact of media pressure – a decision which spectacularly backfired as the wives were subsequently blamed for the team's poor performance and deemed a distraction. It is argued that celebrity status makes it difficult for people to maintain personal relationships due to the media invasion on their private lives (Rojek, 2001). This is seen by the volume of media coverage of celebrities' affairs and relationship breakdowns. Although such stories are regularly applied to footballers, footballers' wives provide a paradox to the difficulties of personal relationships and celebrity as their fame is vicarious and often achieved through these very relationships.

The chapter now provides an overview of women's historical role in football – as a sport and as a cultural pursuit. It will then set out how developments in football, the media and celebrity have combined to sustain the contemporary celebrity milieu in which footballers and their wives are such important players.

Women and football

According to Hargreaves (1994), there is a long history of male domination in modern sports. Although not sportswomen, footballers' wives are intrinsically linked to football and provide a glamorous and feminine element to the sport without damaging its traditional patriarchal order. Even female sports players are often defined in a familial rather than sporting role. Removing the sports element relative to the woman and attaching it to a sporting male serves to support traditional biological assumptions of women in sport. Hargreaves argues that children are primarily socialised into traditional gender roles through the family and this is now underlined through media coverage of wags and footballers' families.

Historically, women have been sidelined as peripheral to professional football. In times of need, however, women have often been called upon to boost the popularity of the game. During both World Wars a number of women took up football as the men's leagues declined due to a lack of male players, but these were quickly marginalised once the male leagues resumed (Williams and Woodhouse, 1991). In the 1950s the Chairman of the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs issued the statement that the 'Federation [needs] "showmanship"...and one of the ideas put forward was the running of a National Football Queen Competition' (National Federation AGM Minutes, 1954:9 cited in Taylor,

1992:144). This led to beauty queen pageants being set up around the country to raise the profile of clubs and the Federation. Despite the reservations of some female fans, the contests continued and as late as 1984 there was a 'Miss Football Supporter' event (Taylor, 1992:147,155). This highlights a thread throughout football history where women have been used to improve the profile and heighten the glamour of the game.

Today, women's football is taken very seriously by many as a competitive sport yet women are still used to glamorise and titillate the men's game. Some clubs still have short-skirted cheerleaders before games and popular soccer programmes parade female fans, demonstrated by Sky's *Soccer AM* programme which has a 'soccerette' section parading female fans along a catwalk to the strains of Jimi Hendrix's 'Foxy Lady'. Until recently the archive on the Sky website displayed pictures of the women, including their vital statistics (football club, bust, waist and hip measurements), serving to clearly delineate female football fans from more serious male fans.¹

The media construction of the footballer's wife can be understood as an extension of this use of women to expand audiences and raise the profile of the sport, not only among the existing audience but also to attract a new female spectator. Clayton and Harris (2004) claim that media coverage of the off-field behaviour of footballers almost exclusively sustains a male gaze, reinforcing traditional masculinities. An image is created of beautiful and aesthetically feminine wives – viewed by many players as 'trophy wives' (Morris, 1981; also in Clayton and Harris, 2004:322).

The lives of footballers have become a ubiquitous part of the celebrity media and therefore their wives are too. In 2008 a new virtual football game *FootballSuperStars.com* was released and pays as much attention to life off the pitch as it does to football itself. Not only does the game involve playing football but also buying clothes and cars, drinking in bars and according to the game's makers 'you could even get yourself a Wag!' (Booker in Steele, 2008:30). It is clear that women have always been subordinated in football, except to add glamour, and footballers' wives now appear to supplement this glamour while reinforcing the patriarchal nature of the game. The following section sets out how developments in football and the media have led to this celebrification of the game, which has enabled the media phenomenon of wags.

Football and the media

In Hare's (1999) perceptive analysis football has become such an attractive global marketing tool that it is able to export itself. It is

not limited by linguistic barriers, does not have overly complex rules and requires no expensive equipment. The simplistic nature of football has contributed to its status as the most popular global sport and it is consequently viewed as a marketing tool as much as sport. A number of societal and communication changes have made football an integral part of popular culture, which will be discussed below, and have helped transform football into the “cash cow” of the new media sport economy’ (Boyle and Haynes, 2004:4).

The introduction of television cameras and eventually satellite broadcasting at football matches saw the game being opened up to a wider audience (Sandvoss, 2003). At this time clubs had commitments to ground restructuring following the Taylor Report in 1989 and were having to meet rising wage demands from players, so they saw the income from broadcasting as essential both in terms of selling the rights to show matches and to gain loyal audiences for marketing purposes (Boyle and Haynes, 2004). The Premier League was formed in 1992 as the larger English clubs wanted to realise and consolidate their marketing potential. They brokered a massive deal for broadcasting rights with *BSkyB* as they felt their popularity warranted a higher proportion of broadcasting revenues than the lower leagues. This was one of the first moves towards clubs becoming marketable brands and entertainment products focusing on the importance of merchandising (Boyle and Haynes, 2004). Although football has always been commercial with a large male, working class audience it is only since the 1980s and early 1990s that it has achieved a broader more middle class and female audience.

Satellite television opened up many new markets for football both internationally and also to groups that were to some extent excluded from football on the terraces, for example, ethnic minorities and women (Walvin, 2001). However, according to some, the introduction of new audiences has been at the expense of the traditional fan. The marketisation of football introduced expensive football-related consumer goods and the cost of attending games increased rapidly throughout the early 1990s. This prohibitive pricing alongside the introduction of club membership schemes served to exclude a number of traditional working class supporters (King, 2002; Taylor, 1995). The changing atmosphere at the grounds led to arguments that football has become ‘feminised’ through safer grounds and corporatisation making it attractive to a wider, more diverse and middle class audience. As King (2002) points out, a more affluent audience will buy merchandise and products promoted by the team and its players and has led to what Taylor (1995:10) terms consumer-fans attending football rather than spectator-supporters.

This flow of money and media attention helped create sporting personalities and transformed the earning potential of players, allowing them to live celebrity lifestyles and gain fame beyond football. Celebrity and endorsements in football have a long history – even in the 1930s some players such as Dixie Dean (Everton) and Alex James (Arsenal) were considered glamorous stars with a great deal of commercial potential (Walvin, 2001). These stars however, were used to endorse a limited range of products to a small audience – unlike today where David Beckham, for example, endorses a wide range of products and is himself a globally recognised brand. It is clear that in the twenty-first century symbolic capital in football can be turned into economic value (Boyle and Haynes, 2004:73).

In 2000, Luis Figo's contract with Real Madrid included an image rights clause licensing the club to capitalise on his commercial value – particularly in the sale of replica shirts. This set a precedent, where many player negotiations are now based as much on marketing potential as footballing prowess (Boyle and Haynes, 2004). This is particularly true of corporations such as Nike who select young and aspiring athletes for marketing projects and determine their value on marketing potential rather than competitive achievements. Such athletes become commodities and function as marketing vehicles (Cashmore, 2006). Taylor (1995) notes that from the 1990s onwards football clubs placed more emphasis on the star qualities of players, and King (2002:195) argues that since the early 1990s teenage girls have become an important part of the footballing audience, with Manchester United in particular drawing on the sexual attractiveness of their players in marketing to such an audience. These conditions have led to football becoming a marketing platform, which some women have exploited to create a career for themselves as brands in themselves, providing stories and information about their husbands' private lives. This in turn has increased the demand for sporting celebrity, a brief overview of which now follows.

Celebrity and football

Following on from Boorstin's (1961/1992) important work on pseudo-events, developed in Rojek's (2001) analysis, there are three historical processes that have led to the emergence of celebrity as we know it today – the democratisation of society, the decline in religion and the commodification of everyday life. The decline in ascribed forms of power and greater equality has helped create

the celebrity, as people look elsewhere for inspiration. In contemporary society celebrity is much maligned, as many who have it appear to have no discernible talent or skill. In the past celebrity and stardom were assumed to be achieved through talent and being gifted whereas now many celebrities are deemed pointless and shallow.

In relation to sport stars, talented and gifted is something that still persists, Andrews and Jackson (2001) claim that such stars are more authentic as they are not fictional. If sport stardom is meritocratic and based on achievement, celebrity should be attributed evenly both within and across different sports but a quick look at the media coverage of sport on any given day highlights that some stars and sports are afforded more coverage than others. This may be explained in the case of football in that it has adapted more quickly than other sports to the demands of show business. A crossover between football and entertainment in terms of the amount of media coverage of the game and of celebrity partnerships intertwines it much more with popular culture (Cashmore, 2004). The nature of celebrity is culturally and historically specific which is perhaps key to understanding the immense iconic power of David Beckham over many other footballers (see Cashmore, 2006).

Woolridge (2002:52–3) has already attempted to map stardom in football and claims that historically, football stardom has two categories. ‘Stars’ are players known in special ways locally, regionally and sometimes nationally but only by followers of football. ‘Superstars’ are players whose fame extends beyond followers of the game. Woolridge’s particular period of study ended in 1946, so this can be developed to include players who are recognised globally and are brands in their own right, such as David Beckham. There is another level in this star system covering those related to the game through media coverage but not directly involved. This encompasses wives and girlfriends, football agents, sports presenters, players’ friends and families. Clearly this is not a unified category, but their ubiquitous media coverage means it is useful to view them as part of a continuum of celebrity in relation to football. Again, although not revered for their talent as footballers are, wives have been able to tap into the celebrity world of the footballer and obtain vicarious celebrity. In contrast to the idea of being talented and gifted however, the wives are actually denigrated and invoke envy amongst their audience more of which will be discussed in the following chapter. The contemporary celebrity scene is a result of historical developments in the media which are now discussed.

Media developments

In his influential work on pseudo-events Boorstin (1961/1992) claims that the graphic revolution provided a means to fabricate well-knownness and create celebrity. The ambiguous truths of pseudo-events have created a situation where the 'American citizen thus lives in a world where fantasy is more real than reality, where the image has more dignity than its original' (Boorstin, 1961/1992:37). In the UK the printed press has evolved from producing serious newspapers focusing on 'masculine' news in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the mass market for entertainment news and celebrity stories currently featuring prominently throughout the press (Holland, 1998). The possibility of a national press in the 1880s and 1890s saw the introduction of more lightweight and easy-to-read features. This 'soft' news was seen as more domestic and personal and was an attempt to broaden appeal to a mass audience – including women. This 'feminisation' came about because the feminine has often been associated with the popular and accessible.

In 1969 when Rupert Murdoch took over the *Sun*, the nature of the popular changed again from its feminised form to a sexualised one. It introduced a daily picture of semi-naked women prompting debates over whether these images were liberating or degrading. This exacerbated a divide between tabloids providing more entertaining soft news alongside the broadsheets which still traded in hard news – factual reporting claiming truth, accuracy and universality (Holland, 1998). Newspapers were also divided along class lines, with working class tabloids seemingly reflecting the vulgar taste of their readers, while middle class papers remained masculine and serious. Sexualisation in the tabloids was presented as liberating to women – inviting them to enjoy themselves and lose their inhibitions. However, this pleasure for women was mainly a pleasure for men and the male gaze (Holland, 1998). At the same time, soft news and entertainment also created a space for the famous and their families to display their lifestyles to readers, while the attractive females amongst them provided images for the male gaze.

Marshall (2005) argues that it is difficult to identify the origins of celebrity-inspired journalism as it has become so routinised in newspapers. Even political or investigative reports often have information about what the person is really like – a practice of celebrity journalism which has led to a further convergence with public relations and promotion in order to glean such personal details. Contemporary celebrity culture acknowledges the public's power rather than traditional hierarchy:

The celebrity embodied that contradiction of being individually elevated and thus relatively unique, but dependent on a new system of 'democratically inspired' value that was derived from popular audiences.

(Marshall, 2005:21)

Although on the surface, celebrity appears like a lottery and a possibility for all, it is not as democratic as it appears and power is still concentrated in a few hands despite the fact that 'ordinary' people can obtain it (Turner, 2006).

Connell (1992:64) argues that the 'fantastical reportage' printed by the tabloid press is feared by those who still view entertainment as separate from information and debate. This reportage largely represents sexual exploits and misdemeanours. It is criticised as it is seen as salacious, but it is of interest to a wide audience, many of whom often feel estranged from the state and politics. He claims that oppositional readings of fantastic reportage are not resisting dominant structures because the audience would probably like the rewards granted to those exposed by the stories but oppose their exclusion from this good life (Connell, 1992:66). In a tabloid media world driven by sexual exploits, footballers, their wives and girlfriends provide stories for an audience keen for details on their private lives. The desire for such stories has led to fictional television series and novels to be produced, enabling even more exaggerated stories about their lives.

These four sections have provided a brief background to women's role in football as well as developments in football, media and celebrity that have all converged to create the celebrification of football in contemporary British society. Football is the most popular sport in the country, with the most coverage and money, and this has led to players becoming celebrities who are the subject of gossip and news, making them attractive to women and making their wives and girlfriends a source of much media attention. For some women marriage to a footballer appears to offer financial security, a glamorous life and an opportunity to gain media coverage and celebrity status, something which if exploited correctly can be turned into a career in itself. It is against this backdrop that the contemporary footballer's wife will be explored in this book.

Structure of the book

This book will demonstrate how, in the early twenty-first century, footballers' wives have provided a paradoxical image for women in

Britain. The wives are held up as aspirational and their career paths seen as a means for self-transformation and social mobility. For others, the women are treated with derision and turned into a grotesque caricature of the pathological working class. These images will be analysed across a range of media as well as how women married to footballers represent themselves. The next chapter sets out the theoretical framework that underpins the analysis of this research. It pays particular attention to Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) analysis in *Distinction* and his work on symbolic violence. This helps explain how the wives are classified according to their lack of cultural capital and taste poverty and why certain parts of the media use forms of symbolic violence to denigrate the behaviour and taste of such women. His thinking, along with Skeggs (2004a; 2005) and Lawler (2004; 2005; 2008b), provides a cultural understanding of class and how this has a moral dimension which is used in relation to working class women (Sayer, 2005). In this way the wags are deployed as moral educators for young women on how *not* to behave and dress.

This chapter then sets out how the media has come to deploy a postfeminist perspective on the world. Certain areas of the media frequently suggest that feminism has been successful and is no longer necessary or relevant to contemporary women who have equality and choice over their lives. This book analyses this postfeminist media culture, which is important as women's identities are in part negotiated through the popular media. It is also crucial in the representation of female celebrities who are increasingly being depicted in class terms, and in the case of working class women as pathological, with audiences deriving pleasure from their problems and failings. Finally this chapter will discuss the existing scholarship on footballers' wives. Studies have looked at these women in relation to the media, their depiction as trophy wives and emphasising their husband's masculinity. In their contemporary coverage, wags encompass many more meanings than solely looking good for their husbands and this will be elaborated throughout the book. It also includes US studies of sporting wives and the codes they follow, as well as the impact of their husband's work on their own lives and identities.

The methodology chapter will outline the epistemological background to the research. It will describe how forms of representation work to provide particular outlooks on the world and the ways these ideologically operate, suggesting to women certain identities and ways of living. This chapter will detail how particular groups are classified through popular culture and reduced to a stereotype. In this way, the wags have been clearly positioned as working class and therefore

different to middle class women. The wag has emerged as an exaggerated figure who appears across a range of media and serves as a symbol of a grotesque working class woman. The semiotic and discourse analysis used for this research will be outlined as well as how it has been applied to the newspaper, magazine, television and autobiographical texts written about footballers' wives and their ideological functions. The sources used will be explained in more detail here and how this method can be applied to such diverse texts. In light of the use of such varied sources, this chapter will look at the different explanations of intertextuality and how they relate to this work.

Chapter 4 analyses the print media as a key area where different discourses are created around footballers' wives. It discusses how newspapers and magazines have worked to create the figure of the wag and a career path for her to follow. This chapter develops Goffman's (1961) concept of a career to analyse the wag and is separated into four sections which focus on the four phases of this wag career. The first section focuses on who wants to be a wag, looking at how celebrity magazines create the footballer's wife as an aspirational figure and living a fairy tale life. This leads some young women to crave such a lifestyle as a means of social transformation and access to unlimited wealth and happiness. In contrast, newspapers have created the pathological figure of the 'wannabe wag' who is a gold-digger stopping at nothing in her pursuit of a footballer. She is set out as a symbol of a society focusing on shallow celebrity and shortcuts rather than getting an education and working for success – marking the wannabe out as a failure of second wave feminism. The section on signing the contract looks at the fascination with 'wag weddings' – events celebrity magazines are prepared to pay millions to have the exclusive rights to.

The wedding has become a staple of the celebrity press helping to create fairy tale images but elsewhere in the media it is used as a means to denigrate the footballer and his wife. The wedding is often portrayed as over-blown and gaudy with wives trying to outdo each other. Reporters describe the weddings as grotesque and expensive, rather than akin to royal weddings as they are displayed in *Hello!* and *OK!*, the newspapers highlight the lack of taste of the 'nouveau riche' and the focus on one day which overshadows the marriage that follows. The footballer's wife is described in terms of having a job and this job description is outlined in the third section. It analyses how the media ascribes a range of roles to these women and how some are able to exploit their wife of role to obtain media or marketing jobs. It argues that the media has certain expectations of footballers' wives but at other points deems them as a

distraction or unsupportive of their husbands. The final section examines how it may all end. An injury or move to a lower club for a player could put paid to a career made out of being a football wife. The media makes much of footballers' affairs and divorces which serve as a moral education to women wanting to tread the same path – the life is not what it seems and money cannot buy happiness.

The Fact or Fiction chapter focuses on the fictional representations of footballers' wives largely through the ITV1 television series. This chapter analyses the characters and story-lines to explain how they contribute to the exaggerated caricature of the footballer's wife. The story-lines intertwine with stories reported in the newspapers and the characters in the series appear in celebrity magazines and mix with real celebrities and footballers on the show which serves to blur fact and fiction, making it difficult to discern which stories are real and which are fictional. The series is a drama but encompasses many of the elements of soap opera and provides pleasure and points of identification for viewers, although in a more aspirational form than many British soap operas.

As a drama about women it also constitutes postfeminist programming and as such the show offers a range of identities and choices for women and depicts women pitting themselves against each other in order to keep their man or their husband's career for fear of losing the money and status they have achieved as a footballer's wife. This chapter will also focus on how story-lines encompass specific themes in relation to such women. It will examine how their lives are, in many ways, depicted as analogous to a fairy tale but with an undercurrent of class discomfort. The wives experience status incongruity with their new-found wealth, others fear having to return to where they came from and overall the visual representations of conspicuous consumption suggests that their spending is excessive and tasteless – something that has a strong resonance with the newspaper coverage of wags.

The Telling Tales chapter turns to consider how individual wives represent themselves and focuses specifically on their auto/biographies. Auto/biography can be regarded as a means to create an alternate self to that portrayed elsewhere and this section will analyse how feminist autobiographical theory can be applied to contemporary books written by footballers' wives. Those writing the books appear to want to portray an alternative view of either themselves, if they have a media persona or of the life of a footballer's wife. Some of these books tap into the market for celebrity gossip. The wives are able to provide details on their celebrity husband's lives as well as gossip on what it is like to be married to a celebrity and attend parties and events. In some cases the

books work as a form of self-help manual to young women looking for a fairy tale of transformation or providing confidence to those who lack it, as well as lifestyle tips. This self-help theme is continued albeit in a negative sense in books which seek to dispel the fairy tale myth by pointing out the downsides and pitfalls of being married to a footballer. The books highlight how difficult it is for women to assert their own identities when they are often subsumed into the position of 'wife of'. This chapter also discusses how women write about the wannabe wag and the competition between women for footballers whilst disputing the idea that life is a fairy tale – again providing a moral education to young women.

The final chapter will bring together all the arguments discussed within the book. It considers the range of meanings attached to a seemingly innocuous acronym and how this is used to both empower and violate women and categorise them by class and taste. It will contextualise this study historically and situate it in academic contexts, as well as considering how research can be developed in future work in this area.

2

Framing the Wag

Since the 2006 World Cup, footballers' wives have become a staple part of the British press coverage and content. They are regularly featured in the tabloid press, celebrity and lifestyle magazines and have fictional television series and novels based on their lives. The amount of media coverage this group of women receive and that the wives themselves write demonstrates a shift to an interest in vicarious celebrity – fame by association. This material provides a resource to analyse representations of women in the contemporary popular media and to unravel what messages are conveyed to their audiences in relation to class, gender, celebrity and football. Despite media saturation, the footballers' wives phenomenon has largely been overlooked in sociological study in the UK. An analysis of media representations of footballers' wives has been undertaken by Clayton and Harris (2004) as part of a wider study of masculinity, and as such its limited focus does not include the wider range of gender and class discourses that surround these women. Roderick (2006b) included a chapter on wives in his study of football as work, but acknowledged that further analysis on the footballers' wives was required to fully make sense of the phenomenon and this book looks to fill this sociological gap. There is some precedent for examining the role of the sports wife in the USA, where studies have analysed the difficulties of marriage to athletes in terms of lack of stability and discusses issues around maintaining an individual identity (e.g. see Ortiz, 1997; 2006; Thompson, 1999; McKenzie, 1999) and this book provides an account of such women's lives across a range of mediated representations in the UK.

In order to understand how these women are represented, this book will draw on a range of scholarship covering class, morality, gender and celebrity. As outlined in the introduction the wives represent a paradox.

They offer the aspiration of social mobility and transformation to some, yet others denigrate them on the grounds of their dependence on a husband, excessive consumerism and lack of taste. Pierre Bourdieu's work on capital, taste and symbolic violence provide an important framework for understanding how and why footballers and their wives are denigrated through symbolic violence for their lack of cultural capital and taste. This book develops a cultural understanding of class which will be outlined in detail below (Lawler, 2004, 2005; 2008b; Skeggs, 2004a; 2005). It argues that culture, rather than traditional markers of class, such as wealth and occupation, is now used to classify certain groups of people. Footballers' wives are very wealthy but defined as working class through their cultural position, behaviour and lack of taste in relation to the middle classes. This classification takes on a moral dimension when analysing working class women in the media who are used to provide a form of moral education for women on how to act and behave (Chouliaraki, 2008; Sayer, 2005). It is the intersection of class and gender that is key to this book, which demonstrates how women are classified both on the basis of their class and gender (McRobbie, 2004; Skeggs, 1997). This research demonstrates how elements of the media construct a postfeminist characterisation of the world, where lip service is paid to second wave feminism, which, however, is then described as a spent force because equality is now achieved (Brunsdon, 2006; Coppock et al., 1995; Gill, 2007; Hollows, 2006; Hollows and Moseley, 2006; McRobbie, 2004). Whilst some postfeminist representations emphasise women's choice to be dependent and revere the wags, elsewhere female celebrities have increasingly become depicted through classed imagery with particular vitriol conferred on the working class celebrity who is undeserving of her wealth and status, which often leads the audience to seek pleasure in her failings (Fairclough, 2008; Negra and Holmes, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2009/2010). These theories on class and gender provide an understanding of the wag – a stereotype of women who are married to footballers and their lifestyles. This book builds on existing accounts of footballing and other sports wives to penetrate beneath the dominant representation of the wag as a grotesque, gold-digging working class woman and reveals how the figure invites both envy and contempt.

Class, gender and morality

In an effort to grasp the class dynamics at work here, the book will draw particularly on the sociology of Bourdieu (1986) and a cultural interpretation of taste. In doing so, the contribution of Skeggs (1997; 2004a;

2005) is also important to an understanding of the intersection of class and gender and how women are positioned in class terms through their representation in popular culture. Lawler's (2004; 2008b) work is likewise helpful in demonstrating how Bourdieu's approach can be developed to demonstrate how class can be understood through an embodied history. Feminists have long critiqued objective measurements of class in terms of the occupational status of the presumably male head of household, as they overlook women's own class status despite their current prevalence in the labour market (see Lovell, 2004). Much of the media representation of footballers' wives is related to their class position, which in objective measures would be determined by their husband's occupation. Roderick (2006b) argues that football is still heavily made up of working class players and that the players engage in highly skilled manual labour, meaning that despite their economic capital, in the media footballers are generally classified as working class. Across the vast number of women married to footballers their class position should perhaps not be classified so, but generic representations of these women inscribe them as working class. Bourdieu's work allows for a less socio-economic and more cultural analysis of class which is clearly appropriate for this book. Savage (2000:106) insists that, rather than being culturally reductionist, Bourdieu's work postulates that culture is not a product of class relations but is a field in itself within which class relations operate. Furthermore, Skeggs argues that popular culture is crucial to how we understand, interpret and position ourselves in terms of class and this point will be developed in relation to footballers' wives. She argues that through using 'historical processes of moral attribution, atavistic positioning and using the working class as constitutive limit', it is possible to see how these are reworked in popular culture, providing a way of interpreting how we come to know and understand class (Skeggs, 2005:46).

Distinction and taste

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.

(Bourdieu, 1986:6)

In this much cited passage Bourdieu emphasises how taste embodies social distinctions and class positions, which he regards as involving

four types of capital – economic, social, cultural and symbolic. Cultural capital is linked to education and etiquette and those with a high cultural capital have improved chances of success in education and beyond, thus undermining any concept of a meritocracy and reproducing class positions. This is crucial to ensuring that those who achieve almost overnight fame and fortune through saturation in the media are seen as beneath those who have ‘earned’ or ‘inherited’ their wealth as is played out in the representations of footballers’ wives (1986:2). Symbolic capital relates to status, prestige and recognition and Bourdieu had a particular interest in struggles and competition over status and recognition (Jenkins, 2002:129).

Bourdieu noted a close relationship between cultural practices, educational capital and social origin which work together to distinguish between a sacred and separating high culture and low culture (1986:13). In Bourdieu’s France, this created three levels – ‘legitimate taste’, ‘middle-brow taste’ and ‘popular taste’ which are inversely proportional to educational capital (1986:16). He argued that the working class expect everything to fulfil a function whereas legitimate art needs to be appreciated ‘independently of its content’ – cultural capital can only be acquired if it is withdrawn from economic necessity (1986:41,53). This may serve to exclude the ‘new rich’, such as footballers, who have removed economic necessity but have not been able to distance themselves from the necessary consumption of their previous lives. It is particularly pertinent to those who realise the precarious nature of certain careers, such as professional sports or those based on media coverage which could be withdrawn at any point.

Although as noted by many, French society is unique, some of Bourdieu’s concepts such as cultural and symbolic capital, taste, distinction and symbolic violence can be developed to analyse the representation of women in the UK. In contemporary media, a distinction between legitimate and popular taste is evident where the tabloid focus on celebrity and television is often derided by the broadsheets. It would be too simplistic to suggest that this is inversely proportional to educational levels as many read both tabloid and broadsheet papers. As Warde (2008) argues, the omnivorousness condition now makes it difficult to establish high levels of engagement which results in specific orientations to cultural activities becoming more fluid. Certainly in football, increasing middle class interest has been seen as a sign of more omnivorous tastes (King, 2002; Taylor, 1995). However, this engagement

with a working class sport does not necessary reduce cultural exclusion:

Just as racists may enjoy Indian food and despise those who produce it, so middle class people may enjoy football but feel varying degrees of contempt for working class supporters, footballers, and footballers' wives.

(Sayer, 2005:174)

Although Warde (2008:327) states that studies show omnivorousness is mainly found among the educated middle classes, it could represent a crumbling of class domination through cultural exclusion or a 'benign, cosmopolitan, tolerant and non-judgemental approach to the diversity of culture'. Consequently, the command of legitimate culture or the exchange value of cultural capital cannot be assumed to be stable. This book will demonstrate that, despite an increasing engagement with football across classes, the players and their wives are framed as working class and subjected to cultural exclusion on the grounds of taste – the symbols used may not be stable and perhaps periodically change (e.g. celebrity *chav*, footballer's wife) but are persistent.

Social rank and specific power are assigned in relation to particular fields and depend on the specific capital mobilised within that field. In the field of sport, footballers have much cultural and symbolic capital whereas their wives have little. Footballers' wives, however, have much symbolic capital in a society where money and fame can be achieved through proliferation in the cultural media. The tabloid press in particular, which thrives on popular culture, has constructed these women as a coherent and recognisable group worthy of much press attention, thus allowing them to create their own media careers. However, this capital is only legitimated by certain sections of the population. Some, who are part of the established upper and middle classes, have utilised symbolic violence to assert their tastes through the popular media by expressing their distaste of these women (and this will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4).

Through their classification as 'wags', footballers' wives are imbued with certain tastes and consumption choices which distinguish them from other women depicted in the media. As Bourdieu (1986:56) argues, taste is often justified by refusing other tastes, he insists that 'tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ("sick-making") of the tastes of others', while aversion to the lifestyles of others are 'one of the strongest barriers between the

classes'. These dynamics are clearly played out in the media and will be discussed throughout the book. Bourdieu maintains that ideological strategies generated in class struggles, naturalise actual differences. This is achieved by converting differences in how culture is acquired into differences of nature. These distinctive lifestyles played out in symbolic space are always defined objectively and subjectively in and through mutual relationships. He argues an objective class is a set of agents in similar conditions of existence who share common properties, which may be legally guaranteed or embodied as class habitus. Lifestyles themselves become products of the habitus and these, in turn, become sign systems and symbolic expressions of class positions.

Bourdieu claims that struggles over the appropriation of economic or cultural goods are simultaneously struggles to appropriate distinctive signs. These signs are goods or practices which become classified or classifiers and represent the struggle to impose a legitimate lifestyle – emblems of class and the legitimate manner of appropriating them. Through conspicuous consumption and taste, footballers are typically represented in the media as *nouveau riche* and vulgar. Even if they acquire the appropriate cultural goods, their mode of acquisition and the acquisition of their wealth marks them out as a different class to those who have different tastes or place themselves in a different class:

Where the *petite bourgeois* or *nouveau riche* 'overdoes it', betraying his own insecurity, bourgeois distinction signals its presence by a sort of ostentatious discretion, sobriety and understatement, a refusal of everything which is 'showy', 'flashy' and pretentious, and which devalues itself by the very intention of distinction.

(Bourdieu, 1986:249)

He goes on to argue that the reality of the social world is in part determined by struggles over the representations of these positions in the social world (Bourdieu, 1986:253). This will be seen throughout this book – although the wives have some control over their media – this is not full control and leaves their representations in the hands of those who wish to mark out their superior distance from them. Women married to footballers but who do not appear in the media struggle against this representation either by publishing their 'own' story or through personal interaction in which they construct themselves in negative relation to the media stereotypes. For many the accumulation of symbolic capital is a means to acquiring a

reputation and respectability; for those without control over their representation it becomes a tool with which to denigrate them (Bourdieu, 1986:291).

For Lawler (2004), Bourdieu's work enables an analysis of how class distinctions and divisions are based on cultural and symbolic axes not just economic ones, and this allows an analysis of class where it is not called class – something she argues is especially important today, as many have proclaimed the death of class. As demonstrated in the discourse surrounding footballers' wives, the media distinguishes individuals, or in this case groups, and either approves and normalises them or disapproves of and pathologises them. She explains how the concept of habitus is a way to analyse how social relations become constituted within the self and how the self is constitutive of social relations (2004:111). It is an embodied history, but often this history is forgotten and so dispositions become seen as 'nature' rather than social training (Lawler, 2008b). The habitus is also relational – relative to the context of the field it is in as well as relating to others. Social relations in the habitus are hierarchical, so some are given the authority to pass judgement whereas others are judged. In this way Bourdieu's work offers an important framework to interrogate how identities are discursively constructed through the media and conferred on others. Moreover, analysing femininities can reveal how certain types of femininity are classified as belonging to a particular class and are then regarded as either desirable or pathological (Lawler, 2004; 2008b). In the case of wags, representations are generally based on bodily appearance, behaviour, consumption and lack of intellect. Class boundaries are drawn through ideas of the 'right ways of being and doing' which have been claimed by the middle classes and classified through manners and etiquette (Lawler, 2008b:249). This book highlights a symbolic struggle between the working classes and the middle classes, albeit an unusual one, the celebrity working class are earning vast amounts of economic capital and obtaining symbolic capital through the media which threatens those factions in middle classes who are working to assert their position as the arbiters of taste and distinguishing themselves and their social position.

Skeggs (2004a) argues that classifications become forms of inscription that are performative. They confirm the perspective of the classifier and encapsulate the classified in discourse and this is demonstrated through the classification of certain women as wags or wannabe wags. She explains this in the following way:

Just as the middle-classes have changed their interests and perspectives from fixity to mobility (although remaining located to become mobile), the working class have shifted historical locations from once being the dangerously mobile, threatening to contaminate the respectable through their movement and proximity, to now becoming firmly fixed in order to become identifiable and governable.

(Skeggs, 2004a:50)

Understanding class as negotiated in relation to other groups through representation rather than through objective classifications allows a cultural interpretation which according to Clément (1995:149) means, 'the concept of class excludes neither the diversity of members nor the existence of internal conflicts'. In this way class is produced at the level of the symbolic and social positioning is produced through discourse. Representations are also attributed with moral value – this is clearly seen through the tales of footballers' wives, which read like fairy tales or fables and will be discussed in more detail below. These classifications and the struggle between the classes are often fought by means of symbolic violence, which is frequently played out through representations in the media and is also outlined below.

Symbolic violence

In *Language and Symbolic Power*, Bourdieu (1991) argues that it is crucial to be able to discover power in places where it is least visible and where it is misrecognised and then revealed:

For symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it.

(Bourdieu, 1991:164)

He argues that symbolic structures are instruments of knowledge and communication and symbolic power offers the ability to construct reality. Relations of communication are always inseparably power relations which enable symbolic power to be accumulated. It is both a structured and structuring instrument of communication and knowledge, which allows symbolic systems to fulfil a political function – as a means to ensure one class dominates another. Classes and class fractions are

engaged in a symbolic struggle aimed at imposing the definition of the social world best suited to their interests (Bourdieu, 1991:167).

These symbolic struggles are not only between classes but also the sexes. Bourdieu argues in *Masculine Domination* that this domination is imposed and suffered through

symbolic violence, a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling.

(Bourdieu, 2001:1–2)

This important concept demonstrates how domination can be exerted through a symbolic principle which is recognised by both the dominant and the dominated through such matters as language, lifestyle or a distinctive property (Bourdieu, 2001). This recognition is actually a misrecognition that occurs when symbolic capital has been acquired and legitimated, obscuring the social processes and structures that make its existence possible. It is in this way that the social world and its arbitrary divisions, such as the socially constructed division between the sexes, become depicted as natural (see also Skeggs, 2004b:23).

Symbolic domination is not exerted in the knowing consciousness but through perception, appreciation and action which constitute the habitus. Symbolic force is the form of power exerted on bodies directly working on dispositions. Symbolic power cannot be exercised without the contribution of those who are subjected to it, as they only undergo it because they construct it as such. It is the product of objective structures which trigger dispositions that help to reproduce them. The dominated often unwittingly contribute to their own domination by implicitly accepting the limits imposed on them, which often take the form of bodily emotions, such as shame, humiliation, anxiety, guilt or passions and sentiments like love, admiration and respect (Bourdieu, 2001:38). Footballers' wives often appear complicit in their own domination by putting themselves forward for media attention, which then denigrates and positions them as a lower class.

A similar process can be seen in Sennett and Cobb's (1972) work on the hidden injuries of class, which analyses the discontent caused by upward mobility. They argue it is because people of a higher class have the power to judge others that those of a subaltern class feel compelled to place themselves on a lower level in order to earn respect. However, when gaining upward mobility people experience 'status incongruity'.

Despite their success, they feel like an intruder and undeserving of respect, whilst simultaneously disrespecting the class they are moving into. In this sense Sennett and Cobb argue that class constricts the weak, allowing the strong to maintain their power. This can be seen clearly in the case of footballers and their wives who have attained financial success but still suffer from class judgements made about them.

Gender and class

Bourdieu's work has been criticised by many feminists as androcentric, claiming his focus on class has led to the omission of gender. This is something he attempted to rectify in *Masculine Domination* (2001) but much of his account here, Lovell (2004) maintains, was premised upon women as objects and the basis of exchange in contrast to much feminist work which characterises women as subjects with capital-accumulating strategies (discussed in Skeggs, 2004b:29). However many of his concepts have relevance for contemporary feminism. Skeggs has argued that Bourdieu's work has been crucial for returning class to the feminist agenda, as well as being significant in three main ways. First, it enables a link between objective structures and subjective experience. Second, his model of social space, in which people embody and carry volumes and compositions of capital, enables researchers to think through different types of value and mobility. Finally, she argues that his methodological insights situate reflexivity as a pre-requisite to knowledge, enabling researchers to examine the position from which they speak (2004b:21). Of most value to this research are his concepts of taste, distinction, capital and symbolic violence and how incorporating a feminist perspective with these concepts allows an analysis of the interaction of class and gender. The next section will outline the concept of gender as performance and describe how this intersects with the analysis of class in representations of footballers' wives.

According to Butler, gender is not exclusively a cultural concept of meaning following from biological concepts of sex, but is also a discourse deployed to naturalise ideas of a binary sex and gender on which culture acts (1999:11). She argues gender identity is a combination of a personal/cultural history of received meanings and imitative practices which refer to other imitations – together these provide the illusion of an interior gendered self or can work to parody the process of this construction (1999:176). She explains:

acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the

play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organising principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.

(Butler, 1999:173)

It is in this way that she can insist that parodic repetitions, such as drag, can become troubling for hegemony. They reveal the constructed nature of gender, whilst others become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of hegemony. Gender is an act or performance that is intentional and conscious but also performative which refers to the construction of meaning through repetition. This is carried out in a regulatory framework and those who fail in their performance of gender are regularly punished (Butler, 1999: 176–7). The performance of gender undertaken by the wags through their style and behaviour has been repeated across the newspapers, magazines and television and is represented as excessive and as such they are often punished through symbolic violence.

Skeggs combines the perspectives of Bourdieu and Butler to provide a reading of femininity and class. Although she argues these theorists have clear differences, they both centralise how certain performances become legitimated and authorised either institutionally, discursively or through practice (2001:297). She argues that femininity is very different for different women, not least since it involves both appearance in terms of the aesthetic labour of looking feminine as well as feminine characteristics such as caring and passivity.

According to Skeggs, the reading of appearance is historically situated, related to moral behaviour and discursively produced. In relation to femininity, excessive attention to appearance can be seen 'as a sign of moral worthlessness, of vanity, of tastelessness', a view which can clearly be applied to the representations of footballers' wives, as femininity 'is the process through which women are gendered and become specific sorts of women' (Skeggs, 1997:98). In this way femininity is a public performance that is observed and requires validation by others. Respectable femininity is discursively constructed around middle class domestic ideologies relating to home and family values. Working class women are observed and interpreted in relation to their sexuality, in opposition to this domestic ideal (Skeggs, 1997). Furthermore, she insists that any form of cultural capital has to be legitimated before it can have symbolic power or be capitalised upon (Skeggs, 2001; 2004b). Gender is a

form of cultural capital available to the working classes but only if it is symbolically legitimated. It is through the media that working class women occasionally attempt to deploy their femininity as a form of capital to gain recognition, although this is often not legitimated but denigrated through symbolic violence. This obscures the fact that there are multiple forms of femininity rather than a coherent, stable version (see also McNay, 2004). Footballers' wives in the media are positioned in a similar way to traditional representations of working class women, who are often positioned as 'other' and defined as vulgar, sexual and deviant as opposed to the norms of middle class elegance, refinement and respectability. It is important to note that respectability is 'organised around a complex set of practices and representations', which in turn shape 'appropriate and acceptable modes of behaviour, language and appearance' and function 'as both social rules and moral codes' (Skeggs, 1997:46).

In reworking their negative positioning, working class women often seek to create their own version of femininity and respectability in terms of their own values. Some women see few prospects of achieving respect through educational achievements, occupational success or other such means, so they invest heavily in themselves to try and obtain corporeal capital. This is frequently the case with footballers' wives who are often represented through a 'barbie doll' image. On the surface, representations in the media of certain women provide role models where fame and fortune can be achieved merely by being glamorous or good looking, such as glamour models, reality TV stars or those who have been able to obtain a famous or talented partner. On closer inspection these women are criticised for investing too heavily in their appearance – femininity should appear effortless – and their sometimes inappropriate conduct demonstrates that the constructed appearance cannot hide a lack of etiquette and cultural capital (Skeggs, 1997; see also McNay, 2004).

McRobbie (2004) studied the phenomenon of television makeover programmes which allow (mainly) women to transform themselves with the help of 'experts' in the expectation of improving their life chances and status, hoping this transformation will help them to accumulate forms of social and cultural capital. She argues however, that the programmes largely amount to public denigration of women of little taste (with which they are complicit) by women with recognised taste and thereby legitimating class antagonisms, sending a message that poor women should emulate their social superiors. She argues that as women have been set free from traditional roles this has led to ruthless

competition amongst women. Such denigration against the poor and disadvantaged is brushed off as ironic and 'no harm intended' – this provides an important counterpart to representations of footballers' wives. The fictional representations are clearly ironic and over the top which serves to diffuse their powerful symbolism. In newspapers and magazines the wags are not in any way depicted as poor and disadvantaged, perhaps this gives the impression that they are fair game, justifying the offensive attacks based on their poor taste and judgement.

As people are individualised they need to reinvent themselves constantly and be flexible enough to adapt to new circumstances and an evolving labour market. This further fragments the position of women in society, and working class women become painfully aware of the derisory judgements made against them by the middle classes, particularly in regard to their appearance and lack of respectability (Skeggs, 1997 in McRobbie, 2004:101):

Female individualisation is, then, a social process bringing into being new social divisions through the denigration of low class or poor and disadvantaged women by means of symbolic violence. What emerges is a new regime of more sharply polarised class positions, shabby failure or well-groomed success.

(McRobbie, 2004:101)

In this way class positions are polarised, and particularly for women are projected onto the female body. She goes on to argue that these programmes and their equivalents in the tabloid press 'construct a new, feminised, social space which is defined in terms of status, affluence and body image' (McRobbie, 2004:104). In this new space footballers' wives have emerged as a recognisable social type distinguished by their taste and behaviour – their bodies display an incorporated history associated with the working class and *nouveau riche* which is used against them as a means of social control. In this space the footballers' wives provide a range of meanings. For some this social type is aspirational and stylish. Yet others see these women as distasteful and seek to differentiate them from the middle classes. As demonstrated in Tyler's (2008) account of 'chav mums', a figurative analysis highlights how social types such as the 'chav mum' or wag become figures who represent wider social anxieties and highlight class antagonisms.

Morality and class

This book analyses cultural interactions between the middle and the working classes. Representations of the working class work to define

the middle classes as those who are not and could not be like these representations (Lawler, 2005). For a number of commentators the middle class is formed around ideas of culture, morality and modernity which has solidified into an identity and occupies 'normal' ground – it is the benchmark of normality against which other groups are measured (Skeggs, 1997; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989; Walkerdine et al., 2001 all in Lawler, 2008b). Culture has a long discursive history and conceptual links with morality so claims to cultural ownership can be translated into claims to an ownership of morality. This point has been put in the following way:

Defining class through culture dislocates it from the economic and firmly locates it within the moral, in which representation and visibility become central mechanisms for knowing and identifying the working-class.

(Skeggs, 2004a:40)

This moral dimension of class is taken up by Sayer (2005:2) who argues that morality is about what is deemed good and desirable, in terms of a way of life, practices, objects, behaviours and character. He insists that class fundamentally affects the kind and quality of life we can lead. It becomes morally significant in daily lived experience and how people view and treat each other. Sayer's work is helpful in this study as it incorporates the moral dimension of class and demonstrates how class inequalities influence people's valuation and pursuit of goods, their ethical dispositions and treatment of others and how these reproduce or transform inequalities. He claims that humans are evaluative beings who continually monitor and assess their own behaviour and that of others and this occurs in a context of inequality (Sayer, 2005:1).

Sayer argues that the moral dimensions of class are often suppressed and, drawing on sociology and moral philosophy, analyses the lay normativity related to class, seeking to understand its internal force rather than reducing it to positioning or discourse. This is a crucial distinction, for while his work is important in demonstrating that morality is not merely a set of norms and rules producing a social order but something that matters to people and is of great importance to them, this book focuses on the discursive construction of morality surrounding these women's lives. It seeks to understand how these women are classified through the media as working class and lacking morality – which simultaneously serves to construct middle class women as moral beings.

In terms of cultural difference footballers and their wives are clearly marked out as separate from the middle classes in terms of their lifestyles, sexual promiscuity and displays of wealth. They seem to struggle for recognition in two different ways. Either through recognition of their own lifestyle, taste and moral worth by selling their stories to magazines, through auto/biographies and writing lifestyle columns or by trying to imitate middle class culture to gain respectability (see Tyler and Bennett, 2009/2010). However, it seems that elsewhere in the media other groups see them as 'less worthy of moral consideration than the members of their own group' (Sayer, 2005:58). Yet it is also important to grasp how such justifications

of superior wealth on the basis of achievements worthy of conditional recognition are always open to contestation. Up to a point, conspicuous worth may (intentionally or unintentionally) produce envy and even admiration, but others may discover or suspect that the owner has not done anything to deserve the wealth.

(Sayer, 2005:66)

In this sense, it would appear that footballers and their wives are unlikely to be respected as many deem footballers as overpaid for their work and their wives as idle. They do become objects of envy and this is represented through various media in moral terms, as their wealth being excessive and undeserved. Elsewhere in the media ideas of environmentalism and anti-consumerism have been portrayed as a means to a more moral lifestyle – one which footballers' wives and their conspicuous consumption fail to adhere to. Middle class ideals of moving to less consumptive, simpler, self sufficient and affordable lifestyles are portrayed in the media and legitimate a downshift to more traditional femininities through the morals of ecological sustainability (see Hollows, 2006). Negra and Holmes (2008:para 11) note that female celebrity virtue can also be obtained through social generosity and charity work but it seems that in the case of footballers' wives even this cannot alter pervasive stereotypes.

Moral education

Many texts are popular because of their moral dimension, which allow people to make sense of their lives. In the case of crime reporting, Jack Katz argues that people read crime news for moral work by 're-creating daily their moral sensibilities through shock and impulses of outrage...[it is a] process through which adults in contemporary

society work out individual perspectives on moral questions of a quite general yet eminently personal relevance' (1987:67 cited in Carrabine, 2008:46–7). Moral stories around footballers' wives are evident on a close examination of their coverage, yet the moral element is easily glossed over because of the glamorous, celebrity depictions of a wealthy lifestyle on display. This gloss helps to make moral opinions of the wives work subtly. The women are often viewed as immoral, not least because their 'dependence' on husbands and lack of productive work contravene ideas of equality and meritocracy. This section will discuss how these stories work as a form of moral education through tropes of soap opera (Geraghty, 1991; Hobson, 2003) and fairy tales (Bacchilega, 1997).

Chouliaraki argues that mediation can be seen as a moral education. She looks at how media representations of distant suffering are not merely voyeuristic and passive but can provide proposals of action to relieve suffering. The media can cultivate ethical values and dispositions through its repetition of stories of misfortune (2008:832). This moral education does not take place through explicit instruction as to what is right or wrong, rather through exemplary stories as to what matters in a particular situation and how to act appropriately in it. Her work follows Aristotle's description of spectacles of public life as forms of moral education and is about western reactions to distant suffering, but this book argues that a moral education is at work in the spectacular representations of footballers' wives in the media, guiding the audience on how to behave and perform their femininity 'correctly'. The moral outrage over women shamelessly pursuing footballers purely for the lifestyle and the money, alongside the focus on relationship breakdowns, serves as a warning to many that this is not a way to obtain symbolic legitimation.

A key moral message played out through certain elements of the mid-range and broadsheet newspapers and cheap celebrity magazines is that the life of a footballer's wife is 'not what it appears' and that money 'cannot buy taste or respect'. This type of reporting appears to be motivated through a politics of envy levelled against footballers and their wives predicated on their material possessions and their mode of acquisition. Steedman (1986:6) describes her mother in *Landscape for a Good Woman*, as always longing for material things that she lacked in order 'to be what she wasn't'. She argues this framework enables fairy tales about making good, but generally the exclusion of many from such an extravagant lifestyle promotes envy and a sense of social injustice. Across the media landscape footballers' wives are often couched in fairy tale terms, inciting envy – more often in the middle classes than the working classes;

perceiving this group as vulgar and not working for their position and the very definition of the undeserving rich.

Moral education is provided in a number of forms such as gossip, media reporting or television, in particular, in soap operas. The lives of footballers' wives are played out as a soap opera in the media and the theories of this much maligned genre are helpful in understanding the moral dimension and pleasure that this real life and fictional soap brings to its audience (Ang, 1985; Brunson, 1997; Geraghty, 1991; Hobson, 2003; Modleski, 1979). Hobson's early work on the British soap opera *Crossroads* and her later work on soap opera generally, provide a useful outline of soap opera theory for this book. She claims that the soap opera is the perfect form for broadcasters as it generates and sustains audiences, press coverage, controversy and advertising revenue, as well as supporting the public service ethos. It is both powerful and cost effective. The soap is a drama in serial form, with a core set of characters and locations which is transmitted at least three times a week with a narrative focusing on everyday personal and emotional lives (Hobson, 2003). In this sense the media coverage of footballers' wives follows these generic forms – they generate and sustain audiences for newspapers, magazines, books and television, there is a core set of characters and locations and they are often depicted dramatically in terms of their personal and emotional lives. Some may also find more resonance between soap opera and tales of footballers' wives as soaps are often used as a term of denigration 'implying over-dramatic, under-rehearsed presentation of trivial dramas blown out of proportion to their importance' (Geraghty, 1991:1). Most importantly, Hobson argues that soaps are one of the most moral of genres and through them, audiences will learn that ultimately wrongdoing will always be punished – a view cemented in the reporting of footballing relationships, on and off the pitch.

It has been argued that soaps probably have their origins in oral literature – folk tales and story telling, which later shaped the novel and emerged in its current form initially on the radio and then television (Hobson, 2003). In this sense, the lives of footballers' wives are depicted like a soap opera and also contain analogies to or elements of fairy tales and cautionary tales. Contemporary scholarship on fairy tales has examined their continuing popularity and their ideological work, in this case particularly in relation to women (Bacchilega, 1997; Harries, 2004; Lieberman, 1972; Zipes, 2007). Bacchilega's (1997) analysis of postmodern fairy tales reveals how they function as gender and narrative strategies in diverse ways. She demonstrates how the fairy tale

works as a mirror with symbolic resonance – it shows our potential for transformation and so refracts what we wish or fear to become (Bacchilega, 1997:28).

In this sense the lives of footballers' wives portray, to some, the potential for transformation and an aspirational world, whereas for others they show a fearful picture of young women's immoral behaviour. By turning the stories into cautionary tales, the fairy tales convey ideological expectations and norms about how women should behave. Fairy tales are what Steedman calls 'interpretive devices' or stories to think with – they do not necessarily determine selves but provide a way to read and understand them (in Harries, 2004:101). The *Footballers' Wives* television series bills itself as a modern morality tale and this can be seen in much of the press coverage whilst Coleen Rooney's autobiography describes her life as a fairy tale which is backed up by visual images in the glossy magazines. Harries (2004) argues that in the most popular fairy tales heroines were seen as passive, apparently dead or sleepwalking and dependent on the arrival of a prince for entry into the real world and for animation. In the media, footballers replace princes as women become dependent on their husbands for their 'job title' and to give them life in the media and the lifestyle they have always wanted. She also claims that the women in fairy tales are either beautiful and passive or powerful and wicked – it could be said then that the wives are beautiful and passive, but elsewhere in the newspapers and the television series they are portrayed as calculating and having too much media attention – perhaps not necessarily powerful but definitely wicked.

Some of the auto/biographies have more in common with postmodern fairy tales, by attempting to expose the 'truths' about being married to a footballer and exposing the myth of the fairy tale. Bacchilega (1997:35–6) suggests that postmodern tales attempt to question the ideological nature of the tales themselves, while exposing the 'lies' and artifice that link the narrative to gender reproduction so that 'natural truths can be questioned'. The treatment of footballers and their wives is very much subjected to moral judgement of their lifestyles and whether they deserve their wealth. This study will demonstrate how soap opera discourses and fairy tale narratives are used in representations of footballers' wives and function ideologically to position women according to their class and gender. The range of discourses surrounding footballers' wives in relation to class and morality are set against a backdrop of postfeminism in the contemporary British media, and such matters are now discussed.

Postfeminism

Contemporary debates in feminism centre upon the aims and values of feminism now and in the future and whether these either break with or build upon the second wave feminist movement. Academics argue over the consensus of meaning of the third wave or postfeminism and how the feminist movement can go forward (see Gillis et al., 2007; Hollows, 2000; Orr, 1997). These debates not only take place in the academy but increasingly through the popular media. This book contends that feminism is still relevant and equality has yet to be achieved, but that in the UK the media frequently portrays a postfeminist era, in which feminism has seemingly achieved equality and is therefore no longer relevant to a generation of women who are now liberated and solely responsible for their own achievements. This is crucial to understanding the varying representations of and reactions to footballers' wives in the contemporary media.

It is important to note that postfeminism is a heavily contested term:

In recent years, debates about everything from the history and exclusions of feminism to the gender consciousness (or otherwise) of young women and the ideological nature of contemporary media, have crystallised in disagreements about postfeminism.

(Gill, 2007:147)

Arguments over postfeminism are not just concerned with transformations in feminisms and media culture but also address the mutual relationships between the two. For Gill (2007:147–8) the term denotes a theoretical position, a type of feminism following the second wave and a regressive political stance. According to Coppock et al. (1995:3), 'postfeminism' became adopted as common sense in part because it emerged at a time when the UK government was promoting the 1990s as a decade of gender equality. The 'common sense' approach in the media assumed that two decades of social policy and legal reform, informed by equal opportunities initiatives had brought about social change and institutional advancement. It therefore implied that gender equality had been achieved but critiqued this as it had left men confused about their identities and women struggled with the expectation that they could achieve it all. In this way the media is able to credit feminism with furthering women's independence whilst dismissing it as irrelevant to a new generation who do not need to be liberated from patriarchy (Whelehan, 2000).

The term postfeminism in the USA related to an era in which feminism has become viewed as a form of discredited politics that undermined heterosexual relations (Coppock et al., 1995). Young women were reportedly keen to reject second wave feminists as bitter and anti-men, instead preferring to reinforce the institutionalised notions of heterosexuality, marriage and family. In a postfeminist era, these institutions become represented as an active choice against a backdrop of the assumption that women have the opportunity to achieve whatever they want, unhindered by historical patriarchal structures; if they did not achieve they only had themselves to blame. In light of this equality, notions of the 'superwoman', who can obtain both a career and a family, alongside the 'new man' who understood feminism and shared responsibility for domestic labour and childcare meant that feminism had become passé or had gone too far rose to prominence (Coppock et al., 1995:4–5).

In the USA, Faludi (1992) argued this was a backlash against feminism – wherever it seems to be gaining ground repressive forces are mobilised in response (in Coppock et al., 1995:6). In spite of second wave feminism's success in gaining political change, feminism as a movement is represented in the popular media as negative and retrograde. The media emphasis on family values suggested that equality had been a success but had failed women by putting them under too much pressure. This led to a rejection of feminism and popular media representations becoming anti-feminist, providing critics with an explanation for feminism's lack of contemporary resonance (Hollows and Moseley, 2006). The idea of a postfeminist era and backlash failed to account for historical differences between second wave feminists and their daughters. By refusing the label feminist, the new generation were not necessarily anti-feminist but questioning its values and meanings. Furthermore, the backlash explanation fails to account for how the popular operates as a site of struggle over the meaning of feminism (and femininity) (Hollows and Moseley, 2006).

The backlash mantle has been taken up in relation to sport by Mariah Burton Nelson in her (1994) book, *The Stronger Women Get, the More Men Love Football*. She contends that as women have made gains in economic, political and athletic strength, men in the USA have clung to 'manly' sports such as (American) football as a symbol of 'natural' male domination. In her view, second wave feminists sought to reduce sexual violence and empower women through employment, healthcare and politics but paid little attention to sport. This misses the fact that sports culture is a pervasive field, providing icons to many young people,

sending out symbolic messages about the role of men, women, love, sex and power which counter arguments of the achievement of equality. An analysis of these messages demonstrates how sport can actually serve to naturalise violence and dominance over women in its representations (Nelson, 1994:8; see also Benedict, 1997). In analysing the representation of footballers' wives, this book reveals how they are situated as part of a postfeminist era of choice and equality, but being placed in a field such as sport they are symbolically dominated by men and are seen as disposable sexual objects for footballers through the reporting of their relationships. Certainly for critics looking to find evidence of a postfeminist backlash in the media, the term 'wag' has been used to denote a stereotypical woman whose emphasised femininity and dependence on her husband stands in opposition to most representations of the aspirations of second wave feminism.

Whilst the US ideas of postfeminism are couched negatively in terms of a backlash, in the UK the term popular feminism was used by the new generation of feminists who rejected the negativity but accepted the need to mark the changes seen in popular understandings of femininity and women's place (Brunsdon, 1997 in Hollows and Moseley, 2006:8). Second wave feminists tended to place themselves outside of the popular, claiming the media misrepresented women and socialised them into false images of femininity presuming that audiences are passive and that feminists can define 'real women'. They challenged the mass media by producing avant-garde cinema, but its effect was limited to those who could understand it and it served to refuse the pleasures and meanings many women found in popular culture. It is this notion of authority and of being outside the popular which also underpins intergenerational disagreements between second wave and third wave/postfeminists, who problematise the whole idea that there is an 'outside' to representation (Hollows and Moseley, 2006). Postfeminism as a concept encompasses a form of relationship between feminism and popular culture – postfeminist identities are negotiated through the popular.

For some, the press has co-opted certain elements of second wave feminism because it 'sells' in consumer culture – offering liberation, independence and freedom but by detaching them from their feminist discourses they have lost their radical meaning. In this way popular feminism becomes tamed and is situated with more traditional meanings of femininity. The previously uneasy relationship between feminism and popular culture is displaced as an opposition between feminism and consumer culture (Hollows and Moseley, 2006). McRobbie (2009)

suggests that on a cultural level feminism has been made unpalatable to young women who are led to believe that the abandonment of feminism provides the promise of freedom and independence. The capacity to earn has a symbolic function marking respectability, citizenship and entitlement. Although women are represented as individual and having choices, she argues that within a lifestyle culture, choice is a form of constraint as women are compelled to make the right choices. Under New Labour the girl embodies values of a new meritocracy (individualism and competition). From being assumed to be headed towards marriage, motherhood and limited economic participation, the girl is now endowed with economic capacity (2009:58). In light of her argument that choices are constrained, it seems that images of footballers' wives contradict the picture of equality under New Labour. On the one hand they are seen as a beacon of social mobility and democracy in celebrity, but other women are discouraged from following the same path exemplified by the harsh public scrutiny of those wives in the press and their depiction as undeserving – perhaps because of their limited economic participation.

Domesticity is part of 'postfeminist' life. Rather than challenge the opposition between public and private that has structured theories of modernity, feminists have frequently reproduced this opposition preferring to become one of the boys by identifying with the urban (Giles, 2004 in Hollows, 2006:100; Thornton, 1995 also in Hollows, 2006:100). The home was seen by the second wave as dull and something to leave behind but postfeminist representations, particularly those invoked by the backlash theorists, demonstrate a return to domesticity and traditionalism, as a choice for women, invoked by Reagan's emphasis on family values. Stacey (1986) termed this a conservative pro-family feminism rather than postfeminism (in Hollows 2006:103) and proposes a structural/historical explanation arguing that the collective experience of a group of feminists found the experience of being feminist and mothering/relationships unfeasible.

This idea of choice and that women's traditional destinations are still an object of gratification is also played out in 1990s lifestyle programming. Brunsdon (2006:41) argues Martha Stewart, a US media owner famous for her lifestyle television show in which she portrays a 'perfect domesticity', is portrayed as liberated and choosing domesticity – a housewife who is not a housewife. In her media (she herself controls), she exists in the domestic arena but this domestic is devoid of the boredom, repetition and frustration characterised as the housewife's lot by 1970s feminism. Martha Stewart represents the reversal of the 1970s

feminist domestic labour debate in which discussions were had on the extent to which women created value through labour in their home to reproduce labourers and labour power. The division of labour meant home was a site of leisure for men but of labour for women; however, for Martha Stewart the activities performed were almost never those essential to the production and reproduction of labour power, such as rearing and feeding a family. It is one of virtuous feminine leisure – perfecting the domestic *mise en scène* – similar to Veblen's performance of leisure.

The British press frequently draw on feminist discourses to present the housewife as a problematic figure (Hollows, 2003 in Hollows, 2006:105). Critics of Nigella Lawson frequently assumed a straightforward choice between feminism and domestic femininity in which feminism could be the only rational response. However, the 'Domestic Goddess' does not suggest women can have it all but offers a fantasy experience of what other 'retro-femininities' might feel like. It appears that feminism is obsolete and there is no longer debate about whether women should pursue a career or motherhood or both – it is about how they can best combine whichever roles suit them (Ghazi and Jones, 2004 in Hollows, 2006:107). Debates on downshifting (reducing working hours or income in return for a 'better' lifestyle) offered an opportunity to revisit debates about the meanings of contemporary femininity that were constructed through lifestyle choices. In the case of footballers' wives it appears that ideas of downshifting and domesticity are things that can only be achieved by the middle classes. Class boundaries seem to be drawn in certain areas of the press (and in fiction) whereby middle class women are praised for returning to a more domestic femininity yet working class women, such as the wags, are accused of gold-digging if they find themselves in a financial position to be able to remain in the domestic sphere rather than engage in paid employment.

Gill (2007:148) insists that postfeminism should be 'conceived of as a sensibility', where postfeminist media culture should be the critical object that is studied and analysed rather than an analytic perspective. Her approach is informed by postmodernist and constructionist perspectives and seeks to examine what is distinctive about contemporary articulations of gender in the media. She draws attention to 'the contradictory nature of postfeminist discourses and the entanglement of both feminist and anti-feminist themes within them' (Gill, 2007:149). Despite these contradictions there are some stable features of a postfeminist discourse. These include notions that femininity is a bodily property, a shift to subjectification, emphasis on self-surveillance

and discipline, focus on individualism, choice and empowerment, the makeover paradigm, a resurgence of ideas of natural sex difference, the sexualisation of culture and emphasis on consumerism (Gill, 2007:149). A postfeminist sensibility also includes irony and knowingness, for example using sexist terminology but suggesting it is not meant seriously. On this reckoning contemporary media culture is postfeminist not pre- or anti-feminist because of its entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist ideas – feminism is not ignored or attacked but taken for granted and repudiated. Women are simultaneously hailed as ‘can-do’ whilst being sexually objectified; they are seen as social subjects but with an unprecedented amount of scrutiny. Postfeminism here correlates with neoliberalism, where individuals are seen as entrepreneurs who are ‘rational, calculating and self-regulating’ – the individual is responsible for their life whatever the constraints (Gill, 2007:163).

Debates continue over the future of feminism and its contemporary relevance, this book still sees a need for feminism as it is clear that in many areas equality has not been achieved, particularly in the field of sport to which footballers’ wives are intrinsically linked. This work does not contend that we are in a postfeminist era where feminism is passé and unnecessary – the representations of women throughout this work are testament to their symbolic oppression – but it does argue that there is a postfeminist media culture in the UK which provides a range of contradictory messages about the position of women in society. In relation to footballers’ wives, this work looks at the range of postfeminist images and contradictions, as well as how these are cross-cut with representations of class, across a range of texts. As Hollows (2000) argues it is necessary to understand feminist identities as a product of specific historical contexts and it appears that in a media-saturated twenty-first century it needs to consider how ideas about feminism and female identities are formed through media representations.

Representations of footballers’ wives

The media represents footballers’ wives in a range of ways and the ideological nature of these representations will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. This section looks at how working class women are represented through celebrity. It will then look at how existing studies have analysed the role of footballers’ wives and girlfriends in the media and how concepts that appear in the media, such as the career of the ‘wag’, can be used to understand the work of footballers’ wives.

Contemporary celebrity

Footballers' wives have appeared as part of the emerging celebrity culture and as such the nature of contemporary celebrity, particularly in relation to women, must be outlined as part of the framework for this book. An introduction to the star system and celebrity culture is provided, before turning to postfeminist critiques of the treatment of female celebrities both in Britain and America. The star system described by Dyer (1979) is an especially important starting point for analysing celebrity – the system began in Hollywood when film studios decided to create stars through images in media texts. In this way stars became products – vital to studios as capital and investments in order to try and guarantee profits. The ground-breaking element of Dyer's study, and the most important here, is its intertextuality and the way his semiotic approach linked film studies with cultural studies (Geraghty, 2000:183–4). In revisiting Dyer's work, Holmes (2005b:8) claims that his methodological tools are still important today and they provide 'a model for mining the cultural significance of a star by examining the network of ideological discourses from which they emerged'. This approach to analysing representation through a range of interlocking media texts will be used to interrogate the meaning behind the images of footballers' wives. Such a method has also been used by DeCordova (1991) who examined the intertextuality produced between the cinema and journalistic discourse around films and their stars.

Traditionally, film stars are portrayed as both ordinary and extraordinary creating both desire and unattainability (Ellis, 1992). Ellis claims that the distance between the circulated image and the performer has been reduced through television, so personalities emerge who are depicted as less paradoxical and easier to read than film stars. A category of celebrities has now emerged whereby appearances on reality TV shows or even association with famous people can bring about fame, and it is here that the celebrity wag appears. Rojek (2001) develops this idea of attributed celebrity through media exposure rather than talent. The media sensationalises and generates public interest in certain images as a response to the routine nature and predictability of everyday life – public attention is then required to validate and sustain interest in the celebrity. Celestoids (compressed and concentrated attributed celebrity) have become accessories of cultures organised around mass communication and staged authenticity.

One argument suggests that stars have been supplemented by replaceable celebrities who are fundamental to prime-time formats such as reality TV and soap opera (Turner et al., 2000:12–3 in Turner, 2006:155). Celestoids are an effective solution to the problem of satisfying the ever-increasing demand for consuming celebrity, which effectively means celebrity is no longer out of reach to most but has almost become a reasonable expectation for people to achieve. Instead of merely reporting on celebrities from other fields, the media now invents, produces and markets celebrities. This can be seen in the sense that the fictional series *Footballers' Wives* helped to create a market for the 'real lives' of women married to footballers – once this became popular across the media, they helped to foster specific stars through giving women newspaper and magazine columns and reality programming such as *Wags' World*, *Wags' Boutique* and *Coleen's Real Women*. However, whilst many associated with footballers achieve celestoid celebrity, largely based on their sexuality or sexual exploits, some wives have managed to enjoy longevity in the media and create a celebrity persona of their own which is distinct from their husbands'.

Although many celebrity texts work to create an illusion of intimacy, Gamson (1994) insists that celebrity gossip is more of a game, and in it the truth is largely irrelevant. It is much freer than acquaintance gossip, as there are no repercussions or accountability – to speculate on someone's life that walks past in the street may cause offence whereas speculation on celebrities' lives harms no-one. As one of his respondents claimed, celebrities are like neighbours that everyone knows (Gamson, 1994:176). In this realm, the celebrity arguably becomes unimportant – it is the sport of celebrity watching, information gathering and meaning making that is key:

Like many gossipers, artifice detectives read the celebrity text in a code that subverts the text's authority but are no less engaged by it, using it for their own purposeful activity.

(Gamson, 1994:182)

Until the footballers' wives appeared, the personal lives of players and details on the closed and private world of football were scarce.

The increasing celebrification of football has brought players' lives to the fore and it seems that the on- and off-pitch dramas relative to the game have now been complemented by private lives, introducing new characters and expanding the potential audience. The scholarship

on gossip and soap opera, as outlined above, offers important insights into understanding the media coverage of the footballing world today. A point put in the following way:

The contemporary media, led by the popular press but with commercial radio and satellite television in hot pursuit, have turned sport into 'male soap opera'.

(Holt and Mason, 2000:94)

Footballers' wives have been able to generate coverage for themselves, due to the access they have to the 'A list' parties and clubs frequented by footballers. According to Geraghty (2000:187), access to 'parties, premiers and posh sporting events can generate celebrity status without a contrasting site of performance'. Here women are more likely to be viewed as celebrities with the media being interested in their personal lives rather than their working lives. The proliferation of reality TV and celebrity-based magazines and websites has created a high demand for celebrities and has made the process appear open to all. It is even claimed that for 'the idea that "to be ordinary" in our culture will probably entail "wanting to be a celebrity" in part gets reproduced and naturalised'.

In this process of normalising the desire to be famous reveals how marrying a footballer has come to be seen as a popular shortcut or career for women who want to be famous. Footballers already have media coverage and the demand for intimate details and gossip about their lives is likely to lead to further media interest in their wives and families. The wives' celebrity represents what appears to be a more democratic and achievable goal of marrying well rather than becoming a Hollywood actress or global pop star. It requires no talent or skill, other than maximising your potential of meeting a footballer and selecting a husband wisely.

Female working class celebrities

Despite the seemingly democratic nature of contemporary celebrity, Turner (2006) argues that all is not as it appears. New trends have enabled more access to women, people of colour and those from different class positions to reach some democratic potential, but celebrity still remains hierarchical, exclusive and controlled by the media industries in their own commercial interests – in this sense it is demotic in its coverage of 'ordinary' people but not democratic as they have little actual control (see also Tyler and Bennett, 2009/2010). This is clearly

evident in the treatment of female celebrities which Negra and Holmes (2008) point out is riddled with judgement, especially as the concept of work, as well as merit/talent, are increasingly being removed from contemporary explanations of fame. The judgements placed on footballers' wives certainly do not make celebrity appear democratic as their presence seems to give credence to other more 'talented' celebrities and serve as morality tales that money and fame cannot buy love or taste.

Negra and Holmes (2008) argue that the coverage of out of control women is based on fears around society not knowing what talent is and that fame is no longer linked to talent, paving the way for illegitimate female celebrities. The crisis surrounding female celebrities is located in the female body representing a perceived lack and emphasises corporeal and sexual surveillance. They explain:

Postfeminist culture's embrace of marriage as the pre-eminent state of achieved femininity, and its re-certification of stereotypes like the 'gold-digger', have also helped to usher in a wave of celebrity 'wives' whose dependent status (whether actual or imaginary) is grist for public condemnation – even as such women become style icons and revenue-generating figures sometimes far in excess of their partners.

(Negra and Holmes, 2008:para 3)

In postfeminism dependence on a husband has a paradoxical representation – on the one hand, it is a sign that equality is possible and it is an active choice for women to return to the domestic, on the other it is seen as a symptom of inequality – the free spending of these women is seen as free loading. They argue that the celebrity of these wives is constructed mainly in the broadsheets and lifestyle media but heightened by concurrent airing of television series – this book analyses this range of sources to examine how this 'celebrity wife of' is constructed in different ways across these media.

As noted earlier in this chapter, much of the concern surrounding these celebrities is their consumption. Negra and Holmes (2008) argue the female 'train wreck' celebrity is endemic because it invokes fears of social and economic disorder and narratives about the accumulation and misuse of wealth. These fears are based in class politics, where being working class implies excess and deviance, and it also draws attention away from other holders of cultural power such as financial and political elites. They go on to argue these celebrities are commonly white and flout behavioural codes of whiteness, so these women are portrayed as 'over-reachers' and displayed as reverting to a grotesque class type.

This contradicts the explanations of fame in which the pre-fame self is celebrated as 'authentic' and the transformation of the self is cause for celebration (Negra and Holmes, 2008:para 5).

This focus on class is also supported by Tyler and Bennett (2009/2010:1) who contend that the cynical turn in contemporary culture has meant that certain celebrities are depicted as 'aspirational parvenus', who should not be desired or admired but treated with a 'pleasurable blend of contempt, envy, scepticism and prurience'. They claim this is brought about by imposing on them an essential class identity, regardless of the extent to which their social and financial circumstances have been transformed by fame. They argue that celebrity is increasingly being used as a means to communicate reactionary class attitudes, allegiances and judgements. Consequently, celebrity culture is constitutive of social life as it produces and sustains class relations – or rather a class pantomime. The focus on their background, proliferation of auto/biography and scrutiny of people's lives contributes to these classifications of class but unequally along gender lines. This can clearly be seen through some of the essentialised class identities imposed on the wags (not least the term wag itself) through their lack of taste, shameless pursuit of a husband as a 'meal ticket', over-exposure in the media and performance of hyper-femininity.

Tyler and Bennett (2009/2010) focus on the case of celebrity chavs arguing class judgements are becoming more explicit – they are depicted as people unable to manage the transition to wealth and fame with dignity and become the excessive embodiment of class hatred. Despite its seeming unpredictability, celebrity becomes highly structured with certain narratives allowing audiences to gain a comparative sense of self-worth. As discussed above, femininity is associated with the middle and upper classes, for the working classes to acquire such femininity is seen as a way to obtain cultural capital and social mobility. But these attempts at femininity are often read incorrectly and appear as a '*class drag act*' (2009/2010:6; Skeggs, 2001 in Tyler and Bennett 2009/2010, emphasis in original). The exposure of their failure in terms of dress and speech is seen as source of pleasure in celebrity culture in contrast to 'virtuous ordinariness'.

Celebrities can no longer be seen solely in terms of providing a positive attachment because this growing celebrity underclass, largely comprising working class women, invokes contempt. These celebrities can be read as symptomatic of a wider process of social stigmatisation and marginalisation – and they can be blamed for producing a morally bankrupt generation of young women. This will be demonstrated

throughout the analysis of the media coverage of footballers' wives, in particular the fear of the wannabe wag phenomenon and their assumed predatory nature. Tyler and Bennett (2009/2010) suggest that as class becomes harder to read on bodies, celebrity provides a means of identifying class distinctions, so the celebrity media function as etiquette guides employed to make class distinctions and judgements.

According to Negra and Holmes (2008), discourses on female celebrities are not intrinsically new but intensify existing trends, having more impact today due to the volume and circulation of such images. Images of damaged celebrities appeal to a female audience, reinforcing postfeminist understandings of individualism and competition between women. Fairclough (2008) describes the derisive and vicious discourse used in gossip blogging to debate aspects of a celebrity's behaviour, lifestyle and appearance and backs the argument that celebrities are no longer primarily figures of aspiration but characters to judge and ridicule. Such language and debates are not only found on blogs but also in the newspapers and some magazines, although expressed more subtly and will be demonstrated later in this book.

Fairclough (2008:para 9) maintains that, the 'prescriptive regime of self-maintenance is mandatory in a postfeminist culture, while the boundaries of this ideal self are positioned as precarious and fluid'...Footballers' wives are prominent in this trope of self-maintenance – they impart their knowledge of beauty and fashion, providing tips to encourage girls to makeover themselves to help in the search for perfection and a husband. In contrast to this, they are denigrated for their lack of taste and performance of hyper-femininity, both in the media and in the way wives talk about each other. Women who over-participate in self-maintenance are regularly deemed as going too far in the quest for youth and beauty, failing to age gracefully or having too much surgery but they are also maligned for not participating in self-maintenance as success is based on youthful, physical appearance. Fairclough (2008:para 11) argues this is played out through what she calls 'bitch culture', which is evident in blogging and is a key part of a postfeminist landscape – it denigrates rather than celebrates women, working 'to police physiological status, style and appearances of female celebrities regardless of association (or otherwise) with more meritocratic notions of talent and fame'.

Press pictures of celebrities are part of the feminist ideal of freedom of choice – choosing to be in the public eye and display their bodies in particular ways to the paparazzi, fully aware the images will

be commodified for consumption (Fairclough, 2008:para 11). However, Fairclough insists that it is actually 'postfeminist trickery' which encourages hyper-sexualisation and exploitation in the name of empowerment. Women are encouraged to imitate stereotypes of postfeminist sexuality whilst being condemned as morally reprehensible. This, she argues, works as a reminder to women that although we look up to celebrities we must consume correctly and obsess about our bodies. It reinforces arguments that second wave feminism is outdated and fuels anxieties about body image, relationships, careers and motherhood. She explains:

The discourses of postfeminism actively reinforce these concerns by suggesting that women may be able to have it all, but must also engage in the constant maintenance of the self in order to remain beautiful, employable, marriageable and ultimately happy.

(Fairclough, 2008:para 8)

The trends in celebrity discussed here illustrate how footballers' wives have emerged as a celebrity category, where their media role is to provide gossip and offer a form of celebrity soap opera around football. The representations of women in celebrity are often negative and, as discussed above, couched in class terms in a postfeminist landscape. They encourage the denigration of such women and imply a 'bitch culture', which attempts to moralise and denigrate them.

The image and work of a footballer's wife

Some research has already been undertaken on footballers' wives and their representations in the media. This is largely because sport sits at the confluence of the two media functions of news (sporting events and results) and entertainment (private lives) (Rowe, 1999) and football's increasing popularity has led to a crossover between football and entertainment which is bolstered by celebrity partnerships, such as David Beckham and Victoria Adams and Ashley Cole and Cheryl Tweedy. Such relationships serve to intertwine football with a much broader popular culture, invoking a desire for gossip about their lives and providing new marketing possibilities to a wider audience (Cashmore, 2004). Although presented as 'one half' of a couple rather than an individual, many wives have a career and all have an identity in their own right. In actual fact, it is claimed David Beckham achieved celebrity outside of football due to marrying Victoria not through his own personality and it is

apparently she who influences most of his decisions (Carrington, 2001; Whannel, 2001).

The media presents male sport stars as adverts for masculinity, relying heavily on fantasy and aspiration (Rowe, 1995:152). This aspiration goes for both men in terms of imitating their idols and for women in terms of marrying a sportsman. Rowe (1995) claims the sycophantic nature of masculine celebrity in sports means women are routinely regarded as groupies and hangers on with nothing to trade but their sexuality and this is clearly seen in the media construction of 'wannabe wags'. Within football women are sexualised to help players project a certain form of heterosexual masculinity and as such appear as 'trophy wives' (Clayton and Harris, 2004). It is in this context that 'misogyny and "one-off" sexual conquests, and sexual misconduct towards women, are perhaps of greater substance than longer-term relations' (Clayton and Harris, 2004:324). These depictions of women as possessions and hyper-feminine help to render an unhealthy and unbalanced image of gender relations in football. This is indicated by the number of top footballers (with wives or girlfriends) accused of affairs or using prostitutes and other players being accused and sometimes tried for rape (see also Benedict, 1997).

Clayton and Harris (2004:327) argue that footballers' wives are, 'portrayed not as women, with lives and minds of their own, but merely as "tools" for increasing the self-esteem and morale of the nation's football team'. Although used for increasing the (masculine) esteem of a football team, such women also generate a moral panic as they may distract the team. Rowe (2010) demonstrates how unremarkable relationships can be viewed as problematic for sportsmen, evoking a fear that men will be distracted or change their priorities for their wives and girlfriends. This is supported by Williams and Woodhouse (1991:86) who contend that some say women make up an 'unholy triumvirate' with betting and booze that is perceived as a threat likely to bring down some of the most talented football players. Rowe goes on to argue that the media highlights the glamour of girlfriends, but requires wives to be seen in a more traditional and nurturing role.

Footballers' wives are not merely a fictional entity or a representation in the media, but are women married to footballers who have their own life experiences. The media contributes to our understanding of the lives of these women and the media analogy of the career of the wag is a useful framework for understanding the work of a footballer's wife. In her study of the wives of clergy, Finch (1983) argues that the analogy of the career is a useful conceptual framework for analysing the ways wives

make sense of their lives in relation to their husbands – she uses the idea of a ‘wife of’ career which is both parallel and tied to her husband’s career (1983:158). Since the 1950s sociologists have looked at a career as something that is not necessarily tied to paid employment. According to Hughes, a career is a means to conceptualise the meaning of social life:

Subjectively, a career is the moving perspective through which a person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions and the things that happen to him.

(Hughes, 1958:63 cited in Finch, 1983:158)

Both Hughes and Goffman attempted to remove the simple correspondence between a career and jobs. Goffman (1961:119) argued that while the term has traditionally been used for those following a respected profession it can be applied to ‘any social strand of any person’s course through life’. In his study of the moral career of a mental patient, he maintained there are four strands to what constitutes a career: any social strand of a person’s course through life; changes over time which can be seen as basic and common to members of a given social category; career as identified by the individual as part of their own self image and felt identity; and the publicly accessible institutional context of a career (Goffman, 1968:119 in Finch, 1983:160). His work also examined careers as properties of collectives, which focused on individuals as social beings rather than as psychological beings (Goffman, 1961:127 in Barley, 1989:51). Barley explains that careers are something that only individuals experience, but they are not only of the individual’s making – a number of people have to have trodden the same path. It is in this sense the idea of the career of the footballer’s wife has become a popular representation in the media and one that other women aspire to.

Looking at the way women are incorporated into their husband’s footballing career gives an insight into the workings of football as well as the work of a footballer’s wife. Hochschild (2003b) argues women often have to engage in emotional labour within relationships providing support to their husbands. It should also perhaps be acknowledged that some women feel that whether they work outside the home or not, they still have to work to contribute towards their partner’s work or image, similarly to wives of diplomats (see Finch, 1983). Ortiz (2006) argues that the sport marriage is a career-dominated marriage. He states that wives have to come to terms with ‘the reality that their husbands are married to their sport careers and teams first, and to them, second’ (Ortiz, 1997:226).

In such marriages women may be subordinated, infantilised, motherised, sexualised, objectified or stigmatised. Research on the wives of baseball players shows how wives of professional athletes are required to support and defer to their husband's high profile, high-status, high-income and high-stress occupation, where their lives are characterised by geographical mobility or instability, while all the time dealing with a husband's routine (Ortiz, 2006:528). Many such wives who have had to defer their own careers to support their husbands but do not always define themselves in terms of their 'wife of' role claiming their own identity. The wives participate in emotional labour in their marriage:

a wife must also be sensitive to the different kinds of occupational stress (e.g. trade rumours, struggling with inferior pitching or hitting, or team politics) contributing to the mood swings which can dampen lighter moods among the team-mates.

(Ortiz, 1997:235)

Wives also have particular issues dealing with 'publicity, fans, groupies, media scrutiny and their husband's status as celebrities' (Ortiz, 2006:528). In the UK, with the popularity of football this is an issue for wives of players at all levels, although this increases the more successful the team. For some, this can lead to insecurity around relationships, for others this celebrity status has been an attraction and something to exploit to create their own media identity. Ortiz claims wives travelling with the baseball team have to comply with an unwritten code of conduct which may include women colluding in the collective denial of infidelity out of loyalty to their husband, creating 'institutionalised adultery' (Ortiz, 1997:227). The media attention afforded to footballers constructs them as public commodities, and according to the British newspaper reports this seems to provide them with limitless opportunities for sex and infidelity.

Alongside emotional labour, footballers' wives are constantly engaged in aesthetic labour too, especially those characterised as hyper-feminised trophy wives. In their study of fashion models, Entwistle and Wissinger (2006:774) argue that models are engaged in display work both on the body's surface and emotionally in the effort to keep up the 'on-going production of the body/self'. As models require certain physical dispositions to gain work, footballers' wives too require similar dispositions to meet and keep a footballing husband. There is a need to conform to a certain 'barbie doll' ideal as well as being seen to represent their husband and at times his club. Women appear to commodify themselves to find

a husband which is then extended to finding media or modelling work. In the modelling world there are 'very exclusive entry requirements' where 'a degree of aesthetic labour may be performed in order to keep up with trends and maintain one's career within this exclusive and competitive industry' (Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006:779). Although this comment is about the requirements to be a model, but following the notion of a career of a footballer's wife in the media, it could very easily be applied to wags. Certainly in his work on sports wives, Ortiz (2006) argues that part of the code of conduct includes an exaggerated form of femininity.

Ortiz found in his work, some wives wanted to talk about their lives to try and improve aspects of their marriage whilst others wanted to dispel stereotypes and 'set the record straight'. This is a rationale for a number of the auto/biographies written by and about the wives that are discussed here and it shows in how the wives construct themselves in opposition to the 'wag' in personal interviews (see Bullen, forthcoming). Roderick (2006b) has looked at the realities of football as work for players and this, alongside accounts of sports wives in America, paves the way for accounts of the work of a footballer's wife (see Ortiz, 1997; 2006; Thompson, 1999; McKenzie, 1999).

It appears that where the 'Essex girl' was the condensed signifier of the epitome of white working class women in the UK (Skeggs, 2004a), this is also true of the 'ladette', the 'female chav' and now resides in the footballer's wife too. Moral boundaries are drawn around footballers' wives based on a gendered form of class and such discrimination seems more acceptable than others such as racism. A point put in the following way:

The liberal, affluent educated whites regard treating others unequally on the basis of their gender, 'race' or sexuality as immoral, and they presumably realise that if they were to be sexist, racist or homophobic, they would themselves be responsible for reproducing injustice and undeserved inequality. They do not, however, see class inequality as unjust and they probably do not regard it as their responsibility either.

(Sayer, 2005:13)

The footballer's wife is different to other representations of working class women in that she is working class and rich, giving a different dimension to the descriptions of their lives. The positioning of footballers' wives through their media representations helps to reproduce both class

and gender inequalities. By looking at various kinds of media coverage this book contributes to contemporary celebrity theories by demonstrating how moral frames such as soap opera and fairy tales work to simultaneously celebrate and denigrate women.

Conclusions

This chapter has set out the main theoretical frameworks that will be used throughout this book. It contends that class distinctions are culturally marked through morality, taste and lifestyle and these distinctions are imposed through symbolic violence, which is played out in mediated representations of footballers and their wives. As Skeggs (2004a) argues class cannot stand alone as other classifications accompany it and here class distinctions are heightened by gender – in a postfeminist era symbolised by a bitch culture, a focus on makeovers and performing femininity, contraventions to symbolic middle class codes result in vicious attacks on taste and appearance. Skeggs claims that some can use classifications and characteristics as a resource whereas others cannot because they are positioned by them. In this work the fictional, exaggerated depictions of women married to footballers creates a distinct group of wags who are stereotyped and denigrated – marked out as ‘other’ to the middle class media producers and audiences, particularly as the role of the wag is seen as aspirational to more working class audiences. The analogies of soap operas and fairy tales that run throughout the media coverage of these women help to provide a moral education over what it is to be a woman in contemporary British society. As these women are placed clearly in a footballing context, the treatment of women in football is either a distraction or as ‘trophy wives’ for the male gaze, which is inherent in much press coverage as well as looking at the work of a footballer’s wife. Whilst some media has worked to create a specific stereotype, some wives have sought to write about their lives and set the record straight, albeit as a mediated commercial venture in some cases. These, alongside personal interviews (see Bullen, forthcoming), provide an insight into the experiences of marriage to a footballer and how they construct their experiences in relation to the media images. The following analysis of newspapers, magazines, television shows, and auto/biographies will demonstrate how different discourses are created about these women and how they combine to produce pervasive stereotypes and messages about certain women in contemporary Britain.

3

Methodology

The subject of footballers' wives was chosen following an exploratory study of the media during the 2006 World Cup, where the most striking element was the amount of coverage afforded to the wives of the England team (Bullen, 2006). The ubiquitous coverage of these women suggests that further analysis of their role was needed. Clayton and Harris claim, that while experiences of wives supporting their husbands' careers has received some sociological scrutiny, little research has been undertaken on the experiences of footballers' wives (2004:322). This book is intended to expand on the existing work on representations of footballers' wives and fill this sociological gap.

Studies of wives have tended to be based on interviews combined with either personal experience or observation (Finch, 1983; McKenzie, 1999; Ortiz, 1997; 2006; Thompson, 1999), based on statistics (Bruegel, 1996), through media representations (Clayton and Harris, 2004; Harris, 1999) or are historical accounts (Coontz, 2005; Thistle, 2006; Yalom, 2001). Footballers' wives provide a different type of subject as they are not only real women with lived experiences but they also negotiate the media-generated construct that has become synonymous with the term *wag*. This research unpacks why the mediated *wag* has been constructed, in terms of what it represents about women in relation to football, class, gender and celebrity. It will also examine the different discourses constructed through multiple media images and how, despite their differences, a particular stereotype has emerged. In her work on the rebranding of class, Skeggs (2005:48–9) argues that analysing popular culture can allow an exploration of what makes the culture of some groups *propertisable* for others and how moral value is attributed through gender and a similar line of argument is pursued in this book.

Dyer's work on *Stars* takes film stars as semiotic significations realised through media texts (1979:1). Footballers' wives can be examined in a similar fashion by analysing a range of interlocking texts, interpreting potential meanings and how they are consumed through a range of media texts. The wag image is realised throughout numerous media which each have distinct qualities impacting on how messages are sent and how audiences respond to them (Abercrombie, 1996; Hall, 1980a). The approach of looking at multiple sites of representation has not only been used by Dyer (1979) and DeCordova (1991) in relation to film, but also by Sean Nixon in *Hard Looks* (1996) which explored masculinity and representations of the 'new man'. Nixon adopted a more Foucauldian approach, aiming to look at both the discourse used by specific institutional sites and how they create a regime of representations. He argues that Foucault's understanding of discourse allows a broader account of representation than semiotics, enabling him to analyse sites of representation, such as shop interiors, that conventionally fall outside of semiotic textual analysis, which is more preoccupied with a rigidly delimited text. His work is to be read as a cultural history and this book too can be read along similar lines, in that it reveals how a range of media have come to represent footballers' wives and the themes that emerge within and across all of these sites.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of semiotic and discourse analysis and illustrates how these will be used to analyse the phenomenon of footballers' wives. It will then define representation and ideology and how they work in relation to the media and this particular work, including how these serve to classify certain groups and generate stereotypes. The following section will outline Bennett and Woollacott's (1987) work on intertextuality as well as Fairclough's (1995) and then discusses how these will both be useful in analysing how the wag has emerged across a range of texts. A brief account of figurative analysis then follows, which is informed by Tyler's (2008) work on 'chav mums', which can capture how an exaggerated figure is developed in the media and elaborates wider social anxieties. The mechanics of the method will then be discussed along with a detailed description of the sources used.

Semiotics and discourse

This research uses a semiotic method to understand the media generated concept of the wag. Following the semiotic approach of Bignell (2002) and the discourse analysis of Fairclough (1995), this book looks

at the sign of the wag in the media and the range of discourses that have emerged around it. This method can be applied to all the sources covered – newspapers, magazines, television and auto/biography. This work also draws on Stuart Hall's understanding how representations and ideology work. Hall's account demonstrates the importance of examining both the connotative and denotative meanings within a text rather than presuming one reading (see Hall, 1980a; 1980b). Bryman (2001) notes that there is often a sense of arbitrariness in the analysis with a semiotic approach but claims that this is probably no more the case in semiotics than other methods of document interpretation arguing:

Indeed, it would be surprising if we were not struck by a sense of arbitrariness in interpretation, in view of the principle of polysemy that lies at the heart of semiotics.

(Bryman, 2001:382)

The semiotic analysis used in this thesis largely follows that set out by Bignell (2002:3) in *Media Semiotics*. Here he defines an approach to studying the media that lies between the opposing positions of a structuralist detailed media analysis and an ethnographic approach concentrating on how individuals personally interact with the media. His approach considers five basic assumptions:

1. Patterns and structures of signs in media texts shape how meanings are disseminated and interpreted.
2. Signs are read in relation to other signs and texts in a social and cultural context.
3. Different types of medium have specific features and ones they share with other media.
4. Both the text and the medium position their audience differently and in turn the audience receives the media in diverse ways.
5. Studying how meanings are negotiated is crucial to understanding how we think about ourselves and our culture.

This study looks to understand the sign of the wag and also looks at the discourses surrounding footballers' wives. Discourse is a way of referring to or constructing knowledge about a subject and discourse analysis has been defined as follows:

It examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse

produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practised and studied.

(Hall, 1997a:6)

Discourse emphasises historical specificity rather than language, and this is important as the wag has emerged at a historically specific time, when there are anxieties and conflicts over the role of women and feminism, class and wealth distribution, consumption and downshifting, the impact of celebrity and concerns over finances in football. As one figure able to condense all of these struggles in their representation the wag is particularly relevant to the early twenty-first century and could not have emerged at a different historical point. According to Fairclough (1995:56), social and 'cultural changes very often manifest themselves discursively through a redrawing of boundaries within and between orders of discourse'.

Fairclough's media discourse analysis attempts to show how the world is represented (representations), what identities are set up for those involved in the story (identities) and what relationships are set up between those involved (relations). It attempts to 'to show systemic links between texts, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices' (Fairclough, 1995:16–7). His approach also focuses on unequal power relations and argues that in order to show how texts work ideologically, analysis has to show how it serves relations of domination. This can include understanding why one representation is chosen over other available ones and where the text originates from – who chooses the representation and what are their motivations and what impact it might have. It must be remembered that in this research, all of the texts not only have an ideological function but also a commercial one – they are cultural commodities in a competitive market and this will have an impact in the values and identities they portray (1995:14).

His work is also concerned with how communicative events work to re-contextualise others – what representations and transformations they produce and how they differ from other re-contextualisations of the same events. These depend on the goals, values and priorities of the communication in which they are re-contextualised (Fairclough, 1995:41). Examining the detail of the sources below and in the ensuing chapters provides further information about the intended audience, commercial pressures, genres and the institution itself which contribute to an understanding of the ideologies and discourses they disseminate.

Representation, ideology, classification and stereotypes

This book is clearly concerned with the question of representation, and in order to understand representation and how it operates the work of Stuart Hall and other members of the Birmingham School will be considered here (Hall, 1980a; 1980b; Heck, 1980; Morley, 1980). The representations of footballers' wives have been used to classify these women as working class and create a stereotype that marks them out as distinct from other groups and the work of Tyler (2006), Skeggs (2004a) and Dyer (2002) will be used here to demonstrate how this works through the media.

Hall's work extends that of Roland Barthes (1957/1973) who moved away from Saussure's linguistic semiotics and applied it to cultural phenomena enabling analysis to take the sign, with its denotative meaning, and link it to broader cultural themes whereby it becomes a signifier with connotative meanings helping to create a myth (see Hall, 1997b). According to Hall, language is a representational system and through the media thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in culture thus culture is 'concerned with the production and exchange of meanings' (1997a:2). He argues cultural meanings organise and regulate social practices and influence our behaviour so have real effects:

Signs stand for or represent our concepts, ideas and feelings in such a way as to enable others to 'read', decode or interpret their meaning in roughly the same way that we do.

(Hall, 1997a:5)

Although signs will always be interpreted differently according to the person reading them and the context in which they are read, by exaggerating these signs and figures it perhaps makes it easier to imply a preferred meaning. All signs have a denotative or descriptive meaning but also a connotative or implied meaning. These meanings can 'influence, entertain, instruct or persuade, with very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences' (Hall, 1980b:130).

As Fairclough (1995) notes, media analysis is concerned with power and how the mass media produces or reproduces power relations, such as class and gender relations, through ideology. The following definition is extremely important for this study:

Ideology is indeed a system of representations, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with 'consciousness':

they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as *structures* that they impose on the majority of men [sic], not via their 'consciousness'.

(Althusser, cited in Heck, 1980:127)

Ideology works differently from discourses of persuasion in that persuasive discourses adopt a point of view and use rhetorical devices to convince audiences to adopt a similar view. Ideologies, on the other hand, are taken for granted as common ground and do not always need to involve rhetorical devices. Ideology, in this sense, does not necessarily mean the media is complicit with the dominant classes nor is it constant or predictable, but part of a wider and more complex and contradictory media discourse (Fairclough, 1995:45). Although texts may have a dominant meaning the interpretation of its meaning is negotiated by the audience. This, according to Morley, is because interpretations of texts will be different depending on the discourses available to the reader (Morley, 1980:171; Hall, 1980b).

It is possible to see how certain women have been classified and positioned in relation to their class and gender. Tyler (2006:para2) argues class is often represented through highly caricatured and emotive figures such as toffs and chavs. Representations such as the *chav* invoke expressions of disgust at the behaviour of those deemed to belong to a lower social class which is crucial to power relations. In her work, Skeggs (2004a:117) argues that representation 'works with a logic of supplementarity, condensing many fears and anxieties within one classed symbol'. As described in the previous chapter, the representations of footballers' wives have worked ideologically to create moral boundaries which separate out these women as 'other'. Although a relatively new figure, the *wag* is a manifestation of historical concerns about working class women. Likewise, Skeggs (2004a:97) maintains that class representations are often old class classifications which are brought up to date and then reworked with new aspects so as to seem contemporary.

Culture assigns meaning to things by giving them different positions in a classification system that marks out difference (Hall et al., 1997 in Hall, 1997c:236). Such representations not only mark difference but also attribute value to the figure or group being classified. Through processes of symbolic violence, outlined earlier, these classifications can be viciously imposed on groups with their consent. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argue power works through the misrecognition of cultural privilege and power which is ascribed rather than achieved and viewed as legitimate and natural – at the opposite end of the scale

this is reversed as, for the working classes, having ascribed and essential characteristics means they are positioned and fixed by values such as immorality and criminality (Skeggs, 2004a:4).

Dyer's (2002) work on stereotypes highlights how they are used as a form of typification, through which societies make sense and are able to reproduce themselves. In order to achieve this, meanings must be fixed and are a reflection of power relations in society. They provide a shortcut in symbolism by reducing complex connotations into a simple form of representation, which invokes a consensus around the stereotype, providing meaning around this social group albeit more apparent than real and representing a specific power relation in society. This serves to include social types – who live by the rules and exclude stereotypes – who are deemed abnormal creating a 'them and us' relationship in terms of belonging in society (also in Hall, 1997c). Although as Hall argues no meanings can be permanently fixed and they are polysemic, it is clear that across a range of media and despite the different discourses available, a fixed and stereotypical meaning has been attached to the figure of the wag which clearly marks her out as pathological, working class and tasteless.

Intertextuality

The accumulation of meaning across different texts where one image refers to another or is altered by being read in context is intertextuality (Hall, 1997c). There are two types of intertextuality used in analysing texts both of which draw on the idea that intertextual knowledge leads the reader to view a polysemic text in a certain way. The first form of intertextuality analyses how texts are linked through genre, character or content (horizontal) or between texts such as television programmes or series with other types of texts that refer to it openly (vertical). There are also related texts such as publicity, newspaper articles, criticism or texts produced by viewers, such as letters, gossip and conversation (Fiske, 1987). Allen (2000) claims that modern theorists view texts as devoid of independent meaning, therefore to understand the meaning of texts analysts need to trace and interpret the relations between texts. This clearly highlights that the most robust textual analyses should also trace relations across a range of different media and that is the form this study takes.

Bennett and Woollacott's (1987) study of *Bond and Beyond* provides an excellent example of the importance of an intertextual analysis through its study of the constitution and effects of James Bond as a phenomenon

across a range of texts (1987:1). Footballers' wives can also be seen as mediated figures and studied in a similar way. They explain:

Whereas popular heroes also usually have their origins in a particular work or body of fiction, they break free from the originating textual conditions of their existence to achieve a semi-independent existence, functioning as an established point of cultural reference that is capable of working – of producing meanings – even for those who are not directly familiar with the original texts in which they first made their appearance.

(Bennett and Woollacott, 1987:14)

Although footballers' wives do not have an origin in a particular work, they appear to have broken free from their originating textual conditions and have taken on a semi-independent existence. Examining how they appear across a range of texts demonstrates how such women have become a cultural reference point that is familiar to all – not just those interested in football or celebrity. This research uses an intertextual approach to demonstrate how texts, such as the television series, draw on specific newspaper articles to produce relevant story-lines and how auto/biography draws on the television series and newspaper stories as reference points and sources of knowledge about the lives of footballers' wives.

Bennett and Woollacott (1987:5) argue that to become popular, fictional figures must relate to popular experience rather than simply imposing dominant ideologies. But in order to do this these fictional forms must make concessions to the different values and ideologies of subordinate groups. Wags represent a semi-fictional figure and analysing a range of texts in which they appear allows an analysis of how they are differentially constructed and express different meanings at different points in time for different audiences. It also enables an examination of what concessions are made according to the intended audience and how the figure of the wag becomes engaged with wider problems and debates in contemporary culture such as the role of women, class and celebrity in contemporary Britain.

The second form of intertextuality is that used by Fairclough (1995), which draws on the work of Kristeva. Fairclough's intertextuality examines discourse practices within a text to demonstrate how genres and discourses are both articulated within a text. He argues linguistic analysis involves what is on the paper, whilst intertextual analysis is more abstract and relates the text to wider discourse practices – linking the

text to society and culture. Kristeva's work on semiotics pays attention to texts and textuality in relation to ideological structures by looking at the double meaning of the text – first in relation to the text itself and second as an historical and social text (in Allen, 2000:36, 37). Kristeva maintains texts are part of a wider cultural and social textuality and therefore reflect the ideological struggles and structures of society.

The intertextuality proposed by Bennett and Woollacott (1987) is the most influential in this book. In analysing a range of media, this study is able to demonstrate how texts explicitly inform one another and are used as reference points – the repetition of the wag representation across texts helps generate an over-riding stereotype which takes on a life of its own. However, both types of intertextual analysis are used here as this work also looks at how ideological and classificatory discourses are linked to wider contemporary discourses of gender, class, celebrity and football.

Figurative analysis

Tyler (2008) and Ahmed (2000) both take a figurative approach to their work, Tyler argues that the 'chav mum' is produced through reactions of disgust to an abject figure embodying historical anxieties. The term 'figure' is used 'to describe the ways in which at different historical and cultural moments specific "social types" become over determined and are publicly imagined (are figured) in excessive, distorted and caricatured ways' (Tyler, 2008:18). Using the figure of the 'chav mum', she argues the figure is always an expression of underlying social anxieties and functions to attribute superiority to those they are differentiated from. Similarly the figure of the wag is often over-exaggerated and can be seen as part of wider anxieties over working class women, celebrity and the distribution of wealth in the UK, in particular, undeserved wealth. Tyler adapts an approach used by both Ahmed (2000) and Castañeda (2002) who argues figuration has a double force – constitutive effect and generative circulation, and this can be analysed across various media (Castañeda, 2002:3 in Tyler, 2008:18). She explains:

This approach refuses any binary distinctions between the material and the semiotic, signs and signifying practices are understood as having material effects that shape the appearance of and our experience of others.

(Tyler, 2008:18)

It is an approach allowing the researcher to examine the wag figure in specific texts and its repetition across various media, which helps give it a form and value that has a significant social and political impact. In this way analysing the wag in different texts will highlight the range of discourses relating to these women and how they come together to provide an over-riding stereotype of a wealthy, over-consumptive, hyperfeminine, working class woman who is dependent on her husband for her identity. As discussed in relation to Bennett and Woollacott's (1987) work above, the repetition of the generic name 'wag' rather than specific names, means the semi-fictional figure of the wag appears to have a life of her own. Ahmed (2000:15) argues it is not simply about how and where a figure, such as the wag, is produced as a figure, but how that figure is put to work and made to work in particular times and places.

Following the idea of how the figure of the wag is put to work, this research will look at how this symbol has emerged across the media, invoking a range of discourses and providing ideological messages about class positioning and the role of women in contemporary British society. As described above, the wag figure has been constructed as a stereotype of a pathological working class woman which is used to confer class difference and distance from certain women and their behaviour, as well as providing exemplary stories about how women should and should not live their lives. The following section will set out how this research selects and analyses certain stories in various media that are written about these women and how they work to set out this stereotype of an exaggerated wag figure and how this is a reference point for other texts. It illustrates how the stories differ according to the author, genre and context and how these demonstrate different ideological messages to different women. It will exemplify how stories contain connotative meanings which contribute and interact with wider ideologies about class and postfeminism in contemporary British culture. In this way the stories implicitly construct cultural boundaries of class as the women are depicted as pathological working class others by a middle class press. It will also show how these women attempt to resist such constructions by offering insights into their lives or by conferring pathological identities on other women such as wannabe wags.

The method

The footballer's wife has appeared in the press at least since the 1960s and 1970s, but following the Beckhams' marriage in 1999,

footballers' wives appeared much more frequently. Initially appearing in the tabloids and occasionally the broadsheets, these articles were followed by a fictional television series, autobiographies, novels, even documentaries and reality TV shows. No form of media seems to have avoided the phenomenon. It would be difficult to fit a complete study of all of the media into this book, so it focuses on newspapers, celebrity magazines, the *Footballers' Wives* television series and auto/biographies. Newspapers were selected as one of the main sources of news, sport and entertainment which reach a large selection of the population. Celebrity magazines have become increasingly popular in the early twenty-first century, alongside the rise in celebrity culture and have been instrumental in creating the desire for celebrity and the aspirational lifestyle associated with this life so are important in understanding representations of footballers' wives. The television series was the first to create a caricatured footballer's wife and was important in drawing attention to this group of women. It's blurring of fact and fiction has also been crucial in the creation of the over-exaggerated figure of the wag. Auto/biography was selected to provide the discourses written by those married to footballers about their lives. All of the texts were initially studied in isolation and certain stories and themes emerged which became the basis of the final analysis and were looked at as an overall set of texts representing and classifying the wag. The following sections detail the approach taken and the sources used.

Newspapers and magazines

Studying the representation of wags in newspapers and popular magazines provided no major ethical issues as it is an unobtrusive and non-reactive method (Krippendorf, 1980) and these sources were available both online and at the Newspaper Archive of the British Library but was complicated in terms of scale and organisation. Although a search of the media since the 1960s would provide a historical context to this work, it would produce too large a sample for this study. Firstly, an analysis was undertaken of three newspapers and three magazines for the six weeks before, during and after the 2006 World Cup finals and the two weeks surrounding the Rooney/McLoughlin wedding in 2008, generating an initial sample of 144 newspapers and 26 magazines. The World Cup was chosen because it was when the concept of the footballer's wife really came to the fore and the coverage saturated the media whilst the Rooney wedding is taken as a contemporary example of how this has continued to be a major focus of the press. The entire

content of the newspapers and magazines over this period was studied to find any articles which discussed footballers' wives; these were then coded to allow themes to emerge.

To supplement this, significant events and debates surrounding footballers' wives in the media were analysed with a more targeted approach using events or debates as the sample rather than specific newspapers and magazines. This section of the analysis focused on key events in the media in order to examine the coverage around specific moments related to footballers' wives rather than focusing on generalised coverage. These moments include the weekend of 'wag weddings' in 2007 and the Ashley/Cheryl Cole marriage problems following press revelations of his infidelity in January 2008 which eventually culminated in their separation in February 2010 following further revelations. Discussions around wannabe wags and wags as role models are considered along with the critique or admiration of their lifestyles. This was done in a more targeted fashion; as all newspapers now publish on the internet regular searches were undertaken using a *google* keyword search of either 'wags' or 'footballers' wives'. Such searches generate millions of hits but by looking at the web address and the overview, it is possible to find those that are in the mainstream English press and may contain such debates. These were then looked at thematically and included in the semiotic analysis.

The main methodological issue with newspapers and magazines was paring down the sheer volume of copy written about these women. This was done through sampling although it does mean that there are possibly different discourses and meanings which are not addressed in this book and perhaps a pure chronological approach would have provided more contextual analysis of how the meanings relate to the current social climate in the UK. Once the sample was set out, a thematic analysis was undertaken. Wives such as Victoria Beckham and Cheryl Cole pose a particular problem as they have careers in their own right so any article that mentioned them in the context of football or as wives were included but not articles specifically related to their individual careers. As the focus of the research was not a quantitative content analysis this does not pose too many problems as it was mainly to get a flavour of the articles and to select specific ones for a more in-depth analysis. Magazines such as *heat* also provide a problem for researchers in terms of their layout. Discerning quantitative amounts of coverage in such magazines is problematic as articles often blur into one another: for example, coverage of footballers' wives activities crosses over with more general coverage of fashion, lifestyle and celebrity. Again as this study is not

Table 3.1 Newspaper statistics

	Ownership	Social class of readership	Circulation 26 May 2008–29 June 2008 (Source ABC)	Readership July 2007–December 2007 (Source NRS)
The Sun	News International	67% ABC1C2	3,089,321	8,051,000
Daily Mail	Associated Newspapers	66% ABC1	2,231,120	5,409,000
The Guardian	The Guardian News & Media	63% AB	347,183	1,114,000

based on quantitative analysis, this has not proved too problematic but the use of wags as vehicles for broader stories can make thematic analysis difficult.

Below are details of the six sources used for the random research, their ownership, circulation, demography and for the magazines, their target audience.¹ The producers of each of the sources will have different commercial pressures which may impact on the types of message being transmitted as well as their concessions to appeal to their intended audience which will reflect different discursive positions on certain issues (Table 3.1).

The social grading used in newspaper readership was developed for the National Readership Surveys over 50 years ago and is based on 'the occupation of the Chief Income Earner (CIE) in each household. Additional criteria such as the size of the organisation, and the number of people for which the CIE is responsible, are used to refine the process'.² A complete table is available in Appendix A, but the grades range from A being upper middle class down to E being those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

The three newspapers were chosen to cover the broad spectrum of national newspapers available in the UK and their demography covers a far-reaching audience including a high proportion of women and a good range of social classes. *The Sun* is the most popular daily newspaper and a tabloid. The *Daily Mail* is the second most popular daily newspaper and is a mid-range paper – neither tabloid nor broadsheet with more female than male readers. *The Guardian* is a quality broadsheet

newspaper. To view the national daily newspaper circulation for all British newspapers see Appendix A.

The choice of magazines is based on best selling weekly magazines. Between April 2007 and March 2008, the chosen magazines were the second, third and fourth biggest selling weekly women's magazines – number one was *Take a Break* which is not a celebrity magazine and therefore not relevant to this research.³

Hello! was launched in the UK in May 1988 and was a British version of 'Spain's royalty-driven women's weekly, *Hola!*'.⁴ Since the launch of *OK!* as a weekly, *Hello!* has been in an ongoing readership battle and claims it has maintained a more upmarket readership. According to the publisher, 'Hello! has the highest female A and AB reader profile in the market place making it the best bred celebrity weekly in the UK.'⁵ This publication heralded the beginning of a devoted celebrity press in Britain.

OK! states on its publishers website that 'OK! dominates the British celebrity market and is first for celebrity news worldwide'.⁶ The magazine was launched in March 1993 initially as a monthly periodical to rival *Hello!* through a strategy of buying access to top celebrities. In 1996, the title became weekly and within three years began to overtake its main rival.⁷ The magazine prides itself on being 'first for celebrity news' both in Britain and overseas. *OK!* claims to be popular with 'upmarket readers' 'by pioneering the idea of an all-round celebrity-based title which surpasses rivals in traditional areas of women's interest.' It also produces a free supplement called *HotStars* targeting younger readers – catching celebrities off-guard and carrying TV listings creating they claim, 'an unbeatable package with something for every age and style'.⁸

heat was launched in 1999 as Emap's response to the burgeoning celebrity market as evidenced by the success of *OK!* magazine going weekly in 1996.⁹ *heat* is one of the cheaper celebrity magazines and according to the website editorial:

The heat reader is 18–34, urban, up-market and intelligent. She is a social butterfly who loves pubbing, clubbing and eating out. She's also a fashion-conscious shopaholic – whether it's clothes, shoes or cosmetics – and she will pay more for better quality products. She is celebrity-mad and passionate about heat, reading it cover to cover and buying it every single week.¹⁰

Similar to the newspapers, every edition was read from cover to cover in order to find stories about footballers' wives. These were then

thematically coded and included in the overall semiotic analysis of the printed media. The analysis also included photographs and visual representations which are much more prominent in the magazines than the newspapers.

Television

Lury (2005) argues that the television image is everywhere but ephemeral – running 24 hours a day making it seem uncontrollable. Due to its range some argue that television trivialises but Abercrombie (1996:3) states that Britain television reaches a very large number of people and this means ‘that television is an important – perhaps the most important – source of common experience for the British people, who are otherwise divided by class, ethnicity, gender, region, personal tastes and a host of other factors’. It is for this reason that it is important to include an analysis of television when looking at how popular media concepts are generated and sustained. Many people will watch television just because it is on – this allows it to reach a far wider audience than the printed media, which requires more attentiveness and for the audience to actively seek it out (see Abercrombie, 1996; Lury, 2005). In this sense prime-time series such as *Footballers' Wives* provide a means for wider social interaction for viewers as reading and talking about television helps to produce the text which in turn helps to naturalise stereotypes and classifications (Fiske, 1987). The analysis also allows a comparison with the visual representations of the press in terms of how the women and their lifestyles are depicted.

In 2002 ITV1 began broadcasting a new series entitled *Footballers' Wives* – this was a World Cup year in which Victoria Beckham was the only wife to make the headlines. The show was initially based around three couples – all the husbands played for Earls Park Football Club and the show documents the highs and lows of being a footballer as well as a fictional insight into how their wives might spend their time and their husbands' money. The show became hugely successful and ran for five series before being axed. It was regularly talked about in all other forms of media and led to a spin off series *Footballers' Wives Extra Time* which was the first ever drama commissioned by ITV2 and a book *How to be a Footballer's Wife* (Reynolds, 2003) as well as official and unofficial websites dedicated to the show.¹¹

Television can be analysed as a text paying attention to both visual and aural signs (Abercrombie, 1996; Bignell, 2002). Sparks (1992) studied crime dramas as moral tales. Once he selected his sample of programmes he watched them and noted emergent patterns, then paid

closer attention to specific examples. This allowed him to analyse how certain narratives draw on and use common discursive resources (1992:116). He argued there were two dimensions to this work – looking at stock characters, relationships, settings and places as well as their stories. All five series of *Footballers' Wives* and the spin-off series were viewed for this research – a total of 54 episodes all of which were at least one hour long. These were watched back-to-back over the course of two weeks and similar to Sparks' approach notes were taken on story-lines and visual representations. This allowed an analysis of how narratives were related to or became a reference point for the representations and discourses found elsewhere in the press. Looking at the characters also helped to examine how the exaggerated figure of the wag had been able to emerge through the media in relation to these caricatured women.

It was essential to watch all the episodes together as this allowed for an analysis of both the stories within individual episodes and the plots that ran throughout the series and also across seasons. This generated a huge volume of data so the analysis focuses mainly on the first two series but may also discuss specific events in later series that illustrate specific points. The timing of its transmission alongside the rise of the wag in the media allows for an intertextual analysis of how footballers' wives appeared in different texts and engaged with a range of topical debates. The coverage of the series in the newspapers and magazines and the cultural references in the programme highlight how they give the impression that they are representing one world rather than fact and fiction. Again the quantity of episodes was problematic as it would be easy to overlook important story-lines and visual effects that may be relevant to the study – particularly when watching episodes back-to-back. Having seen much of the first two series before, allowed me to not become too absorbed in the story to perform a critical analysis. Taking these two series as the main analysis also helped to reduce the overwhelming amounts of data and make the work manageable.

Auto/biography

In looking to uncover the lived experience of footballers' wives and the discourses they use to describe their lives this study also looks at auto/biography – books written by or about football wives. Again a thematic approach was applied allowing prevalent themes to emerge rather than prescribing them from the outset. The major themes analysed here are class and postfeminism as these were endemic in the newspaper sources as well as the books. Fairy tales and conspicuous consumption were also examined as these are key themes related to

footballers' wives in other media such as the magazine sources. These were important tropes in these specific texts and allowed for a broader analysis across the range of media. The notion of a fairy tale life has been a prominent theme across all of the media helping to attract a wannabe culture which is then compounded in books such as Coleen McLoughlin's which becomes a self-help book for girls wishing to tread this magical path. Whilst some texts emphasise the glamour, others are keen to point out the less glamorous lifestyles, similar to the women interviewed here, and perhaps are trying to offer an alternative to the stereotyped image of the footballer's wife.

Looking at the stories in these texts helps work as a reference point for other media and influences the story-lines found in newspapers, magazines, and television series. It has been suggested that

an examination of narratives enables a greater focus on the collective, social character of the world and enables, too, a contextualising of the subject of narrative within time and space. Personal narratives do not exist in a vacuum but draw from a range of cultural narratives. And then, of course, having gone into social circulation, they too become resources on which to draw, whether on a small or a grand scale.

(Lawler, 2008a:44)

Smith and Watson (2001) argue that life narrative and biography are not interchangeable. In biography others document and interpret someone's life from their own viewpoint and are thus external to the subject. Life narratives on the other hand are written from both an internal and external viewpoint. Stanley (1992) critiques this idea claiming that the intertextuality between writing genres, particularly fiction and autobiography, is very important. The text is constructed and recognises that some of the past is unrecoverable, the selective and limited nature of memory leads to a partial construction and fictionalisation of some events. It then becomes difficult to tell apart fiction, biography and autobiography as they all symbiotically inform each other. For this reason she uses the term auto/biography as it refuses any easy distinction between autobiography and biography so is a useful term in considering the selected texts as they encompass autobiography, biography, co-authorship and possibly ghost-writers.

There are surprisingly few books written by footballers' wives which has limited the selection here – this is perhaps because up until now there has not been much of a market for them but currently they are proliferating. The main books used are written by women as a commercial

enterprise and they construct a mediated image of the self for public consumption. All of the books attempt to establish rapport with the audience and speak specifically about their experiences as women both in terms of the mundane and the extraordinary. The sources used are fully outlined in the auto/biography chapter but include books by Victoria Beckham, Angie Best and Coleen McLoughlin, as well as historical and edited accounts by Becky Tallentire and Shelley Webb. Each of the books was read and notes taken about key themes over a period of eight weeks. These were then analysed allowing themes to emerge from the data, which could then be compared both across the auto/biographies themselves and also with the stories that appeared in the other media included in the research. For all the books it is important to acknowledge is that they are all commercial enterprises which have been edited by publishing companies. In this respect these books provide a mediated account of life as a footballer's wife which represents the interests of the authors, the publishers and the construction of a potential audience.

Conclusions

This section has laid out the epistemology of this study as well as describing the mechanics of how it was undertaken. It has demonstrated how a semiotic approach encompassing multiple sites of representation can be used to demonstrate the range of discourses and stereotypes surrounding footballers' wives and what they mean in contemporary British society. The key to this study is not only the range of media covered but how the different sites intertextually relate and generate certain stereotypical meanings despite individually producing a range of discourses for their audiences to draw upon. Examining a range of texts shows how the figure of the wag is put to work in particular times and places, helping to produce value judgements about certain types of women and class antagonism.

By understanding which discourses occur in specific media it is then possible to demonstrate how these appear in other texts, how they are drawn upon or re-contextualised and used in relation to the sign of the footballer's wife. This study highlights the explicit intertextuality between texts, which refer directly to other media events, and how this serves to blur fact and fiction. Analysing a range of different texts enables an understanding of how various media draw on contemporary discourses of postfeminism, class and celebrity to mark out footballers' wives as immoral, working class and tasteless. These show how the wag

is a historically specific manifestation of long running concerns over working class women and morality. The following chapters provide an introduction to each media, a description of the main features and themes that emerged and how they work to create a form of soap opera that blurs fact and fiction to the audience. In particular, it demonstrates how the wag has become a condensed signifier representing a site of struggle over the meaning of class, femininity and the role of women in contemporary Britain.

4

Wives in Print

The analysis begins with the printed media. Although as discussed below there are a range of representations surrounding the wag, certain newspaper representations have been crucial in creating the figure of the wag as an excessive working class woman, shamelessly and immorally pursuing footballers in order to live a life of dependence akin to a real life soap opera. Although some magazines support this view, others have worked to depict an alternative image of footballers' wives as sophisticated women with glamorous lifestyles to be aspired to. Both of these have created pervasive discourses about the lives of such women which help to shape both fictional representations and how women represent themselves or attempt to distance themselves from such representations.

It is this that makes this a crucial chapter in demonstrating how the image of the footballer's wife has been constructed and relayed to audiences through printed media and how these meanings are negotiated and understood. According to Lumby (1997), the media represents the unstable ground on which notions of gender and sexuality are built in contemporary society (in Whelehan, 2000:7). Alongside this, the celebrity studies discussed earlier also demonstrate how contemporary celebrities in the media have become a site of class struggles. The footballer's wife is depicted as a working class woman and as such condenses many of these struggles over the meanings and workings of gender and class in Britain today. Each of the sources used for this research has different priorities and discourses, which it draws on to create its representations of wives. This chapter initially focuses on the different discourses surrounding these women and their importance to the media, and then provides an analysis of how the footballer's wife has been depicted as a career throughout the media. This will be

separated into four sections on wannabe wags, becoming a wag, the job description of a footballer's wife and how it might all come to an end.

Why the interest in wags?

Table 4.1 demonstrates just how quickly the wives became a staple part of media coverage. It shows the vast amount of articles including footballers' wives in the newspapers during the 2006 World Cup. Interestingly, celebrity magazines were slower than the newspapers to pick up on the value of footballers' wives – now some of their staple stories. Geraghty (2000:187) argues that contemporary celebrity predominantly rests on the private life of a person rather than their performing presence. She argues that in contrast to professionals who are famous for their work, celebrities are famous for their lifestyle. Certainly the proliferation of celebrities who are famous for their lifestyle rather than talent or work seems to support this view and goes some way to explaining why footballers' wives have become part of the celebrity landscape through representing the private lives and lifestyles of some of this country's most renowned sports stars.

The *Daily Mail* has a more right wing political leaning than the other newspapers. It is a paper with a high female audience and seems to focus on marking out footballers' wives as a group to be denigrated. It appears that financial envy on the part of the readership is placated by vilification of the taste and behaviour of women who fail to conform to middle class femininities. The *Guardian* coverage, like other broadsheets, is ambivalent. In some cases it is supportive and criticises detractors

Table 4.1 Number of press articles incorporating footballers' wives

Newspaper/magazine	No. of articles	
	World cup coverage (03 June 2006–15 July 2006)	Rooney wedding coverage (07 June 2008–21 June 2008) ¹
Daily Mail	69	17
The Guardian	36	9
The Sun	103	36
heat	22	23
Hello!	11	13
OK!	29	25

of the wives on the basis of class whereas at other points it is highly critical. This is for a number of reasons, including the same financial envy as laid out above, the feminist background of some of the journalists and because the editors view their newspaper as the arbiter of good taste and moral ways of being. In contrast, *The Sun* does at times condemn the behaviour of certain women but also offers a more aspirational figure providing the fairy tale of transformation. Conboy (2006) maintains that tabloid appeal lies in its linguistic and national specificity, whereas some publications alienate certain groups, the tabloids identify with readers and their interests, promoting social belonging. It provides an imagined shared ideal of community, 'albeit one without the analysis of central social issues other than when they are refracted through sensation, celebrity and a prism of everyday life' (Conboy, 2006:10). It offers to its readers a way out of their lives to find fame and fortune. The *Sun* as a newspaper is heavily reliant on both football and celebrity, which means the wags are an ideal figure to help them sell newspapers and relate to their audience. The paper also devotes many column inches to soap opera and this is a theme that runs through the coverage of the lives of footballers' wives.

Hello! and *OK!* are keen to emphasise the exclusivity of their articles, something which has created bidding wars and tensions in this market (Marshall, 2005). In order to obtain this exclusivity these magazines would not be able to denigrate these women. They depict the wives as aspirational and different from the reader due to their lifestyle. Becker (2008:89) discusses how celebrities are commonly depicted posing at home which serves to naturalise stars in their domestic environments and give an insight into who they really are – 'through angle and eye-contact with the camera, they are brought down to the viewers level'. It supposedly gives a look behind the façade of their public life. This promotes the lifestyle of wags in the glossy weekly magazines which marks them out as living a fairy tale dream and appearing to have control over their representation. *heat* and its contemporaries have adopted a more vicarious approach to celebrities for those who want to see through the gloss. They emphasise readers' star-spotting and paparazzi shots, often highlighting 'the pics they so don't want you to see' thus emphasising the wives ordinariness and closeness to the reader by reporting 'the truth'. Mark Frith, former editor of *heat* claims of the magazine's success:

We were lucky in that people were looking for a celebrity magazine that was a bit cooler than the others, less sycophantic. People didn't want to settle for the image of stars they were being given any more

and I thought we should be the magazine equivalent of the reality show, like a weekly real-life soap opera about famous people.

(quoted in Saner, 2008)

Frith hits on one of the key points of this study, as he indicates how the lives of footballers and their wives are depicted as if they are living in a soap opera and as characters who could appear in one. As Biressi and Nunn (2008) argue, the *Footballers' Wives* television series was rooted in tabloid women's magazines such as those used in this research with the characters even appearing in *Hello!* magazine.

Lang's (1978:149) account of admired women in the media argues that the news media collaborated with the fashion industry to create 'beautiful people' and 'superconsumers' providing glamour to be idolised. The access footballers' wives have to money and glamorous events makes them an ideal vehicle to sell newspapers and magazines, as well as fashion and other consumer goods. It is this consumption, however, which classifies them as distinct from other women, whilst for some it is aspirational and something to follow, yet for others it is seen as tasteless and pathological.

The career of the footballer's wife

As outlined in Chapter 2, the sociological career offers an important insight into how to study footballers' wives. As one or two wives appeared in the media initially, others began to try and tread the same path. The media has generated a symbolic career for these women, which some live out and others aspire to. The constructed nature of the wag is highlighted in the following comment:

it is as if a group of embittered middle-aged men got together in a bitch-fest about women and then, somehow, produced living dolls who – shallow, dumb, lazy and living off their men – personified their complaints. The Wags are programmed for three activities: sex, sunbathing and shopping. Obviously they all secretly hate each other and spend their limited brain power deciding which bikini to change into.

(Moore, 2006 *Daily Mail* [online])

In this passage the twin discourses of class and postfeminism are drawn upon in constructing the wag. There are similarities here with Tyler's (2008) discussion of chavs, where it is possible to see how the figure of

the wag is laden with class judgements allowing them to be easily identified and stigmatised across the media (see also Hayward and Yar, 2006). In depicting the wags as dependent on their husbands, not participating in paid work, being in competition with each other and their hyper-feminine appearance, they are placed in stark contrast to second wave feminist values and thus as a postfeminist representation of women.

This rest of this chapter provides a qualitative analysis of newspapers and magazines using the framework of the career of a footballer's wife studying four stages of a career – the wannabe, the wedding, the work and the ending. It looks at what images are being created and the debates these provoke across the media. It also provides a context for the later chapters and serves as a first point of reference for the intertextuality that runs throughout the book, as the press picks up on the television series and relates to experiences described in auto/biographies.

Wannabe wags and role models

Along with the rise of the wag the figure of the 'wannabe wag' has emerged who creates much moral concern in the media. According to *The Observer* in 2007, this group was one of the top ten youth tribes whose duties include spending money and posing (Churchill, 2007:8). The wannabe wag includes pre-teens and teens who see being a footballer's wife as a career option that brings wealth and celebrity as well as the wives of footballers who are perhaps not famous enough to make them 'mainstream wags' or 'woffs' (wives of famous footballers) (see McCaffrey, 2008 *Mirror* [online]). The creation of the wannabe in particular, has led to media debates on the influence of these images on the lives of young women. As Walkerdine (1984) notes, comics were originally used as textual devices to prepare young girls for life but it now seems celebrities have taken over this role. Conboy (2006:129) argues tabloids are often moralistic, in particular covering female celebrities in a range of styles ranging from role models, as part of a cautionary tale or outright moral indignation. This is demonstrated in the way the wag feminine identity is simultaneously constructed as over-the-top and pathological, whilst guiding women to a traditional conservative femininity based on marriage and dependence on a man.

This idea of the wannabe wag causes concern not only over gender relations but class positioning too. In certain articles footballers and their wives are seen as the new aristocracy. This helps to foster aspiration, as success in this aristocracy is not given by birth and thus is

attainable to all. It implies childhood narratives that previously involved marrying a prince and following a Cinderella fairy tale may have been superseded for a more contemporary version. Mott argues footballers are no longer linked to the working classes but instead they 'are the new aristocracy only they've got disposable income and less draughty houses' (in *Telegraph Sport*, 2007:59).

In this sense the fairy tale of the footballer and his wife provides a transformation ideal for girls and boys who feel they have limited potential following traditional middle class paths, such as education, for success. As wealth has polarised in British society, fame or footballing prowess seem the best option of transformation. Alison Kervin, a sports journalist, explained:

It's like a Cinderella story isn't it you know. If you're a pretty 19 year old living in Liverpool working as a hairdresser earning £12 grand a year that's your lot – the most you're going to get is £14 grand. You might marry Gary from the garage and live in a council house, you know I'm probably overplaying it, but they've pretty much got limited scope for development of themselves and their lifestyles but if they go down to Chuckles nightclub on a Saturday night they'll be millionaires overnight. They'll be really famous, the best clothes, the best house and it really feels like knight in shining armour stuff.

(2008, personal interview)

As a media producer, Kervin marks out the wives in class terms but this exemplifies the paradox whereby the wags are derided but held up as objects of fascination. The media is complicit in creating this fairy tale that they are then quick to denigrate and moralise about when others want to follow the same path, a reflection of how pleasurable contempt is part of contemporary celebrity (Tyler and Bennett, 2009/2010).

This fairy tale and idea of transformation are key as according to Fraser and Brown, fans have parasocial relationships with celebrities, as they reconstruct themselves in response to images of people they admire (2002:187 in Cashmore, 2006:83). In this sense the desire to be a wag perhaps comes from this depiction of their lives as fairy tales and like royalty in glossy magazines. *OK!* magazine claims:

With Steven's [Gerrard] huge success with Liverpool and England, combined with the popularity of his beautiful fiancée Alex, the pair have become one of the country's most aspirational couples.

(*OK!* 2007:31)

The aspirational nature of coverage in *OK!* and *Hello!* magazines focuses on glossy posed pictures with designer props. The features in these magazines are reliant on being 'friends' with celebrities and thus put a positive spin on their articles. *Hello!* with its royal heritage trades on selling the romantic traditional aspiration of meeting a prince and becoming a princess with a more contemporary heroine. As their stories rely on exclusives from celebrities and its audience wanting to emulate them, they display a much more romantic picture of life encouraging romance and marriage as a career for young women:

Footballers can be contradictory creatures. Despite living a notoriously extravagant lifestyle, they're traditional boys at heart – close to their mums, proud of their home towns and cherishing their accents. And when it comes to girls, despite offers from every model under the sun, a huge number of these boys fell in love with their true loves at school and are still with their childhood sweethearts.

(Labous, 2007:124 *OK!*)

The media focus on the lives of the 'A-list wags' is constructed as an ideal life for many girls. It is highly consumerist and involves spending days shopping and investing in physical appearance. Women with seemingly few qualifications are given the opportunity to model and write on fashion as well as obtaining invites to the biggest weddings, events and parties. The name-dropping of designers may evoke aspiration in many girls who are bombarded with celebrity images from the numerous magazines and websites devoted to celebrities and fashion. Describing her baby shower in *OK!* magazine, Sheree Murphy states:

I couldn't believe it when I saw the sea of presents: I got baby Dior, Chloé outfits, designer berets – I have nothing left to buy!.

(in Reeves, 2008a:3)

It is the aspiration to marry to a footballer that causes much concern. Looking at images of the most admired women in the USA, Lang (1978:147) found most were satellites of 'worthy' men whose fame gave them celebrity, stating women in the USA became newsworthy when they have 'mothered, married or been sired by a man of achievement'. Such a trend now appears in contemporary Britain where finding a celebrity husband is a means of obtaining wealth, celebrity and achieved femininity (Negra and Holmes, 2008). This desire for dependency is one

of the many moral concerns centred on footballers' wives – something seen as a high risk strategy in a postfeminist world (McRobbie, 2009).

Despite this glamour and aspiration, elsewhere this conspicuous consumption is seen as immoral and invokes disgust. In a Bourdieusian sense, it highlights their lack of cultural capital and nouveau riche status through depicting the wives as tasteless. In contravening middle class discourses of reducing consumption and downshifting, these women are marked out as grotesque and poor role models (Negra and Holmes 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2009/2010). An article in *New Woman* magazine identifies celebrity culture as the source of 'reckless spending syndrome'. The media bombards girls with celebrity images and via the internet they can learn about and instantly source designer clothes and many feel that it is their 'right to live like a WAG' (*New Woman*, 2008:71). The apparent democratisation of celebrity here is seen to lull girls into a false sense that everyone can live like those depicted in the media and a convenient shortcut to this, and to avoiding debt, is to marry well. However, as noted earlier, this democratisation of celebrity has not necessarily occurred as the media is still run by a small number of owners and producers, meaning few celebrities are in control of their own coverage and in the case of wags, they are used as a moral education and cautionary tale for young girls.

The Sun, a newspaper whose audience has a high number of working class readers, seems to understand the transformation ideal and the desire to emulate the footballing life, on June 17th women are encouraged to 'Look like a WAG (with a small price tag)' (Davies, 2006:24–5), and on 27th June how to 'Get the WAG look in a day' (Browne, 2006:35). These, alongside other features such as 'Look of the week' in *heat* and fashion shoots in *Hello!* and *OK!*, encourage girls to emulate their idols and have been linked to moral concerns about women's consumption and increases in female bankruptcy. This is borne out in the *Daily Mail* article 'Going bust, the wannabe Wags' (2006a [online]; see also Montague, 2006) which is followed by Coleen McLoughlin telling girls to 'get a grip' and buy cheap high street outfits (Clerkin, 2006 *Daily Mail* [online]). Although women are encouraged to emulate their idols, moral concerns over consumption and reckless spending have led to attempts to re-draw the boundaries between the wannabe and the wag, or the celebrity and the 'ordinary' person. The *Daily Mail*, a paper with a high female readership, takes this opportunity to discourage young women from viewing footballers' wives, a group they continually moralise about, as role models. This focus on the excessive consumption of wealthy women they deem working class resonates with Hayward

and Yar's (2006) study on chavs, which claims that the new poor are not excluded from consumption but are marked out by their excessive and pathological consumption – they are taste poor.

The wannabe wag is discursively constructed as having been duped into abandoning education to shamelessly pursue rich footballers who will provide them with the lifestyle they aspire to. This pursuit and capture of a footballer becomes a career option for young women and puts them in competition with their peers and clearly overlooks the gains for equality made by second wave feminists. The wannabe is portrayed as working class and pathological for her ruthless desire for money and celebrity thus invoking more disgust than the wag herself. The *Sun* decides to give an insight into the week of a wannabe wag, which they claim goes

inside the sordid mind of girls who will do anything to sleep with a famous footballer – we reveal squalid and pathetic gameplan of the wannabe wags.

(Ley, 2008:35)

It is not only spending a footballer's money that the media presents as an attraction to footballers, but the potential money to be made by selling your story. The publicist Max Clifford claims responsibility for a situation where kiss-and-tell stories are a fast track to celebrity:

Basically girls kiss and tell for money and/or revenge. I've helped create the market and continue to get them huge deals because I believe they should choose whether or not to exploit themselves rather than be passively exploited by other media, who then waltz off with the entire profit from their stories.

(Clifford and Levin, 2006:136)

Although Max Clifford seems to suggest he is empowering or protecting women, such stories have constructed the wannabe as predatory. Women are often seen as a threat in male sports with the media concerning itself with the acquisitive female groupies who 'prey' on sport stars rather than the behaviour of the players themselves (Rowe, 1997; 2010). Bacchilega (1997) argues in fairy tales marriage is viewed as a social and ideological institution which treats women as an object of exchange but transforms victimisation into heroism. She argues compliance with this gives women virtue, which is honoured and rewarded by the world, so is seen as a path to success. In this example, the discourse seemingly

marks footballers out as victims and objects of exchange, but this fairy tale explanation goes some way to understanding why wannabe wags work so hard to get a man – this will provide them with recognition and respectability as wife not a wannabe. Unfortunately, the highly competitive way of ensnaring a footballer and the performance and effort of hyper-femininity this involves is seen as pathological, as middle class femininities dictate that femininity should be seen as effortless (see Skeggs, 1997).

The *Sun's* attention-grabbing headline overlooks alternative discourses that clearly place women as objects of exchange. A particular article claimed promoters seek out pretty girls via Facebook to attend events for footballers arguing that players view girls as pieces of meat. This is exemplified by the *Guardian* discussion of the rape allegations against the Manchester United team, talking of the team and their friends 'harvesting' girls from local department stores (see Booth, 2007:11). This is also noted in the wag novel *The Beautiful Game* (Challis and Fabulous, 2008), which is based on the personal experiences of a footballer's wife. Many press stories detail failed relationships and accusations of rape against footballers seem quite high, particularly at parties. However, the images of the life of a wag and the access to celebrity culture it brings outweigh the pain for many girls (see Booth, 2007). Even the more liberal *Guardian* states

today gold-digging is seen as a viable career choice for women, viewed with a new regard, even glamour... In the space of a few years, Wag has devolved from being a term of derision into a beau ideal.

(Churchwell, 2008:6)

The press coverage of footballers sexual exploits supports Clayton and Harris's (2004) claim about the extent of misogyny and sexual misconduct within football and supports Nelson's (1994) idea that as women make gains in other areas of society, representations of women in relation to sport, particularly football, work to subordinate them. Both men and women are complicit in creating this situation, with certain areas of the press appearing to hold both sides of the relationship to account such as Lowri Turner in the *Daily Mail*:

There is also, of course, the whole WAG phenomenon, predicated almost entirely on a cynical pact between rich, bored, badly behaved men (Ashley Cole comes to mind) and the women who want to live off them. The gaggle of wannabe WAGs hovering outside any

nightclub frequented by Premier League footballers is proof that there is an increasing number of women who believe that far from having their own life and their own job, the notion of being a human leech is to some degree a preferable career.

(Turner, 2008:36)

Clayton and Harris (2004) claim that media coverage of footballers' private lives reinforces traditional masculinities, while their beautiful and aesthetically feminine wives emphasise this. Certainly the wives seem to perform much aesthetic labour to achieve their looks, attracting a footballing husband and are often then found imparting their fashion and beauty tips to media audiences – this aesthetic labour, however, is often seen as too much effort and undignified. Kervin in the *Sunday Times* claims, that women around footballers are pre-feminist throwbacks who believe that the only way to improve their social position is by marrying well and therefore they need to look good:

The whole point of being a Wag is to be photographed. The two central tenets of Wag culture are that it is aspirational and acquisitive. So the key to being a Wag is to own things that others want. They will then want to emulate you and look up to you. It creates an illusion of entire unreality – as if you're not real at all.

(Kervin, 2007:9)

This idea of acquiring things others want brings into play the politics of envy and the possibility of social mobility at work in the media. The press suggests that the performance of femininity by the wannabes and wags contradict the femininity that the middle class set as correct and good. The *Telegraph* notes that 'they [wags] accept their role as trophy wives' and claim that trophy wives are unlikely to get true love or marry for it (Weldon, 2007:25). This is presented as a word to the wise, that love must be compromised for money, and that neither a footballer nor a wannabe wag is likely to marry for love – it is a mutually beneficial arrangement. Although many believe that economic activity and intimacy are incompatible (as money degrades intimacy), as claimed by Fay Weldon here, but this ignores the ways that 'all of us use economic activity to create, maintain, and renegotiate important ties – especially intimate ties – to other people' (Zelizer, 2005:3).

Boundaries are being drawn in the middle class media to distinguish these relationships as immoral – in an effort to provide a moral education, by making life as a footballer's wife appear pathological, so as to

educate those who might otherwise see it as a fairy tale opportunity for transformation. It is possible that Weldon is particularly against such relationships, as her work is often associated with feminism and second wave feminism intended to improve women's opportunities, thus decreasing the material need for women to marry purely for money. Yet the symbol of the wannabe wag serves to reduce women to aspire to a subordinate role in marital relationships. In a postfeminist era, the media pays lip service to the achievements of women, including education, work and independence and so to portray gold-digging as morally reprehensible allows the audience to believe that feminism has been successful.

It seems then that the wannabe wag is a particular response to contemporary British society, where celebrity is an influential part of everyday life, and class and wealth have become polarised. The wannabe sees glamorous and romantic depictions of the wag lifestyle in celebrity magazines and finds an opportunity for social transformation and mobility simply by imitating the femininity displayed by such women. However, whilst this is encouraged in certain publications, other middle class newspapers mark this path out as immoral and the lifestyle as tasteless. The wannabe wag is also presented as anti-feminist in the media – their desire for dependence on a man and that marrying well as their best hope of social progression seems to ignore gains made for women by second wave feminism. The wannabe is also distinctly postfeminist in the way she is depicted as competitive with other women, displays hyper-femininity and is sexualised in the media. She is also used as a moral education to young girls that following this path is not a way to legitimate symbolic capital.

Signing the contract...

The wedding ceremony of a footballer and his wife is perhaps the cementing of the wag career. Negra (2009:8) insists that in a postfeminist society US cinema aimed at women has reached out to a neo-conservative audience prioritising 'housewife chic', which includes a spectacular wedding, the allure of luxury commodities and sumptuous domesticity – with singledom to be avoided at all costs. This desire to avoid singledom and focus on weddings has been mirrored in the British coverage of footballers' wives. The football wedding provides wives with media coverage, as well as an opportunity to highlight their taste and style to the world. This section will focus on the period leading up to and including the weekend of 15–17th June 2007, when four premier

league players married on the same weekend, as well as the coverage of the wedding of Coleen McLoughlin and Wayne Rooney in June 2008 – the rights to which are said to have been sold for a record amount – around £2.5 million to *OK!* magazine (Kington, 2008:7 *Guardian*). As one journalist put it,

Like most things with the word ‘celebrity’ attached to them, today’s celebrity weddings are on the whole overblown, charmless events that translate directly into acts of publicity.... Emma Draude, the Managing Director of the PR group Midas said of the Cole’s wedding ‘Cheryl saw her place cemented in Wag aristocracy and fast-tracked her celebrity status with her high-profile wedding,’ she said making the act of matrimony sound as significant as an in-store appearance at Top Shop.

(Burrows, 2007:8 *Telegraph*)

Weddings have become a crucial part of celebrity coverage and for the wives are an opportunity to display their femininity, style and wealth, but elsewhere are used to mark out celebrities through discourses of conspicuous consumption and taste. In her work *White Weddings*, Ingraham (1999) argues, that compelling images across all forms of media create the market and desire for white weddings, whilst simultaneously naturalising heterosexuality and marriage as essential to well-being, belonging and morality. She explains:

Watching our favourite actors achieve active happiness or love allows us to live vicariously through the experiences of characters with whom we identify and grow to love and appreciate.

(Ingraham, 1999:126)

This idea can be clearly seen through the huge market for coverage of celebrity weddings, which serves to depict their lives as real life soap opera. It started with Paul Gascoigne and Sheryl Kyle in 1996, who were offered £150,000 by *Hello!* for the exclusive rights to cover their wedding. In its effort to capture the celebrity market, *OK!* has been prepared to bid vast sums of money for weddings, particularly those of footballers and their wives. They have covered the weddings of David and Victoria Beckham (£1 million) and Cheryl and Ashley Cole (£1 million). In 2007 four players married on the same weekend – John Terry and Toni Poole (£1 million) and Steven Gerrard and Alex Curran (£750,000) both being

covered by the magazine. In 2008 three editions of *OK!* covered the wedding of Wayne Rooney and Coleen McLoughlin.

This coverage supports Boden's (2003:19) claim that, weddings have come to be celebrated for 'the heady, romantic pleasures of the day itself, thereby disassociating the image of the wedding somewhat from that of marriage and, especially, the married life it presages'. In the lifestyle magazines the weddings are treated respectfully, romantically and in the utmost detail to enable the reader to visualise the event and imagine they were there. Ingraham (1999) argues that in popular culture weddings are presenting the promise and accumulation of wealth. Examining the cases of Grace Kelly and Princess Diana, she maintains their lives symbolised the possibility that fairy tales can happen, and this is a theme that runs throughout the *OK!* and *Hello!* coverage of these weddings. *OK!* advertised their coverage of the Rooney wedding with a two page invitation to the reader:

We will bring you all the details of the week-long celebration, so you too will feel like one of the guests at the wedding everybody wants to attend.

(*OK!* 2008b:6)

Elsewhere in the media, weddings are used as a weapon of symbolic violence against those deemed to have little cultural capital and taste (see Bourdieu, 1986; also Boden, 2003). Due to the exclusive nature of the coverage other magazines and newspapers are left with only speculation and comment as the coverage is jealously guarded – according to the *Daily Mail*, Ashley and Cheryl Cole's guests were banned from bringing cameras or mobile phones to their wedding and made to sign a confidentiality agreement (Tapper and Beckford, 2006 [online]). This exclusivity appears to counter the romantic consumption of weddings and may in part explain why many newspapers, particularly the broadsheets, merely pay lip service to such events.

It also helps explain the derogatory coverage from other publications, which do not have access to the wedding, such as this description of Steven Gerrard and Alex Curran's nuptials:

It was a weekend of white stretch limos and white acrylic nails, blackened windows and beefy security guards as the players fought to defend the lucrative deals they had signed with celebrity magazines... Yesterday Curran wore a radioactive tan and a couture Dior

dress. Guests were treated to bacon butties and chips before departing in the early hours of this morning.

(Chittenden, 2007:11 *Sunday Times*)

The idea of four premiership weddings seemed to cause amusement among many. In fact, it is was not surprising to find many footballers marrying on the same day. The constraints of league football and international commitments means there are only a very few summer weekends available to players to get married. The weddings happening on the same weekend drew on discourses of competition between the wives, with much speculation they would try to outdo each other. They were criticised for their conspicuous consumption, which was deemed grotesque and as purveying unrealistic expectations of what a wedding should be:

their respective brides have gone to extremes to ensure that their ceremony grabs the headlines in glossy magazines. Forget understated classiness and tradition, national stocks of St Tropez bronzer and Louboutin stilettos have been depleted as those considered worthy of an invitation prepare for this flashy three-day blow-out... the Mail's very own guide to the biggest, tackiest, splashiest weekend in the history of football's glitterati....

(Boshoff, 2007:22)

Ingraham (1999) states that images of heavily commodified weddings suggest to audiences that this is the way to emulate royalty and the wealthy and are seen as real manifestations of fairy tales.

The weekend of weddings was written about as if part of a *Footballers' Wives* script:

Who could make up the fact that four England footballers would get married this weekend, forcing guests to charter helicopters to fly from event to event, putting in fleeting appearances before flying out again? Who could make up the outfits, the people, the cake 'as big as the groom', the opulence, grandeur and over-consumption?

(Kervin, 2007:9 *Sunday Times*)

The *OK!* coverage of the Terry wedding is spread over 48 pages, including posed shots of the couple, their friends and family (particularly famous ones). The tone of the language is entirely different to newspapers, rather than excessive, the wedding was described as a 'fairy-tale'

and 'stunningly beautiful'. Rather than flashy and tacky, the ceremony is described as 'lavish, yet traditional' (Gould and Reeves, 2007:53). The article tastefully describes all the details – name-dropping designers and suppliers. The venue and décor are detailed along with the invites, menu and drinks, while the piece speaks more of romance and teenage sweethearts, rather than the more cynical gold-digging talk from some newspapers. The contemporary fairy tale analogies continue 'she wanted to look princess-like and modern' (designer Hakes in Gould and Reeves, 2007:59). The dancing, performers, fireworks and fountain displays are all listed but in the fairy tale context of a girl's dream wedding, they are portrayed as perfectly reasonable and beautiful, rather than crass and excessive.

Wayne Rooney and Coleen McLoughlin are a couple who seem to be more popular than most in the press and have both raised their public profile since the 2006 World Cup. The media has often been quick to point out the pair's working class roots, something they are proud of, while putting them down in terms of their lack of cultural capital. This depiction of them as pathologically working class fuelled speculation over the behaviour of Wayne's family (documented at previous family events) and as Hayward claimed, the public were 'bracing ourselves for headlines about a union of chav royalty' (2008:117 *Daily Mail*). Initially though, the *Daily Mail* was much kinder about the couple than the other football weddings:

'Wayne and Coleen have been planning their dream day for years', said a source close to the couple. 'But they were adamant that they should stay true to their Liverpool, working class roots with a small, personal ceremony. They are not interested in outdoing anybody else, the day is all about Wayne and Coleen – not their celebrity friends.'

(Moodie, 2006 [online])

A wedding can be seen as providing this couple with some respectability, which they have been denied by some parts of the press, by supporting the moral and legal institution of marriage, suggesting they are following the naturalised norms embodied in marriage (see Ingraham, 1999). For the footballer's wife, marriage also serves to differentiate her from the wannabe. The coverage in 2008, however, took a rollercoaster ride between attacking and defending the couple and their choices – not only between different titles, but even within the same editions. Once they announced the magazine deal, the venue and that a number of

relatives would not be invited, the coverage seemed largely based around either the concept of exclusivity or the taste and consumption of the couple.

Raisborough and Adams (2008) argue that class boundaries can be drawn through mockery – disparagement humour appearing more subtle and tolerant than outright disgust. A couple of days after the Rooney wedding, the *Daily Mail* provided wedding pictures ‘not in *OK!* that did not cost £3 million’ using actors to portray Wayne and Coleen, adding speech bubbles to their mouths to mock the couple (Thomas, 2008). This is not only a clear case of sour grapes at not being able to easily report a newsworthy event, but is also a tool to distance the couple from the audience. Amanda Platell continues the critique of the couple, largely for not being good Catholics, but also for selling out to *OK!*:

But then the interior of their local Liverpool church wouldn’t quite cut it with *OK!*, who have the £2.5 million deal to cover the wedding.

(2008:19 *Daily Mail*)

Conboy (2006:133) argues the *Daily Mail* constructs the ‘past’ as a time of common sense, flattering its readers into believing they are part of a community preferring the ‘proclaimed morality of this past to the intervention of expertise in the present’. The *Mail* invokes this appeal for times gone by, one which looks at the religious sanctity of marriage and one which emphasises the values of marriage over consumption on the day itself. After speculating how the Rooney wedding costing ‘squillions’ it ran a nostalgic article detailing footballing marriages of yesteryear (Topham et al., 2008).

The *Sun* on the other hand manages to provide an A–Z guide to the wedding despite it being shrouded in secrecy (Hendry, 2008:12–13) – perhaps as it knows the couple are much liked by many of its readers. In understanding this, it also offered advice on how to ‘Wed like a Wag ... without the swag’ (Minot, 2008:52). Unlike the *Daily Mail*, which puts up clear boundaries to marginalise the couple, the *Sun* appears to try and break them down – tacitly acknowledging that many footballers and their wives have similar backgrounds to much of their readership.

Some of the worst attacks on the couple again came from *Daily Mail* columnists – particularly Natalie Clarke in her article entitled ‘Burton and Taylor they ain’t’ (2008:22–3). Many of the comments were very

personal, thus attracting criticism from elsewhere in the press. It also casts aspersions on those who follow celebrity culture – with Clarke failing to see her own part in creating it:

but the brutal truth is that Coleen has very little style and never will have, no matter how many zeros on the price tag of the frocks you put her in. But then, at the risk of being sour, if this wedding circus tells us anything at all about Britain, it's that we're a nation caught up in the worship of mediocrity. And vulgarity, as symbolised by the crass yacht they've hired, complete with its umpteen suites and hair salon.

(2008:22)

This public denigration of women of little taste legitimates class antagonisms and seems to appear as an acceptable form of discrimination (see McRobbie, 2004; Sayer, 2005). Responses to this article from elsewhere suggest that class struggles were being played out through the Rooney wedding.

The *Sunday Times* seemed unsure of its stance, initially its profile article on the couple distills a violent class attack like Clarke above:

No expense is spared as the couple tie the knot, even if the show is more Croxeth than high society ... Perhaps a little worried that some of her chums' Merseyside wedding gear might be a bit too chav for OK!'s pictorial expectations, Coleen had generously opened a £25,000 account for them to get kitted out at a smart Liverpool boutique.

(*Sunday Times* 2008:19)

However, the article then goes on to praise them for the choices they made ending with 'Good on them: they did it their way, with petals, pizza and prawns' (*Sunday Times* 2008:19). This ambivalence seems to acknowledge wider discourses of class and morality, as well as the economic imperative to sell newspapers. As Sayer (2005) points out, class antagonism appears to be more acceptable than other forms of discrimination, but certain lines must not be crossed. Clarke has alienated her audience by making her position too explicit and other newspapers want to ensure that they do not follow suit.

The *Guardian* appears to try and take a step back from the criticism, but it seems to render the couple powerless to make their own choices – assigning passivity rather than accepting that this may actually be their taste:

It seems to me as if the media (at their snickering, prole-bashing worse) bullied and cowed Coleen, 22, into making safe, 'tasteful' choices.

(Ellen, 2008:13)

In *OK!* Coleen states what she wanted as 'neutral' and 'glamorous but not over the top' (Reeves and Moody, 2008:91). It is difficult to discern whether this was a reaction to the press or her choice. It might also be part of an attempt by Coleen to assimilate herself with middle class tastes, in an effort to gain some respectability in the media (Tyler and Bennett, 2009/2010).

Again in the *Guardian*, Hyde claims that the 'sneering at Wayne and Coleen's nuptials confirms that classist snobbery is thriving in Britain' (2008:36). She specifically names Clarke's article and also refers to the *Sunday Times*, arguing it is quite clearly stating you cannot buy class and points out that the concern over the Rooneys is really a fear of their social mobility. In contradicting the opinion of many of his colleagues, Hayward in the *Daily Mail*, complains that we live in a 'Victorian prison of class' and fail to see that the Rooneys represent what is right about our culture – that we should be able to transcend unpromising starts (2008:117). Burchill in the *Sun* continues with this theme, claiming it is jealousy from those who have not been too successful, despite an expensive education, telling readers:

Don't knock Wayne and Coleen for splashing the cash on big day. Recently, a new sort of politics of envy has reared its ugly head – rampant jealousy of Chavs with cash.... If they'd had foie gras and caviar at their wedding dinner, they'd have been slated as jumped-up wannabes – instead, they had pizza, which proves they're common as muck.

(2008:14)

According to Sayer (2005), consumption constitutes a desire to become an object of envy, through lifestyle and an individual sense of worth. This envy is based on what is deemed as a good way of life, which is bound up with moral dimensions of class and it is this which is largely debated in the media. A wedding is an event that allows a display of wealth and social networks for all to see, and as discussed previously, it also sets up moral boundaries in the sense that marriage represents a conventional, heterosexual norm (Ingraham, 1999). As Burchill points out, the moral dimensions are sometimes difficult to discern and reflect the position of the author rather than the couple themselves. Although

clear class boundaries have been drawn around the couple for vulgar spending and poor taste, they are elsewhere championed for being true to their roots, by choosing the food they like, not what others think they should have. They appear to be upholding middle class traditions through marriage, particularly having a religious ceremony but display the kind of wealth that many of them will never attain, and as such they are reviled on class grounds.

Burchill (2008) also emphasises that if there had been lots of celebrities attending the wedding, they would have been accused of seeking more money from the glossies, but because it was close friends and family they were snubbing the other wags. She claims the posh papers are appalled by the working class man – framing this argument purely in class terms. Barbara Ellen (2008) in the *Guardian*, who asks if the coverage is a 'chavwatch', and like Burchill they are both guilty of what they criticise in others, by drawing on discourses of chavs they are implicitly framing them as lacking in cultural capital and pathological consumers. Despite defending the couple in terms of how they choose to spend money, by associating them with chav culture they are placing the Rooneys in a culture that is seen to be vulgar and marginal (see Hayward and Yar, 2006; Tyler, 2008).

Meanwhile, in the glossy magazines the coverage of the wedding was suitably different claiming 'this modern-day prince and princess got their happily ever after when they wed on Thursday' (Reeves and Moody, 2008:76 *OK!*). *OK!* devoted many pages to the couple and the build up, culminating in three wedding souvenir specials. These covered their secret Italian abbey wedding (30 June 2008), their wedding party (01 July 2008) and the honeymoon on a luxury yacht (08 July 2008). This sets the tone for the rest of the coverage and, as with previous weddings, the magazine goes into great detail of the ceremony, including interviews with the couple, all in a romantic, if fawning, fashion. The magazines include lots of striking images of the couple, family and friends, the setting, invitations and table details. It also includes pictures evoking emotions such as the bride crying or the couple laughing and having fun. This detailed description of the day, the evening, the pre- and post-parties and the honeymoon fill three front covers and 134 pages across the three souvenir magazines. The issues appear as a romantic tribute to the couple and obviously the magazine wants to capitalise on its vast investment by filling more than one edition and to ensure future copy from the couple. Interestingly this coverage continues a year later with an article on their first anniversary (Short, 2009) and a page of 'Coleen and Wayne's Wedding Memories' (*OK!* 2009:75).

This may be to get their money's worth from the deal or to compete with *Hello!*'s front cover of this year's football wedding between Joe Cole and Carly Zucker (*Hello!* 29 June 2009).

Hello! (24 June 2008) had four pages devoted to the wedding including photos of the couple shopping before the wedding and some library pictures of them and the venue. It also focused on their world exclusive six months before when Wayne and Coleen announced their wedding in *Hello!* It included details from that interview as well as 'insider' details of the wedding – all of which was respectful and romantic (Whitaker, 2008a). In the next edition, there was an article on the weather spoiling the Rooney's honeymoon – again mentioning the exclusive wedding announcement and being the first to publish their wedding certificate (Whitaker, 2008b). A couple of weeks later it showed Wayne and Coleen on honeymoon in Vegas but as part of a full feature on footballing couples on holiday (Alexander, 2008). This positive spin, despite not getting an exclusive on the wedding, was presumably due to previous exclusive interviews and not to damage their chances of future potential exclusives.

heat showed little of the couple – perhaps due to the staged nature of the wedding contradicting their ethos and *Big Brother* (a *heat* staple) commencing on *Channel 4* at the same time. Coleen still appeared in regular fashion columns, but in the week after the wedding the magazine had a two page spread on 'Wayne and Coleen: the Love Story' which contained grainy pictures and a couple of sentences under the following titles – 2003 the early days, 2003 the engagement, 2004 prostitute scandal, 2005 'slap' rumour, 2008 husband and wife (*heat*, 2008b:74–5) – focusing on the problems they had faced during their relationship. It did invite readers to see what Coleen packed for her honeymoon with a picture of her with *Monsoon* shopping bags (Crompton, 2008:84). Two weeks later, Wayne and Coleen were pictured in a swimming pool in Las Vegas, again in grainy pictures with no explanation that they were on honeymoon – but a mention that Wayne had been spotting 'having a fag' highlighting a less mediated picture (*heat*, 2008c:46–7). As Mark Frith (2008:8), former editor, states in his autobiography, the magazine was meant to be cooler than the others so pretends to hate the whole 'magazine wedding thing' yet in private they are all 'obsessed by the spectacle'. This leads them to try and get a behind the scenes look – presumably they were unable to in this case.

Generally, the press has taken an envious and derogatory approach to the weddings of footballers and their wives. Wayne and Coleen seem to split media opinion and therefore perhaps the public's too. They are

simultaneously championed as working class and the people's heroes whilst being subjected to symbolic violence on the grounds of envy from those with less economic capital but who presume themselves to have more cultural capital. It is perhaps indicative of a culture that aspires to success but is riven with jealousy and ill-will to those obtaining social mobility. This may well be because they defy the idea of a neo-liberal meritocracy – players are seen as earning too much and their wives as being unproductive. This section can only be concluded with a quote from the *Daily Mail*:

It's all right for royalty and Hollywood celebs to get hitched like that, of course, but not working class scousers.

(Hayward, 2008:117)

Job description

Key skills, rather, are looking decorative in a cocktail dress and smiling politely at official functions. On no account should you attempt to interfere in matters of state – pre-match strategy and post-match analysis are strictly for the men – and you will be expected to socialise extensively with the other wives according to a strict hierarchical pecking order – deferring to the captain's and the manager's wives and patronising the younger and less successful wives.

(Cadwalladr, 2006:64 *Observer*)

Following the coverage of the 2006 World Cup the career of being a footballer's wife took on a life of its own. This has constructed the notion of a job or 'wife of' career which involves tasks as wide-ranging as supporting husbands at matches, looking good for your husband (including shopping and beauty treatments), keeping house and raising children – a conservative return to traditional femininities.

This 'wife of' career is supplemented by some who set up their own business or have business careers many of whom are ignored by the press but are described in the auto/biography and interview chapters – as well as media work for the more celebrity hungry. Not only do newspaper articles set out the wife of career but even cartoons printed during the World Cup in 2006, envisage the role of the footballer's wife in footballing terms.

There are many opinions on what it means to be a footballer's wife influenced by both the press and fiction. Marina Hyde in the *Guardian* writes:

The cliché about footballers' wives dictates that they form the kind of rigid girly hierarchies last seen at the back of the school bus, are manicured on the hour, and can drop the GDP of Ecuador in a two-hour shopping spree.

(2006a:8)

Cadwalladr (2006:62) in the *Observer* insists the wives preparations for the World Cup include 'honing wardrobes, topping up spray tans, practising camera smiles'. She suggests that the wags are the

closest thing the modern age has to being a diplomatic wife . . . complete with a codified set of behaviour rules, a rigorous dress code and a punitive social convention that frowns on the idea that you might want to have normal marital relations with your husband.

(2006:62, 64)

This places football in what Papanek (1973:858) terms as a two-person career, within which both members of a couple come under pressure in relation to one partner's job. This traditional view of vicarious achievement appears a pre-feminist one and now seems outdated to many. Ulrika Jonsson questions why the focus of the tournament is so much on the wives pointing out:

If your hubby was on the Vauxhall production line, you wouldn't expect to be there done up like a dog's dinner cheering him on, would you?

(Jonsson, 2006:35 *News of the World*)

This is true if your husband was to work in certain jobs, but as Finch (1983) argues there are many careers in which a wife is part of the job providing domestic work, secretarial work, entertaining colleagues or customers and generally standing at her husband's side. Within the media the footballer's wife appears to take on such a role. In the glamour magazines this is depicted as a positive and respected role, claiming of Alex Curran:

The 24-year-old blonde possesses all those glamorous qualities that put football stars' wives, à la original Wag, Victoria Beckham, in a league of their own: the just stepped-out-of-the-salon hair, perfectly tanned skin and seemingly bottomless wardrobe of top designer

labels are just the start...their mere presence, inevitably up their famous husband's celebrity cachet.

(*Hello!* 2007b: 68, 70)

The tabloid press sexualised images of footballers' wives during the World Cup and much was made of the women's role of servicing their husbands. The *Sun* wrote of 'England's group sex!', claiming the players were celebrating 'with a night of matchless nookie' (Parker, 2006:4). The following week the girls are described as 'smiling wags in night of love' because the 'boys scored freely as Sven Goran Eriksson lifted his bonking ban' (McLeod, 2006:5 *News of the World*). The *Guardian* argues that its readers may find there is something distasteful to tabloids describing the wags as 'sexual helpmeets' and go on to claim:

it is rather difficult not to think of the Wags as cast in the mould of Fembots in the Austin Powers movie – hopelessly seductive pleasure machines clad in baby doll nighties.

(Hyde, 2006a:9)

These passages demonstrate how the women are depicted as performing a kind of hyper-femininity – one which is sexualised in relation to football. Gill (2007) argues that postfeminist discourse includes the sexualisation of culture and in the case of wags, women may appear to choose their sexualised image, but they are also clearly placed as an adjunct to their husbands, purely for servicing his needs. Their display of femininity is seen as over the top, and this classifies them as 'other' to seemingly effortless codes of middle class ideas of femininity.

Although the most successful in their own careers Victoria Beckham and Cheryl Cole are different to other wives, as they were famous in their own fields before getting together with footballing partners and thus are not seen as just wags by the media. They represent two separate careers rather than one two-person career. Although in some areas she is credited as being responsible for her husband's media image and success (see Carrington, 2001; Cashmore, 2004; Whannel, 2001), Victoria Beckham now seems happy to be known as David's wife and often appears in the papers at his side and with their children – perhaps this is because in the past she has been criticised for not supporting him such as over his move to Real Madrid (Lampert, 2004 *Daily Mail*). In contrast to Victoria, Cheryl Cole is much more outspoken and asserts her own independence in the media. She allegedly made Ashley turn down a lucrative playing contract in Spain saying 'Why should all my dreams

be shattered for the sake of his career?’ (Wetherall, 2007:7 *Closer*). The front page of the magazine is splashed as ‘puts career before marriage’ something she goes on to admit in the article was selfish. Her attitude does not seem to reflect the magazine’s values as the article refers to her as a ‘loudmouthed wag’ and highlights his resistance to her noting that ‘Cheryl Cole may control Ashley’s career, but he defies her “no partying without me” ban’ (2007:7). This is countered by more sympathetic coverage in *OK!* the following week where she is described as ‘feisty’ and that the couple ‘like to put their heads together and reach a compromise’ (Guiltenane, 2007:47). Cheryl likes to be seen as independent and criticises others for gold-digging and is quick to refute it in herself:

Cheryl is determined to make her own way – she even recently returned a Bentley that Ashley bought her because she felt she hadn’t earned it.

(Guiltenane, 2007:47)

Cheryl Cole insisted that her husband’s career should not impinge on her own. The nature of football, where players have to move regularly, has led to concerns within the footballing establishment over wives’ influence. Roy Keane, then a football manager, claimed players are not allowed to make career decisions as their wives are more concerned about what shops are available rather than the team and football:

Then he launched a withering assault on the culture of celebrity that has disfigured the game, pointing the finger at weak-willed players in thrall to their trophy wives and girlfriends.

(Henderson, 2007:S13 *Daily Telegraph*)

Of course, this is a tension in many marriages, not just footballing ones, where decisions have to consider the needs of everyone in the family. He is clearly drawing on media discourses that mark wives out as conspicuous consumers, but elsewhere it has also been argued that players like shopping and nightlife too or perhaps that Roy Keane was not offering good enough contracts.

Coleen McLoughlin and Alex Curran provide different case studies, as both achieved their initial celebrity as a result of their husband’s footballing career. According to Papanek (1973), the demands of a husband’s job can be a major factor in women’s reluctance or inability to develop independent careers. In the case of footballers’ wives, these demands have created an opportunity for an independent career which both of

these women have managed to exploit – Coleen has numerous advertising contracts, a television show, a magazine column and a book, and Alex has a newspaper style column; both have also produced their own perfume. As a result, they are often featured in newspapers and celebrity magazines and the subject of much discussion.

Papanek also notes that some two-person careers emphasise a public image, such as political roles, and that the wife can help make or break their husband's career:

Women who develop their own public image, starting from their base as the wives of prominent personalities, usually evoke fierce attacks and loyalties which are partly based on their having violated stereotyped standards of proper behaviour in the vicarious achievement role.

(Papanek, 1973:862–3)

This clearly seems to be the case when looking at the attacks made on footballers' wives. Just the title of an article on Coleen McLoughlin is enough to highlight the ambivalence felt about her in the press – 'Profile: Coleen McLoughlin: Triumph of teen spirit and awful taste' (*Sunday Times* 2005 [online]). It implies that Coleen has a role as idol to teenagers but that the taste and style she represents demonstrates a lack of cultural capital. The article discusses the launch pad of Coleen's media career – a photo-shoot with *Vogue* – a magazine it describes as

the classiest of women's monthly glossies and trendsetter for high maintenance females. Its editor had decided to turn McLoughlin into a fashion icon.

(*Sunday Times* 2005 [online])

It seems that Coleen had little control over her career she was picked – a passive move not instigated by her. This implies that the *Sunday Times* sees itself and *Vogue* as gatekeepers to the highbrow cultural establishment in the UK and they decide who deserves recognition (see Bourdieu, 1986). This is further compounded when the paper expresses surprise at the *Vogue* choice:

The import of this has left fashionistas clutching their heads. *Vogue* has never compromised its high standards with plebeian taste. And McLoughlin is to style what a bicycle repair kit is to a Formula One

car. She is a shopaholic whose undiscerning accumulation of expensive clothes – paid for with Rooney's gold credit cards – has earned her the term 'looting chic'. She is, in short, a 'superchav', the uncrowned queen of chav.

(*Sunday Times* 2005 [online])

Again the reference to gold-digging and chav culture shows that this newspaper sees Coleen as a different class to their readers – a member of the celebrity chav set who may be financially rich but exhibit dire taste poverty (see Hayward and Yar, 2006; Tyler and Bennett, 2010). This is a clear denigration of her and popular culture. It appears that the bourgeois purveyors of culture are committing acts of symbolic violence against a symbol of working class style – no doubt because they see it as a threat to the traditional order of things (see McRobbie, 2004). The article continues this theme, highlighting that Coleen does not share their cultural capital but they recognise her symbolic cultural value to the 'masses':

'Coleen is typical of this generation of girls who have money but were never taught to dress,' says a fashion journalist. 'The whole luxury market is now about accumulating possessions and putting them together without any subtlety. *Vogue* has never done crude pop culture, but it has recognised that Coleen's style has real currency.'

(*Sunday Times* 2005 [online])

This discussion illustrates the conflicting pressures of the ideological projects of certain newspapers and the commercial pressures of selling papers and attracting advertisers. Here Coleen's role as a footballer's girlfriend is recognised as something aspired to by young girls, so *Vogue* seems to be trying to widen its audience or rescue this 'lost' generation by modelling her into what they see as an acceptable role model. The newspaper claimed it was a 'huge boost to her self-esteem' as she was 'a mere adjunct to Wayne's world' (*Sunday Times* 2005 [online]). It appears as if she is being rescued through being provided with the tools to restyle herself in the image of the upper classes, gaining recognition and respectability not often afforded to working class women (McRobbie, 2004; Skeggs, 1997). The newspaper seems to be oblivious to its role in creating the image of her career as a gold-digger and an adjunct to her boyfriend. Despite its own cutting comments, the newspaper talks of 'uncharitable voices', referring to her as only after his money – distancing themselves from such opinions.

In the tabloids Coleen, like her husband, has become a symbol of 'working class made good' – this appears to resonate with many of their readers. According to Savage (2000:117), 'a common theme in people's perspectives on class is their desire to be "ordinary" and not to appear to be "above" others'. This is something that Coleen is particularly keen to convey to her audience – her ordinariness has contributed to her success. However, this is also indicative of Sennett's hidden injuries of class. His research found discontent in upward mobility owing to 'status incongruity' – people found themselves caught between two worlds. Some are proud of their working class past and disrespect the class they move into but are expected to desire mobility to gain dignity and control over their world and try to gain respect (Sennett and Cobb, 1972).

McNay (2004) argues that working class women seek to create their own version of femininity and respectability. They often do not see a chance to gain respect through their educational or occupational success and therefore concentrate on their appearance as capital. One of the rewards for this investment in the self is gaining a celebrity partner. This could help to explain why some footballers' wives head for a career in the fashion and beauty industry attempting to use their femininity as a form of cultural capital (Skeggs, 1997:10).

With being working class comes a constant fear of never having 'got it right' (Kuhn, 1995 in Skeggs, 1997:6). In this sense femininity and appearance become crucial for working class women wanting to 'get it right'. Skeggs argues that representations reveal how some women will never get it right, because they do not have the right knowledge and background, and in relation to footballers' wives this seems to be demonstrated through their media coverage. However, they have used their femininity as capital to marry well and gain fame but their display of femininity is seen as vulgar and failing to comply with middle class norms. Coleen, though seems to feel she has 'got it right' and is keen to pass on what she has learnt through her *Closer* magazine column. It seems more and more that celebrity magazines are employing celebrities as writers, as well as Coleen's column, Alex Curran writes on fashion in the *Daily Mirror* and Krystell Sidwell, who won the ITV2 series *Wag's Boutique*, received a prize of a fashion column in *Now*.

Coleen's column is entitled 'Welcome to my World' which went on to become the title of her first book. The column boasts her news, views and style on one page. A review of one week includes what to wear next summer, her romantic weekend with Wayne, watching my weight, inside my wardrobe and I love... (product name). The column

serves as an endorsement for products, an insight for people wanting details of her life (gossip) and attempts to normalise her to the reader, for example, in that she watches her weight, providing a guide to life for young girls as does her autobiography (see McLoughlin 2007a; 2007b).

It is clear that one role of the footballer's wife is supporting their husband, perhaps not unlike any other wife, although on a more extreme scale. Clifford points out, that contemporary kiss-and-tell girls, such as Rebecca Loos, hold their heads high and feel no embarrassment (Clifford and Levin, 2006). It was Victoria Beckham who received the most vitriol over these revelations about her husband's infidelity for not moving to Spain to support him. The wives are viewed as a group who should be seen to be supportive of their husband, but since 2006 should also refrain from distracting them:

These WAGs are of course far from just adjuncts to their famous men. Several of them are mums Several, too, are famous in own right . . . But this was an occasion to put their own egos aside and join up with the other wives in a big show of solidarity.

(Hello! 2007a:74)

As this discussion suggests the role of a wag is multi-faceted and can take various forms. It can be a traditional two-person career, two career relationship or this two-person career can evolve into two distinct roles as in the case of Coleen McLoughlin and Alex Curran. The stereotype seems to place women clearly in a traditional and conservative femininity of standing by their man, which could be seen as pre- or anti-feminist. However, in a postfeminist era this is seen as an active choice and many women have used this position to make an independent career for themselves and impart their knowledge and tips to the wannabe wags who see this as a fairy tale job.

Fired or retired?

This final section looks at what happens when the fairy tale ends or turns into a nightmare. This can occur in many ways, the main ones discussed here are infidelity and divorce – specifically Paul and Sheryl Gascoigne in the 1990s and Ashley and Cheryl Cole more recently. The end of the career could also occur because a footballer retires either through injury or old age thus curtailing the symbolic job of being a footballer's wife. The noted wealth and fame of footballers in

contemporary Britain means that their relationships are depicted as shallow and short term – perhaps also due to the pressures of living a celebrity life in the press. The incorporation of these women and their identities into their husband's career means a split could be catastrophic for these women:

God forbid if Alex Curran split up with Steve Gerrard. Who would she be then? You can't let a man make you.

(Jamelia quoted in *Daily Mail* 2006b [online])

As these relationships are seen as one-sided and women accused of gold-digging, they are often deemed unlikely to last. This is seen with Wayne Rooney and Coleen McLoughlin, despite them being childhood sweethearts. Following revelations about him visiting a prostitute their relationship was described thus:

She was seen as rehearsing for a marital drama of domestic violence, separation and reconciliation as foreshadowed by the bewildered footballer Paul Gascoigne and his former wife Sheryl.

(*Sunday Times* 2005)

Perhaps the most documented divorce in football involved Paul and Sheryl Gascoigne. The couple seemed to have a turbulent and violent relationship according to the media. Piers Morgan recalls being contacted as editor of the *Mirror* in October 1996 by a friend of Sheryl Kyle. The friend told him that she had been badly beaten by Gazza at a hotel in Gleneagles – he suggested she 'pose' for pictures (by walking out of a hotel when a camera was there) as this was the best way to seek revenge (Morgan, 2005:136). Conboy (2006) highlights that celebrities are important vehicles for certain news issues, he claims that they provide a safer environment to discuss domestic violence as it becomes associated with the detached and glossy lives of others rather than more commonplace realities of everyday domestic violence. The celebrity status of the protagonists often overshadows the violence itself and tabloid narratives are often on male terms and how women should conform to the male worldview. Sheryl was perhaps one of the first footballers' wives to attempt to use the media to put across her point – a brave thing considering the stature of her husband.

As Conboy argues celebrities may be a vehicle for discussing certain issues, but it can detract from the gravity of the situation. Brooks in the *Guardian* claims of Sheryl:

Although in the flesh she wears it lightly and with dignity, Gascoigne's blonde hair, tanned skin and long pink nails make her an easy target for mockery.

(2002:16)

Her credibility seemed to be in continual question, Barbara Ellen in the *Observer* writes:

She is too much the Battered Babe, too much an icon of celebrity victimhood. How can people be expected to take her seriously when she went ahead and married Paul Gascoigne, even after he'd repeatedly beaten and humiliated her? And how can this divorced *Hello!* regular justify keeping her husband's name exploiting it, even as she blackens it, campaigning for Refuge throughout the media? 'I believe her about the abuse,' says a friend, herself a past victim of domestic violence... 'I just wish that they'd chosen someone a bit more credible'.

(Ellen, 1999:29)

Ellen goes on to note that interest in the Gascoignes was 'more salacious than it ever was sympathetic'. She acknowledges that because Sheryl was attractive she was often seen as a 'damaged Barbie doll' claiming the reports sent 'out the dangerous message that domestic violence was somehow "sexy"'. Arguably portraying her as a doll allows the reader to separate her from the violence – it is far less dangerous than if it was happening to a real person, and this protects one of the nation's heroes from having his reputation tarnished. Feminist commentators such as Ellen, criticise the portrayal of domestic violence in relation to celebrities. She argues that the gloss of celebrity seems to serve the interests of the perpetrator not the victim – rightly claiming that domestic violence is never acceptable regardless of the background of the woman.

This issue of how celebrities are dealt with in relation to domestic violence is particularly pertinent here. As someone who had a wealthy husband and therefore received a good divorce settlement, Sheryl Gascoigne has often been portrayed as calculating rather than as a victim. In an article for the *Sunday Mirror* about Sheryl's interview with Martin Bashir to promote the Refuge charity, Carole Malone claims:

I'd have had more sympathy for Sheryl Gascoigne had she decided to speak out about being battered by Gazza BEFORE she got her £1.5 million divorce settlement. Or, if after three years as his

girlfriend – years in which she says the footballer regularly beat seven bells out of her – she hadn't then gone on to marry him in a lavish ceremony chronicled in (and paid for) by Hello! magazine... And while the bleeding hearts might claim that Sheryl – like lots of domestic violence victims – suffered from guilt, shame and low self-esteem and so couldn't leave, one has to wonder why, if it was all so bad, she went on to marry this man she was so terrified of.

(Malone, 1999:33)

She goes on to claim that Sheryl could have got a job to support her children but chose to stay for the money and the lifestyle. Malone also insists no-one would have heard of her had she not married Gazza and she wouldn't have £1.5 million from the divorce and the luxury house. This attack on women who are the victims of domestic violence is clearly postfeminist. As second wave feminists worked to bring domestic violence to the fore and protect women, certain elements of the media now seems to think it has gone too far and women have become favoured (Coppock et al., 1995). Sheryl Gascoigne seems to represent an 'over-reacher' and her accumulation of wealth has been seen as deviant. As Negra and Holmes (2008) argue, in relation to train-wreck celebrities, she invokes wider fears over gold-digging and undeserved wealth. These class-based concerns serve to shift attention from the actual issue of domestic violence.

Sheryl points out elsewhere that her lifestyle has come at a price when she is reported in *The Mirror* to have said

that while the physical wounds from his batterings have healed, the emotional scars have left her unable to trust another man.

(Moyes, 2004:19)

Sheryl's main crime was that she went out with a public 'hero' who in the eyes of many should not have his reputation tarnished. She is also seen as less of a victim as she has received money – or been 'paid off' through the divorce settlement. What arises out of this case is that without her husband, a footballer's wife is very much on her own, as his reputation exceeds hers and there remains a culture of silence around domestic violence amongst footballers (see Benedict, 1997 for a discussion in relation to US sports). A number of journalists did call for Gascoigne to be dropped from the England squad after the revelations, but this did not happen (see Moore, 2001:25 *Mail on Sunday*; Brooks,

2002:16 *Guardian*). Sheryl herself said that she felt let down that Paul was allowed to continue to play for England:

'There was no inkling that there would be any help there from his management, teams the football industry. The whole conspiracy of silence that goes along with domestic violence was even stronger with me, because of the public eye.' Asked if she felt that Gascoigne was supported by Hoddle and soccer chiefs, she said: 'Yeah I did feel that, 'cos they covered it up'.

(Gascoigne in Boshoff, 1999:5 *Daily Mail*)

It appears that some things were covered up, while others were orchestrated by the media and PR companies. As discussed above, Piers Morgan helped stage photos for *The Mirror* and the stories were mediated on both sides:

I kept quiet for different reasons – sometimes I was kept quiet. Things were written about me that were very hurtful but whenever I wanted to sue, Paul's advisers would tell me I couldn't do anything about it. It wasn't till years later that I found they were leaking things, putting it the other way round, because they didn't want people to find out what was really going on.

(Gascoigne, in Brooks, 2002:16)

In an interview with Euan Ferguson, Sheryl continues on this theme of double-standards, as Paul's family and the footballing world ignored what was going on (Ferguson, 1999:20 *Observer*; see also Ridley, 1999:8 *Observer*). In his article Ridley points out that this is not an isolated incident – George Best was regularly honoured by the football world despite his behaviour which included abusing both his wives. Essentially this prompts a wider debate about the treatment of women in the footballing world – despite all that has happened Sheryl, she still cuts a controversial figure in football, with Ridley claiming that players were upset for 'what she's done to him now after what he's given her' (Ridley, 1999:8). Moreover, the career of a wife can be abruptly curtailed if their partner meets another woman, albeit as a replacement or one-night stand. It seems to be a part of football culture. Benedict (1997:41), in his book on American athletes' crimes against women, describes a situation that is directly comparable where he argues that lawyers defending such athletes claim they 'possess a distorted perception of women as a result of their repeated opportunities for consensual sex'. This leads

them to presume consent from women – particularly because so many women want to be with them and leads to a situation where adultery is commonplace.

In *OK!* magazine Cheryl Cole said that she trusted her husband 100 per cent and called the girls that throw themselves at him sad. She goes on to claim:

'I couldn't be one of those footballers' wives who just accept them sleeping around because they live in a nice house and have designer handbags' . . . 'It's not. What if you get cheated on or beat up? What are you going to do then? Stay there for the Chloé handbag? I don't think so'.

(Guiltenane, 2007:51, 53)

A few months after this article insisting there were no problems in their marriage, Cheryl was publically humiliated by the revelation in the *Sun* that her husband had cheated on her with a girl he met in a night-club (White and Case, 2008). This was further compounded by someone else coming forward three days later to claim he had also cheated with her (*Sun* 2008a [online]). Cheryl was humiliated by the detailed exposés in the press, but unlike some other wives she had money and her own career, removing a number of reasons forcing others to stay in a marriage. As she had also been very vocal about not putting up with infidelity, she was left in a difficult situation in terms of her marriage and her media position. Ashley was clearly portrayed as morally wrong and Cheryl's position as his wife and her seeming acceptance of his infidelity means that she was afforded little sympathy. In fact, she was treated with scepticism and envy with her moral judgements on other women coming back to haunt her and this served to place them in class terms as part of an immoral working class who provide poor role-models for young couples (see Tyler and Bennett, 2010).

This led to much speculation over their relationship in the press – it appeared that neither Ashley nor Cheryl had coped well with their transformation to celebrity and as such became objects of a cynical fascination. In February *heat* reported that it was decision time for the couple. The magazine wanted to look at what was 'really' going on behind closed doors and provides pictures and details bringing the situation up to date, what family and friends are saying as well as the public reaction (2008a:14–18). This kind of speculation is seemingly based on hearsay from the tabloids but claims to offer an insight – *heat* and the public seem to be in full support of Cheryl leaving Ashley. At the same

time *OK!* reported that Cheryl has had a change of heart. In a less sensationalised piece, it claimed that she was seriously considering giving him a second chance, despite feeling that he 'has ripped out her heart and stamped all over it' (*OK!* 2008a:11).

By June 2008, *heat* reported it was expecting Cheryl to call in the divorce lawyers soon. It claimed that despite initially wanting to stand by her wedding vows a source said she had now found the strength to walk away. They even include a paragraph from a lawyer explaining what Cheryl will get out of a divorce – noting that she will get less as she has such a good career herself (Fernando and Atkinson, 2008). However, only two weeks later *OK!* claimed Cheryl had forgiven Ashley, showing the couple on holiday together in Spain and describing how difficult it has been for Cheryl and that they may still face troubles ahead (Reeves, 2008b). At the same time *Hello!* ran pictures of the couple laughing, stating that they were planning their future together. Like *OK!* they seem to put an emphasis on the couple staying together, rather than split – this saves shattering their fairy tale illusion of celebrity lives and marriage – particularly in editions where they are also celebrating the Rooney wedding:

Looking happy, relaxed and, most importantly together, Cheryl and Ashley Cole took a romantic stroll along a Spanish beach last week, showing all the signs of being back in love.

(Morgan, 2008:60)

Although perhaps not telling the whole truth, the copy does sell the happy ever after idea. However, in February 2010 further revelations of Ashley's infidelities were published and in May 2010 Cheryl Cole filed for a divorce. Football seems to perpetuate a culture that enables players to have affairs, particularly due to their apparent popularity with women. Cheryl Cole's initial reluctance to leave her husband may seem surprising as she appears not to have as much to lose as other women by resigning from being a footballer's wife, but she still stands to lose. As stated above, although the two of them are celebrities in their own right, their celebrity increases as a couple providing them with more press and advertising opportunities.

Those who actually go through with divorce get mixed reactions in the press – as noted above Sheryl Gascoigne was seen as being a gold-digger and ungrateful when describing the abuse she had suffered after being paid £1.5 million in a settlement. An article in the *Observer* on sports marriages claims that 70% of them end in divorce and talks in

detail about the landmark case of Ray and Karen Parlour. Ray left Karen and their three children for a new girlfriend:

Karen's lawyers argued that she had been instrumental in helping him recover, in his early career, from problems with drinking and betting. Without her support he would never have thrived under Arsène Wenger at Arsenal...Karen Parlour's divorce settlement included £1.8 million of Ray's future earnings.

(France, 2004 [online])

This is an example of what Conboy (2006) argues is an alternative view to the antics and infidelities of the rich and famous depicted in the press and can even issue a possible challenge to the patriarchal status quo. However, what these stories generally bring is a debate over whether the settlement is tantamount to greed or justice.

France notes that the *Sun* claimed Ray had been 'Fleeced', whereas Karen's solicitor claims:

A sporting marriage can be overwhelming. It takes over everything. Like diplomats' wives they are subsumed by their husband's careers. Meanwhile, the real high-earning days are limited. They have all this responsibility and pressure without any of the security. A company wife would feel much more secure and at the same time wouldn't have the nail-biting pressure of a victory or a loss to deal with, on a day to day basis.

(Rae, in France, 2004 [online])

She also apportions some blame with the clubs who create a specific mentality, and this places the club before marriage (see Ortiz, 1997; 2006; Benedict, 1997).

Some women refuse to accept being fired from their role as footballer's wife and become dubbed 'serial wags' in the media (see, e.g., Danielle Lloyd and Charlotte Mears in *Sun* 2008b [online]). They appear to actively pursue footballers in order to keep up their media attention and carry on the career without actually having a footballing partner. With a career based not only on marriage but also on the media there is always a chance that coverage will be stopped and the symbolic career removed. The concept of the wag appeared during the World Cup in 2006 and for many was expected to be ephemeral lasting the duration of the tournament. The phenomenon has now taken on a life of its own with articles

describing other types of sporting wags, as well as rock wags, city wags and aristowags (see Holden, 2008 *Daily Mail* [online]).

Conclusions

Through the media it is possible to trace the career of the footballer's wife – each one has made different decisions and taken different paths but the press gives a representation of this role being desirable and creating aspirational wannabes. The celebrity wedding provides respectability for the wife, above the wannabe, as well as publically displaying wealth and romance. Once married, the 'wife of' role is simultaneously described as being both helpmeet and disruptive to a husband's career. The attitude of each individual newspaper seems to depend on its perceived audience and its editors. Whilst the glossy magazines need to sell lifestyle and aspirations, they will be respectful of those they use to market their magazines, yet elsewhere these women are marked out as working class and pathological in terms of their taste and greed. The newspapers use these women to promote debates around morality and young women in contemporary Britain. Ideologically this can work in many ways – it can be viewed as a means to create a coherent moral ideal – based in class terms. It separates the commentator from the morally bankrupt women who seek dependence on a man in order to obtain a certain lifestyle. It marks these women out as greedy, conspicuous consumers and as financially rich but taste poor, making 'poor' lifestyle choices and defying meritocracy with their underserved wealth. In some respects, the papers could be seen as providing guidance to young women as to what lifestyles and femininities are desirable. Women are shown that to follow the performed hyper-femininity of the wag may provide a footballing husband and money, but will not bring legitimated capital. Reports of infidelities and violence serve as a warning that money cannot buy happiness.

Although the lifestyle magazines cannot be accused of violence, they only portray one side of life in terms of being married to a footballer, the reality of which is often quite different – even for the rich and famous. This romantic and positive reporting of these women's lives has helped to place them as aspirational figures and led many to believe that marrying a celebrity is a way to attain social mobility, financial security and live happily ever after. It does also create a market for designer clothes and lifestyles, which are crucial to the magazine's survival by selling advertising space for women wanting to obtain this lifestyle. In a postfeminist media the pursuit of this dream and the competition

between women for dependence on a husband is denigrated and seen as simultaneously pre-feminist, anti-feminist and postfeminist depending on the reading of such stories. It is these contradictions that Gill (2007) argues exemplifies a postfeminist media culture. The sycophantic attitude of magazines such as *OK!* and *Hello!* reporting their lives as fairy tales which has led to the jealousy and snobbery found elsewhere in newer celebrity gossip magazines, like *heat* and among newspapers, as they offer pleasurable contempt – emphasising the cynical turn in celebrity watching suggested by Tyler and Bennett (2010). The images appear at a time where a sport and celebrity obsessed media tries to deal with issues of class and wealth polarisation. These couples represent a different working class, those with money, and such portrayals convey the lives of footballers and their wives as both a fairy tale and a soap opera. The next chapter will now turn to the fictional representations of footballers' wives and how these have worked alongside newspapers and magazines to intertextually create these representations of the footballing life as a glamorous soap opera.

5

Fact or Fiction

This chapter examines the fictional representation of footballers' wives. The symbol of the footballer's wife has grown so much in stature that a range of fictional work has been created about their lives. This chapter will focus on the ITV1 series *Footballers' Wives* (FW) but also acknowledges the emerging genre of 'wag lit', including *The Wag's Diary* and *A Wag Abroad* (Kervin, 2007; 2008), *The Beautiful Game: A WAG's Tale* by Clare Challis and Fabulous (2008) and *The Footballer's Wife* one of a trilogy of novels by Kerry Katona (2008) amongst others. This section will first outline television theory focusing on feminist approaches and work on soap opera. It will then discuss how the characters and stories in FW help generate and sustain various stereotypical elements that work intertextually with other media representations to create the figure of the wag and blur fact and fiction.

As discussed in the chapter on methodology, television images are important when looking at both representation and intertextuality. Critical discourse in relation to television grew out of a fear of the modern and the popular, which caused anxieties over a 'democratisation of taste' (Hartley, 1998:34). According to Brunson (1998), television has been seen as both a cause and a symptom of social problems, similar to preceding forms of popular culture such as the novel and cinema. Despite these fears of its mass effects and the legitimacy of television viewing, television was actually a 'domestic medium' rather than a 'mass medium' (Brunson, 1998; Hartley, 1998).

Hartley (1998) argued that the aim of television, as it was developed in the USA in the 1940s, was to provide entertainment and had some crucial requirements. The television audience had to physically be at home, and invest in their home to sustain their entertainment activities there, rather than at external venues. Added to which was a growing 'ideology

of domesticity', meaning that the medium spoke to such matters as personal experience, consumption, heterosexuality and the feminisation of family governance (Hartley, 1998:41–2). According to Corner (1999), one of the significant consequences of broadcasting has been the change in the realms of public and private. This is particularly true in late modernity, as public affairs have taken on a domestic and familial form, whilst that which was previously considered private is now up for public debate (Croner, 1999:13). This transformation can be seen in the ways contemporary celebrity's rely on revealing personal details and, as in the case of footballers' wives, gain fame through being a part of a celebrity's private life. It has been argued that:

Feminist critics and theorists agree that television, like other forms of mass or popular culture, plays a significant role in teaching and maintaining the political and social status quo.

(Mumford, 1998:117)

Television then has become an important media, reflecting on society and social issues, as well as contributing to concerns about them. It has also provided a space for celebrities to emerge – without a talent – purely by providing information about their lifestyle and their private lives.

FW distilled and amplified the increasing debates surrounding the excessive money in football and how women would fit into this world. The images of the women in the series and the story-lines they are involved in help to demonstrate how the fictional images reflect on contemporary society and helped fuel the desire for information about the lives of the real footballers' wives. It has also contributed to the negative stereotyping of such women, where the exaggerated characters and overblown story-lines have helped create a mythical wag figure, elsewhere in the media, who is used to classify certain types of women and their taste, often in the form of a moral education.

Footballers' Wives – the series

Welcome to the world of *Footballers' Wives*, where everyone plays dirty... They're young, they're rich, they're sexy, and they've got everything that money and fame can buy. They should be having the time of their lives. But the reality is very different... *Footballers' Wives* follows the lives of young, rich couples – all embroiled in the highly glamorous and treacherous world of premiership football.¹

This is the blurb for the television programme, but could just as easily have appeared in the previous chapter on the press coverage of actual footballers' wives. The show first appeared in 2002 which was before the term *wag* ever appeared in the press, and only Victoria Beckham was recognised as a footballer's wife. According to its producers Shed Productions one of the programme's key strengths was the demographic that it appealed to:

broadcasters using the strength of its brands. *Bad Girls* and *Footballers' Wives* have both delivered high prime-time mass audiences in the valuable 16 to 34 year old demographic.²

Shed Productions was set up in 1998 and its first major success was the series *Bad Girls* which was followed by *FW*. The latter was a programme devised and written by women, focusing mainly on the lives of women but the inclusion of strong male characters, with their own story-lines based around football and laddish behaviour (including car chases and fights) ensured a male audience was not precluded from the programme. This is particularly crucial as ITV is a commercial station which requires its prime-time programmes to deliver audiences to advertisers (see Tulloch, 1990). Brunsdon (1998) argues that the flow of television programmes and the way they are negotiated by both broadcasters and audiences is important. *FW* was a prime-time series shown at 9.00pm (Tuesdays – series one, Wednesday – series two and three, Thursday – series four and five) so provided the climax of an evening's viewing, rather than the initial draw, and was likely to be popular with advertisers due to its high viewing figures, particularly among the 16–34 demographic.

In the case of the footballers' wives phenomenon it is unclear which came first, the massive media focus on Victoria Beckham which led to the series being devised or the series causing media attention to be focused on actual wives of footballers. Lee-Anne Baker had a small part in series one and is married to a footballer in real life. In a cast interview for the Series 1 DVD she says that she acted as a consultant meeting writers, producers and the wardrobe – being involved in every aspect. She says she

told them about the way of life, the things the girls do and where and everything really. They couldn't believe half the stuff I was telling

them they were sitting there mouths wide open thinking did that really happen

(in Shed Productions, 2001 [DVD])

Although initially she claims the producers were shocked at the lives of the real wives, in another cast interview for the website she acknowledges:

Obviously *Footballers' Wives* is a drama, so it's boosted a bit for the cameras, but it's got lots of elements of truth in it. It's quite realistic, I think. Everything's exaggerated, right down to what we all wear, but the story-lines are realistic.

(Baker, 2007)

This hyperbole helped create the exaggerated figure of the wag. As Tyler (2006) notes exaggerated figures are often used to exemplify social class, and despite their glamour these caricatured women represent judgements about the working class or *nouveau riche*. Following the growth of reality TV, Friedman (1988:6) has argued that reality is now 'a prominent source of subject material for a number of fiction programmes', which base their stories on topical events. The dramatic lives of the characters in FW are so fantastic that it seems unlikely they could be based on reality. The over-the-top sets, production and costume combine to emphasise this and as pointed out in the following passage, also work to mimic other texts, such as celebrity magazines:

More recently, the overblown antics of the characters in the British drama series, *Footballers' Wives*, are supported by the glossy, super-glamorised, almost cartoon look produced via the lighting, colour, setting and costumes employed by the programme. Again this is entirely appropriate, as the show is both a homage to and a parody of the spectacular dramas of the 1980s and is making a direct visual connection to the glossy and trashy celebrity culture engineered via the equally brightly coloured, shiny and cheap print magazines, such as *Hello!* and *Heat*.

(Lury, 2005:40)

Intertextuality

Using Bennett and Woollacott's (1987) concept of intertextuality the FW series was perhaps one of the first to explicitly link texts and as

demonstrated below took stories reported elsewhere in the newspapers and re-contextualised them as fantastic fictional story-lines. The similarity between the stories has led to the meanings coded in the caricatured wives of the programme being associated with the wives who appear elsewhere in the media. Women married to footballers also draw on the series when talking about their own lives. This has generated a cultural meaning around the symbol of the footballer's wife or wag associated with an exaggerated figure who is working class, tasteless and hyper-feminine.

It has been argued that a 'TV drama is inter-textual, a dynamic succession and synchrony of other texts, other social events' (Tulloch, 1990:130). This point is exemplified by the programme, where actual papers like the *Sun* to report on the lives of the characters, watching real television programmes to see football reports and other news events involving the characters. Some of the couples sell their stories to *OK!* and *Hello!* magazines – particularly weddings – mirroring the behaviour of real life wives. In one story-line Tanya Turner convinces Chardonnay Lane-Pascoe to use such magazines to tell her side of the story and take control of a situation. The interview she gives causes trouble in her marriage but she is quick to point out, as already known by the viewer, that what is written has been twisted, alluding to processes of media exposure and celebrity production. The programme includes cameo roles of current professional footballers, pundits and even 'it girls' in order to give the illusion that the programme is very much part of the celebrity and footballing scene. Complementing this dynamic is the real media reporting on the series where characters have features in celebrity magazines (see Biressi and Nunn, 2008). In addition, the coverage of footballers and their wives all interrelate to create a code, which gives an exaggerated meaning to the term footballer's wife. As Brunson et al. (1997) argue, this intertextual approach to analysing texts demonstrates how television can produce meanings that both contribute to or contradict other areas of women's culture, as well as reveal how audiences interpret meaning in light of other media and culture.

One of the results of this intertextuality surrounding footballers' wives is that fact and fiction have become blurred (see Baudrillard, 2006). Some of the events and characters so closely represent real events that it may be difficult for audiences to ascertain what is fact and what is fiction. The character of Stefan, the club manager in series one and two (broadcast in 2001 and 2002), is a quiet but determined foreign manager with a clipped accent, non-expressive face and the criticisms of his lack of passion seem to be a reflection on the appointment of Sven Goran

Eriksson as England manager in 2001. The celebrity couple Kyle and Chardonnay and their wedding in series one bear more than a passing resemblance to David and Victoria Beckham and their wedding in July 1999. In series three (first broadcast in 2004), two new characters are introduced, Harley Lawson, a 17 year old boy-wonder and his girlfriend Shannon, who has a heavy Liverpudlian accent, is obsessed by changing her looks and pursuing a media career, and is often derided for being trashy or lacking in taste. The introduction of these two coincides with Wayne Rooney coming to prominence in 2002 and Coleen McLoughlin being photographed by the press in 2003 and her subsequent media career. In series four (first broadcast in 2005), in a dressing room altercation the manager throws a shampoo bottle at his captain, cutting his face, following a poor defeat – in February 2003 David Beckham was injured when Alex Ferguson kicked a football boot that hit him above the eye following a defeat (Custis, 2003 *Sun*).

Perhaps the most disturbing parallel with actual events was at the beginning of series four when the team were on a 'jolly' in Malaga, Spain. The boys had female golf caddies and ended up having a party with the girls, which showed scenes of group sex, including a girl – who had previously consented to sex – refusing and being raped. The police were called but the girl was offered money to drop the charges in light of the potential stories that would be written about her in the press. In the mean time the boys were 'sticking together' and accusing her of 'getting on last year's bandwagon' and being a 'slag on the make'. She accepted the money but later took the law into her own hands. Initially the team were complicit in covering up what had happened although one of the team, upset by what had happened, undertook to help the girl find the perpetrator. This was broadcast in 2005 but only two years earlier there had been widespread press coverage surrounding a number of Leicester City players, who were arrested following a trip to La Manga in Spain. This incident provoked a lot of criticism over the state of English football and attitudes to women. Charges against three players were eventually dropped, due to a lack of DNA evidence, but the women had their characters slurred in the headlines. They were described as 'tarts' (Sullivan, 2004 *Sun*), chasing 'after a quick buck' (Savage, 2004:7 *Daily Star*) and 'setting a honeytrap' (Smith and Turnbull, 2004:16 *Mail on Sunday*).

In this example, it can be seen how the series was working as a form of moral education for women in football. Drawing on the coverage of the Leicester City incident may have prompted the fictional series to advise the girl not to pursue the case – she would be unlikely to win and would have to endure having her character assassinated in the papers. In the

programme only one (separated) girlfriend questioned her partner over the incident, as in reality, most of the wives stood by their men. This seems to be because the victim is depicted as of dubious character (club dancer, tequila girl, travelling alone) and therefore is not to be believed – wives are perhaps complicit in institutionalised adultery and possibly rape by turning a blind eye (see Ortiz, 1997). The discourses surrounding wannabe wags elsewhere in the newspapers create the idea that women throw themselves at footballers, leading wives to see their husbands as victims, albeit because they are too weak to refuse or because they are likely to fall victim to false accusations. This lays the blame on women for the violence perpetrated against them and individualises them as pathological. This turn against women is a stark contrast to the sisterhood of second wave feminism, who sought to prevent domestic violence and is symptomatic of contemporary postfeminist media.

Postfeminist programming

FW can be situated in a trend that started in the USA of programmes focusing on female characters, which began with *Cagney and Lacey* in the early 1980s. Prior to this, women often appeared with men or for their sex appeal although at the same time showing women in empowering roles. In the mid 1990s, a number of female centred dramas met huge success. Beginning with atypical characters, such as supernatural women or warriors (*Xena, Buffy*) and then moving to ‘new women’ who were both successful and vulnerable, while they had career success they struggled in relationships (*Ally McBeal, Sex & the City*) (Lotz, 2006). These new series focused on either one or a group of women, which allowed for an array of stories to be told about women and their lives. It is an indication of how television companies sought female viewers and a growing segmentation of the television market in the USA – as more channels appeared many programmers moved to narrowcasting, in an effort to generate and sustain their audiences for advertisers.

British television differs from that in the USA in that the BBC is still public service television, which does not need advertising money, but the commercial stations have had to rethink their programming in light of the proliferation of digital and satellite channels. FW is a female-centred drama, yet it differs from many of the US dramas which focus on single women (new women) wanting a successful career before marriage (and depicting marriage as optional). As the title suggests, FW represents a range of stories about women and their lives, but largely those who are married – although some of these comment that it is ‘their job’.

It does follow the successful trend of female drama in the USA by providing multiple points of identification for the audience. A female centred drama entitled *Footballers' Wives* is likely to include a range of essential male characters as the programme focuses on their position as wives.

Some of the US shows have been at the centre of debates on femininity, femininity and womanhood (Lotz, 2006). Certainly FW and the wags in the media have generated some debate in the press on the roles of women, women's behaviour and feminism in the UK. In Dow's (1996) analysis of prime-time US television and feminism, it can be argued that FW is emblematic of postfeminist programming. Postfeminism implies that feminism is no longer necessary, although it assumes certain feminist goals (equality in the work place and the right to a fulfilling personal life), but rejects or questions other feminist issues. She argues that:

second-wave feminists did not simply attack the family as an impediment to self-actualisation but they also attacked it as a source of material oppression manifested in a gendered division of labour, domestic violence, marital rape, and unequal divorce laws.

(Dows, 1996:88)

Focusing a series on being a wife then, suggests that as long as women are seen as strong and successful in other areas, being part of a family does not need to be oppressive. Without children many of the women do not experience the gendered division of labour and they are wealthy enough to employ others to undertake domestic work. Most of the characters appear to take control of their own lives, by making a career out of the situation they are in – selling stories to the media and supporting their husband's career to maintain their own lifestyle. Others are depicted as having their own career – mainly in modelling but one of the main characters is a football agent who has achieved equality in a very male-dominated field. It is also clear that the show does on occasion depict some of these marriages as containing unequal gender relations, domestic violence and oppression. Perhaps the glamour of the lifestyle and images portrayed serves to trivialise this aspect of their marriages and sustain the idea depicted in some areas of the press that for some women it is worth the effort.

Certainly, Dow (1996:146) claims that one theme played out in postfeminist media is the highlighting of divisions among women, implying that female solidarity is a feminist fantasy, arguing that in 'much feminist pop culture, women have replaced patriarchy as women's worst enemy'. The focus of many episodes is the competition

between women – trying to outwit each other or just plain fighting in the players' lounge. Although the women are regularly depicted socialising together, it is clear that there is derision, sarcasm and striving to out do one another in much of the conversation. Sometimes relationships between the wives are depicted as friendships and the wives sticking together, but the competition between them is a much more over-riding theme. It has been argued that competition and individualism are embodied in women within a Blairite democracy (McRobbie, 2004; 2009) and this discourse is heavily drawn upon within the series. It clearly demonstrates that although part of a clique, the women are essentially on their own and need to look after themselves.

The series highlights a range of scenarios – which appear simultaneously anti-feminist and feminist – and in doing so it is this dynamic mix that makes the programme postfeminist (see Gill, 2007). It features both equality in the workplace but simultaneously suggests that women do not need to work as, if they choose wisely, they can be comfortably dependent on their husbands. It depicts women in marriage as strong, independent and achieving self-actualisation alongside women who are oppressed by marriage – subjected to a traditional gendered division of labour and domestic violence. It speaks to the number of different forms of marriage and family in a postmodern society, which is also captured in the next chapter on auto/biography.

Soap opera?

According to its producers FW is a drama series; however, it displays many of the characteristics of a British soap opera:

Love, relationships, families, women, men, babies, children, marriage, divorce, death, heartache, heartbreak, tears, happiness, laughter, violence, not a little sex – emotions and the practical effects and consequences: these are the stuff of British soap opera.

(Hobson, 2003:xi)

Key to soap opera is the element of time and its continuous transmission which creates verisimilitude – an illusion that the characters and locations exist whether viewers are watching or not (Hobson, 2003). Generically FW does not follow these aspects of a soap opera, as it is a drama series and not on everyday, each new episode begins with a recap of the previous week and often starts at the same point in time. This does not allow for the week time-lapse in the viewer's life and at other points

time appears to be compressed. It is sometimes unclear how much time has lapsed – particularly between series – making it difficult for the audience to follow a clear passage of time. Each series encompasses an entire football season but each episode and the series end with cliff-hangers to ensure viewers tune in again – like a soap there is no final resolution. There are, however, sub-stories resolved either within or across a couple of episodes as a lack of resolution may make the programme seem repetitive and lose viewers' interest (Geraghty, 1991). Yet it has been argued that in order to

become a long-running series, programmes had to have a connection with events which would be familiar to large sections of the audience, and only those which had these qualities in abundance were to succeed in the coming years.

(Hobson, 2003:11)

The lack of familiarity with the lives of the characters meant that FW, in contrast to a soap, was unlikely to continue indefinitely as the novelty wears off for the audience – they need to be able to recognise some of the events in their own lives and believe in the characters and scenarios.

The series resembles US prime-time series of the 1980s such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty* which were seen as soap operas but not in their purest form. Here the main focus is on the characters and their emotions, but they are very rich and glamorous with large production budgets (Hobson, 2003). US soaps are seen as much more aspirational than in Britain and it is ambiguous whether FW is meant to be aspirational. It clearly shows a means of achieving wealth and fame without obtaining good qualifications or careers and a lifestyle that many would find attractive, but this is tainted as a competitive and violent world. In soap opera the audience learns that evil will ultimately always be punished – this is not always the case in FW, yet it clearly shows a moral tale in that money cannot buy happiness. It provides a moral education for the wannabes who see marriage to a footballer as a shortcut to fame and fortune.

In terms of having a life outside the series the programme became one of the most talked about for a long time – knowledge of the programme became a form of cultural capital to some. It appeared in national newspapers, magazines as well as appearing on fan sites and blogs, and it was even mentioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury in his Easter speech in 2004 (Stubbs, 2004 *Independent*). Tanya Turner, the character, also

appeared in *Bad Girls* (another Shed Productions programme) appearing as an inmate sent to prison for cocaine abuse, making her presence seem more real as she does not disappear between series. The programme not only appeared in a number of magazines, it is likely it played a major part in popularising coverage of 'real' footballers' wives in the media. Soaps and the media are symbiotic and the papers help to create the illusion that the fictional stories are part of the real world by relating them to current events.

Most television genres have had their boundaries blurred and it is difficult to define them and fit programmes into single categories. It has been argued that 'all of television drama has a natural tendency to biodegrade into soap opera' (Edgar, 2000:77). FW contains many of the traits of a soap opera, melodrama and even light entertainment at times and has a great appeal to women due to the strength of its female characters and the story-lines, as well as providing a moral education for some, similar to soap opera.

Pleasure

Dyer argues that the appeal of popular culture lies in its utopian sensibility through which feelings emerge (1979; 1992 in Lusted, 1998:181–2). The utopian sensibility provides a world to escape to – one that is completely different to conditions of uncertain economic futures with forced employment, low pay, long hours and low status. According to the FW producer:

The show may well be aspirational to some, but the intention is that our audience can enjoy the paranoia and self-obsession of these over paid protagonists.

(Roach, 2007)

So it seems the intention of FW is escapism for those who could never live this life but, as in the cynical turn in celebrity proposed by Tyler and Bennett (2010), suggests the audience is constructed as one who seeks pleasure in finding fault with other women's lives – similar to readers of newspapers and celebrity magazines. This fault finding could be put down to a politics of envy – in the UK increasing polarisation of wealth means those unable to acquire such material goods are pleased untold wealth has its downsides. It also relates to the view that footballers, and their wives, are undeserving. In a society based on meritocracy,

where the capacity to earn gives women respectability, these women are denigrated for not earning money themselves. Symbolic violence is used to classify these women as working class despite their wealth and their lack of taste and cultural capital becomes a source of mockery for others to build boundaries (Bourdieu, 1986; McRobbie, 2004; Skeggs, 1997).

The soap viewer has a parasocial relationship with characters in the programme which leads to an imaginative investment in their actions and situations (Corner, 1999:49). It has been said that the 'pleasures of telling, rehearsing and predicting the mechanisms of narrative are very much part of soap opera's attraction' (Geraghty, 1991:23). In this way, FW provides a platform for celebrity gossip – perhaps a better one than real celebrities as fictional characters cannot be hurt by gossip and it provides women with their own version of footie talk. In her work on *Dallas*, Ang (1985) notes that pleasure is not a natural thing but a construct, functioning in a specific social and historical context, entertainment is therefore not an uncomplicated pleasure. In order to produce an object for pleasurable consumption, producers must use their previous experience to know what the audience will like. In the case of FW this experience was used in conjunction with their interpretation of what audiences found pleasurable in other forms of media such as the tabloid press. Ang highlighted how each viewer has a unique relationship to the programme and that they need cultural knowledge to be able to decode the codes and conventions to understand the text. Producing and consuming fantasies allows the viewer to play with reality – this is liberating as they can adopt positions and try them out without worrying about reality.

The DVD of the second series of FW provides an 'extras' disc which gives tips on becoming a footballer's wife with three stages (shopping, getting the 'slap' on and big hair) where the wardrobe and make-up team from the show makeover someone and simultaneously divulge make-up tips and name-drop designers that are 'footballers' wives' (Series Two 2002 [DVD]). This coupled with the programme's book *How to be a Footballers' Wife* (Reynolds, 2003) provides an even deeper insight for the viewer, making it easier to emulate and put themselves in the position of the characters. It seems the producers believe the performance of hyper-femininity and conspicuous consumption, sources of women's denigration elsewhere, are sources of pleasure for their intended audience, claiming:

The public's enjoyment of the show is not only due to the outrageous storylines and larger than life characters, but also down to the

tremendous locations, sumptuous production design, not to mention the latest in designer fashion and immaculate hair and make-up.

(Roach, 2007)

Ang (1990) argues that even characters providing negative representations of women can be points of identification and give pleasure to the viewer. In using Sue Ellen from *Dallas* as an example, she states that she is financially dependent on an unscrupulous husband who also provides most of her identity, she detests him but does not have the strength to leave. The audience can empathise with her situation and live through her problems. Others may take pleasure in taking a stance against her and bitching about her behaviour. Through Sue Ellen, some are fascinated by a fantasy world that they can identify with, as it highlights the complexities and conflicts that result from contemporary life. The audience also takes pleasure in the expectation of a happy ending – they feel an emotional involvement with the character. As Ang (1990:162) notes the characters ‘do not function as role models but are symbolic realisations of feminine subject positions with which viewers can identify in fantasy’. This viewer positioning allows them to move beyond the constraints of everyday life and explore alternative identities and situations (Ang, 1990). The negative representations of women in FW works in a similar way – despite the exaggerated storylines, there are underlying identities and situations women can identify with. Although FW provides some happy endings and resolutions, the viewers’ expectations may not be met as there are a number of plot twists, deaths and injustices. But these may also be a source of pleasure, by reflecting ‘real’ life or because their emotional involvement with the character is a negative one and they see them getting their just deserts.

The characters

Although Hobson (2003) argues that soap characters are not stereotypes because the audience knows them too well, they do have stereotypical traits. Medhurst and Tuck (1996) state that in situation comedies both characters and situations have to be stereotypical and of a recognisable type. This resonates with the production of a stereotypical footballer’s wife throughout the media. While the characters encompass a range of traits and display alternative femininities, across the media, wags are often reduced to one exaggerated figure. Certainly the lead women in the first two series of FW all embody an array of stereotypes of

footballers' wives, women and motherhood and find themselves in some situations that seem familiar albeit due to media coverage of the lifestyles of the rich and famous.

Modleski (1979) argues that in soap opera, one character is provided that the viewer is allowed to hate. This villainess is a negative representation of the viewer's ideal self. This character likes to make things happen and take control of events. She claims this can be represented through mothers trying to manipulate their children's lives or ruin their marriages and argues that pleasure is derived from hating the villainess because of the energy needed to repress her. The villainess transforms traditional feminine weaknesses into sources of strength – she argues this is particularly the case in relation to pregnancy. As all the characters are flawed in FW there is no one villainess, although Tanya Turner as the main character is perhaps the most devious and displays much of the behaviour of a villainess. Modleski argues the villainess allows women to experience the satisfaction of seeing men suffering the anxieties and guilt usually placed on women. Other women choose to vent their frustrations on the villainess as she refuses to accept her own powerlessness. These themes can certainly be seen throughout a number of the story-lines.

In FW only two characters survive all five series – one is footballer's wife Tanya Turner and the other is footballer's mother and later manager's wife Jackie Pascoe. This section outlines their characters and those of Chardonnay Lane-Pascoe and Donna Walmsley, the two other main wives in the first two series. Tanya Turner is quite clearly the Queen Bee of the wives and is married to the team captain in the first and second series. Tanya is widowed three times and has numerous boyfriends throughout the series. Her profile according to the series website is:

More than anything else, Tanya is a survivor – an extremely strong woman who knows what she wants and will do anything to keep it. Although she's fiercely loyal to the few people who have managed to win her friendship, cross her and she becomes the sort of enemy that nightmares are made of – a predator who can pick out someone's weakness at 100 yards and who is cold, calculating and remorseless in her revenge. Tanya is highly intelligent and is resourceful enough to manipulate a harmful situation to her advantage, a strength flawed by her belief that without a man and her glamorous lifestyle, she's nothing.³

In this sense Tanya represents the career wag, depicted to need a husband for both financial and social status. She is glamorous and displays the hyper-femininity associated with wags elsewhere in the media. Tanya is incredibly calculating and it is difficult to decide whether she is likable despite her malicious nature or whether she is someone to be despised. Her relationships are often violent and she is regularly in direct competition with other women, usually over a man. Her story-lines are often over-the-top, bordering on the comedic. She attempts to murder the club chairman to protect her husband and marriage, whilst in a later series she swaps babies at birth with her love rival Amber Gates in order to keep her man. The lengths she will go to in order to maintain her husband's career or ensnare a new partner to maintain her lifestyle demonstrate a commercialisation of intimate life and marriage (see Hochschild, 2003a). This transaction is not one-sided as she also becomes an asset to her partners aesthetically in looking good for them, and practically and emotionally in support of their career. Tanya constantly smokes, drinks and snorts cocaine throughout the five series and the final scene of the last series shows her about to snort a line of cocaine spiked with lethal poison. This is a scenario that is unlikely to provide pleasure for the viewers who will never know whether she survives or if she has finally met her match.

The other survivor is Jackie Pascoe, whose son Kyle is the star striker in the first two series; she later marries the club manager. Jackie embodies a stereotypical sports mother invoking the 'spoiled athlete syndrome' in her son and being very over-protective, almost competitive, when it comes to his wife Chardonnay (see Ortiz, 1997; 2006). She embodies the woman who will accept the fact that she will always be second best to football – believing in self-sacrifice. Her selflessness in marriage, more than other characters, seems to reflect what Finch (1983:49) terms a 'helpmeet wife' who follows her husband 'selflessly, loyally and cheerfully' (1983:49). She has a number of complicated story-lines, including sleeping with her son's best friend (and Tanya's husband), getting pregnant then allowing her son and daughter-in-law to bring the child up as their own, her trauma over wanting the baby back and a family life, the child being an intersex baby, Chardonnay's death and her son's subsequent breakdown. When she eventually remarries, her stepson tries to break up her marriage, the club chairman attempts to rape her, her husband goes blind and is then murdered. Her story does have a reasonably happy ending as it looks like her husband's killer will be caught and she moves to Australia with her son for a new start over.

Chardonnay Lane-Pascoe is married to Kyle – she is a glamour model with her own career. It is this career and the focus on her body which leads many of her story-lines and eventually contributes to her death. Her celebrity and certainly the depiction of her wedding likens their relationship to that of the Beckhams. The idea of Chardonnay being based on Victoria Beckham was fuelled by Victoria herself when she exclaimed in the newspapers ‘My hairdresser calls me Beaujolais’ (Hodgson, 2003:14 *Evening Standard*). Her character also highlights the tensions for a wife between having her own career and supporting a footballing husband as well as between having children and maintaining a career. Like the other models in the series (Amber and Liberty), she is depicted as a ‘diva’ in the workplace which draws on other celebrity discourses surrounding the life of models.

Donna Walmsley is the most family oriented out of the original three couples. Her life is her children – even placing them before her husband and his career. She seems troubled by the glamorous lifestyle and much is made of her class (working class and from Bolton), and she is seemingly susceptible to the hidden injuries of class (see Sennett and Cobb, 1972). Her time is spent trying to track down and gain custody of their son that she was forced to give up for adoption when she was aged 13. Her husband’s public infidelity and his ever-increasing ego eventually lead her to an affair with one of his team mates as well as the kidnap of their daughter. Perhaps due to her more likeable character, she has a happy ending when she is reconciled with her husband and they move to Manchester United to start again. A move which serves to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction – making him appear to be an actual footballer.

Two other women play major parts in this series. One is Nurse Dunkley who is caught having sex with her comatose patient (the club chairman) by Tanya who uses this against her to enlist her help to try and switch off the club chairman’s life support. She is an awkward character who is difficult to like. She reappears at other points in the five series either to blackmail Tanya or help her with another malicious scheme, such as swapping her baby with Amber’s to ensure that paternity tests work in her favour. The other figure is Hazel Bailey who starts off as a sports agent and later becomes Chairman of the football club. As the programme website describes her:

A gay woman working in what is traditionally a man’s world, Hazel has her work cut out for her. Luckily, she has the intelligence and ruthlessness needed to earn her the reputation of being the biggest

ball-breaker in football, both as an agent and eventually a Club Chairman. Tough-talking and supremely ambitious, she will lie, cheat, and terrorise in order to get what she wants.⁴

It is perhaps no coincidence that the most successful businesswoman is a lesbian. In television terms this effectively removes all of the paradoxes that other career women experience in terms of heterosexual relationships and having children. She is also, stereotypically, depicted as quite masculine – always wearing suits, cold and getting one up on the men.

Looking at the individual characters demonstrates how they all reflect different social types of women including the helpmeet wife, the over-protective mother, the career woman and the gold-digger. Despite this range of social types a number of the specific traits of these women have been melded together and condensed to create a generic footballer's wife or wag figure. This figure has then become a reference point for other media and indeed footballers' wives themselves to draw on as a cultural resource. The characters representation as grotesque symbols of stereotypical women married to footballers, such as the desperate wannabe dependent on her husband for her identity, the demanding celebrity wife and the childhood sweetheart struggling to adapt to fame and fortune, have been selected from the wider coverage and debates surrounding footballers' wives and celebrities in general to create these exaggerated caricatures.

The characters then are all drawn from wider discourses about women's lives found throughout the media. The characters in *FW* provide a guide to how women should behave as, similar to soap opera, the bad are often punished and the good rewarded – it has a clear moral dimension to guide women into making the 'right' choices. The incorporation of a variety of characters and story-lines enables multiple points of identification for a wide range of women. This not only increases audience viewing figures and thus advertising revenue but also reflects a perspective that there is no longer one identity of either a wife or a woman's life. The range of characters and story-lines prevents the show from 'constructing a monolithic view of female desire in relation to sex and marriage' (Lotz, 2006:109). According to Lotz (2006), in order to combat negative stereotyping multiple images of the stereotyped group should be disseminated so that one stereotype is uninhabitable. However, despite *FW* depicting a wide range of characters, it has contributed to and perpetuated the negative media stereotype of wags. Through its caricatured women in overstated houses and glamorous locations, it associates wags with excessive and pathological

consumption, keeping your husband at any cost and a glamorous, if tasteless, lifestyle.

Themes and story-lines

The stories in *FW*, unlike in soaps, do not obviously reflect the themes of ordinary everyday life; however, many are stories familiar from popular culture albeit reworked and set against a glamorous backdrop. A number of themes occur throughout the series and these will be discussed here.

Fairy tales

The analogies with fairy tales cut across much of the media coverage of footballers' wives. The glamour depicted in weddings and lifestyles in this series mimics that in the printed media and the characters' backgrounds exemplify the idea that wealth offers transformation and social mobility. This all helps contribute to the idea that marrying a footballer is akin to marrying a prince – a life-transforming tale of rags to riches. Something that continues in the autobiography of Coleen McLoughlin discussed in the next chapter.

Although the characters in the series are depicted as living in a fairy tale, not unlike in the printed media these tales are intended to have a strong moral dimension making them more like one of Aesop's fables. The show is marketed as

a modern morality tale for our time Fame and fortune might be what our audience aspire to, but a life in a sparkling mansion with a clutch of shining cars outside brings with it its own form of misery.

(Roach, 2007)

According to Bacchilega (1997), in the second half of the twentieth century fairy tales became increasingly popular in North America and run through many forms of popular culture. Although not explicitly based on specific tales, the story-lines in *FW* often have symbols or signs associated with fairy tales. Bacchilega argues that the fairy tale depends on the suspension of our disbelief and the fantastic lifestyles and plots in the series mean that the audience sees the programme as fantastic and do not expect realism. In this sense, it is the images and symbolism that are crucial to the fairy tale. She claims that the fairy tale can be a mirror of lives which are not value-free but contain ideological expectations and norms. Many of these work against women symbolising them

as objects of masculine desire, passive, beautiful (Snow White), jealous and competitive (wicked witches) as well as making concepts of motherhood and beauty appear natural. The postmodern fairy tale seeks to acknowledge these metaphors and question ideological representations that provide natural truths about gender reproduction.

FW promotes many stories that would perhaps not be out of place in a traditional fairy tale. Its title alone certainly emphasises marriage and to many characters this is seen as important as either a place to bring up a family, a means for identification or for financial support. The football element of the series is depicted in a typically masculine way highlighting an ever-present patriarchy – one that women are often made to submit to through sex or violence. The series also presents images of competitive women, such as the competition between Tanya Turner and Amber Gates over the love of the team captain – something often present in fairy tales. In terms of the programme representing a postmodern tale, it does provide a range of possibilities for women, it allows women to outsmart men and at times questions natural truths about marriage and motherhood. On the whole, taking into consideration the comments of the production company, it seems likely to represent a more traditional fairy tale than a postmodern one:

They say football is the new rock ‘n’ roll, and the Earls Park FC wives are living it to the full. They’ve got the designer gear, the palatial homes, the flash cars, the platinum credit cards and the handsome superstar husbands...but underneath it all they are ordinary women, struggling to keep their marriages intact while their husbands dazzle the crowds on the football field...and the girls in the nightclubs.⁵

Unruly women

The concept of fairy tales and fables leads into a discussion about the treatment of the good and bad women in the series. Kirkham and Skeggs (1998) analysed the BBC series *Absolutely Fabulous* which they claim was based around women who refused to accept the need to behave appropriately. They argue that the women’s obsession with fashion is given to the viewer as a source of identification and mockery. Throughout the show, two characters make a spectacle of themselves, particularly in terms of being generally unruly and transgressing social norms. They argue that for centuries there has been debate over the correct conduct for a woman creating ‘respectable’ women and their ‘other’ – sexualised women whose behaviour meant they could not claim any

power or authority. In this sense, hedonism and conspicuous consumption in *Absolutely Fabulous* is seen as profane with the audience invited to look down on it, providing they have the cultural capital to see the irony and pretention. Others may view the consumption as desirable but unthinkable in the reality of their lives. They argue that in this show femininity is paraded 'as a mode to be put on and off rather than as something that comes naturally' (Kirkham and Skeggs, 1998:296). This masquerade of femininity can only be used as a critique by those who can access it effectively when they need to. The main characters expose 'the masquerade, the labour and ridiculousness of femininity' (Kirkham and Skeggs, 1998:296), although they never truly undermine the concept.

The footballers' wives should also be viewed along similar lines. There is a clear transgression of morals and social norms by a number of characters, for example, Tanya is depicted as a bad girl who regularly smokes, drinks and takes cocaine as well as being callous and calculating. Chardonnay's obsession with her looks leads to her adoption of Jackie's baby (passing it off as her own – lying to friends and the media) in order to avoid 'saggy boobs and stretch marks' but eventually dies of an eating disorder. Whatever happens good or bad, the women in the series are usually part of a spectacle, often encompassing traditional conservative ideas of femininity in terms of looking good and supporting husbands but tempered by their exaggerated performance of femininity through designer clothes, hair and make-up – as well as transgressive behaviour including affairs, violence and blackmail. To some extent, they show not only the hard work of creating a masquerade of femininity but also a façade of happy marriage and celebrity. They are an 'other' to the female audience, who would not and could not behave in the same way, and an aspiration to others desiring a glamorous lifestyle or a chance to live a different life.

Kathleen Rowe (1997) examined the long tradition of unruly women to deconstruct the ambivalence surrounding the comedienne Roseanne Barr. She traces a line of women represented as outrageous and transgressive, which both intensifies and undermines popularity. She claims that this centres on the body which is considered as excessive (in terms of size, age, cleanliness, pregnancy or sexuality) thus breaking pre-existing norms of gender representation. As she puts it:

I see the unruly woman as prototype of woman as subject – transgressive above all when she lays claim to her own desire.

(Rowe, 1997:76)

FW is largely concerned with women laying claim to their desires through material goods, shopping or sexuality. According to Rowe, the unruly woman makes disobedience thinkable to others, something that is certainly said about the behaviour of footballers' wives. The pushing of boundaries delights some of the audience but for others evokes fear and even disgust. Some may argue that the programme punishes these women for asserting their desire – in the case of FW the producers note that money cannot buy happiness, but others may see it as aspirational or a space to explore a number of issues around femininity.

Work and marriage, or marriage as work

Lotz (2006) notes that US female-centred dramas highlighted feminist progress in terms of career options, but feminist critics point out that these narratives demonstrate how career progression leads to fewer personal life options or dependence on a husband. There is a need to reconcile independence with a desire for romantic relationships – gains provide new dilemmas. She argues there is no blame placed, rather it is more the scale of women's expectations that create the struggle. In the case of footballers' wives, romantic relationships can provide a means to financial independence and a career. The show FW highlights the difficulty of combining a career and a personal life, illustrated through Kyle and Chardonay's arguments over her career after marriage. Just before their wedding, she claims that he thought that when they married she would 'give up her job and put on a pinny'. Kyle's mother adds to this, saying that it is one thing to go out with a page three model but an embarrassment to marry one. When Chardonay has a breakdown, following an incident with two men on her hen night resulting in bad scarring on her chest, Jackie unsympathetically tells her she is 'Kyle Pascoe's wife now, you've got an image to keep up'.

As the next chapter on auto/biography will also reveal, 'the implications which a man's paid work has for his wife are more significant than vice versa' (Finch, 1983:11). Finch argues that women marry both the man and his job, and live out their life in the context of his job. This certainly seems to be true in the case of footballers' wives. She goes on to state that where the husband is a public figure, her life may be structured by her identification with her husband's job, she may be expected to appear in public and behave in a certain way without pay – a wife is often chosen as an asset. This coupled with her claim that many women may try to conceal their 'wife of' identity in order to find their own appears to contradict current media representations of footballers'

wives. The series itself has helped create a role that the public are interested in, allowing some women to exploit this 'wife of' identity. Instead of these wives being invisible in the public domain, they are bringing the private into the public. The wives often partake in a two-person career – the wife is active in a career that is not hers (see Papanek, 1973). This is certainly seen in *FW* where wives are subject to expectations from both their husbands and their husband's employers in terms of providing a supportive role. The wives are expected to provide a relaxing environment for their husbands so that they have a greater capacity for work (Finch, 1983). This role is emphasised in the show, with comments made about how players' personal problems and home life are affecting their performance, with the club hierarchy complaining that it is run by the wives – exemplified by the manager refusing to give the captaincy to Kyle Pascoe because he is too interested in his new wife.

In *FW*, for women such as Tanya marriage is a career, demonstrated by the fact that she gets through three husbands in the five series. When talking about careers she tells Chardonnay that being a footballer's wife is a full time job. As Finch (1983) argues, these wives benefit from their vicarious contributions to her husband's career. This is particularly the case for Tanya – when it looks like her husband's career may be over she works hard to ensure that his job is safe. This is often overlooked by her husband who regularly uses her lack of career as a form of financial violence against her – saying he is 'nothing but a cash machine' to her, that he earns 'money for you to drape yourself in' and that nothing in the house is hers – calling her a parasite. In contrast, on her first night out with the club Donna tells the other wives that she will not be going to games as she has a daughter to look after. Tanya criticises this attitude stating that she is not supporting her husband. Although Finch argues that the husband benefits more from a wife's work in marriage, in this case a wife gains her own benefits from being married to a footballer. For some women she suggests that basking in the reflected glories of their husband is an example of their investment in him being repaid. Oakley (1974) states, that this vicarious occupational identity (especially if the husband is valued, respected or prestigious) may be more appealing than other available identities, for example, a housewife (in Finch, 1983:163).

Despite the emphasis on marriage, the programme also provides examples of what Ortiz (1997) calls institutionalised adultery – the team are often complicit in covering infidelities. When Tanya Turner asks the players where Jason is they instinctively tell her he must have fallen asleep at the bar, they and the viewer know he is having an affair. At other points Jason tries to encourage Kyle to have an affair with a

woman and when Ian is caught on camera having a three-in-a-bed session and ends up on the front page of the newspapers he is greeted by cheers and congratulations in the team changing rooms. Even his team mate Salvatore Biaggi, who is depicted as having more respect for women than most (although he later has an affair with Ian's wife), in discussion about Ian's wife throwing him out tells Ian, even if you 'score an own goal you still score'. Donna later discusses with Salvatore that it is not easy being a footballer's wife even though it should be with all of their money, he points out that 'money and fame change people' and that 'players will always put themselves first' – a definite cautionary tale for the viewer.

With the exception of Chardonnay and Kyle, pretty much every other character has an affair of some sort during the series, this may be for love, money or some other gain. Although the preservation of marriage seems important to many characters, monogamy is not part of this. A number of the players comment that they are 'only human' and others note that women offer themselves on a plate and this makes life difficult for them. This is visually depicted through girls waiting for autographs and sometimes screaming when players leave training, they are also always the centre of much female attention whenever shown in a nightclub. This serves to place the men as victims and merely to remove them from taking responsibility for their own actions – many are fully aware of what they are doing. Jason Turner certainly seems to separate his wife from other women, telling one girl that 'fun is not what wives are for'. The programme is similar to American postfeminist programming outlined above, whereby those women that have their own careers demonstrate the dilemmas of being a career woman and having a family. At the same time, other wives' dependence on marriage, arguably even as a career, seems to illustrate the failure of second wave feminism or alludes to a postfeminist world where marriage and dependence on men is one of a range of options for women.

Parenthood

As you would expect in a series about wives, parenthood is key to a number of story-lines. Donna's world revolves around her children and she is wracked with guilt from giving up the son she had aged 13. She tracks him down and tries to reunite the family initially against the wishes of her husband. Her daughter is kidnapped at the end of series one which causes great pain and anguish and she is not returned to them until halfway through series two. The pool cleaner who kidnapped her claimed it was their fault as they had paraded her in front of the cameras

and shown off their wealth. This is because her husband arranged a magazine photo-shoot at their house – something common for footballers and their wives in reality. Such discourses of inciting envy are currently mirrored in newspapers citing this as a possible reason for the number of footballers' homes being burgled. Throughout the series Donna is still depicted as a maternal and caring character putting her children first.

As Modleski (1979) argues, many villainesses use feminine traditional weaknesses as a source of strength. Tanya Turner uses pregnancy to control more than one of her husbands. She agrees to come off the pill to please Jason and sustain her fragile marriage but secretly continues to take it. On the surface her attitude to motherhood is matter of fact and emphasises that motherhood is not natural to all women. However, as her character is marked out as transgressive and deviant, this serves to reinforce naturalised ideas of motherhood as instinctive and natural. She tells Chardonay to do a Madonna – 'save your tits by putting it straight on the bottle' and in series five she tells a pregnant Lucy to 'get rid, it's no worse than a colonic if you do it early doors'. At the end of series three, Tanya now seeing new team captain Conrad, finds she is pregnant at the same time as his ex-wife Amber. She smokes and drinks throughout the pregnancy, contrasting with Amber who tries to become an 'earth mother'. Tanya realises that her ex-husband sabotaged their contraception and is most likely the father of her baby, not Conrad so she spikes Amber's drinks to induce labour and has an elective caesarean at the same time, getting her hired midwife (Nurse Dunkley) to swap the babies. This ensures that Tanya's baby is shown to be Conrad's when they have the paternity test. She even goes as far as to fake tan the baby to match Amber's skin colour in order to maintain the charade. In birth the two are juxtaposed with Amber screaming in a birthing pool wanting a natural birth and Tanya checking her nails, emotionless, whilst she has a caesarean section. Tanya's baby dies (although Amber thinks it is her son) and this is the only point when some emotion is seen from Tanya, but she continues to maintain the charade that her baby is alive until Amber eventually exposes the fraud. This is an extreme example of motherhood, no doubt, but demonstrates how villainesses can use pregnancy and children to control a partner.

Jackie appears dependent on her son Kyle and does not want to let go and allow him to live his own life and seems jealous of his wife. Kyle is her only son and having been brought up to be a professional footballer appears to be a spoilt child or athlete who is over-mothered (see Ortiz, 1997; 2006). Kyle and Jackie's relationship becomes even more complicated when his wife Chardonay is mistakenly told she is pregnant.

They announce it to the media and she is offered a role as a TV presenter on a talk show about pregnancy only to find it is actually Jackie who is pregnant. The father (Tanya's husband) wants her to have an abortion but unable to do this, Jackie convinces Chardonnay and Kyle to pretend the baby is theirs. Jackie convinces Chardonnay that this way she can keep her figure and her career as well as having a baby. Chardonnay has concerns about Kyle thinking of her as a 'walking womb' and he criticises her for wanting to adopt because she cannot be bothered and is too selfish to have children. Eventually Jackie and Chardonnay go to Florida to keep out of the limelight whilst the baby is born and Chardonnay and Kyle introduce Paddy Pascoe to the world as their own. In series two, this causes great problems, as Jackie is unable to relinquish her child and allow the couple to bring up Paddy as their own, even continuing to breastfeed without their knowledge. This is further muddled when the father finds out and decides that they should have the baby back – that is until he finds out the baby is intersex and calls him a freak.

Parenthood is depicted as both a desirable option and an inconvenience for the women in FW and it is often further complicated by the amount of infidelity. Children are often used as ammunition both within relationships and external to them. The babies are even treated as commodities – Tanya's baby born purely as a means to keep her boyfriend and the Pascoes use Paddy to generate more publicity. They even claim that he is more famous and has more deals than them before he is even born. Other women, such as Donna, represent much more traditional symbols of motherhood – always putting her children and their needs first.

Conspicuous consumption

Female audiences can be segmented by a number of factors, but Lotz (2006) argues that more crucial than basic demographics is the income related to purchasing power. The buying practices of the audience define its value. In this sense a programme about women who are glamorous and love to consume is likely to be an advertiser's dream. The programme name is spelt *Footballers Wive\$* – with a dollar sign at the end seemingly related to the glamorous lifestyle of these women or the implication that money is the most important thing in their lives. Either way, conspicuous consumption seems to be marked out as a pastime of the nouveau riche and they are deemed to lack taste.

According to Geraghty (1991), US soaps highlight wealth and plenty through gender – this wealth is provided by men for their women to enjoy and display. A number of the characters in the series, as seen in

the real life stories of such women, have been with their partners since before they were famous and a number have their own careers implying they are not with their partners purely for money; however, the men still often provide for them. In a later series, one wife is prevented from having a job by her husband who sees her role as a wife and mother and tries to control her through money and violence. The wives display the wealth of their husbands although the money does not come without strings attached. Tanya Turner sees her role as keeping her husband playing in the team, otherwise her lifestyle will disappear and her life becomes a struggle to find men who can fund this life. She throws vases at Jason when he quits his job claiming there will be 'no space for them in a council house which is where we are going now you have thrown your career away'. This highlights their recognition of the precarious nature of their lifestyle and also alludes to their background, while contributing to discourses of transformation through marriage.

Many scenes begin with wide-angle shots of the players' houses, emphasising the size of their mansions. They often have more than one expensive sports car outside with personalised number plates. All of the houses have pools and snooker rooms depicting a leisurely lifestyle. In a number of scenes the women are shown in dressing gowns, lying by the pool, receiving beauty treatments or having lunch with friends highlighting a 'lady of leisure' lifestyle. As Sassatelli (2007) argues, newspapers align such images alongside a critique of consumerism and moralism. It is seen as a vice of our time which she claims is linked to 'materialism, superficiality, hedonism, dissatisfaction, massification, bad taste and even personality disorders' (Sassatelli, 2007:117). Certainly these kinds of images were seen as outrageous in the context of the programme and distasteful when related to actual footballers' wives in the press.

Fiske (1987:213) maintains that in television drama women wearing lots of jewellery is a code signifying that 'female-as-patriarchal-commodity is bought, and wearing them is the sign both of her possession by a man, and of his economic and social status'. In *FW*, Ian Walmsley tells his wife to buy designer clothes as they can afford it, his wife is uncomfortable with their new found wealth and initially buys high street clothes and cuts out the labels. Chardonnay on the other hand not only spends Kyle's money but also her own – buying him a racehorse (named *Vin Blanc*) as a wedding present. It concerns her when she may not be able to model any more that he will have to buy his own wedding present and she may be financially dependent on him.

Much is made of aesthetics and a number of objects would be considered tasteless by some, for example, the tiled footballer in the bottom of the pool and the themed weddings. When talking about their houses, one of the cast members says in an interview:

The Walmsley's house is gorgeous. Ours is a bit more normal than the Pascoe's house but it's still huge, open-plan, with a pool. But the decor's quite tacky. There's all this leopard print everywhere! It's like a catalogue house, Donna and Ian haven't actually thought of any of it themselves, it's all copying other things they've seen. I'd decorate it very differently! That red leather couch ... not really me! And there are huge TVs everywhere. They never watch them, it's just that those are the biggest tellies money can buy and so they think they have to have them. Part of that is that they literally do come from nothing.

(Monaghan, 2007)

Sayer (2005) argues that consumption is influenced by a wish to invoke envy in others and represent self worth through a lifestyle. Many find this vulgar and thus style and aesthetics will then impact on judgements of moral worth. He claims that spending more than you can afford and trying not to look cheap is understandable but doomed as a way to win respect and prove you are as good as the dominant classes. Even between characters there is an element of derision on the basis of taste. Jason Turner takes Donna Walmsley's sister for dinner and when she states that they are just having steak he replies 'it's chateaubriand and very expensive or is it wasted on you?' At the Pascoe's wedding, a number of the guests appear to be smirking at the fairy tale theme in a derisory way, with even Tanya, Chardonnay's best friend, criticising her dress. It seems that the programme sets out to sustain the concept that money cannot buy taste. This lack of cultural capital bestowed upon the wives in the series reflects that of the wives in the printed media – allowing the 'old-moneyed' to distance themselves from these 'nouveau riche'. This lack of taste is used to distinguish these money rich but taste poor people as of a lower class (Bourdieu, 1986).

Class

British soaps have traditionally used class as a theme and a means to create a community and FW is no different (Geraghty, 1991). The Walmsleys are from Bolton and seem to have trouble coming to terms with their new found wealth and celebrity. This is made all the more painful by other people highlighting their new position and accusing

them of forgetting their roots. Donna appears particularly uncomfortable with their situation and continually compares her new life to growing up in Bolton. There is a stark visual contrast between her house and the council estate and flat where her son and his adoptive mother live. It seems that this is to emphasise the shift in Donna's life. Daniel's adoptive mother questions whether if they were still in the gutter, they would still have a right to the son they gave up. She tells them 'you think you can buy anything – you think I'm rubbish. Get in your swanky car and sod off' as if to give voice to the unease and status incongruity that Donna has been experiencing. Donna at times turns on the working class questioning to both her husband and the other wives, the adoptive mother's parental skills, the fact she lives on an estate and that she has split from her husband; however, a social worker points out to them that their suitability for access is not based on their material goods. Donna herself says she is 'punished for wanting too much'. At the end of series one her daughter is kidnapped by the pool cleaner who claims it is because she and 'her mongrel family' (adding a racial dimension to the envy as they are a mixed race couple) think they are better than him. They parade themselves and their children in front of the cameras to make others jealous and it disgusts him.

According to Sayer (2005), people's concerns in relation to class are not just related to material goods, recognition and respect but also moral questions of what is good. Although in the first series only one couple are clearly marked out as working class, the behaviour of some, both in consumption and morality terms may be deemed by certain observers to be working class. Tanya Turner's desperation to cling onto her husband at any cost (including attempted murder) in order to maintain her lifestyle implies that this is her only likely source of income and status. Sayer argues conspicuous wealth may induce either envy or admiration in others – some may be critical if they feel the person has not done anything to deserve their wealth. This idea of deserving position is something which is often said about the inflated wages of footballers and even more so about their wives. It is also discussed in relation to the amount of media coverage they receive – particularly the wives who are deemed to be 'scroungers' and only spending their husband's money. This is linked to Sayer's insistence that gender and ethnicity are co-determinants of class implying that gender differences mean men and women always occupy different classes. In being identified through their husbands, these women are likely to be seen as a class beneath them.

The femininities displayed by these wives mark them out as working class, their desperation to find and cling on to a husband,

their affairs and violence distinguish them as others from middle class femininities who confer the right ways of being and doing (Lawler, 2008b). Elsewhere in British postfeminist programming middle class women have been depicted as increasingly displaying domestic chic (see Brunson, 2006; Hollows, 2006; Negra, 2009). Although the footballers' wives display lives of leisure similar to middle class domesticity, they do not appear to have the capital to take care of their house and home in the 'right' way or enjoy engaging with conservative or traditional femininities. In this way, rather than domestic goddesses supporting their husbands and families these women are, through their class background, deemed gold-diggers and disgusting.

Conclusions

FW finished on ITV1 in 2006 just before the mass coverage of footballers' wives began as a result of the World Cup finals coverage. The programme was axed due to falling audiences – perhaps such a programme was no longer necessary as viewers could enjoy similarly outrageous stories about 'real' people with whom they have more affinity and could actually aspire to be. ITV claimed that the programme was a 'zeitgeist show' and as such had had its time (Elliott in Byrne, 2006) and Shed Productions said that it was a hard show to keep up for longer than five series (Gallagher in Byrne, 2006). It is possible that as the fictional stories became more outrageous the audience wished to bring it back to reality as they could no longer identify with the programme. The programme itself and the impending coverage of footballers' wives managed to blur fact and fiction.

The programme did not disappear as its influence, in terms of the ensuing media coverage of footballers' wives, has endured as well as all five series being released on DVD. The rights to the programme were sold to BBC America as well as the television channel 5 Life in January 2007. American network ABC also bought the rights and made a pilot series which has yet to be developed as they announced concerns that it might not sit well with their National Football League coverage. The programme clearly set the scene for the stereotyping of footballers' wives and to some extent women generally. Its glamour has clearly contributed to the aspirational lifestyle sought by wannabe wags. This in turn has led to moral debates surrounding women who chase footballers for celebrity and money or selling their stories to the media. Indeed it may even have shaped the behaviour of footballers and their wives. Certainly media criticism of the taste displayed in footballers' homes

includes Phil and Julie Neville's home which has the couples initials everywhere as well as current trends for glass floors above basement swimming pools – both of which have featured in houses in FW (see Woods, 2008:19 *Telegraph*). It is clear then that the introduction of FW is a key moment in both the development of the wag stereotype by merging fact and fiction to create outrageous characters and story-lines which have helped generate a desire to read about the lives of these women in the media.

This chapter has demonstrated the importance of television in popular culture and how soap opera and feminist television criticism help provide an understanding of the range of characters and the appeal of a programme like FW. The show's story-lines and characters have drawn on discourses and stories found elsewhere in the media, as well as creating discourses drawn upon by women talking about their lives and others making judgements about footballers' wives. The programme demonstrates women making a career out of being a footballer's wife, something which the printed media has applied to their coverage as examined in Chapter 4. The series also creates a class position for the footballers' wives – as working class but nouveau riches. This complements some of the newspaper coverage, which acknowledges that these women have money but that their excessive consumption is immoral. In the series, moral bankruptcy is portrayed as some of the women desperately try to cling on to their husbands or as others try to ensnare one to achieve this aspirational lifestyle depicted in magazines such as *Hello!* and *OK!*. The interplay of the printed media and the fictional television series has served to generate and sustain stereotypes about this group of women as well as creating discourses about being a woman and a wife in contemporary Britain. The story-lines make the programme seem real and the reporting of actual footballers' wives appears as a soap opera. As these media have combined to create a stereotype, the discussion now turns to what the footballers' wives say about their own lives.

6

Auto/biographies – Telling Tales

This chapter examines auto/biographies of footballers' wives to see how they present themselves in this published form. With the ever increasing interest in celebrity, alongside the blurring of the public and the private, the commercial market for autobiographies has proliferated to include criminals, sport stars and entertainers (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Now even being associated with a celebrity or a producer of celebrity can be enough to prompt the writing of an auto/biography. Autobiography is the most widely used term for a life narrative (forms of self-referential writing), although its self-referential and universal nature has been challenged by postmodern and feminist critics (Smith and Watson, 2001). The symbol of the wag depicted through newspapers, magazines and television is marked out as a pathological figure invoking disgust. This representation has prompted some women to write their own lives to refute the stereotype, whilst for others the focus on wags has opened up a space in which they can capitalise by marketing their lives and lifestyles. In this sense, the auto/biographies are shaped by existing images in the media as much as the personal experiences of the wives themselves.

The players

The wives discussed in this chapter are listed in the table below along with some details about their husband's careers. This chapter will first consider the auto/biographical genre. It will then outline why women would write about being a wife. The five books will then be briefly discussed before a thematic analysis across all of the texts (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Wives, husbands and their careers

Wife	Career	Partner	Partner's career
Coleen McLoughlin	Media work	Wayne Rooney	Everton, Manchester United 2000s
Victoria Beckham	Singer/fashion designer	David Beckham	Manchester United 1990s, Real Madrid, LA Galaxy, AC Milan 2000s
Angie Best	Model, fitness trainer, media work	George Best	Manchester United 1960s/1970s Various US/UK teams including Fulham 1970s/1980s
Brigitte Arscott	Beautician, aerobics teacher, personal trainer	John Beresford	Barnsley 1980s, Portsmouth 1980s/1990s, Newcastle 1990s
Suzi Barnes	Insurance company, Selfridges beauty counter	John Barnes	Watford 1980s, Liverpool 1980s/1990s, Newcastle 1990s
Kirsty Dailly	Full-time mother	Christian Dailly	Dundee United, Derby 1990s Blackburn 1990s/2000s, West Ham, Southampton, Rangers, Charlton 2000s
Kirstene Fry	Not mentioned	Barry Fry	Manager: Barnet 1980s/1990s, Southend, Birmingham, 1990s Peterborough 1990s/2000s
Cheryl Hirst	Trainee solicitor	Andy Booth	Huddersfield, Sheffield Wednesday 1990s, Huddersfield 2000s
Heather Sanchez	Senior lecturer in art and textile design	Lawrie Sanchez	Reading 1970s/1980s, Wimbledon 1980s/1990s

Helen Saunders	DVLC [Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency], Gatwick airport, full-time mother	Dean Saunders	Brighton, Oxford, Derby 1980s, Liverpool, Aston Villa, Galatasaray, Nottingham Forest, Sheffield United, Benfica, Bradford 1990s
Suzi Walker	Model, TV presenter	Ian Walker	Tottenham Hotspur 1980s/2000s
Shelley Webb	Journalist, broadcaster	Neil Webb	Reading/Portsmouth/Nottingham Forest 1980s, Manchester United/Nottingham Forest 1990s
Kelly Woan	Part-time MA student	Ian Woan	Nottingham Forest 1990s/2000s
Maureen Harvey	Clerical assistant	Colin Harvey	Everton 1960s/1970s
Rosemary Hurst	Office junior/homemaker	John Hurst	Everton 1960s/1970s
Pat Labone	Model/secretarial work	Brian Labone	Everton 1950s/1960s
Celia Morrissey	Homemaker	John Morrissey	Everton 1960s
Janet Royle	Office worker/homemaker	Joe Royle	Everton 1960s/1970s
Annette Scott	Dress shop owner/publican	Alec Scott	Everton 1960s
Brenda Thomas	Teacher	Dave Thomas	Everton 1960s/1970s
Norma Vernon	Homemaker	Roy Vernon	Everton 1960s
Ann West	Pianist	Gordon West	Everton 1960s
Nancy Young	Cared for family	Alex Young	Everton 1960s

Autobiographical theory and feminism

According to Olney, autobiography represents consciousness with no reference to objects outside itself (1980 in Benstock, 1988:10). This concept may be applied to some autobiography but is not true in relation to much female writing. Benstock criticises Olney, stating that such work is a crossroads of writing and selfhood – it begins with a presumption of self-knowledge but ends with the creation of a fiction due to the nature of its construction. She goes on to claim that autobiography is similar to Lacan's mirror stage – a means of distancing and reconstituting the self, but highlights the degree to which the image and the self-image may not coincide (Benstock, 1988:15). According to Rawlings (1992), the difficulty of separating fact and fiction in criminal biographies has historically caused controversy over their accuracy. The authenticity of accounts of celebrity may be considered in the same way, as many of the stories may seem like hyperbole or mediated accounts written for a specific audience. The more popular accounts are perhaps cashing in on the popular appetite for 'chick lit', offering self-help guides for women (Coleen McLoughlin, 2007a) or in some cases an extension of the tabloid kiss-and-tell story, while others offer a guide to being a wag (see Sawyer's, 2008, *Wag Don't Wannabe*).

Rowbotham (1973, cited in Friedman, 1988:39) argues that the image in the mirror for women is a cultural representation and is thus often unrecognisable, which can lead to both alienation but also the potential for a 'new consciousness'. It can create a dual consciousness of the culturally defined self and the self as different from the cultural prescription. It is autobiography that enables the creation of the alternate self. Although mediated and often written by someone else these, auto/biographies provide the women with a means to create an alternate self to the one imposed on them by the media developed stereotype.

According to Gusdorf (1956, in Friedman, 1988:34), the cultural precondition for autobiography is a pervasive mood of individualism. This point is also shared by Watt (1957) as he attributes the birth of the novel itself directly to the rise of the middle classes and their distinctive take on individualism in the eighteenth century. Watt went on to argue that as society came to value individuals rather than communal traditional beliefs, this paved the way for an interest in writing that was concerned with the daily lives of ordinary people. The emergence of individualism led to a stress on the importance of personal relationships for emotional security and this goes some way to explain the

emergence of books by women written about their lives as wives and their personal relationships. Friedman argues that although GUSDORF was the first to discuss the construction of the autobiographical self through writing, his individualist concept is theoretically problematic when applied to women, minorities and non-western peoples (1988:34). Individualism and the concept of uniqueness establishes a critical bias which may lead to the misreading and marginalisation of others, ignoring the importance of culturally imposed group identities and differences in socialisation – particularly in terms of the construction of gender identity. She contests this stating:

The very sense of *identification, interdependence, and community* that GUSDORF dismisses from autobiographical selves are key elements in the development of a woman's identity.

(Friedman, 1988:38 emphasis in original)

Certainly, by including the stories of a number of wives, Webb and Tallentire's books show a sense of a shared identity amongst women married to footballers. In male autobiography, the focus is both on the author and his connection to society – he may be seen as representative of the times whereas female autobiographies rarely reflect the establishment history of their times. They emphasise to a much lesser extent the public aspects of their lives, politics or their careers but concentrate on their personal lives, contradicting established male autobiographical content criteria. A point made in the following way:

domestic details, family difficulties, close friends, and especially people who influenced them... Even in the autobiographies by women whose professional work is their claim to fame, we find them omitting their work life, referring obliquely to their careers, or camouflaging them behind the personal aspect of their lives.

(Jelinek, 1980:6, 8)

Jelinek (1980) contends that neither men nor women are likely to explore or reveal painful or intimate memories in their autobiographies and insists that self-revelation is a fallacy. She maintains they rarely admit to intense feelings of hate, love, fear or disclose explicit sexual encounters; writers protect and distance themselves from such feelings. This contradicts the idea of a confessional mode of writing. It seems an outdated view in light of the sexualised nature of the contemporary press and its reliance on revelatory stories – auto/biography has to some

extent followed suit. Felski (1989:83) takes issue with Jelinek, focusing on the subgenre of confession, which intends to give prominence to the author's most intimate and private life as a means to avoid objective filters and attempt to find a 'truth' in subjective experience. It allows the author to consciously write the self whilst bringing about a sympathetic and confidante relationship with the reader.

Writing about being a wife . . .

It is unsurprising that a number of footballers have written their auto/biographies, particularly when they are so young, as these tend to revolve around their playing careers. They are written to appeal to a specific audience and often published at the height of their career to maximise sales. What is a slightly more perplexing question is why would footballers' wives and girlfriends write auto/biographies and for what audience? To date, only a few such books have been written and this section will explore why these books have been written and for what audience. It is important to note that the

idea that oneself, one's feelings, one's spouse and domestic relations were properly and innately worth writing about was essentially a female idea, however tentatively conceived at the time.

(Pomerleau, 1980:28)

Pomerleau was referring to women's writing in the seventeenth century; the few auto/biographies of the time were largely written about idyllic relationships, often chronicling their husband's achievements (Smith and Watson, 2001).

Although not all contemporary auto/biography is written on the idyllic – often quite the opposite – the media perception of being a footballer's wife draws on tropes of fairy tales which help to sell books. These books also help to shape the media discourses of transformation and aspiration in relation to the life of a footballer's wife. Smith and Watson (2001:51) note that publishers 'may invite celebrity figures to tell life narratives to a public hungry for vicarious fame'. The 'real' footballers' wives stories do not appear to be bestsellers, as these represent the desire of the author to depict a certain perspective, only those with their own media careers like Coleen McLoughlin and Victoria Beckham are likely to be coaxed by publishers to write narratives and shape them for specific audiences in order to top the bestseller lists.

There appears to be a variety of reasons for this group of women wanting to tell their life stories. For some it is a means to criticise and take revenge on the press for what are seen as spiteful and stereotypical stories – more than one author uses their book to ‘put the record straight’. George Best has a playboy image and Angie talks to the audience as if they are all women who are interested in her (ex-)husband and debunking (urban) myths that he was not what people thought. She explains:

There were not that many sweet, loving moments. George is not and has never been a tender or romantic person (sorry girls!); you have to take his hand and show him the way.

(Best with Pittam, 2001:5)

Other wives recount stories that appeared in newspapers and then tell the ‘truth’ as it ‘really happened’ stressing the constructed nature of the press. In this way they are re-contextualising the stories according to their own priorities – the impact on their own lives rather than the salacious gossip or ideological projects required to sell newspapers. A number of the stories criticised were of the kiss-and-tell kind, where women were hurt by the embarrassment and concerned about how their children would be affected by the press coverage. The exaggerated traits of wags as chavs, unintelligent or constantly shopping also symbolically violated the women, who chose to write their own stories to counter these critiques. The books appear in some part to attempt to dispel stereotypes or provide alternate images.

Particularly in the case of the more recent books, they are arguably purely a marketing vehicle. A number of the contemporary celebrities have various companies and products that they endorse. As McCracken (1989) notes, celebrity endorsers seek to transfer meanings associated with themselves to the endorsed product and subsequently the consumer. The auto/biography then becomes a means to give credibility to or create the symbolic properties they require to sustain or generate more endorsement deals. The amount of copy written about celebrity, football and wags in the early twenty-first century seem to provide a context for such women to market themselves and create a media career writing about their lives.

Gamson’s (1994) claim that the celebrity industry creates an illusion of intimacy in its texts appears to be evident in the motivation of some of these women to publish. The wives’ writing helps to merge the public and private spheres of footballers’ lives. They are purveyors of celebrity

gossip but it seems that this is in part to control the information that is published. It seems that using the analogy of Lacan's mirror, the mediated image is unrecognisable, or perhaps uncontrollable for these women and the auto/biography enables the creation of an alternate or more familiar self (Benstock, 1988; Rowbotham, 1973 in Friedman, 1988).

These women are ideally placed to obtain celebrity status and provide gossip on their lives as well as constructing themselves through relationships with others, particularly a husband or boyfriend (Riegel, 1996). Gossip is often seen in negative terms but has textual, social and cultural functions. Both gossip and scandal help to maintain the morals and values of groups informally and celebrities provide something personal for people to talk about who have no strong, personal bonds and only transient association (Gluckman, 1963). Talking about celebrities and their lives provides women with a space to talk about societal attitudes and conventions (Geraghty, 1991 in Riegel, 1996). Baumeister et al. (2004) claim that gossip is a site of cultural learning. Anecdotes of people contravening social norms work to communicate rules through a narrative, helping create an easier path through a complex and ever-changing world. Examples of passing on experience can be seen in a number of the women's autobiographies, particularly in terms of relationship breakdowns and the impact of living in the media. Coleen McLoughlin's autobiography specifically provides her readership with tips to live their life by. This may be in contrast to newspapers which may use their denigrating depictions of wags to dissuade other women not to live their lives like them and follow a more respectable middle class way of life.

Coleen McLoughlin, Victoria Beckham and Angie Best all have written books that have an element of self-help about them. Coleen provides tips and teaches girls to be themselves and have their own style – in playing on the fairy tale dream she offers girls an insight into how to obtain this ideal mainly through the performance of a certain type of femininity. Although written as a book about her life with George Best, Angie also uses the book not only as a form of closure for herself but also to tell how she picked herself up after her divorce by looking good and even having plastic surgery, recommending this approach to any woman going through a separation or divorce. Victoria is less direct in her self-help. She recounts her lack of confidence and what appears to be almost a self-loathing of her looks and figure, explaining how the pressure of the band and the media led to an eating disorder. Her success seems to be written as an inspirational tale for others who lack

confidence in themselves. It seems that these women feel that they can offer guidance to others on how to deal with certain issues that may arise in life. They clearly see themselves as having successfully negotiated bad times and achieving success and want to impart this knowledge to others.

Real footballers' wives – *The First Ladies of Everton*

Becky Tallentire's book *The First Ladies of Everton* (2004) is very much written as a football book by a woman, not a footballer's wife herself, involved in documenting the club's history and it is difficult to find any information on its launch and marketing other than the blurb on the publisher's website. It is an interesting history largely covering a specific generation of Everton players in the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the wives had similar experiences so it seems likely to appeal only to an audience of (female) Everton fans. It is marketed on the 'behind every great man' adage tying them to their husband, instead of allowing them their own identity or to be seen for their own achievements other than marrying a footballer. This is seen in early examples of female auto/biography and perhaps ties in with the traditional patriarchy through which much of football is still viewed. She undertook to write the book when she realised fans know everything about the players but nothing about their families:

The modest, unassuming women found in this book dedicated their lives to their husbands' careers, continually shelving their own ambitions, security, support networks and families to sustain their partners' dream and to follow them wherever the rallying cry sounded and don't be fooled by their dainty appearance; these girls are made of stern stuff. While the men headed off to Goodison Park in search of glory, they repaired the trail left in their wake – more often than not with a clapped-out car in the driveway and a baby under each arm.

(Tallentire, 2004:12)

Although written in 2004, before the 2006 World Cup, certain footballers' wives were already ubiquitous in the media and many of her descriptions of the wives of Everton players in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s tend to depict a helpmeet image rather than the individualistic women interested in their own careers and ambitions currently criticised in the media. This clearly demonstrates the changing role of women from an era where second wave feminism was in its infancy to the postfeminist world currently espoused in some parts of the media.

The experiences of these women were probably similar to those of most wives at the time, regardless of their husband's job. The rationale for Tallentire's lack of contemporary wives in her book is unclear, but as a footballing history it could be because modern wives are criticised by many traditional football fans who believe that women should not be involved in the game (see Keane in Stewart, 2007; Rowe, 2010).

The chapters of the Tallentire book take the format of a life history, but the focus of each chapter implies that it was a structured interview covering the same subjects, often in the same order. Each chapter begins with a summary of the husband's career before the wife's narrative begins placing the women firmly as adjuncts to their husbands. This book and the Webb book discussed below contain biographies. According to Smith and Watson (2001), biographies invariably write the object in the third person; however, in both these cases they are written in the first person leading the reader to view them as personal accounts. In actual fact, the stories and details selected have been edited by the author to portray the narrative of their choice rather than the selection of the subject.

Angie Best – *George and Me*

Angie Best had a co-author for this book but provides no details about her which might help ascertain how much input she may have had or if her co-author imposed a particular viewpoint. Interestingly it also appears that her book had been edited to some extent by George Best himself as at one point she states she wanted to share a poem he wrote for her but he would not allow it. Despite the fact that Angie Best has had quite an eventful and celebrity filled life without George Best and divorced him in 1986, it is clear from the title of her book, *George and Me* (Best with Pittam, 2001), that this is aimed at an audience interested in George rather than her. When asked why this was, she claimed she wanted to get on with her life:

Well because I wrote my menopause book and there was not a mention of a man on any page anywhere in the book and I'd come home to England to promote it and every show I went on, every radio, every newspaper, every television all they wanted to talk about was George and I said for fuck's sake I'm here to promote my menopause book. George George George George George. So I went home and I said that's it, I'm going to write the book they can all fuck off. They can read it and then I can say to them you got questions read the book you know. So I went home it took me one month and all my diaries and it was done. It should never have been done because it went out on September 11th and I'm sitting in the TV studio ready to

promote my book and the bombs went, the planes went into the ... so it never got promoted no promotion whatsoever which was fine with me because I couldn't have cared less anyway I just, I got no money for doing it I just wanted it done so that was it.

(2008, personal interview)

It seems then that the book is about closure with George, quite different to Coleen McLoughlin and Victoria Beckham's books, which emphasise their own lives and independence. Angie claims the book is written out of love not anger in the introduction – perhaps because she thinks her audience expects her to be angry as her husband's bad behaviour was well documented in the press. This draws on discourses of scorned wives, in particular of celebrities who use the media for revenge. She refutes this idea claiming that 'we alone must accept responsibility for what we do' (2001:3). Although implying individuals are responsible for their actions, she does seem to be using this as a means to absolve George of any responsibility for what he did, similar to discourses of abused women assuming responsibility for their abuse. She goes on to state that by telling these stories 'in a way I feel that I am giving George absolution' (Best with Pittam, 2001:9). Angie says of her book:

This is a true story, a very hard story, and the people in it are just plain ordinary folk. Except George of course.

(Best with Pittam, 2001:6)

It does have to be questioned what was so special about George. He was an exceptional footballer but a terrible husband – committing adultery, assaulting his wife and becoming an alcoholic. However, he has obtained absolute loyalty in the eyes of his ex-wife. This is seemingly out of love but may also be to protect herself, their son or a reflection on what she perceives is the public opinion of him. Cynically this can, of course, be seen as a marketing strategy – by not criticising him outright she is not alienating his fans who will buy her book to glean information on him.

Angie deploys a narrative of hope in her book and offers it as advice to other women in the same situation, as well as improving her own self-esteem. She says it was not a success but,

I get letters from women and men who've read it and I keep them all because they are always so nice they all say Jesus I thought you were just another ... until I read your book. I was like yeah well hello!

(2008, personal interview)

Angie provides an fascinating case study on the beginnings and problems of football celebrity in a less media saturated world. However, she has led an interesting life of her own but does not draw out this self in the book, due to its role of satisfying audience demand for gossip on her ex-husband.

Shelley Webb – Footballers' wives tell their tales

Shelley Webb, a wag herself, undertook a writing course in the early 1990s run by dramatist Jimmy McGovern, prior to writing her book. He told her that he never expected to have a footballer's wife on one of his courses to which she responds:

Well, who could blame him. After all, our particular species has been well and truly categorised into the 'dim bird' category. What's more, we're Malibu-drinking bimbos who live in tacky houses and in the TV drama *The Manageress* even indulged in a three in a bed session with the manager....

(Webb, 1998:ix)

In drawing on media discourse of footballers' wives as bimbos, Webb (1998:ix) implies that her book is clearly written to counter this, claiming it is a 'pilgrimage to football wife enlightenment'. Shelley's book is written at a time when footballers' wives were discussed in the newspapers, but not on a regular basis and certainly not with the saturation they receive today but she still marketed it in terms of needing to set the record straight. Webb is a writer and broadcaster and was in the public eye already and was related to football as sports journalist, wife and daughter. It seems likely that Webb chose to write the book as a wife and sports journalist rather than being coaxed by agents and publishers. It provides a more negative perception of the life of a footballer's wife, but it must be borne in mind that the stories are mediated to emphasis a point by Webb.

The focus on the downsides of life as a wag including divorce, adultery and loneliness seem unlikely to appeal to a male audience and possibly even a female audience as it spoils the fairy tale of transformation to a better life by becoming a footballer's 'princess' and obtaining a wealthy, glamorous life of leisure. It is therefore a little unclear who the target audience is. It could be seen as a cautionary tale for women, disputing the benefits of marrying a footballer or possibly an attempt to dispel this myth, which would perhaps work to quell the issue of women trying to seduce married footballers. However, the book's preoccupation with the

mundane and ‘reality’ seems unlikely to sell in a contemporary media market saturated with glamour and celebrity. The selling point of the footballer’s wife story is the escapist and fantastical lives of the fabulously wealthy and famous – particularly as marrying a footballer is like a lottery in that it could happen to anyone.

Victoria Beckham – *Learning to Fly*

Of all the books, Victoria Beckham’s is more of an auto/biography about her whole life – an easier task when you have been part of one of the biggest pop acts in the world, started a solo music career and married the world’s most famous footballer. Although providing a mediated picture of her life, Victoria wants her audience to feel she is divulging a less mediated side of herself – conveying herself as having little confidence and self-deprecating. She appears to be quite intimate about her life, but also uses her book as a tool of revenge. Her writing seems to be a means of gaining self-esteem providing a different image to her press coverage as a Spice Girl, which depicted her as a confident and independent woman. She sends messages to others like her when describing stage school (Laine’s) where they told her she was fat and would not succeed. She explains:

Message to the underdog: I am the most successful person who has ever come out of Laine’s. It doesn’t matter what you look like, it’s all about hard work, determination and self-belief.

(Beckham, 2002:73)

Victoria uses the book to show how far she has come and to help explain who she is now. She recounts her lack of confidence and what appears to be almost a self-loathing of her looks and figure, explaining how the pressure of the band and the media led to an eating disorder. Her success seems to be written as an inspirational tale for others in a similar situation – like much self-help literature. She iterates that she does not like to worry about her appearance all the time as some might expect.

In contrast to other footballers’ wives, Victoria Beckham earned more money and was more famous than David and it seems he pursued her – something he notes in his autobiography when he says he saw her on television and had to find a way for them to meet (Beckham and Watt, 2004). She clearly does not represent a typical footballer’s wife, the Beckhams’ celebrity is so great because they are a couple – neither is dependent on the other for their status but they are both more famous together. Unlike other wives who are dependent on their husbands for

their status, Cashmore (2004) notes that it was Victoria's background in the Spice Girls which gave her the experience in marketing, branding and the importance of image which she has used to advise her husband and manage his celebrity. The life of the Beckhams is like a real life soap opera – the events that have happened to them include death threats, burning effigies, kidnap threats and numerous allegations of affairs and such stories gain and perpetuate interest in the couple offering far more to the audience than other wives' tales. It seems that her marketing and branding background alongside her personal fame would be motivation to publish an auto/biography as a means to bolster the brand and take some control over media coverage.

Coleen McLoughlin – *Welcome to My World*

There was much media speculation about whether Coleen could or would write a book herself and opinions that celebrity novels and auto-biographies are a 'money-spinning, marketing tool for glamour models and wags' (Sutton, 2007 *Mirror*). No evidence can be found that reveals the ghost-writer so this study assumes that the book represents the words of Coleen rather than the focus of a celebrity ghost-writer. It is possible that if there was a co-author they have not been credited because, according to Merritt, in the *Guardian*,

There is a delicate balancing act between acknowledging the hand of the ghost and spoiling the make-believe.

(2008 [online])

McLoughlin (2007a) admits hers cannot be an autobiography and is only based on a few years experience of living in the media. As the title suggests, she is offering a window onto her life and more than the others, this book is written with a specific audience very much in mind – offering tips and advice and positioning herself as a role model. The development of autobiography as a creative rather than a summative process means that this could be seen as part of a move towards young people documenting their lives as they live them (Jelinek, 1980).

In some ways her book represents a kind of self-help manual for girls – it has regular pages which are given over to what can only be described as tips for living your life. It has been argued that

the sports scene and the pop scene offer young people a broad range of identification possibilities and thus take over part of the task of

school, church, and of the family, ... As models of lifestyles, they direct the behaviour in society.

(Tolleneer, 1986:234)

In contrast to media stories that mark her out as lacking in taste, Coleen evidently disagrees and aims to show her world as a model lifestyle. Her book encompasses fashion tips, fashion faux-pas, shopping lists for boyfriends, beauty tips and so on. This leads to the conclusion that the author places herself as a role model or style icon that her readership would listen to and want to emulate – exemplified by her claims of girls from all over the country wanting to know where she gets her clothes. It is this that enables Coleen to create a meaning for herself as a style and youth role model, which opens up a large endorsement market of fashion and beauty products. Cynically speaking the book could be seen as a marketing tool for Coleen and her sponsors. It seems clear that in writing the book itself, Coleen wants to refute the denigration she receives in the newspapers and prove she has her own career and makes her own money – asserting her position as an independent woman.

The ‘wife of’ career

The idea of the career of a footballer’s wife which runs neatly through the media coverage in Chapter 4 is more difficult to follow through the auto/biography. This is perhaps because they are written to give a different side to the story and it emphasises that each of their lives is different rather than following the career that is mapped out in the media. This could also be because of when the books were written – none except Coleen McLoughlin’s were written after the 2006 World Cup when the wag career really took off. This section briefly looks at the beginnings of the wag career and weddings before analysing how these women portray their own careers.

None of the wives discussed could be construed as wannabe wags. Most met their husbands before they were famous or were unaware they were footballers with Angie Best and Victoria Beckham being pursued by their husbands. In terms of cementing the career through a wedding not nearly as much attention is paid to the day itself as is in the printed media and the television series. The Everton wives had some local attention for their weddings – some including press and police to control crowds. For others there is not much said about weddings – perhaps due to constraints of space in books and also because the wedding has only

recently become a focal part of the media coverage which focuses on the wedding day whereas the books focus on the ensuing marriage. Angie Best does talk of her disastrous wedding and Victoria Beckham goes into detail of hers which was perhaps a blueprint for the high profile weddings that followed.

Victoria discusses the decision over whether to sell the rights to her wedding, stating that money was not a consideration as they wanted a private wedding. She said they would definitely not accept money from *Hello!*:

It's known as *Hello!-Goodbye!*; everyone who has their wedding in *Hello!* ends up getting divorced

(Beckham, 2002:332)

However, what clinched the deal was that security would be down to the magazine – the safety of fans became someone else's responsibility and the cost of the security would be absorbed by the magazine on top of the million pounds paid. Victoria wanted a 'romantic Robin Hood medieval theme' with an intimate ceremony and an extravagant party, stating:

Like all little girls I had imagined that my wedding would be a fairy tale. I would be the Princess and David would be the Prince and we'd get married in a castle. And David shared the same dream as me.

(Beckham, 2002:333)

It was this wedding that seemed to fuel the media frenzy around celebrity weddings and clearly inspired the wedding of Kyle and Chardonnay in *Footballers' Wives* the series.

In terms of the job description of a footballer's wife the autobiographies do not reach a consensus – perhaps because of their emphasis on individuality. Certainly the role is referred to as a career by Shelley Webb (1998:37) in relation to the European Cup Winners Cup in 1991 which she says was the first time 'in my "career" as a football wife I got a decent seat'.

The emphasis on being a wife in the contemporary media promotes much discussion; this debate is related to the idea that in a postfeminist society women are now deemed to have economic capacity rather than being directed solely towards marriage and motherhood (McRobbie, 2009). This apparent shift is demonstrated by Angie Best, who notes about her belief that a man made her feel complete was

a rather naïve notion I was slave to for a long time; only in the last few years have I come fully to realise that I can be a totally independent woman. I think women of my generation are betwixt and between. We can still hear our mothers saying ‘You have to find yourself a husband’, but on the other hand we are living our lives now in the midst of a new generation of women who are free-thinking in every way.

(Best with Pittam, 2001:24)

The depiction of footballers’ wives as adjuncts and dependent on their husbands seems to refute this. This positioning appears to be class-based and fixes them as gold-diggers and immoral rather than granting them choice and free-thinking status. However, where espoused in the media, postfeminism is also seen to represent choice and one of these choices is a return to the domestic, a space overlooked by second wave feminism (see Brunson, 2006; Hollows, 2006). Whatever their choice – to work for themselves or adopt a more traditional role in supporting their husbands’ careers – through telling their own stories these women emphasise their financial independence and individual identities as well as discussing the work they do for their husbands and in holding their families together.

In auto/biography for many of the wives their job was about being part of a two-person career and supporting a husband. This can be in terms of Hochschild’s (2003b) concept of emotional labour and also in terms of practical support (Finch, 1983). Despite being the manager’s wife, Kirstene Fry would run the clubhouse bar with her husband and wash the team kits (in Webb, 1998:132). For others, the key role was the emotional labour needed to help their partners through the trials and tribulations of being a footballer. Brigitte Arscott claims partner John Beresford used to bring all his problems home with him following defeats, injuries or being dropped from the team (in Webb, 1998:140). Brenda Thomas noted her husband Dave was difficult to live with from Thursdays due to his mental preparation for the game. He would relive the games in his sleep – once knocking out her tooth (in Tallentire, 2004:123). Some women offer support by moving with their partners; Suzi Walker said she would be ‘heart-broken’ if Ian moved up North but would go as she loved him and wanted to support him (in Webb, 1998:164).

Wives do not only have to engage in emotional labour but also aesthetic labour for their husbands’ image (see Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006; Finch, 1983). Brigitte Arscott felt the onus to play the ‘football

wife' at Newcastle matches and 'dress up a bit' (in Webb, 1998:140). Shelley Webb claims a move to Manchester United started an obsession with looking the part and dressing up for the game. She argues that contrary to how the contemporary wives view their fashion status she states that she wore designer labels but without 'any conviction or method, or indeed talent' – calling herself a fashion disaster (Webb, 1998:28).

The only auto/biography of a contemporary celebrity 'wag' is Coleen McLoughlin's and contrary to discourses that claim nowadays everyone wants to be famous, she appears to imply an almost passive entry into her career in the world of vicarious celebrity. Stating that 'I never went out of my way to capture fame. It was the other way round – fame grabbed me and I have had to deal with it as positively as I can' (McLoughlin, 2007a:192). Coleen describes her successful career, but does not specifically define what this entails. She certainly does not see it as 'a celebrity' and in response to those who criticise her unearned fame she states:

For the record, I have never regarded myself as a celebrity and I never will. I'd go as far as to say I'm well-known. I'm not an actress or a pop star or a model, even though I promote clothes. Hopefully through my fashion and the way I go about life, I am simply someone other girls can relate to, and that's why I'm doing what I do now.

(McLoughlin, 2007:290)

Coleen's career seems to be based on the fact that she is 'normal' and that people can relate to her – she claims her column in *Closer* is rewarding as she is able to help people. She acknowledges that the press coverage she receives has allowed her to carve out a lucrative career with advertising and media contracts (McLoughlin, 2007:74). Coleen emphasises her career in order to obtain the respectability that she is not afforded in much of her newspaper coverage. She stresses her, and her husband's, lack of leisure time due to work commitments in an effort to refute representations of being an idle lady of leisure. She demonstrates how they both work for what they have and that she is not a gold-digger – they are not the undeserving rich. Despite this assertion of her productive labour, she also represents a neo-traditionalist view about her views on women and work:

I've never had the view that a girl needs to go out and get a career in order to somehow justify her existence. If you are in a couple and

you've no need to work, and your partner's happy to support you, then I don't think there is anything wrong with that.

(McLoughlin, 2007:287)

One key part of Coleen's career that she describes is her charity work. Negra and Holmes (2008) claim celebrity virtue can be obtained through social generosity and charity work. Coleen notes that her parents have always fostered children and she has an adopted sister who is disabled. Coleen spends much time discussing her sister Rosie and her condition, Rett syndrome, seeming to want to raise awareness as she was involved in an ITV programme on the subject. It has also led her to raise the issue of funding for hospices, which she maintains are grossly underfunded by the government. After the programme was aired many people knocked on her mum's door to offer money to the local hospice, and as a result of the campaign Tony Blair pledged more funding. This leads her to insist that the hardest part of her career is being asked to help a charity and having to turn it down. Coleen is evidently keen on revealing a more socially aware and generous side to herself than the excessive shopaholic depicted in the newspapers.

Existing work on sports wives notes how the wives are often incorporated into their husbands' career making it difficult to assert their own identity (Ortiz, 1997; 2006; Thompson, 1999). Incorporation in a husbands' career appears to be a pre-feminist trait and the focus on their title as footballers' wives seems to emphasise a return to these traditional roles, perhaps as a response to what some commentators see as the excesses of second wave feminism. In their writing many of the women emphasise their dislike of being portrayed as merely an adjunct to their husband.

Shelley Webb found that even her dad introduced her to people as Neil Webb's wife. She is clearly unhappy about being seen as his 'wife' probably due to the lack of identity this affords her. Explaining how it was 'inevitable... that I fell for a footballer and exchanged the daughter tag for the one of wife', (Webb, 1998:3) and how 'I wasn't Neil Webb, but as his wife I was part of the package' (Webb, 1998:27). Kelly Woan agrees, explaining how she is often ignored by people she is introduced to because they are only interested in her husband and is judged on whether she is good enough for him: 'I'm just an accessory and it doesn't matter how interesting I might be' (in Webb, 1998:104).

This highlights the difficulty for these women in asserting their own identity and helps explain their participation in auto/biography, as it

offers them a means to talk about their identity rather than being subsumed by their husbands'. In emphasising their careers they are asserting their financial independence and economic capacity. For those who choose to bring up their family in what may be deemed a more traditional role they have their emotional labour as wife, mother and keeping a family together impacting on different aspects of their identity. Wives have found numerous ways to enhance their individuality; Pat Labone, for example, joined an amateur dramatic group and after good reviews a journalist introduced Brian as 'this is Pat Labone's husband'. She explains how:

After all these years of being made to feel like a second class citizen lurking in the shadows, it was a great feeling because I'd been seen as a complete person and not as an extension of my husband.

(in Tallentire, 2004:50)

The end of the wag career is not well documented in these books, as these women do not necessarily see their career as being a 'wag'. Coleen stated her hopes for the future were to be married to Wayne Rooney and have children, which she has achieved. Victoria and David Beckham are still together and recently celebrated their fifteenth wedding anniversary. Angie Best's work documents the difficulties of being married to an alcoholic and although she still often cared for George after their divorce she also describes picking herself up and moving on. For the other women discussed here most continued with their 'wife of' role after the football career was over. Shelley Webb specifically details that the end of a football career can lead to the (in this case temporary) break-up of a marriage detailing the difficulties in managing the transition from playing football to finding a new career. Her husband suffered depression following injury, rejection and his eventual move into 'the purgatory that is non-league football' which she claims for an international footballer is 'soul-destroying'. She wrote letters on his behalf for jobs of any kind in football. Eventually she realised she was lonely:

Self-awareness was no substitute for the loss of not only a husband and a father but a best friend.

(Webb, 1998:49)

This eventually led to her leaving Neil – a decision which she says managed to change him back into the man he once was. When questioning

why she had not walked out years ago, Shelley said she had to resolve her own identity crisis first 'to emerge from my own make-believe football wife world' (Webb, 1998:49).

Competitive women and the wannabe

In a postfeminist media, women's biggest enemy is often portrayed as other women (Dow, 1996; McRobbie, 2009). As wealthy footballers are a scarce commodity but are portrayed in the press as accessible to all, this appears to create competition amongst women for their attention. This competition manifests itself most clearly in the wannabe wag described in the press chapter above. As Rowe (1995) argues women are often regarded as groupies in relation to male sports players who have nothing to trade but their sexuality. In their writing the women appear to give credence to this media discourse.

Nearly all the wives complain about the attention players receive from other women. It is implied there is a general perception that players, even those who are married, are seen to be available to all women. Even in the 1960s football was a good job but lacked the money and media attention of today but still appeared to be a sought after commodity. Despite some women such as Sheryl Gascoigne publicly discussing the emotional issues relating to being a football wife, which in some instances lead to infidelity or violence, the lifestyle press and the television series have made the lifestyle appear glamorous and desirable.

Cheryl Hirst suggests the problem of obsessive fans is worse at smaller clubs as the players are more accessible claiming most 'girls seem to think footballer equals money' (in Webb, 1998:158). It is this assumption that makes footballers a target for some women as a way of transforming their lives. For some, the nature of contemporary celebrity means meeting a celebrity provides the opportunity to marry a wealthy man, as well as a chance to sell a story to the papers – contributing to the market for auto/biography and writing about personal relationships. In relation to football stories, the money is only likely to be good if it is a very famous player (or more than one) and there is always the risk of a backlash or cover up. However, if the woman has a minor celebrity status already this can give them a chance of increasing their media coverage.

Coleen McLoughlin describes girls approaching Wayne Rooney with no other intention than to make money. They ask for one picture and if they get it, they ask for another, where they put their hands all over him,

so they can sell it to the papers and make up a story. She appreciates that fans are supportive and important to them but bemoans

how sly people can be. Some girls can be really evil. I trust Wayne but I don't always trust the people he might find himself around.

(McLoughlin, 2007a:20)

Likewise, Victoria Beckham (2002:305) notes that to claim an affair with a footballer, particularly a married one enables such women to launch 'tacky modelling careers'. This desire for fame and fortune is, what the wives believe, the motive to marry a footballer.

Angie Best notes the jealousy of women who also wanted to be with George. In being public property he should not be seen to be attached to one person:

To this day women tell me how much they hated me when they read about our engagement and marriage, about how they ripped down their posters of George when they read about us. I was disliked by his peers, male and female, because in their eyes I was taking their George away from them.

(Best with Pittam, 2001:16)

The wives in all of the books from the 1960s until today describe numerous scenarios of women pursuing players, even in front of their wives. It as if the women are prepared to commodify themselves in order to obtain a footballing husband. Shelley Webb refers to them as 'sirens' (1998:7), while Saunders describes how nightclub employees encouraged such women by bringing them to 'speak' to the players (in Webb, 1998:66).

The discourses surrounding these competitive women desperately seeking a footballer directs much of the criticism at the women themselves and marks them out as pre- or anti-feminist by competing with other women through creating a display of hyper-femininity in order to gain dependence on a man. However, these women are not the only ones who should be criticised. The behaviour and lifestyle of some of the players actively encourages women to throw themselves at them, often at great cost to their reputation or in some cases personal safety. Ortiz (1997) found in US baseball male infidelity is tolerated as part of a loyalty competition between marriage and the team. There is a tension between the loyalty of the husband as a 'real man' or 'one of us'.

Some wives choose to stay at home rather than travel with the club and try to avoid hearing about their husband's infidelity from wives who travel with the team, which helps create a form of collective denial. He views this as 'institutionalised adultery' or an 'adultery culture' (Ortiz, 1997:227). In English football this situation sells newspapers, so infidelities are regularly reported across the media. Benedict (1997) goes as far as to argue many male athletes commit sexual crimes against women because the amount of female attention afforded to them leads them to presume consent.

The wannabe is emphasised as a source of competition, but some women found this was not so amongst the wives themselves. Particularly in the 1960s wives such as Ann West point out that at Everton a number of the players lived near each other and thus the wives became friends (in Tallentire, 2004). Football creates a unique lifestyle due to families having to move frequently, husbands being away and the problems of fame and other women. In this sense women often have to rely on other wives for friendship and Norma Vernon explains that when she had her children she had no family nearby, but the football communities rallied round to help her (in Tallentire, 2004).

Thompson (1999) argued that a number of ice hockey teams expected the wives to bond as a team like players. However in contrast to this, some contemporary newspaper accounts and the fictional television series, tend to pit the wives against each other and insinuate that hierarchies exist among them. A competition is induced between wives based on style, status and wealth. The aesthetic work of a footballer's wife in the media is based on a performance of femininity and wealth. Yet this is not a new theme – Helen Saunders was terrified by her husband's move to Liverpool as it was such a big one. She was told horror stories where the wives had to wear new designer outfits each game or they would be looked down upon:

I was really big after Louisa and I had no confidence. I was just petrified of the extra things that come with a glamorous club like Liverpool.

(in Webb, 1998:65)

Shelley Webb found being a wife at Manchester United very pressured and once moving back to Nottingham Forest she described how it was great to be amongst people they knew – rather than having to compete against or perform with them. In doing so she explains how she had

'been living in some kind of fantasy world with definite delusions of grandeur' (Webb, 1998:44).

Coleen McLoughlin (2007a) notes that it is hard to work out who takes advantage of whom when it comes to footballers and women. She insists that the issues of women selling stories to the press explains, in part, why celebrities often marry other celebrities – because they mix in the same circles and feel safe in each others company. It appears then that a politics of envy exists amongst women regarding footballers as public property. It would be unfair to hold these women entirely responsible, if that is the case, as the lifestyle media and the fame of these players makes them appear accessible to all and some do live a play-boy lifestyle. George Best was entirely complicit in encouraging women and treating them as objects even when he was married. There does appear to be evidence of some competition between the wives themselves depending on the club, but often they are united by their unique, and often isolating, lifestyle.

Fairy tales and cautionary tales

Gitlin (1998) argues that Hollywood stars are the royalty of this century, but in Britain where sport has become one of the main sources of stars and celebrities, footballers and their families have to some extent replaced the aristocracy as people to aspire to be. This highlights a shift in the role models that some of our society looks up to and relates to the normalisation of the desire to be famous (Littler, 2004). Notions of a fairy tale life are no longer linked to marrying a prince but a footballer or a celebrity – the autobiographies of some of the wives use a fairy tale language that supports this view. The blurb on Coleen's book explains:

Her story is a Cinderella fairy tale of an ordinary Liverpool school-girl who was transformed into a style icon and cover girl, sought after by fashion and lifestyle magazines the world over.

(McLoughlin, 2007a)

Stories circulating in the media suggest that many young people want to become famous, but instead of working hard or developing skills to do this, there are shortcuts to fame and fortune. One of these shortcuts is now presented as the Cinderella story of meeting a wealthy footballer. For many of the actual footballers' wives it does not seem to have been their intention to marry a footballer. Some wives in the 1960s claim they did not realise it was possible to earn a living through football. Others

even go as far as to stereotype footballers as not boyfriend material. Shelley Webb says of her husband:

Not that I really had any grand scheme, that the white knight riding towards my goal should be sporting shin-pad armour and a jockstrap codpiece.

(Webb, 1998:4)

Lieberman (1972) argues fairy tales can teach children behavioural patterns, values and ways of predicting the consequences of specific acts or circumstances. In this way, women are taught in part by these tales 'ideas of what they could or could not accomplish, what sort of behaviour would be rewarded, and of the nature of reward itself' (Lieberman, 1972:385). Fairy tales tend to show beautiful, meek and passive girls as being rewarded and ugly, bad tempered girls as being defeated. This, she argues, helps to promote jealousy, division and competitiveness amongst women. Such tales are exemplified by Victoria Beckham when distancing herself from one of the women who claimed to have slept with her husband:

me and David, smiling, really happy, and this girl with permed, streaked hair looking vile . . . two pictures of this slapper with her twin sister.

(Beckham, 2002:303)

Lieberman (1972:387) also maintains that fairy tale narratives depict an obvious reward system, which 'equates being beautiful, being chosen, and getting rich'. This is certainly a theme that readers of the tabloid press and these auto/biographies would equate with meeting and marrying a footballer – wives need to be beautiful and display their wealth to be offered lucrative media and advertising deals. The stories also imply that victims invariably get rescued and rewarded, so women should be passive and not strive to defend themselves. Victoria Beckham writes in terms of being 'rescued' from being ugly, spotty and bullied. This focus on needing to be beautiful in order to be 'chosen' perhaps is reflected in the way wives talk about their appearance and even use their books to impart beauty and fashion tips (McLoughlin, 2007a; see also Beckham, 2007 *That Extra Half an Inch*).

What these women do not conform to is the idea of passivity. These women work hard on their appearance, marriages and careers – they have not been passively selected. It is perhaps this lack of passivity

that contributes to negative images of such women for prioritising her own career over their husbands' and critiques of crass displays of hyper-femininity. Although the books can provide an education in the lived experiences of being married to a footballer, which may contradict the glamour found elsewhere in the media, they also help to perpetuate the myth. In drawing on analogies of fairy tales, and in the more recent publications, describing lifestyles and offering tips on how to follow them helps to perpetuate the idea of the footballing marriage as fairy tale. This fairy tale analogy then provides marketing potential for those wives who are regarded as living the dream.

If the key moral message conveyed via elements of the printed media is that the life of a footballer's wife is 'not what it appears', this is certainly backed up by the wives writing about the negative side of living with footballers. This does not appear to be motivated by a politics of envy as it seems to be elsewhere in the media but does work as a word of caution to young women, perhaps to deter the wannabe wags or 'sirens' that they see as targeting their men, discussed above, or to set the record straight to those aspiring to a footballing fairy tale.

Although not necessarily motivated by envy, some of the older wives who did not experience the financial gains of the Premiership do seem to see a sense of social injustice in the excesses of football. Ann West claims that the wages players earn today are wrong as they earn in a week what a nurse earns in five years, 'I think it's immoral and obscene and it's not doing these kids any good at all' (in Tallentire, 2004:94). One of the other criticisms earlier wives have of the contemporary footballing scene is the press coverage. Brenda Thomas would not like to be a footballer's wife now because of the intrusive nature of the media. She also touches on the morality of the money in football noting that players get paid a lot to entertain, but she likes to think that if they had earned that kind of money they would 'do something useful with it and share it about a bit' (in Tallentire, 2004:129). Annette Scott also notes the pressure and scrutiny on players now, claiming:

They still seem to come from working-class backgrounds but they're suddenly flung into this artificial world with vast amounts of money that some of them just can't handle and they seem unable to live a normal life.

(in Tallentire, 2004:154-5)

Here she is supporting the idea that footballers and their wives are working class and are often unable to manage the transformation to celebrity and wealth with dignity, seemingly placing their failings down

to their class position (Tyler and Bennett, 2010). She goes on to observe how cynical the press coverage is stating:

I feel sorry for David Beckham and his wife; the press were just sitting there waiting for something to go wrong. They love it when that happens because it sells their newspapers. It makes me sick.

(in Tallentire, 2004:155)

Certainly Victoria supports this notion that there is a paradox to how celebrities are viewed through the newspapers:

People outside must think, oh, nice house, nice cars, loadsamoney, flash holidays but they don't realise what goes with it: The fact that my Mum can't listen to the radio or pick up a newspaper without hearing something bad about me.

(Beckham, 2002:479)

In fact where the newspapers and magazines use the footballers' wives to tell morality tales, some of the wives, in particular the contemporary wives, turn the tables on the printed media in terms of questioning their morals.

Angie Best (2001:6) insists that unlike celebrities now they had no control over the media and maintains contemporary wives have more control and 'have their own hotlines to the papers and almost crave the publicity'. She complains not about the press attention but the untruths told:

Admittedly I never really minded having my photo in the paper after a night out, but not when the accompanying story told untruths about my life. So long as the Angie/George/Mary triangle tales sold their rags they were happy.

(Best with Pittam, 2001:186)

Although celebrities today may be able to exploit the media to gain attention and a career, this control is limited (see Turner, 2006). Coleen McLoughlin uses her book to criticise the behaviour of the newspapers. She found her early press to be very negative and upsetting but believes she is now seen as a style icon. Coleen notes that the press attention makes her feel self-conscious about her body, causing her to breathe in or lie down all day to prevent them obtaining unflattering shots of her. However, at times she contradicts this to normalise herself to the

audience – that she is just like everybody else when referring specifically to a photo used during the World Cup on a water ride:

There are other people who might get upset at having millions of people see you like that, but we're just two normal girls, acting our age, being real.

(McLoughlin, 2007:120)

She seems to be giving a word of caution about the impact being a celebrity can have on your life. At one point Coleen lists newspaper stories and then explains to her readers what 'actually happened'. Informing her readers that she hates the way rumours are able to become fact in the papers, yet states:

I'm not blaming the public, because not so long ago I used to believe near enough everything I read in the newspapers.

(McLoughlin, 2007:33)

Here she is educating her readers not to believe everything they read in the media – Victoria Beckham also frequently argues that the media misrepresent and misunderstand her.

This media attention invokes a morality issue over greed – the newspapers insisting everyone has a price for a story. Some women obviously sell kiss-and-tell stories as previously discussed and in other cases friends sell stories. Coleen claims a number of her friends have been approached by the papers, but all her true friends have refused to speak to them, with those who sold stories being deemed only acquaintances. Victoria Beckham notes that at one point, when she was struggling with whom to trust, she even accused her sister over a leak to the media.

Victoria Beckham regards the media as a tool by which people are able to hurt her. An ex-boyfriend sold his story to *The Star* for £60,000. Then when her son Brooklyn was born, the *Evening Standard* valued the first picture of Brooklyn at £25,000. The couple did not want to provide pictures of the baby but someone attempted to sell pictures to *The Sun*. She asks:

What kind of people would stoop to something like that? If that wasn't private, what was? We were like public property.

(Beckham, 2002:326)

This frenzy of coverage, she argues, fuels obsession with celebrities and creates other problems as well as issues of trust. As a couple David and Victoria have suffered hate mail, including bullets sent to David's house – one for each of them (Beckham, 2002:222). They have also had kidnap threats made against their son and had to employ personal security, and she claims to have lived in a bubble of fear for nine months. The book eventually clarifies that all of this fear was orchestrated and the paranoia induced in a range of ways by their security guards and the media. She insists she genuinely had no idea of who to trust. Talking of the death threats, she says that 'the nation had an unhealthy obsession with "Posh and Becks"' (Beckham, 2002:375) and fails to understand how people they have never met could hate them so much. It is possible this may have inspired the *Footballers' Wives* kidnap story in which the perpetrator blames the couple for parading themselves and their family in the media. In the series this was told as a moral story about excess and displays of wealth – based on a politics of envy and concerns over social justice.

Glamorous lifestyles and conspicuous consumption

The trope of conspicuous consumption and lifestyle throughout, certainly the more recent, accounts of footballers' wives serves to fuel the discourses in the media surrounding glamour, wealth and conspicuous consumption. Tallentire's (2004) account, which focuses largely on women in the 1960s has much less evidence of conspicuous consumption, although many state that they had a privileged life compared to the average worker. These couples invested in businesses and pensions due to the short-lived nature of football careers – no doubt because the media and endorsement deals were far more limited than now. Yet there is a comparable situation for those in the lower leagues now wishing to secure their futures after football. Like depictions of wives at glamorous parties in the contemporary media, many frequently describe looking forward to the big nights out after the game, often choosing to have their hair done in preparation rather than watching the match. Despite the similarities there were clearly different levels of consumption and finance in the game as according to Janet Royle, she had her sons' Christmas presents put aside at the toyshop and paid for them weekly – with the great financial wealth surrounding premiership football now this would seem an unlikely scenario (Tallentire, 2004).

Many of the Everton wives recall being taken to Torremolinos with the club in the 1960s as a reward for the team's success, somewhere

they thought exotic, and it was the first time many of them had flown. Pat Labone and Celia Morrissey recall this trip because they were not allowed to go as they were not married. This kind of moralistic stance was in keeping with the times and appears alien compared to the sexualisation of women and kiss-and-tell stories related to football now. It does though have some contemporary resonance with Coleen McLoughlin, who was prevented from attending the Sports Personality Awards with her boyfriend by David Moyes, Everton manager, because they were only 16 (McLoughlin, 2007a:66).

Angie Best does not seem to conspicuously consume during her relationship with George, claiming much of his money was spent on alcohol. She writes of continually having trouble getting maintenance money from George, both during and after their marriage – according to her he was always useless with money and did not really have very much. She asserts, 'I certainly didn't love him and marry him for his money, did I?' (Best with Pittam, 2001:184). However, she also dated a number of famous and wealthy men, which afforded her a lifestyle many can only dream of – one time receiving a Rolls Royce as a gift that she swapped for a beach buggy. When writing about conspicuous consumption she claims, 'It is wonderful to receive gifts, but deep down I did not really care for all these material possessions' (Best with Pittam, 2001:27).

In an interview though Angie does admit to retail therapy:

I remember when George used to go on a bender and he'd come home and I'd just grab him by the arm and take him out and make him buy something because that was my present, my reward for putting up with this silly drunken bum. I got fur coats, got diamonds, got everything. It was just stupid at the time, you know, but you had to have something that made you feel better cos you were treated like a fucking doormat.

(2008, personal interview)

Contemporary wives, such as Cheryl Cole discussed above, maintain money is no reason to put up with infidelity. Angie's tale provides a form of moral education for her readers, stating in regard to later relationships that money was not everything:

I fooled myself for many months into thinking that I could substitute happiness with diamonds and furs and allowed myself to be seduced by the smell of money. I should have known better than that.

(Best with Pittam, 2001:200)

Perhaps acknowledging the critiques about her high-spending lifestyle, Coleen McLoughlin finishes her book proclaiming that her hopes and dreams for the future are not material, but health and happiness, married to Wayne with a family – iterating the fairy tale happy ever after. Despite these non-material claims conspicuous consumption is never far away in her book and she compounds her media stereotype of being a shopaholic. She name-drops a number of designers, her friend's shop and the companies she has advertising contracts with, although she insists she is not getting commission for mentioning them. In light of these contracts she points out that designer brands are not necessary, as the high street provides good clothes too. Yet the assertion provides a clear divide between the author – who always buys the designer product – and the reader who has to make do with the cheaper brands she recommends. Even when talking about the Saturday job she had in a New Look store when she was 16, she still emphasises her priorities on spending when talking about having to wear their clothes for work, she was 'more than happy about because they used to have a nice designer range by Luella at the time' (McLoughlin, 2007a:45).

These comments can be read as patronising to those unable to afford the finer things in life invoking envy in the reader, but Coleen continually refers to knowing where she has come from, acknowledging how lucky she is and normalising herself to the audience. Again in light of what is written about her elsewhere in the media, where she provokes attacks from those who feel she should not have access to this kind of money or that it is morally wrong to conspicuously consume, she can use this defence of knowing where she comes from to justify that she deserves to spend money because she appreciates it and has earned it.

McLoughlin, like Best, exercises caution to her readers when discussing her wealth and spending. She explains when she was 17 and Wayne 18, they bought a million pound house, which she decorated as she did not have much else to do having just left school. Although this would seem idyllic to many she did not like living there as it was a long way from friends and family, she cried for the first two weeks feeling too young for this move. She now lives in her 'dream house' but insists they do not live a lifestyle with servants at their beck and call or celebrities around every night – at home they are no different than any other young couple who live together who 'laugh, argue, irritate, bad habits' (McLoughlin, 2007a:238). Again, the reader seems to be reminded that money cannot buy you happiness, despite being bombarded with images of conspicuous consumption.

Victoria Beckham seems almost beyond conspicuous consumption – perhaps because she came from a relatively well off background – few kids grow up with a Rolls Royce and a pool in the garden. It is interesting that despite a wealthy upbringing herself, Victoria distinguishes the ‘old-monedied’ from the ‘nouveau riches’. Describing a friend she states:

She'd had a different kind of upbringing to me; her family was really well-off, but understated in an old-money kind of way.

(Beckham, 2002:78)

Like others, Victoria seems to experience some incongruity with her position. Her lifestyle is certainly of the rich and famous – she talks of a trip to the Versace show in Milan that included private helicopters, limousines, hotels and a stay in Gianni Versace's room at his house as well as being able to pick an outfit from their shop. Despite this Victoria still felt like an outsider among the stars and complained that the fashion industry was bitchy. She spent her time talking to a hairdresser and Donatella's husband:

I felt far more comfortable with them than with the lovely-darling, mwoi-mwoi, fashion week darling, fuckwit celebrities.

(Beckham, 2002:236)

There perhaps comes a time when there is little need for conspicuous consumption as in Victoria's case most things are free – often borrowing houses for holidays, her wedding dress and shoes were presents from Vera Wang and Manolo Blahnik respectively. The designer at Gina made her a special pair of boots for a birthday present and even replaced all of her shoes for free when her suitcases were stolen. It seems that, unlike other footballers' wives who are seen as women to be distanced from, she is regarded as a potential marketing vehicle for certain designers.

Class judgements

It is the conspicuous consumption discussed above that often leads to class judgements being conferred on footballers' wives in the newspapers. Despite the idea of women aspiring to the fairy tale of marrying a footballer a number of footballers' wives seem to question why they receive so much press and feel it can be quite derisory. The wives are

subjected to symbolic violence through being denied respectability and taste (Bourdieu, 2001; McRobbie, 2004; Skeggs, 1997). The focus on ‘status, affluence and body image’ provides a space for wags to emerge as figures of both aspiration and style whilst simultaneously being categorised as trying too hard, lacking style and morality – largely based on their assumed class position (McRobbie, 2004:104). This paradox is recognised by the wives:

All the press attention surrounding the Wags was unbelievable. The Wags? I don’t even like that label and here I am using it... it just seems to me like a sneery way of describing all the England footballers’ wives and partners.

(McLoughlin, 2007a:7–8)

Although it is perhaps not a particularly nice label, the categorisation of these women and the volume of ‘news’ it has generated has created the press attention needed to enable Coleen McLoughlin in particular to embark on her chosen career as well as providing a springboard for others. Coleen even claims that ‘none of us asked for it’ (McLoughlin, 2007a:8) suggesting passivity with the media, but she fails to consider that sustaining such attention requires effort and tenacity, particularly in enduring the bad press – it becomes a full-time job. Initially Coleen found that the tabloids were scathing of her dress sense and claims some designers will not sell clothes to wags as they do not convey the right image. However, once *Vogue* magazine invited her to do a photo-shoot she became hailed as a style icon – she claims the editor’s rationale was the

magazine’s reputation for featuring contemporary culture and that it was their job to record what was going on in the world of glamour, style and fashion. I was apparently, part of a new breed of girls – I was still only eighteen years old at the time – whose style and shopping habits were increasing the awareness of designer brands and changing the face of shopping. She went on to describe me as a fashion phenomenon.

(McLoughlin, 2007a:90–1)

The media attention to her shopping and dress sense allowed Coleen to be recognised as a ‘fashion phenomenon’ or as someone who could influence what young girls wear. In her book Coleen sees herself as style icon, yet as discussed above the *Vogue* interpretation was slightly

different, with the editor Alexandra Shulman insinuating she was more passive in the process:

She was a bit nervous about the clothes... She said she never would have thought about buying what we put her in. But I believe she has bought a couple of the pieces since the shoot... She clearly knows about fashion and she is incredibly sweet and very pretty... The idea to feature her came from an initial idea that we wanted to do something on Footballers' Wives to tie in with the television series. It evolved into Coleen on her own because we were intrigued by the fact that she had become so famous but had never been photographed by anybody apart from the paparazzi – and who does look good in paparazzi photos?

(Shulman, 2005 Vogue [online])

It seems as if that they wanted to style Coleen so that her influence would teach young women to dress 'properly'.

As well as being denigrated on the basis of taste, wags are often marked out as stupid or bimbos. Suzi Walker complains that the *Cutting Edge* documentary made about footballers' wives tried to label her as a typical football bimbo, a label she links to having been a page three model (in Webb, 1998:159,163). It is unclear here whether she sees the label attached to her status as a wag or as a page three model but shows how the wag is just one in a long line of labels used to classify women who are deemed to be working class, immoral and unintelligent. This was a stereotype pervasive even in the 1960s and 1970s when wives did not have much public attention. Maureen Harvey explains she was happy to be an anonymous wife and have nothing to do with the club. However, she was prepared to stand up and be counted in reaction to the *Daily Mirror* printing that Don Revie's wife was intelligent unlike most players' wives – she took exception to this and wrote to the paper which printed her letter (in Tallentire, 2004).

A more recent press report, however, claims the government believes wags are 'inspirational' as many of them have achieved at least five good GCSEs setting an 'excellent example to youngsters' – some even have or are studying for a degree. This is used as a word to the wise implying that these women did have to work hard – they did not just marry a footballer:

Despite their party-loving fashionista image, most took their studies seriously, the LSC [Learning Skills Council] said, adding that at least

nine of England's highest-profile Wags gained five C grades in their GCSEs, or better.¹

They are quick to point out that those who succeeded without qualifications were lucky. This seems to be one of the first times that wags have been perceived as a positive role model in the media or an acknowledgement of the role model and thus influential status these women now have. However by calling them wags, it uses a term that draws on the discourses of lack – in terms of morality, taste and intelligence – so this is only a tacit acknowledgement of their achievements as they are still positioned as lacking through being named wags.

Not all the women in these books share the same background – not all are working class despite the media implying they are a coherent group sharing similar characteristics. Class is certainly an issue for many. Both in terms of being a victim of class stereotyping and derogation and for those who do this to others. In terms of denigration through class and taste, Wayne Rooney and Coleen McLoughlin have experienced some of the worst coverage in the media and Coleen's reiteration of the negative press stories highlight how this has an impact on her and how she believes others perceive her. She recounts stories and then refutes them or gives the correct details to imply the newspapers are wrong:

In one newspaper they said I went down to dinner wearing a Burberry-style dress, playing on all that chav rubbish. It was Missoni.

As Rooney is disgraced again, read the latest gloriously tacky episode of designer-loving, comfort-eating, bank-emptying, Merc-driving, jewellery-dripping, Wayne-forgiving ... Queen Coleen. [referring to her media title of 'Queen of Chavs']

(*Daily Mail* both in McLoughlin, 2007a:156)

Coleen and Wayne are offended both by the derogatory statements made about them and being linked to chav culture. They clearly understand that being marked out as a chav means being turned into 'abject, gauche, excessive tragi-comic figures' (Tyler and Bennett, 2010:2). As well as selecting newspaper articles that produce depictions of Coleen as a chav she also claims that the fictional TV series *Footballers' Wives* has a lot to answer for and links it to press images:

Their stereotype of the footballer's wife or girlfriend seems to be all about bad taste, greed, Sunday newspaper kiss 'n' tell stories

and controversy, as if our day-to-day lives are some kind of soap opera.

(McLoughlin, 2007a:183)

Despite the criticism, unlike others she defends her working class background and continually claims she will not forget where she has come from and recognises that they are lucky, though she notes that Wayne has achieved his place through hard work. Tyler and Bennett (2010:1) argue that certain celebrities are seen as 'exploitative parvenus' and this is clearly seen through the discourses surrounding footballers' wives as gold-diggers. As discussed above, the footballer provides a means of class transformation for many young women – the wannabe wags – but this focus on the footballer and his money serves to mark out all footballers' wives as gold-diggers and thus part of an immoral working class seeking transformation.

Such discourses of gold-digging fail to account for the peculiarities of life being married to a footballer. Ortiz (2006) argues that within sport marriages, women are not usually employed and their husbands often prefer this as her financial dependence provides him with more influence in the relationship. He argues that some women comply with this as it is essential to keep the family functioning. However in reality, work choices for these women are often restricted due to the transient nature of a footballing career. In the wake of such accusations, wives are keen to clarify that they knew their husbands before they were famous and did not chase them down for their money. Some clearly do not wish to comply with this power exercise as many have their own career and are financially independent. Women such as Brigitte Arscott claim they are determined to have a career despite the fact that many, including her partner John, think she is mad. She says she has supported herself for so long that she misses her independence (in Webb, 1998:142). These working women may be of a different class to their husbands in terms of career and education, but as a result of the media descriptions portraying dependence on a husband, all wives continue to be critically judged as working class and immoral for not participating in the economy and being part of the undeserving rich.

Victoria and David Beckham appear to buck the stereotypes by both being famous and having reasonably middle class backgrounds. In contrast to the other women who have class judgements made against them, Victoria at times seems to compound critical working class stereotypes of others despite acknowledging that the press criticise her

and David for their lack of taste and education. Her media alter ego of 'Posh' is used as ironic but perhaps one she herself aspires to. Victoria has always had a rough ride with the tabloids perhaps because they prefer the 'working class person made good' story rather than 'privilege' succeeding (Beckham, 2002; Beckham and Watt, 2004).

Victoria explains her school was between two council estates, while describing herself as a different background to other pupils. On meeting a fellow pupil before starting high school she was asked if she was 'bussing it' – not knowing what this meant and having never been on a bus before – it was clarified as a question about going to school by bus to which she replied '... no. I'm going in the Rolls Royce' (Beckham, 2002:45–6). She claims she was the only pupil in the proper uniform as no-one else could afford it, insisting she was a misfit who did not want to be like the others – who looked like they had no mothers to look after them. She goes on to state that the 'rough element' at the school threatened her and her teachers had to walk her up the road to prevent her from being beaten up (Beckham, 2002:45–8).

It is a paradox that someone writing a book criticising stereotypes of herself then goes on to stereotype and denigrate the working class and then football fans. This statement draws on negative discourses of football fans and 'Brits abroad' and may be a form of recourse for the treatment Victoria has suffered at their hands:

Or what about a nice line in Union Jack shorts with white socks, sandals and a beer belly, like the fashion icons that filled the screens in Marseilles when England played the first match against Tunisia on 15 June?

(Beckham, 2002:277)

Like other wives, Victoria notes the continuity in negative stereotypes about working class women and perhaps playing to her alleged 'posh' persona attempts to distance herself from them:

I wasn't actually born in Caxton Road, I was born in a hospital in Harlow, but for years I tried to forget about that because Harlow is in Essex. Spice Girl yes, Essex Girl, no.

(Beckham, 2002:31)

She sees her Spice Girl persona as a form of strength, as it involves notions of girl power whereas the Essex girl is clearly a source of

denigration. Suzi Walker also looks to rebut the link between Essex and footballers, stating:

But huh, I came from Surrey and now I live in Hertfordshire so there's no hint of Essex!

(in Webb, 1998:164)

In this sense some of the women are helping to perpetuate the stereotypes levelled against them in the media by conferring them on others. Both footballers and their wives appear synonymous with Essex, chavs and the working class in much of the media attention regardless of their background. This demonstrates that the media and the wives themselves draw on a long line of negative class stereotypes when discussing their own lives and those of other footballing wives.

Conclusions

Looking at all the books together helps build up a historical account of societal changes, changes in women's attitudes and the nature of celebrity. Many of the older wives appear to view contemporary football and footballers' wives in relation to the money earned and the amount of press coverage they receive. They claim not to have received much press attention in the 1960s – their husbands were more local or in some cases national figures but certainly not general celebrities or global icons. Angie and George Best provide a clear exception to this, highlighting that celebrity status was attainable but only for a few, unlike now when it appears accessible to all. George was able to earn additional money from advertising and both of them received a lot of press coverage from the late 1960s into the 1970s but this was far more limited than today. Angie states in her book that she liked it when George moved to the USA as he was not recognised and when he returned to the UK he had lost much of his celebrity status. By the 1980s, Suzi Barnes recounts that footballers were already part of the celebrity scene but this was not in the same way as they are now (in Webb, 1998:180). David Beckham and Wayne Rooney exemplify a new global footballing celebrity. In stark contrast to George Best being anonymous in the USA, David Beckham arrived in Los Angeles to be greeted by the paparazzi. The global nature of the contemporary media has enabled him and his wife to turn themselves into global icons beyond their respective careers of footballer and pop star and they continue to generate intrigue and speculation.

The auto/biography demonstrates the highs and lows of being married to a footballer. The wives use their books to confirm and confer stereotypes of other women such as the wannabe wags whilst simultaneously attempting to dispel stereotypes and negative images about wives by emphasising their work, both paid and emotional labour, as well as their own identities. The life is represented as a fairy tale but this comes with words of caution, as the wives explain to young women that life married to a footballer is not all it seems. They also provide cautionary tales about the ethics of the media and the invasion of privacy as well as wannabe wags who will pursue footballers in pursuit of this fairy tale.

Although the role of a footballer's wife has changed since the 1960s, due to the impact of the celebrity media, there are themes that run throughout these women's lives including the tension between club and family commitments. Certainly many of the wives felt lonely, bringing up children on their own because football always came first. David Beckham was perhaps the first to publically break this mould declaring in his auto/biography that his decisions to move club have been based around his family not just football and that his family are what matters most in his life (Beckham and Watt, 2004). He is able to display this due to his superstar success and his importance to clubs in terms of both marketing and football; however, lower league players who have less power often have to submit to the clubs wishes (see Roderick, 2006b).

This loneliness is tempered, for many observers, by the amount of money and the luxury lifestyle of the contemporary wives. It seems that the attempts at 'realism' such as in Shelley Webb, Becky Tallentire and Angie Best's books have failed to abate the desire of women to marry a footballer. Certainly in Victoria and Coleen's books the lifestyle seems to outweigh the bad, with these two providing a self-help approach to show how any girl can make it. Coleen goes as far as to provide pages devoted to tips and lists for girls to follow and it seems that these will perpetuate the wannabe wag.

The books clearly draw intertextually on contemporary discourses surrounding footballers' wives throughout the media. Certainly Coleen who, more than the other wives discussed here, is subjected to the material effects of being deemed a 'wag' devotes more space to discussing her reactions to other media. She spends considerable time correcting media stories and untruths, and even has a chapter entitled 'We're not all called Chardonnay or Cristal' drawing on the *Footballers' Wives* television series. She believes the series is responsible for generating much of the prejudiced perceptions of real footballers' wives. Coleen regards the series as a blueprint for the newspaper coverage, akin to a real life

footballing soap opera, arguing that if there is no story then the press will often just make it up.

It is possible to see in this chapter the impact of the media, both fact and fiction, on the lives of these women. It also highlights the notion of a fairy tale life with the footballer as the knight in shining armour. Although representative of auto/biography these books had quite different intentions and audiences. They represent a mediated version of the 'reality' of being a footballer's wife.

7

Conclusions – What’s in a Name?

This book is a discussion of both continuity and social change in the role of celebrities, wives and women in British society as represented in various parts of the media. A seemingly innocuous acronym with a denotative meaning of ‘wives and girlfriends’ has become a powerful signifier of femininity and class – one used both as an opportunity by some women and a weapon of symbolic violence against them. It follows Gill’s (2007) argument that the media provides an entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist ideas which constitute a postfeminist media culture. Discourses surrounding the footballer’s wife demonstrate pre-, feminist and anti-feminist attitudes to the role of these women. Their role is further complicated by the intersection of class and gender. In particular, working class female celebrities have class judgements made about them and their lifestyles throughout the media. This fixes them as abject others and promotes debate about morality, social justice and conspicuous consumption. The wives appear to represent a return to an emphasis on traditional marriage patterns and dependence on a husband. This return to the domestic is often held up to be one of the choices of postfeminism but also perhaps reflects the patriarchal nature of football (see Brunsdon, 2006; Hollows, 2006). The book exemplifies how, on the surface, contemporary celebrity appears more democratic and accessible to all but as the producers of the media remain an elite group, certain figures are used to highlight transgressions to neo-liberal principles of meritocracy, such as undeserved wealth, or to middle class ideas of femininity and morality. Consequently, they are derided for their lack of cultural capital and taste and serve as a cautionary tale to others (Negra and Holmes, 2008; Turner, 2006; Tyler and Bennett, 2009/2010).

The footballer’s wife has been able to capture the public’s imagination due to a range of social changes that have created the conditions

for celebrity and football to become an essential part of news and magazines' repertoire. Football is Britain's favourite sport and has long monopolised media sports coverage. The globalised culture industry has led to an increasing demand for celebrities and celebrity gossip and the amount of media (satellite television, newspapers, magazines, internet) that need filling has allowed the proliferation of celebrities. They include not only those who represent traditional stardom, through achievement or having a talent such as footballers, but also their wives and their glamorous lifestyles, who have access to the right parties and nightclubs and can provide gossip on some of the nation's favourite idols.

This book has examined the symbol of the wag and the discourses that surround her in various types of media, which provide a range of messages about the footballer's wife but have also created a pervasive and grotesque stereotype of a gold-digging, bimbo desperately clinging on to a man for his money and her identity. The individual texts used here disseminate strong messages but their real power is in their relation with other texts which serve to strengthen this stereotype. It is this interplay of meanings that has created moral codes and representations of footballers' wives which appear natural and true rather than media-generated myths. Analysing a range of media helps to demonstrate how a multi-faceted concept has been generated with differential appeal to various audiences – newspaper and celebrity magazine readers, chick lit and celebrity autobiography readers, television drama viewers and footballers' wives accounts of themselves. The wives can be viewed as textual devices providing young women with a range of meanings and morals. The newspapers, magazines and the television series have all combined to depict a life similar to a fairy tale or soap opera. All three portray a wealthy and glamorous lifestyle which when intertwined creates a representation that blurs fact and fiction. What differs between these representations is the treatment of this wealth and glamour.

Such celebrity without talent is often depicted as fleeting. It is not likely that people will idolise one particular footballer's wife for a long time, apart from anything else her husband's career will eventually come to an end, lessening his celebrity and thus her vicarious access to the media and her ability to be seen in the right places may disappear. The ephemerality of fame based on media coverage alone may mean the wife has a short lifespan in the spotlight unless she has been able to produce her own identity and career. The wag figure, however, appears to be an enduring concept – beginning in 1997 with Victoria and David Beckham becoming a couple, peaking during the 2006 World Cup and

still appearing in the press to date. It seems that the footballer's wife or wag as an image has longevity regardless of the women who fall under its umbrella. In contemporary Britain women are increasingly portrayed as wives rather than by their own identity, as the term wag becomes applied not only to those married to footballers but also other sport stars, aristocrats and politicians. It demonstrates a return to a more conservative view of women's role, as one of wife, and encourages discourses of marriage as a means of respectability and achieving femininity. Unlike many celebrity star studies this book is not about a specific star but an umbrella term representing a range of women with the job title of wag conferring celebrity status rather than the person.

Lifestyle magazines, such as *Hello!* and *OK!*, depict the wives as akin to aristocracy, displaying glamorous clothes, large houses and a fairy tale lifestyle. This demonstration of a romantic and seemingly perfect life has created a lifestyle that others aspire to. The coverage borders on the sycophantic and in this case the wives can do no wrong. It has created a fairy tale representation of these women which has led to a desire among young girls to marry a footballer, not least for the glamorous wedding itself.

This coverage emphasises the role of these women as the wives of someone famous. The 'wife of' role has been portrayed as a career in the newspapers and how young women see this as a more achievable goal than working for their own career and identity – in the postfeminist media gender equality is presumed to have been achieved and women can now return to domesticity and dependence as a lifestyle choice. A magazine like *heat* that seeks to show the 'real' lives of celebrities has a much less sycophantic approach and provides a behind the scenes look at celebrity thus normalising them to the audience. The fictional television series *Footballers' Wives* incorporates a range of representations showing glamour, greed and grit. More importantly it includes actual footballers and celebrities at parties and events in the show and portrays the characters using or worrying about magazines and newspapers making it appear as real life. In this sense it helps to perpetuate the idea that the lives of all footballers' wives are like soap operas. It also contributes to the stereotype of wags as grotesque and manipulating. Whilst elsewhere in the media women's return to middle class domesticity is seen as chic and respectable, for these fictional women the return to the domestic is seen as tasteless and desperate to retain an undeserved and immoral lifestyle.

In a media world saturated with celebrities, being a provider of gossip on these people has now become another way to gain fame. Wives

are well positioned to provide gossip on both their husbands and the closed world of football, as well as exposing what it is like in the world of the celebrity. Their access to parties and nightclubs enables them to obtain their own media attention and to provide information and gossip on what this world is like in this sense their stories work like *heat* magazine or reality TV to unpack the workings of the celebrity world. This provides such women with a space to write auto/biography; for some this is through magazine interviews and columns and for others in the form of books. In emphasising their normality through being a wife, their background and divulging the details of their private life, footballers' wives are able to identify with their audience whilst at the same time the wealth they have access to and their material possessions allow them to draw boundaries and differentiate themselves as celebrities and extraordinary.

Coleen McLoughlin specifically exemplifies the world of aspirational celebrity and how to work this to your advantage. She writes as if providing a self-help guide for those wanting to live like her and perpetuating the fairy tale of becoming wealthy and a star overnight. Coleen writes about both the mundane and extraordinary seemingly documenting her life as she lives it rather than reflecting on a life lived. It is also possible to see books such as hers as a form of celebrity endorsement – not just for the products she endorses but for herself as a product. She has been able to write her own magazine columns, has published (ghostwritten) children's books, produced her own perfume and a fitness DVD all of which require her to develop and sustain a particular image which she has done through writing about herself.

Contribution

This book contributes to work examining at a postfeminist media culture, a claim that the media simultaneously pays lip service to the success of second wave feminism, making feminism appear unnecessary whilst representing dilemmas for women making certain life choices and masking continuing inequalities. There appears to have been a shift from the 1980s and early 1990s when women in the media were portrayed as strong, independent individuals to an era where women face choices and dilemmas. The wives appear to represent the idea that, in postfeminist culture, marriage is important for achieved femininity although for working class celebrity wives marriage often means being represented as gold-diggers (Negra and Holmes, 2008). This study supports new directions in celebrity research, which suggest that

the postfeminist media selects certain groups of women and marks them out for making poor choices – something exemplified by the treatment of the wags (Fairclough, 2008; Negra and Holmes, 2008; Tyler, 2008). The performance of femininity required to obtain a footballer is represented as over-the-top and wannabes are maligned as competitive and desperate. The wives' excessive wealth and consumption is depicted as profane – they are the undeserving rich due to their dependence on their husbands, lack of productive work and taste. This seems based on jealousy on the part of the middle class journalists, and their presumed audiences, who seek to distance themselves from those they view as working class despite their wealth as well as imposing a form of social control by creating moral codes around the lives and behaviour of young women.

The wag symbol firmly places these women as adjuncts to their husbands. If they have their own career they are unsupportive and bad wives but if they distract their husbands too much they are quickly condemned. It represents dilemmas for women surrounding marriage and personal fulfilment. The symbol presents dependence on a man as aspirational rather than an independent career, although this is a double-edged sword as women run the risk of accusations of gold-digging rather than supporting their husband in a two-person career. The media downplays these women's personal achievements and highlights their relationships and the romance of a wedding and marriage. The media gloss seems to imply that the wags have control over their own lives whilst simultaneously acting as a form of social control on their behaviour. This social control is in contrast to the treatment of footballers who are rarely condemned for their misogynistic treatment of women. Although some players have been criticised for their behaviour in the media, they often obtain support for their performances on the pitch and transgressions are easily forgotten. The construction of the predatory wannabe wag has also worked to absolve players of responsibility for some of their deviant sexual behaviour.

It is not only postfeminism that is important in the treatment of these women but also class. Through analysing the treatment of the wag in the media this work demonstrates that the UK is still riven with class divisions which are played out through the media as it distinguishes people through culturally based class stereotypes. This book supports a cultural understanding of class in particular that the working classes are now classified on the grounds of lack of taste and cultural capital rather than a lack of economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Hayward and Yar, 2006; Lawler, 2004; 2008b). The contemporary celebrity world, and

in particular the footballing world, bring about contradictions and complications to traditional markers of class such as wealth and occupation. Football has traditionally been seen as a working class occupation but with the increasing amounts of money in the game and the top players being some of the wealthiest young people in the country, it is unlikely that they can be identified as working class. Top footballers are high in economic capital, but often low in educational capital, because in their early years they concentrate on their football rather than academic qualifications. In terms of socio-economic background, it is often presumed that footballers are working class and this is often the source of the denigration against these couples. This is perhaps because the working classes should not include ladies of leisure and conspicuous consumers and do not follow the cultural etiquette and tastes of the middle and upper classes. As a result of their encroachment on a space reserved for the middle and upper classes, these young, glamorous and working class couples are disparaged on the basis of their lack of taste and lack of productive work in an attempt to stifle their social mobility.

Football is, at times, portrayed as a hobby or privilege rather than a job and therefore not worthy of the money paid to top level players which induces envy in others who then denigrate aspects of their lives. The wives by association are even less deserving because they are living off their husband's earnings rather than engaging in productive work. Footballers and their wives promote debates on social justice – for some marrying a player is a way to obtain upward social mobility whereas for others their wealth and status through marriage highlights injustice. Although these couples highlight to some a democratisation of celebrity and distribution of wealth, in a society that predicates itself on meritocracy they provoke much outrage. The players represent a form of meritocracy in terms of the skill required to reach the upper echelons of football but this is not so for their wives. They are seen to work hard on their aesthetic appearance but are viewed as having no other talent and therefore are undeserving of their wealth and media coverage. The working class status of this group seems to be based on culture, taste and education rather than wealth and occupational status.

For these reasons, the wives, like celebrity chavs, seem to invoke a moral debate in some areas of the media about how young women should live their lives (see Hayward and Yar, 2006; Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2009/2010). As part of the celebrity underclass the wives are often treated with contempt, but this causes concern that others aspire to be like them. From a conservative position portraying young,

glamorous women as adjuncts to their husbands and happy to support their career serves to reinforce a patriarchal tradition. However, the wives fail to live up to domestic chic and subordination to their husband's career by being depicted in nightclubs and shopping rather than in the home. This has led to a moralistic element to the coverage of these women – again perhaps based on envy, as they often have more glamour and money than those who write about them. Women are told that money cannot buy love or taste. The wives are symbolically denied social mobility because their nouveau riche spending patterns are seen as distasteful and vulgar. At certain points the media has embraced these women as if to use them to disseminate particular meanings to young women. For example in *Vogue's* use of Coleen McLoughlin, the editor demonstrates her control over what Coleen wore in the photo-shoot stating that these were clothes that she might not have picked herself whilst simultaneously marking her out as someone whose style people aspire to. It seems that by controlling what she wears they are attempting to increase their circulation figures and demonstrate to her fans what they should wear in something akin to *What Not to Wear* on a massive scale (see McRobbie, 2004).

Despite the media focus on wives appearing as adjuncts to their husbands, many are quick to try and build up their own identity and create jobs for themselves within the media. In this sense they perhaps represent a less conservative representation of women. In a postfeminist fashion the women are defending their right to marriage and to define these marriages how they choose. Although depicted as adjuncts, the auto/biographies present women working hard to assert their own identity. Thompson's (1999) research reveals how difficult it is for wives of sport stars to have their own identity due to being overshadowed by their partner's talent and celebrity. This makes it difficult to strive to achieve a sense of self rather than living in the shadow of someone else. Even though the wives in the media are depicted as dependent on their husbands by seeking some of the celebrity and limelight that has been monopolised by their partners they are attempting to reclaim themselves and achieve their own identity. Although the celebrity wives depicted in the media appear keen to show off their lifestyle and wealth, in the auto/biographies the wives emphasise the ordinariness of their lives – rather than highlighting difference to the audience they want to build a rapport and find points of identification. No doubt because they want to distance themselves from the media wag figure or the wannabe wag and the connotations associated with them. It also contradicts ideas that to desire celebrity is normal.

The term *wag* or *footballer's wife* deploys both possibilities and repression. For some it seems to engender opportunity and a means of wealth and mobility, particularly for those who seem to have limited access to other means of gaining social mobility. For those who are married to footballers, it can be what Gough Yates (2003) terms an 'oppressive feminine identity'. Although these women attempt to resist this identity, it is often imposed upon them by others as soon as people find out their partner's occupation. It is one which they feel limits their identity to 'wife of' and a stereotypical range of traits rather than allowing them an individual and unique identity. For some women they seem to represent the failure of feminism partly because they are deemed to encourage women to become dependent on a man and partly because it encourages competition between women to obtain these husbands. This focus on the individual works to prevent an organised movement and obscures ongoing gender inequality.

Modleski (1979) describes how villainesses in soap operas are characters who viewers are allowed to hate. The villainess is someone who likes to make things happen and take control of events and can turn traditional feminine weaknesses into sources of strength. In seeing the life of a footballer's wife as a soap opera they seem to be depicted akin to villainesses. The audience experiences a love/hate relationship with the wives based mainly on envy or class distinction. It seems that many find the wives aspirational for their ability to make a career out of being a wife, to be able to live a fairy tale life and create their own media career. Others, however, vent their frustrations on women who they see as pre-feminist throwbacks (Kervin, 2007). Instead of taking opportunities offered to be successful in their own right and creating their own identity, these women have chosen to focus on developing their femininity in order to exploit wealthy men for their own ends. This is compounded by media coverage that shows women competing with each other for these men – in postfeminism this is seen as self-defeating if women are the enemy there can be no coherent stance to continue to make improvements in the struggle for female equality (see Dow, 1996; McRobbie, 2009). From all sides there seems to be elements of *schadenfreude* when things go wrong for these women – a moral side to the postmodern fairy tale.

Future directions

Further research into the role of wives, particularly those at the highest level of the game, if access could be obtained, would help to provide a more generalisable study on the work and life of football wives. The

production of the wives through the media would be useful, in particular focusing on media publicists and agents, to help uncover the workings and economic system behind the promotion of this group of women – again this work may experience problems of access as highlighted in the methodology section. A study of the young women who are seen to be susceptible to these images, those who are wannabe wags, those who follow their style and fashion and those who do not, would complement this work. This would be an insightful study on how young women today view society and celebrity and the impact of these images on their opinions as an alternative to media conjecture on the subject. As a recent phenomenon this study is clearly situated in the early twenty-first century, but it would be important to analyse the representation of footballers' wives historically to look for continuation or change. It will also be interesting to see how long the phenomenon will last and how it will develop. The current credit crunch seems particularly pertinent to a study based on envy of financial wealth and lifestyle – will the class envy and antagonism increase as others lose money and jobs or will a wage cap on footballers' earnings lead to a restructuring of football in terms of aspiration and celebrification.

The footballer's wife provides multiple points of identification and misidentification for many women. A multi-media study such as this has been able to demonstrate how various media have combined to create a mythical generic celebrity called the wag. By using television drama alongside the coverage of these women's lives in various media, a real life soap opera has emerged that has blurred fact and fiction and provides a space for discussing the role of women as wives and as celebrities. It also provokes discussions of class, wealth, identity and distinction through taste and morals. Although there are many discourses present in relation to these women the media has created an over-riding figure of a wag which is used to mock and denigrate certain women and impose on them an identity that they would not choose. By highlighting the range of debates and images created around these women, this book goes some way to redressing the balance by offering alternative views on the lifestyles and images of these women.

Appendix A

Table A.1 Social grading used by National Readership Survey

Social grade	Social Status	Chief income earner's occupation
A	Upper middle class	Higher managerial, administrative or professional
B	Middle class	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
C1	Lower middle class	Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2	Skilled working class	Skilled manual workers
D	Working class	Semi and unskilled manual workers
E	Those at the lowest levels of subsistence	Casual or lowest grade workers, pensioners and others who depend on the state for their income

Source: National Readership Survey

http://www.nrs.co.uk/about_nrs/data_available/definitions_of_social_grade [accessed 14 May 2009].

Table A.2 National daily newspaper circulation

	June 2008	June 2007	% change	May 2008	June 2008	Jan 2007–June 2008	% change on last year
The Sun	3,089,321	3,064,376	0.81	3,149,267	3,089,321	3,120,512	1.54
Daily Mirror	1,472,286	1,565,711	-5.97	1,483,830	1,472,286	1,487,034	-4.79
Daily Star	733,244	795,891	-7.87	726,097	733,244	726,706	-6.69
Daily Record	390,130	404,110	-3.46	85,043	390,130	394,139	-3.12
Daily Mail	2,231,120	2,303,438	-3.14	2,292,173	2,127,796	2,291,722	-1.31
Daily Express	742,324	770,403	-3.64	740,219	742,324	737,922	-3.47
Daily Telegraph	865,400	891,768	-2.96	862,966	766,363	871,094	-2.93
The Times	611,384	633,850	-3.54	626,401	562,465	620,059	-3.25
Financial Times	445,756	444,763	0.22	450,558	408,856	449,260	-0.16
The Guardian	347,183	363,562	-4.51	353,822	332,187	356,350	-3.33
The Independent	233,973	238,291	-1.81	240,503	192,194	244,120	-2.94

Circulation refers to the number of sold, reduced price and free copies of a title distributed on an average day over the stated period of time whereas readership refers to the number of people reading a title on an average day over the stated time period.
Available online at: <http://media.guardian.co.uk/presspublishing/table/0,,2290914,00.html> [accessed 22 July 2008].

Table A.3 NRS Readership estimates – women’s magazines

	Adults						Men		Women	
	Total	ABC1	C2DE	15-44	45+	Total	Total	Total	Total	
AIR – Latest 12 Months	37517	22823	14694	15244	22273	16690	20257			
Apr 08–Mar 2009										
UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE	49206	27395	21811	24452	24754	23949	25257			
EST. POPULATION 15+(000)s	000	%	000	%	000	%	000	%	000	

Women’s Weekly Periodicals

Take a Break	2926	5.9	1929	8.8	1493	6.1	1433	5.8	474	2.0	2453	9.7
OK!	2539	5.2	1394	5.1	1145	5.2	1870	7.6	669	2.7	329	1.4
Hello!	1924	3.9	1154	4.2	770	3.5	1150	4.7	774	3.1	296	1.2
Heat	1801	3.7	988	3.6	813	3.7	1586	6.5	215	0.9	269	1.1
Closer	1789	3.6	921	3.4	868	4.0	1485	6.1	304	1.2	147	0.6
Chat	1358	2.8	448	1.6	910	4.2	723	3.0	635	2.6	143	0.6
Pick Me Up	1125	2.3	366	1.3	759	3.5	844	3.5	281	1.1	87	0.4
Now	1111	2.3	594	2.2	517	2.4	961	3.9	150	0.6	105	0.4
Woman’s Own	1080	2.2	476	1.7	604	2.8	476	1.9	603	2.4	89	0.4
That’s Life!	946	1.9	319	1.2	628	2.9	591	2.4	355	1.4	103	0.4
Reveal	848	1.7	397	1.5	451	2.1	747	3.1	101	0.4	48	0.2

Woman	809	1.6	371	1.4	438	2.0	347	1.4	462	1.9	59	0.2	750	3.0
Woman's Weekly	801	1.6	364	1.3	437	2.0	257	1.1	543	2.2	90	0.4	711	2.8
Bella	790	1.6	317	1.2	473	2.2	397	1.6	392	1.6	55	0.2	735	2.9
Love It!	737	1.5	242	0.9	495	2.3	591	2.4	146	0.6	65	0.3	672	2.7
Best	720	1.5	301	1.1	419	1.9	298	1.2	423	1.7	41	0.2	679	2.7
Inside Soap	687	1.4	244	0.9	443	2.0	510	2.1	178	0.7	111	0.5	577	2.3
New	685	1.4	318	1.2	367	1.7	603	2.5	82	0.3	31	0.1	654	2.6
People's Friend	553	1.1	229	0.8	323	1.5	44	0.2	508	2.1	76	0.3	476	1.9
Look	527	1.1	298	1.1	229	1.0	456	1.9	71	0.3	37	0.2	489	1.9
Grazia	525	1.1	385	1.4	140	0.6	436	1.8	89	0.4	34	0.1	492	1.9
Real People	510	1.0	151	0.6	358	1.6	377	1.5	132	0.5	26	0.1	484	1.9
Star	436	0.9	183	0.7	253	1.2	392	1.6	44	0.2	79	0.3	357	1.4
More	418	0.8	211	0.8	207	0.9	386	1.6	32	0.1	19	0.1	399	1.6
My Weekly	374	0.8	156	0.6	219	1.0	80	0.3	295	1.2	41	0.2	333	1.3
Full House	314	0.6	91	0.3	224	1.0	199	0.8	115	0.5	21	0.1	293	1.2

Source: NRS <http://www.nrs.co.uk/toplinereadership.html> [accessed 25 June 2010].

Appendix B

Interview topic guide

1. Introduction

- Introduce self and research
- Explain what the research will be used for – PhD/Book/ESRC funded-archive
- Confirmation OK to tape record
- Confirm whether can name participant/anonymity

2. Personal background

- Origins/childhood
- Family life
- Career
- Relationship with husband
 - When/how met
 - How long together

3. Husband's career

- Background
 - How became player/where
 - Clubs
 - Stage in career
 - What do you see as next move
 - What do you see as career after football
- Impact of husband's career on family/your life
 - Moved a lot
 - If played outside UK – different experience?
 - Tensions between club and family responsibility?
 - Altered your personal career path?
 - Friendship groups – do you socialise with other wives?
- Interest in football beyond partner's career?

4. Life-style

- Could you explain a bit about your life-style
 - Could you describe a typical day for you (yesterday)
 - What would a typical week entail
 - Does your life change much from the football season to the closed season?

5. Media

- How does being in the media impact on your husband's/family's life?
 - Attention from football fans
 - Female attention
- Do you view yourselves as celebrities/famous? (Local or national)
- Does the club provide media training for your husband/you?
- Do either of you employ an agent/publicist?
 - If yes were you approached/at what point did you feel this was necessary?
- Could you tell me what you think of the media coverage of footballers' wives and girlfriends?
- How does the use of the term 'wags' in the press make you feel?
- Do you feel the media coverage affects what people think of you?
 - How and why?
- Did you watch the ITV series *Footballers' Wives*?
 - Could you tell me what you thought about it?

6. Future

- What are your aspirations for the future?

Notes

1 Introduction

1. <http://www.socceram.com/soccerettes/0,21655,13874,00.html>, accessed on 16/03/07

3 Methodology

1. All newspaper statistics from <http://www.nmauk.co.uk/nma/do/live/factsAndFigures> accessed 28 May 2008
2. http://www.nrs.co.uk/about_nrs/data_available/definitions_of_social_grade accessed 14 May 2009
3. http://www.nrs.co.uk/top_line_readership accessed 22 July 2008
4. http://www.magforum.com/wom_week.htm accessed 28 May 2008
5. http://www.hellomagazine.com/marketing/hello_media/circulation_reader_ship.html accessed 28 May 2008
6. <http://www.northernandshell.co.uk/media/okmag.php> accessed 28 May 2008
7. http://www.hellomagazine.com/marketing/hello_media/circulation_reader_ship.html accessed 28 May 2008
8. <http://www.baueradvertising.co.uk/magazines/portfolio.asp?ID=13> accessed 28 May 2008
9. http://www.hellomagazine.com/marketing/hello_media/circulation_reader_ship.html accessed 28 May 2008
10. <http://www.baueradvertising.co.uk/magazines/portfolio.asp?ID=13> accessed 28 May 2008
11. See <http://www.footballerswives.tv/>, http://www.femalefirst.co.uk/footballers_wives/

4 Wives in Print

1. The dates for the magazines are between 7th and 24th June due to publishing dates. *OK!* magazine produced a double-issue dated 30th June which was published on 16th June so falls within this period.

5 Fact or Fiction

1. <http://www.footballerswives.tv/> accessed 25 March 2008
2. http://www.shed-media.com/company/comp_index.html accessed 25 March 2008
3. http://www.footballerswives.tv/characters/char_tt.html accessed 08 April 2008

4. http://www.footballerswives.tv/characters/char_hb.html accessed 08 April 2008
5. http://www.shed-media.com/programmes/prog_drama_fw.html accessed 25 March 2008

6 Auto/biographies – Telling Tales

1. <http://itn.co.uk/fe5e60714581fd890a12649240a029bf.html> accessed 24 October 2007

Data Sources

Auto/biography

- Beckham, D. & Watt, T. (2004) *David Beckham: My Side*, London: CollinsWillow
- Beckham, V. (2002) *Learning to Fly: The Autobiography*, London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Beckham, V. (2007) *That Extra Half an Inch: Hair, Heels and Everything in Between*, London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Best, A. with Pittam, N. (2001) *George and Me: My Autobiography*, London: Virgin Books Ltd.
- Best, G. & Knight, M. (2003) *Scoring at Half-Time: Adventures On and Off the Pitch*, London: Ebury Press
- Clifford, M. & Levin, A. (2006) *Read All About It*, London: Virgin Books Ltd.
- Frith, M. (2008) *The Celeb Diaries The Sensational Inside Story of the Decade*, London: Ebury Press
- Gascoigne, P. & Davies, H. (2005) *Gazza: My Story*, London: Headline Book Publishing
- McLoughlin, C. (2007a) *Coleen: Welcome to my World*, London: HarperCollinsPublishers
- Morgan, P. (2005) *The Insider*, London: Ebury Press
- Morgan, P. (2008) *Don't You Know Who I Am?* London: Ebury Press
- Rooney, W. & Davies, H. (2006) *Wayne Rooney: My Story so Far*, London: HarperSport
- Sawyer, F.A. (2008) *Wag Don't Wannabe: The Smart Girl's Guide to Dating a Footballer*, London: Pennant Books Ltd.
- Tallentire, B. (2004) *Real Footballers' Wives: The First Ladies of Everton*, Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company
- Webb, S. (1998) *Footballers' Wives Tell their Tales*, London: Yellow Jersey Press

Broadcast sources

- 19 Entertainment (2007) *Victoria Beckham: Coming to America* (Transmitted on ITV1 July 17th)
- British Broadcasting Corporation (2008) *From Wags to Riches* (Transmitted on BBC3 December 18th 21:00 hrs)
- Shed Productions Ltd. (2001) *Footballers' Wive\$ Series 1* (DVD)
- Shed Productions (FW2) Ltd. (2002) *Footballers' Wive\$ Series 2* (DVD)
- Shed Productions (FW3) Ltd. (2004) *Footballers' Wive\$ Series 3* (DVD)
- Shed Productions (FW4) Ltd. (2005) *Footballers' Wive\$ Series 4* (DVD)
- Shed Productions (FW5) Ltd. (2006) *Footballers' Wive\$ Series 5* (DVD)
- Talkback Thames Production (2007) *Wag's Boutique* (Transmitted on ITV2 between 30/01/07 and 24/07/07)

Fictional books

- Challis, C. & Fabulous (2008) *The Beautiful Game A Wag's Tale*, London: Headline Review
- Katona, K. (2008) *The Footballer's Wife*, London: Ebury Press
- Kervin, A. (2007) *The Wag's Diary Welcome to the World of Wags ...* London: Avon
- Kervin, A. (2008) *A Wag Abroad*, London: Avon
- Reynolds, J. (2003) *How to be a Footballer's Wife: Tanya Turner, Chardomay Lane-Pascoe & Donna Walmsley*, London: Boxtree

Magazines

- Alexander, H. (01 July 2008) Footballers' lives the beach goes on for England's summer lovin' lions, *Hello!* Issue 1028: 58–9
- Crompton, E. (21–27 June 2008) Coleen's High Street honeymoon, *heat*, 84–5
- Fernando, H. & Atkinson, L. (14–20 June 2008) Cheryl: Time to call in the divorce lawyers, *heat*, 6–9
- Gould, P. & Reeves, C. (26 June 2007) 'I couldn't ask for a better wife' John Terry and Toni Poole, *OK!*, Issue 577: 52–100
- Guiltenane, C. (23 October 2007) 'There are no problems in the marriage' Cheryl Cole, *OK!*, Issue 594: 46–53
- heat (16–22 February 2008a) It's crunch time, 14–18
- heat (21–27 June 2008b) Wayne & Coleen: the love story, 74–5
- heat (5–11 July 2008c) The week in pictures Bless, Wayne is so white!, 46–7
- Hello! (05 June 2007a) Liverpool fields a winning team of Wags in Athens, Issue 972: 72–5
- Hello! (05 June 2007b) Steven Gerrard's fiancée Alex Curran in a league of her own as she prepares to become a footballer's bride, Issue 972: 68–70
- Labous, J. (26 June 2007) It started with a kiss behind the changing rooms! Football sweethearts, *OK!*, Issue 577: 124–30
- McLoughlin (13–19 October 2007b) Coleen Welcome to my world!, *Closer*, 21
- Morgan, S. (08 July 2008) So happy together Cheryl and Ashley Cole are Costa Del Sol mates, *Hello!*, Issue 1029: 60–5
- New Woman (March 2008) Worth going hungry for?, 68–71
- OK! (26 June 2007) We proudly present the romantic wedding of Steven Gerrard & Alex Curran, Issue 577: 31
- OK! (26 February 2008a) Cheryl's Change of Heart, Issue 611: 11
- OK! (17 June 2008b) World Exclusive Coleen McLoughlin & Wayne Rooney invite only OK! readers to our spectacular wedding, Issue 627: 6–7
- OK! (30 June 2009) Coleen and Wayne's Wedding Memories, Issue 680: 75
- Reeves, C. (26 February 2008a) OK! Invites you to a very special baby shower Sheree Murphy, *OK!*, Issue 611: 42–55
- Reeves, C. (08 July 2008b) Jetting to Spain to rekindle their love Cheryl and Ashley Cole, *OK!*, Issue 630: 64–8
- Reeves, C. & Moody, M. (30 June 2008) Your exclusive invitation to our big day Wayne Rooney marries Coleen McLoughlin, *OK!*, Issue 628: 76–151
- Rozsnyai, S. (13 July 2004) Sheryl Gascoigne gives her side of the story for the first time, *Hello!*, Issue 834: 66–75

- Rozsnyai, S. (29 June 2009) We invite you to join us at the wedding of England and Chelsea star Joe Cole and his longtime love Carly Zucker, *Hello!*, Issue 1078: 68–87
- Short, S. (30 June, 2009) 'It feels like yesterday we were getting married' Wayne and Coleen, *OK!*, Issue 680: 71–2
- Shulman, A. (2005) Coleen's Vogue moment, *Vogue* [online] at: http://www.vogue.co.uk/vogue_daily/story/story.asp?stid=25731 [accessed 08 January 2008]
- Wetherall, T. (13–19 October 2007) Ash takes revenge on controlling Cheryl, *Closer*, 7
- Whitaker, T. (24 June 2008a) After revealing their wedding plans in Hello! Coleen and Wayne marry, *Hello!*, Issue 1026: 40–3
- Whitaker, T. (01 July 2008b) Mr and Mrs Rooney rain fails to stop play on their dream honeymoon, *Hello!*, Issue 1027:46–7

Newspapers

- Booth, R. (22 December 2007) 'Harvest' time in Manchester as players cruise shops for party girls, *The Guardian*, 11
- Boshoff, A. (25 November 1999) The conspiracy of silence that let Gascoigne beat me; soccer chiefs did nothing to help stop the violence, says Sheryl, *Daily Mail*, 5
- Boshoff, A. (09 June 2007) With this ring I thee Wag, *Daily Mail*: 22–3
- Brooks, L. (06 May 2002) Portrait: Blonde ambition: First she was a trophy wife – then a battered one. Now Sheryl Gascoigne wants to show the world who she really is, *The Guardian*, 16
- Browne, H. (27 June 2006) We show you how to become a footballer's wife, *The Sun*: 34–5
- Burchill, J. (14 June 2008) Roo earned it ... so enjoy it, *The Sun*: 14–5
- Burrows, T. (26 May 2007) Wildlife I do, I do, I do, *Telegraph Magazine*, 8
- Byrne, C. (04 May 2006) 'Footballers' Wives' shown red card after ratings slump, *The Independent* [online] at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/footballers-wives-shown-red-card-after-ratings-slump-476723.html> [accessed 21 April 2008]
- Cadwalladr, C. (June 2006) Don't know who they are? You will by the end of this month. Meet the real footballer\$ wives – and they're just as competitive as the players ... , *Observer Sport Monthly*, (76): 62–5
- Chittenden, M. (17 June 2007) The big match: a wag wedding hat trick, *The Sunday Times*, 11
- Churchill, M. (June 2007) The ten teen looks in *Observer Music Monthly*: 6–9
- Churchwell, S. (12 June 2008) Material girls, *The Guardian G2*, 6
- Clarke, N. (12 June 2008) Burton & Taylor they ain't!, *Daily Mail*: 22–3
- Clerkin, B. (30 August 2006) Stop spending like a WAG, says Coleen, *Daily Mail* [online] at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-402832/Stop-spending-like-WAG-says-Coleen.html> [accessed 18 June 2008]
- Custis, N. (02 February 2003) Fergie decks becks, *The Sun* [online] at www.lexisnexis.com [accessed 26 August 2008]

- Daily Mail (20 August 2006a) Going bust, the wannabe WAGs, [online] at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-401520/Going-bust-wannabe-WAGs.html> [accessed 18 June 2008]
- Daily Mail (05 September 2006b) WAGs are leeches, says Jamelia in stinging attack, [online] at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-403696/WAGs-leeches-says-Jamelia-stinging-attack.html> [accessed 18 June 2008]
- Daily Mail (16 June 2007) John Terry kicks-off wedding WAGathon, [online] at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-462278/John-Terry-kicks-wedding-WAGathon.html> [accessed 18 June 2008]
- Davies, E. (17 June 2006) Look like a WAG (with a small price tag), *The Sun*: 12–3
- Ellen, B. (28 November 1999) Comment: Sheryl is right to speak out against wife-beaters: Too many men still feel there is nothing wrong with giving their wives or girlfriends a slap or two, *The Observer*, 29
- Ellen, B. (15 June 2008) Let's face it, only a real swine would sneer at a girl's wedding, *The Observer*, 13
- Ferguson, E. (28 November 1999) Love hurts. Too right it does Euan Ferguson meets Sheryl Gascoigne, *The Observer*, 20
- France, L. (03 October 2004) Success isn't all it's cracked up to be, *The Observer* [online] at: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/osm/story/0,,1315435,00.html> [accessed 15 August 2008]
- Gaunt, J. (13 June 2008) Bride and prejudice, *The Sun* [online] at www.lexisnexis.com [accessed 26 August 2008]
- Hardcastle, E. (11 July 2006) Ephraim Hardcastle, *Daily Mail*, 17
- Hayward, P. (14 June 2008) Rooney's all at sea, but he's a hero to float my boat, *Daily Mail*, 117
- Henderson, M. (16 August 2007) Modern-day Clough right to ask who wags the tail, *The Daily Telegraph Sport*, S13
- Hendry, S. (10 June 2008) Sun A-to-Z guide to Wayne and Coleen's £5m wedding, *The Sun*: 12–3
- Hodgson, J. (15 April 2003) Posh: Just call me Beaujolais; Footballers' Wives star inspires latest nickname for Victoria, *Evening Standard*, 14
- Holden, W. (18 January 2008) Now it's cool to be a Wag, *Daily Mail* [online] at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/you/article-509013/Now-cool-Wag.html> [accessed 18 June 2008]
- Hyde, M. (23 June 2006a) Come on you Wags!, *The Guardian G2*: 6–9
- Hyde, M. (21 September 2006b) America's Ryder Cup Wags make sure they stay out of the rough in *The Guardian* [online] at: <http://sport.guardian.co.uk/rydercup2006/story/0,,1877382,00.html> [accessed 12 January 2008]
- Hyde, M. (14 June 2008) The wedding bashers live in terror of the upwardly mobile, *The Guardian*, 36
- Jonsson, U. (09 July 2006) Ulrika, *News of the World*, 35
- Kervin, A. (17 June 2007) Nice day for a Wag wedding, *The Sunday Times*, 9
- Kington, T. (13 June 2008) Come on you newlyweds Rooney gives paparazzi the slip to marry Coleen, *The Guardian*, 7
- Lacey, D. (18 August 2007) Perhaps Keane's problem is other clubs offer players more money *The Guardian Sport*, 4

- Lampert, N. (01 December 2004) Why it all went so wrong for Becks and Posh, by Elton in *Daily Mail*, 19
- Ley, R. (05 February 2008) Inside the sordid mind of girls who will do anything to sleep with a famous footballer, *The Sun*: 34–5
- Malone, C. (28 November 1999) Carole Malone's column: So Sheryl, what did you see in the millionaire Paul Gascoigne?, *Sunday Mirror*, 33
- McCaffrey, J. (18 January 2008) Diary of a 'Wannabee Wag', *The Mirror* [online] at: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/topstories/2008/01/18/diary-of-a-wannabee-wag-89520-20289112/> [accessed 13 May 2008]
- McLeod, N. (18 June 2006) Smiling Wags in a night of love, *News of the World*, 5
- Merritt, S. (16 June 2008) The book wot I wrote, *The Guardian* [online] at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jun/16/fiction.celebrity> [accessed 06 June 2009]
- Minot, L. (14 June 2008) Wed like a WAG... without the swag, *The Sun*: 52–3
- Montague, B. (18 June 2006) Young women face ruin with four in five earning less than they spend, *Daily Mail* [online] at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-396208/Young-women-face-ruin-earning-spend.html> [accessed 18 June 2008]
- Moodie, C. (19 July 2006) Wayne and Coleen to wed next summer in 'modest' affair, *Daily Mail* [online] at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-396394/Wayne-Coleen-wed-summer-modest-affair.html> [accessed 18 June 2008]
- Moore, S. (23 December 2001) The pimps and creeps behind a soccer scandal, *Mail on Sunday*, 25
- Moore, S. (25 June 2006) Nights on the lash... now for the WAGlash, *Daily Mail* [online] at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-392389/Nights-lash-WAGlash.html> [accessed 18 June 2008]
- Mott, S. (16 January 2007) 'Bex' hardly bucks trend by going to Beverly Hills, *Daily Telegraph Sport*, S9
- Moyes, S. (07 July 2004) Sheryl: The Real Gazza; I am tired of hearing what a great guy Paul is. He beat me for hours, *The Mirror*, 19
- Parker, N. (12 June 2006) England's Group Sex!, *The Sun*: 4–5
- Patrick, G. & Hagan, L. (13 June 2008) Rooneys marry in rain-lashed Italy I thee wet, *The Sun*: 4–5
- Platell, A. (14 June 2008) Not OK, Wayne, *Daily Mail*, 19
- Rae, C. (21 August 2006) 'Wags' life makes you bankrupt, *The Sun* [online] at: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/article/0,,2-2006380614,00.html> [accessed 01 December 2006]
- Ridley, I. (28 November 1999) Football. The domestic violence debate: Personal view: The Best conspiracy. As Paul Gascoigne struggles to stifle his ex-wife's claims of battery, an old star's tribute is challenged, *The Observer*, 8
- Saner, E. (04 September 2008) Question time. Ex-Heat editor Mark Frith denies creating a monster, says the cult of celebrity isn't for him – and apologises for that sticker of Jordan's son, *The Guardian* [online] at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/sep/04/celebrity.women> [accessed 04 September 2008]
- Savage, T. (10 April 2004) Anger as football victims demand gbp 60k for Stories; all rape girls are after is quick buck, *Daily Star* [online] at: <http://www.lexisnexis.com> [accessed 26 August 2008]
- Sheridan, E. (06 February 2008) WAGs shown the red card by hardline England boss Capello, *Daily Mail* [online] at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/>

- article-512652/WAGs-shown-red-card-hardline-England-boss-Capello.html [accessed 18 June 2008]
- Smith, M. & Turnbull, D. (14 March 2004) Tarts set us up in a honeytrap in *Mail on Sunday* [online] at: <http://www.lexisnexis.com> [accessed 26 August 2008]
- Steele, J. (25 February 2008) Log on to spend it like Beckham, *Metro*, 30
- Stewart, R. (15 August 2007) 'Football Players at Wags mercy, blasts Keane', *The Telegraph* [online] at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/main.jhtml;jsessionid=NMEBWUOKESJWRQFIQMFCFFOAVCBQYIV0?xml=/sport/2007/08/15/sfnfro115.xml&CMP=KNC-umknc01_ne_1_ggl_BrGB&HBX_PK=roy+keane+wags&HBX_OU=50 [accessed 16 August 2007]
- Stubbs, F. (28 March 2004) The Archbishop and the 'Footballers' Wives', *The Independent* [online] at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/the-archbishop-and-the-footballers-wives-567956.html> [accessed 07 May 2008]
- Sullivan, M. (19 May 2004) DNA proves Leicester aces didn't rape tart, *The Sun* [online] at: <http://www.lexisnexis.com> [accessed 26 August 2008]
- Sutton, H. (19 October 2007) Tough love book review, *The Mirror* [online] at: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/tv-entertainment/archive/books/2007/10/19/tough-love-115875-19972545/> [accessed 06 June 2009]
- Tapper, J. & Beckford, M. (15 July 2006) Pop goes £500,000 on Ashley Cole's wedding, *Daily Mail* [online] at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-395906/Pop-goes-500-000-Ashley-Coles-wedding.html> [accessed 04 September 2008]
- The Guardian (13 June 2008) Lost in showbiz. The age of the Wag is over: It's all about posh people now, *G2*, 2
- The Sun (01 January 2008a) Cole slept with me as well, [online] at: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article733120.ece> [accessed 12 September 2008]
- The Sun (25 August 2008b) WAG rivals lock horns at Faces, [online] at: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/showbiz/bizarre/article1604319.ece> [accessed 12 September 2008]
- The Sunday Times (17 April 2005) Profile: Coleen McLoughlin: Triumph of teen spirit and awful taste, [online] at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/article381985.ece> [accessed 01 August 2008]
- The Sunday Times (15 June 2008) Profile: Wayne and Coleen Rooney £5m wedding or not, pizza and prawns are posh enough for them, 19
- Thomas, D. (14 June 2008) The Pictures of that wedding you won't see in OK! (and no, they didn't cost us £3m...), *Daily Mail*: 22–3
- Topham, L., Nicholas, S., Appleyard, D. & Moss, L. (12 June 2008) Matches of the day, *Daily Mail*: 51–2
- Turner, L. (13 June 2008) Rise of the gold-digger: The young women who shamelessly pursue older men for their money, *Daily Mail*, 36
- Weldon, F. (16 August 2007) Why the WAGs are guilt-edged, *Daily Telegraph*, 25
- White, R. (30 August 2006) COLEEN: Don't spend like a wag, *The Sun* [online] at: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/article/0,,2-2006400251,00.html> [accessed 01 December 2006]
- White, R. & Case, P. (25 January 2008) Chelsea's Cole is a love cheat, *The Sun* [online] at: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article725180.ece> [accessed 12 September 2008]

- Wintour, P. (15 June 2007) Cameron seeks flexible working rights for all parents, *The Guardian* [online] at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,,2103626,00.html> [accessed 12 January 2008]
- Woods, J. (05 April 2008) Footballers' drives *The Daily Telegraph*, 19
- Wynne-Jones, J. (02 September 2007) The scrummies, rugby's antidote to the Wags, *Sunday Telegraph* [online] at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/09/02/nrugby102.xml> [accessed 12 January 2008]

Web sources

- Baker, L. (2007) Cast interview – Lara Bateman [online] at http://www.footballerswives.tv/features/feat_int/int_fw1/int_fw1_lb.html [accessed 08 April 2008]
- <http://media.guardian.co.uk/presspublishing/table/0,,2290914,00.html> (n.d.) [accessed 22 September 2008]
- http://uk.news.yahoo.com/itn/20071024/tuk-wags-are-inspirational-says-governme-ba1618_1.html (24 October 2007) [accessed 24 October 2007]
- <http://www.baueradvertising.co.uk/magazines/portfolio.asp?ID=13> (n.d.) [accessed 28 May 2008]
- <http://www.bbcamerica.com/content/57/index.jsp> (n.d.) [21/04/08]
- http://www.femalefirst.co.uk/footballers_wives/ (n.d.) [accessed 08 April 2008]
- <http://www.five.tv/aboutfive/press/pressreleases/20071101/> (11 January 2007) [accessed 14 April 2008]
- <http://www.footballerswives.tv/> (n.d.) [accessed 08 April 2008]
- http://www.footballerswives.tv/characters/char_clp.html (n.d.) [accessed 08 April 2008]
- http://www.footballerswives.tv/characters/char_dw.html (n.d.) [accessed 08 April 2008]
- http://www.footballerswives.tv/characters/char_hb.html (n.d.) [accessed 08 April 2008]
- http://www.footballerswives.tv/characters/char_jw.html (n.d.) [accessed 08 April 2008]
- http://www.footballerswives.tv/characters/char_tt.html (n.d.) [accessed 08 April 2008]
- http://www.hellomagazine.com/marketing/hello_media/circulation_readership.html (n.d.) [accessed 28 May 2008]
- http://www.magforum.com/wom_week.htm (n.d.) [accessed 28 May 2008]
- http://www.mainstreampublishing.com/pdf/catalogue_autumn_2004c.pdf (n.d.) [accessed 08 January 2008]
- <http://www.nmauk.co.uk/nma/do/live/factsAndFigures> (n.d.) [accessed 28 May 2008]
- <http://www.northernandshell.co.uk/media/okmag.php> (n.d.) [accessed 28 May 2008]
- http://www.nrs.co.uk/about_nrs/data_available/definitions_of_social_grade (n.d.) [accessed 14 May 2009]
- http://www.nrs.co.uk/methodology/sample/the_sample (n.d.) [accessed 22 July 2008]

- http://www.nrs.co.uk/time_spent_reading/TSRTablesJan-Dec2007.xls#Tables!A356 (n.d.) [accessed 22 July 2008]
- http://www.nrs.co.uk/top_line_readership (n.d.) [accessed 22 July 2008]
- http://www.shed-media.com/company/comp_index.html (n.d.) [accessed 25 March 2008]
- http://www.shed-media.com/programmes/prog_drama_fw.html (n.d.) [accessed 25 March 2008]
- <http://www.socceram.com/soccerettes/0,21655,13874,00.html> (n.d.) [accessed 16 March 2007]
- Monaghan, K. (2007) Cast interview – Donna Walmsley [online] at: http://www.footballerswives.tv/features/feat_int/int_fw1/int_fw1_km.html [accessed 08 April 2008]
- Oatts, J. (29 June 2007) US ‘Footballers’ Wives’ back on track [online] at: <http://www.digitalspy.co.uk/ustv/a63325/us-footballers-wives-back-on-track.html> [accessed 21 April 2008]
- Roach, C. (2007) Producer’s notes [online] at: http://www.footballerswives.tv/features/feat_bts/bts_fw5/bts_fw5_1.html [accessed 25 March 2008]

Bibliography

- Abercrombie, N. (1996) *Television and Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Ahmed, S. (2000) *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality*, London: Routledge
- Allen, G. (2000) *Intertextuality*, London: Routledge
- Andrews, D. L. & Jackson, S. L. (2001) Introduction: Sport Celebrities, Public Culture, and Private Experiences in Andrews, D. L. & Jackson, S. L. (Eds.) *The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity*, London: Routledge
- Ang, I. (1985) *Watching Dallas Soap Opera and the Melodramatic*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.
- Ang, I. (1990/1997) Melodramatic Identifications: Television Fiction and Women's Fantasy in Brunson, C., D'Acci, J. & Spigel, L. (Eds.) *Feminist Television Criticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Bacchilega, C. (1997) *Postmodern Fairy Tales Gender and Narrative Strategies*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania
- Barley, S. R. (1989) Careers, Identities and Institutions: The Legacy of the Chicago School of Sociology in Arthur, M. B., Hall, D. T. & Lawrence, B. S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Career Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Barthes, R. (1957/1973) *Mythologies* selected and translated from the French by Lavers, A., London: Paladin Books
- Baudrillard, J. (2006) The Precession of Simulacra in Durham, M. G. & Kellner, D. M. (Eds.) *Media and Cultural Studies Keywords*, Revised Edition, Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Baumeister, R. F., Zhang, L. & Vohs, K. D. (2004) Gossip as Cultural Learning. *Review of General Psychology* Vol. 8 (2): 111–121
- Becker, K. E. (2008) Photojournalism and the Tabloid Press in Biressi, A. & Nunn, H. (Eds.) *The Tabloid Studies Reader*, Maidenhead: Open University Press/McGraw Hill Education
- Benedict, J. (1997) *Public Heroes, Private Felons Athletes and Crimes against Women*, Boston: Northeastern University Press
- Bennett, T. & Woollacott, J. (1987) *Bond and Beyond the Political Career of a Popular Hero*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Benstock, S. (1988) Authorising the Autobiographical in Benstock, S. (Ed.) *The Private Self Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, London: Routledge
- Bignell, J. (2002) *Media Semiotics An Introduction*, Second Edition. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Biressi, A. & Nunn, H. (2008) The Especially Remarkable: Celebrity and Social Mobility in Reality TV in Biressi, A. & Nunn, H. (Eds.) *The Tabloid Studies Reader*, Maidenhead: Open University Press/McGraw Hill Education
- Boden, S. (2003) *Consumerism, Romance and the Wedding Experience*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

- Boorstin, D. J. (1992) *The Image A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* 25th Anniversary Edition, New York: Vintage Books a Division of Random House, Inc.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Translated by Rice, N., London: Routledge
- Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language & Symbolic Power*, Thompson, J. (Ed.), Translated by Raymond, G. & Adamson, M., Cambridge: Polity Press
- Bourdieu, P. (2001) *Masculine Domination*, Translated by Nice, R., Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Boyle, R. & Haynes, R. (2004) *Football in the New Media Age*, London: Routledge
- Bruegel, I. (1996) The Trailing Wife: A Declining Breed? Careers, Geographical Mobility and Household Conflict in Britain 1970–89 in Compton, R., Gallie, D. & Purcell, K. (Eds.) *Changing Forms of Employment Organisations, Skills and Gender*, London: Routledge
- Brunsdon, C. (1997) *Screen Tastes: Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes*, London: Routledge
- Brunsdon, C. (1998) What is the Television of Television Studies? in Geraghty, C. & Lusted, D. (Eds.) *The Television Studies Book*, London: Arnold
- Brunsdon, C. (2006) The Feminist in the Kitchen: Martha, Martha and Nigella in Hollows, J. & Moseley, R. (Eds.) *Feminism in Popular Culture*, Oxford: Berg
- Brunsdon, C., D'Acci, J. & Spigel, L. (1997) Introduction in Brunsdon, C., D'Acci, J. & Spigel, L. (Eds.) *Feminist Television Criticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Bryman, A. (2001) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Bullen, J. (2006) *A Media Analysis of the 2006 Football World Cup Coverage*, Unpublished MA Dissertation, University of Essex
- Bullen, J. (2010) *Wealth, Fame and Family: The Media and Representations of Footballers' Wives*. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Essex
- Butler, J. (1999) *Gender Trouble; Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Second Edition, London: Routledge
- Carrabine, E. (2008) *Crime, Culture and the Media*, Cambridge: Polity
- Carrington, B. (2001) Postmodern Blackness and the Celebrity Sports Star Ian Wright, 'Race' and English Identity in Andrews, D. L. & Jackson, S. L. (Eds.) *The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity*, London: Routledge
- Cashmore, E. (2004) *Beckham*, Second Edition, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Cashmore, E. (2006) *Celebrity/Culture*, Oxford: Routledge
- Castañeda (2002) *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Chippendale, P. & Horrie, C. (1999) *Stick it Up Your Punter! The Uncut Story of The Sun Newspaper*, London: Pocket Books
- Chouliaraki, L. (2008) The Media as Moral Education: Mediation and Action. *Media Culture Society* Vol. 30 (6): 831–852
- Clayton, B. & Harris, J. (2004) Footballer's Wives: The Role of the Soccer Player's Partner in the Construction of Idealised Masculinity. *Soccer and Society* Autumn Vol. 5 (3): 317–335
- Clément, J. P. (1995) Contributions of the Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu to the Sociology of Sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal* Vol. 12 (2): 147–157

- Conboy, M. (2006) *Tabloid Britain Constructing a Community through Language*, Abingdon: Routledge
- Connell, I. (1992) Personalities in the Popular Media in Dahlgren, P. & Sparks, C. *Journalism and Popular Culture*, London: Sage Publications
- Coontz, S. (2005) *Marriage, A History from Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage*, New York: Viking Penguin
- Coppock, V., Haydon, D. & Richter, I. (1995) *The Illusions of 'Post-feminism'; New Women, Old Myths*, London: Taylor & Francis
- Corner, J. (1999) *Critical Ideas in Television Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Cowie, C. & Lees, S. (1981) Slags or Drags. *Feminist Review* Vol. 9 (Autumn): 17–30
- DeCordova, R. (1991) The Emergence of the Star System in America in Gledhill, C. (Ed.) *Stardom Industry of Desire*, London: Routledge
- Dow, B. J. (1996) *Prime Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement since 1970*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press
- Dyer, R. (1979) *Stars*, London: British Film Institute
- Dyer, R. (1981) Stars as Signs in Bennett, T., Boyd-Bowman, S., Mercer, C. & Woollacott, J. (Eds.) *Popular Television and Film, A Reader*, London: BFI Publishing in association with the Open University Press
- Dyer, R. (2002) *The Matter of Images Essays on Representation* Second Edition, London: Routledge
- Edgar, D. (2000) Playing Shops, Shopping Plays: The Effect of the Internal Market on Television Drama in Bignell, J., Lacey, S. & Macmurrough-Kavanagh, M. (Eds.) *British Television Drama Past, Present and Future*, Basingstoke: Palgrave
- Ellis, J. (1992) *Visible Fictions Cinema: Television: Video*, London: Routledge
- Entwistle, J. & Wissinger, E. (2006) Keeping Up Appearances: Aesthetic Labour in the Fashion Modelling Industries of London and New York. *The Sociological Review* Vol. 54 (4): 774–794
- Fairclough, K. (2008) Celebrity Gossip Blogging, Bitch Culture and Postfeminism in *Genders*, Issue 48 [online] at http://www.genders.org/g48/g48_fairclough.html
- Fairclough, N. (1995) *Media Discourse*, London: Edward Arnold.
- Faludi, S. (1992) *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*, London: Random House
- Felski, R. (1989) On Confession in Smith, S. & Watson, J. (Eds.) *Women, Autobiography and Theory A Reader*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press
- Finch, J. (1983) *Married to the Job: Wives' Incorporation in Men's Work*, London: George Allen & Unwin (Publishers Ltd.)
- Finch, J. (1993) 'It's great to have someone to talk to': Ethics and Politics of Interviewing Women in Hammersley, M. (Ed.) *Social Research Philosophy, Politics and Practice*, London: Sage Publications Ltd. in association with the Open University
- Fiske, J. (1987) *Television Culture*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.
- Foster, G. M. (1972) The Anatomy of Envy: A Study of Symbolic Behavior. *Current Anthropology* Vol. 13 (2): 165–202
- Friedman, S. S. (1988) Women's Autobiographical Selves Theory and Practice in Benstock, S. (Ed.) *The Private Self Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, London: Routledge

- Gamson, J. (1994) *Claims to Fame Celebrity in Contemporary America*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press
- Gamson, J. (1995) Stopping the Spin and Becoming a Prop: Fieldwork on Hollywood Elites in Hertz, R. & Imber, J. B. (Eds.) *Studying Elites using Qualitative Methods*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Geraghty, C. (1991) *Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime Time Soaps*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Geraghty, C. (2000) Re-examining Stardom: Questions of Texts, Bodies and Performance in Gledhill, C. & Williams, L. (Eds.) *Reinventing Film Studies*, London: Arnold.
- Giddens, A. (1992) *The Transformation of Intimacy Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Gill, R. (2007) Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* Vol. 10 (2): 147–166
- Gillis, S., Howie, G. & Munford, R. (2007) Introduction in Gillis, S., Howie, G. & Munford, R. (Eds.) *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration Second Edition*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Gitlin, T. (1998) The Culture of Celebrity. *Dissent* 45 (Summer): 81–83
- Giulianotti, R. & Gerrard, M. (2001) Evil Genie or Pure Genius? The (im)moral Football and Public Career of Paul 'Gazza' Gascoigne in Andrews, D. L. & Jackson, S. L. (Eds.) *The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity*, London: Routledge
- Gluckman, M. (1963) Gossip and Scandal. *Current Anthropology* Vol. 4 (3): 307–316
- Goffman, E. (1961/1991) *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, London: Penguin Books
- Gough Yates, A. (2003) *Understanding Women's Magazines Publishing Markets and Readerships*, London: Routledge
- Greenfield, S. & Osborn, G. (2001) *Regulating Football Commodification, Consumption and the Law*, London: Pluto Press
- Hall, S. (1980a) Introduction to Media Studies at the Centre in Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. & Willis, P. (Eds.) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972–79*, London: Hutchinson & Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham
- Hall, S. (1980b) Encoding/Decoding in Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. & Willis, P. (Eds.) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972–79*, London: Hutchinson & Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham
- Hall, S. (1997a) Introduction in Hall, S. (Ed.) *Representations Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Hall, S. (1997b) The Work of Representation in Hall, S. (Ed.) *Representations Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Hall, S. (1997c) The Spectacle of the Other in Hall, S. (Ed.) *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1995) *Ethnography Principles in Practice* Second Edition, Abingdon: Routledge
- Hare, G. (1999) 'Get your kit on for the lads': Adidas versus Nike, the other World Cup. *Sociology of Sport Online* Vol. 2 (2) at: <http://physed.otago.ac.nz/sosol/v2i2/v2i2a1.html> [accessed 17 May 2007]

- Hargreaves, J. (1994) *Sporting Females Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports*, London: Routledge
- Harries, E. W. (2004) *The Mirror Broken: Women's Autobiography and Fairy Tales* in Haase, D. (Ed.) *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press
- Harris, J. (1999) Lie Back and think of England: The Women of Euro 96. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* Vol. 23 (1): 96–110
- Hartley, J. (1998) Housing Television: Textual Traditions in TV and Cultural Studies in Geraghty, C. & Lusted, D. (Eds.) *The Television Studies Book*, London: Arnold
- Hayward, K. & Yar, M. (2006) The 'Chav' Phenomenon: Consumption, Media and the Construction of a New Underclass. *Crime, Media, Culture* Vol. 2 (9): 9–28
- Heck, M. C. (1980) The Ideological Dimension of Media Messages in Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. & Willis, P. (Eds.) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972–79*, London: Hutchinson & Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham
- Herzog, C. C. & Gaines, J. M. (1991) 'Puffed Sleeves before Tea-Time' Joan Crawford, Adrian and Women Audiences in Gledhill, C. (Ed.) *Stardom Industry of Desire*, London: Routledge
- Hobson, D. (2003) *Soap Opera*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Hochschild, A. with Machung, A. (1989) *The Second Shift Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, London: Judy Piatkus (Publishers) Ltd.
- Hochschild, A. R. (2003a) *The Commercialisation of Intimate Life Notes from Home and Work*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983/2003b) *The Managed Heart Commercialisation of Human Feeling* 20th Anniversary Edition, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press
- Holland, P. (1998) The Politics of the Smile 'Soft News' and the Sexualisation of the Popular Press in Carter, C., Branston, G. & Allan, S. (Eds.) *News, Gender and Power*, London: Routledge
- Hollows, J. (2000) *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*, Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Hollows, J. (2006) Can I go Home Yet? Feminism, Post-feminism and Domesticity in Hollows, J. & Moseley, R. (Eds.) *Feminism in Popular Culture*, Oxford: Berg
- Hollows, J. & Moseley, R. (2006) Popularity Contests: The Meanings of Popular Feminism in Hollows, J. & Moseley, R. (Eds.) *Feminism in Popular Culture*, Oxford: Berg
- Holmes, S. (2005a) 'Off-guard, Unkempt, Unready?': Deconstructing Celebrity in heat Magazine. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* Vol. 19 (1): 21–38
- Holmes, S. (2005b) 'Starring... Dyer?': Re-visiting Star Studies and Contemporary Celebrity Culture. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* Vol. 2 (2): 6–21
- Holmes, S & Redmond, S. (2006) Introduction: Understanding Celebrity Culture in Holmes, S. & Redmond, S. (Eds.) *Framing Celebrity New Directions in Celebrity Culture*, Abingdon: Routledge
- Holt, R. & Mason, T. (2000) *Sport in Britain 1945–2000*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

- Ingraham, C. (1999) *White Weddings Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*, London: Routledge
- Jelinek, E. (1980) Introduction: Women's Autobiography and the Male Tradition in Jelinek, E. (Ed.) *Women's Autobiography Essays in Criticism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Jenkins, R. (2002) *Pierre Bourdieu* Revised Edition, Abingdon: Routledge
- King, A. (2002) *The End of the Terraces The Transformation of English Football in the 1990s* Revised Edition, Leicester: Leicester University Press
- Kirkham, P. & Skeggs, B. (1998) Absolutely Fabulous: Absolutely Feminist in Geraghty, C. & Lusted, D. (Eds.) *The Television Studies Book*, London: Arnold
- Krippendorff, K. (1980) *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology* Vol. 5, The Sage COMMTEXT Series, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications
- Lang, G. E. (1978) The Most Admired Women: Image-Making in the News in Tuchman, G., Daniels, A. K. & Benét, J. (Eds.) *Hearth & Home Images of Women in the Mass Media*, New York: Oxford University Press
- Lawler, S. (2004) Rules of Engagement: Habitus, Power and Resistance in Adkins, L. & Skeggs, B. (Eds.) *Feminism after Bourdieu*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- Lawler, S. (2005) Disgusted Subjects: The Making of Middle-class Identities. *The Sociological Review* Vol. 53 (3): 429–446
- Lawler, S. (2008a) Stories and the Social World in Pickering, M. (Ed.) *Research Methods for Cultural Studies*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Lawler, S. (2008b) The Middle Classes and their Aristocratic Others Culture as Nature in Classification Struggles. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, Vol. 1 (3): 245–261
- Lechte, J. (1990) *Julia Kristeva*, London: Routledge
- Lees, S. (1993) *Sugar and Spice Sexuality and Adolescent Girls*, London: Penguin Books
- Lewis, J. & Ritchie, J. (2003) Generalising from Qualitative Research in Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (Eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Lieberman, M. R. (1972) 'Some Day My Prince will Come'; Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale. *College English* Vol. 34 (3): 383–395
- Littler, J. (2004) Making Fame Ordinary: Intimacy, Reflexivity, and 'Keeping it Real'. *Mediactive* Issue 2: 8–25
- Lotz, A. D. (2006) *Redesigning Women Television after the Network Era*, Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press
- Lovell, T. (2004) Bourdieu, Class and Gender: 'The return of the living dead?' in Adkins, L. & Skeggs, B. (Eds.) *Feminism after Bourdieu*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- Lumby, C. (1997) *Bad Girls: The Media, Sex and Feminism in the 90s*, Allen and Unwin: Sydney
- Lury, K. (2005) *Interpreting Television*, London: Hodder Education
- Lusted, D. (1998) The Popular Culture Debate and Light Entertainment on Television in Geraghty, C. & Lusted, D. (Eds.) *The Television Studies Book*, London: Arnold
- Macdonald, M. (1995) *Representing Women Myths of Femininity in the Popular Media*, London: Edward Arnold.

- Marshall, P. D. (2005) Intimately Intertwined in the Most Public Way Celebrity and Journalism in Allan, S. (Ed.) *Journalism: Critical Issues*, Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Mason, Jennifer (2002) *Qualitative Researching* Second Edition, London: Sage Publications
- McCracken, G. (1989) Who is the Celebrity Endorser? Cultural Foundations of the Endorsement Process. *Journal of Consumer Research* Vol. 16 (3): 310–321
- McGillivray, D., Fearn, R. & McIntosh, A. (2005) Caught up in the Beautiful Game: A Case of Scottish Professional Footballers. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* Vol. 29 (1): 102–123
- McKenzie, B. (1999) Retiring from the Sideline in Coakley, J. & Donnelly, P. (Eds.) *Inside Sports*, London: Routledge
- McNay, L. (2004) Agency and Experience: Gender as a Lived Relation in Adkins, L. & Skeggs, B. (Eds.) *Feminism after Bourdieu*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- McRobbie, A. (2004) Notes on ‘What not to Wear’ and Post-Feminist Symbolic Violence in Adkins, L. & Skeggs, B. (Eds.) *Feminism after Bourdieu*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- McRobbie, A. (2005) Post-Feminism and Popular Culture. *Feminist Media Studies* Vol. 4 (3): 255–264
- McRobbie, A. (2009) *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Medhurst, A. & Tuck, L. (1996) Situation Comedy and Stereotyping in Corner, J. & Harvey, S. (Eds.) *Television Times a Reader*, London: Arnold
- Modleski, T. (1979) The Search for Tomorrow in Today’s Soap Operas: Notes on a Feminine Narrative. *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 33 (1): 12–21
- Morley, D. (1980) Texts, Readers, Subjects in Culture, Media, Language Working Papers in Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. & Willis, P. (Eds.) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972–79*, London: Hutchinson & Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham
- Morris, D. (1981) *The Soccer Tribe*, London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.
- Morrow, S. (1999) *The New Business of Football Accountability and Finance in Football*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Mumford, L. S. (1998) Feminist Theory and Television Studies in Geraghty, C. & Lusted, D. (Eds.) *The Television Studies Book*, London: Arnold
- Negra, D. (2009) *What a Girl Wants? Fantasizing the Reclamation of the Self in Postfeminism*, London: Routledge
- Negra, D. & Holmes, S. (2008) Introduction in *Genders*, Issue 48 [online] at: http://www.genders.org/g48/g48_negraholmes.html
- Nelson, M. B. (1994) *The Stronger Women Get, the More Men Love Football: Sexism and the American Culture of Sports*, New York: Avon Books a division of The Hearst Corporation
- Nixon, S. (1996) *Hard Looks Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption*, London: UCL Press
- Oakley, A. (1974) *Housewife*, London: Allen Lane.
- Oakley, A. (1981) Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms in Roberts, H. (Ed.) *Doing Feminist Research*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Orr, D. (1997) Charting the Currents of the Third Wave in *Hypatia* Vol. 12 (3): 29–45

- Ortiz, S. M. (1997) Travelling with the Ball Club: A Code of Conduct for Wives Only in *Symbolic Interaction* Vol. 20 (3): 225–249
- Ortiz, S. M. (2006) Using Power: An Exploration of Control Work in the Sport Marriage in *Sociological Perspectives* Vol. 49 (4): 527–557
- Papanek, H. (1973) Men, Women and Work: Reflections on the Two-Person Career in *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 78 (4): 852–872
- Pomerleau, C. S. (1980) The Emergence of Women's Autobiography in England in Jelinek, E. (Ed.) *Women's Autobiography Essays in Criticism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Raisborough, J. & Adams, M. (2008) Mockery and Morality in Popular Cultural Representations of the White, Working Class in *Sociological Research Online* Vol. 13 (6) [online] at: <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/13/6/2.html> accessed 14 November 2008
- Ramazanoğlu, C. (with Holland, J.) (2002) *Feminist Methodology Challenges and Choices*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Rawlings, P. (1992) *Drunks, Whores and Idle Apprentices Criminal Biographies of the Eighteenth Century*, London: Routledge
- Reynolds, J. (2003) *How to Be a Footballer's Wife*, London: Boxtree
- Riegel, H. (1996) Soap Operas and Gossip. *Journal of Popular Culture* Vol. 29 (4): 201–209 [online] at: http://0-lion.chadwyck.co.uk.serlib0.essex.ac.uk/searchFulltext.do?id=R01281200&divLevel=0&area=abell&forward=critref_ft [accessed 07 December 2007]
- Roderick, M. (2006a) A Very Precarious Profession: Uncertainty in the Working Lives of Professional Footballers. *Work, Employment & Society* Vol. 20 (2): 245–265
- Roderick, M. (2006b) *The Work of Professional Football A Labour of Love?*, Abingdon: Routledge
- Rojek, C. (2001) *Celebrity*, London: Reaktion Books Ltd.
- Rowe, D. (1995) *Popular Cultures Rock Music, Sport and the Politics of Pleasure*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Rowe, D. (1997) Apollo Undone: The Sports Scandal in Lull, J. & Hinerman, S. (Eds.) *Media Scandals Morality and Desire in the Popular Culture Marketplace*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Rowe, D. (1999) *Sport, Culture and the Media The Unruly Trinity*, Buckingham: Open University Press
- Rowe, D. (2010) Attention La Femme! Intimate Relationships and Male Sports Performance in Fuller, L. K. (Ed.) *Sexual Sports Rhetoric: Global and Universal Contexts*, New York: Peter Lang
- Rowe, K. (1997) Roseanne: Unruly Woman as Domestic Goddess in Brunson, C., D'Acci, J. & Spigel, L. (Eds.) *Feminist Television Criticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Sandvoss, C. (2003) *A Game of Two Halves Football, Television and Globalisation*, London: Routledge
- Sassatelli, R. (2007) *Consumer Culture History, Theory and Politics*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Savage, M. (2000) *Class Analysis and Social Transformation*, Buckingham: Open University Press
- Sayer, A. (2005) *The Moral Significance of Class*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

- Schickel, R. (2000) *Intimate Strangers The Culture of Celebrity in America*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee
- Sennett, R. & Cobb, J. (1972) *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd
- Sharpe, S. (1976) *'Just Like a Girl' How Girls Learn to be Women*, London: Penguin Books
- Sheridan, E. (February 06, 2008) WAGs shown the red card by hardline England boss Capello, *Daily Mail* [online] at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-512652/WAGs-shown-red-card-hardline-England-boss-Capello.html> [accessed 18/06/08]
- Skeggs, B. (1997) *Formations of Class and Gender Becoming Respectable*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Skeggs, B. (2001) The Toilet Paper: Femininity, Class and Mis-recognition. *Women's Studies International Forum* Vol. 24 (3/4): 295–307
- Skeggs, B. (2004a) *Class, Self, Culture*, London: Routledge
- Skeggs, B. (2004b) Context and Background: Pierre Bourdieu's Analysis of Class, Gender and Sexuality in Adkins, L. & Skeggs, B. (Eds.) *Feminism after Bourdieu*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- Skeggs, B. (2005) The Re-branding of Class: Propertising Culture in Devine, F., Savage, M., Scott, J. & Crompton, R. (Eds.) *Rethinking Class Culture, Identities and Lifestyle*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Smart, B. (2005) *The Sport Star Modern Sport and the Cultural Economy of Sporting Celebrity*, London: Sage Publications
- Smith, S. & Watson, J. (2001) *Reading Autobiography A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Sparks, R. (1992) *Television and the Drama of Crime: Moral Tales and the Place of Crime in Public Life*, Buckingham: Open University Press
- Stanley, L. (1992) *The Auto/biographical I The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/biography*, Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Steedman, C. (1986) *Landscape for a Good Woman A Story of Two Lives*, London: Virago Press Ltd.
- Steele, J. (February 25, 2008) Log on to spend it like Beckham, *Metro*, 30
- Tasker, Y. & Negra, D. (2005) In Focus: Postfeminism and Contemporary Media Studies. *Cinema Journal* Vol. 44 (2): 107–109
- Taylor, I. (1995) 'It's a Whole New Ball Game': Sports Television, the Cultural Industries and the Condition of Football in England, *Salford Papers in Sociology* No. 17, University of Salford
- Taylor, R. (1992) *Football and its Fans Supporters and their Relations with the Game, 1885–1985*, Leicester: Leicester University Press
- Thistle, S. (2006) *From Marriage to the Market the Transformation of Women's Lives and Work*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press
- Thompson, W. (1999) Wives Incorporated Marital Relationships in Professional Ice Hockey in Coakley, J. & Donnelly, P. (Eds.) *Inside Sports*, London: Routledge
- Tolleneer, J. (1986) The Sports Scene and the Pop Scene: A Comparative Structural-Functional Analysis. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* Vol. 21: 229–238
- Tulloch, J. (1990) *Television Drama, Agency, Audience and Myth*, London: Routledge
- Turner, G. (2004) *Understanding Celebrity*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.

- Turner, G. (2006) The Mass Production of Celebrity: 'Celetoids', Reality TV and the 'Demotic Turn'. *International Journal Of Cultural Studies* Vol. 9 (2): 153–165
- Tyler, I. (2006) The Filthy Politics of Social Class. *Media/Culture* Vol. 9 (5) [online] at: <http://www.journal.media-culture.org.au/0610/09-tyler.php>
- Tyler, I. (2008) Chav Mum Chav Scum Class Disgust in Contemporary Britain. *Feminist Media Studies* Vol. 8 (1): 17–34
- Tyler, I. & Bennett, B. (2010) Celebrity Chav: Fame, Femininity and Social Class. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 13 (3): 375–393
- Veblen, T. (1925) *The Theory of the Leisure Class An Economic Study of Institutions*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Walkerdine, V. (1984) Some Day My Prince will Come: Young Girls and the Preparation for Adolescent Sexuality in McRobbie, A. & Nava, M. (Eds.) *Gender and Generation*, Basingstoke: MacMillan Education Ltd.
- Walkerdine, V. and Lucey, H. (1989) *Democracy in the Kitchen: Regulating Mothers and Socializing Daughters*, Virago, London.
- Walvin, J. (2001) *The Only Game Football in Our Times*, Edinburgh: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Warde, A. (2008) Dimensions of a Social Theory of Taste. *Journal of Cultural Economy* Vol. 1 (3): 321–336
- Watt, I. (1957) *The Rise of the Novel Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books
- Whannel, G. (2001) Punishment, Redemption and Celebration in the Popular Press The Case of David Beckham in Andrews, D. L. & Jackson, S. L. (Eds.) *The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity*, London: Routledge
- Whelehan, I. (2000) *Overloaded: Popular Culture and the Future of Feminism*, London: The Women's Press Ltd.
- Williams, J. & Woodhouse, J. (1991) Can Play, Will Play? Women and Football in Britain in Williams, J. & Wagg, S. (Eds.) *British Football and Social Change: Getting into Europe*, Leicester: Leicester University Press
- Woolridge, J. (2002) Mapping the Stars: Stardom in English Professional Football 1890–1946. *Soccer and Society* Summer Vol. 3 (2): 51–69
- Yalom, M. (2001) *A History of the Wife*, London: Pandora
- Zelizer, V. (2005) *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Zipes, J. D. (2007) *When Dreams Come True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition* Second Edition, New York: Routledge

Index

Note: Locators in **boldtype** indicate tables.

- ABC, 137
Abercrombie, N., 53, 66
Absolutely Fabulous, 127–8
Adams, M., 87
Adams, V., *see* Beckham, V.
adultery, institutionalised, 49, 104,
115, 130–1, 149–50, 161
see also infidelity, of players
aesthetic labour, 6, 26, 49–50,
81, 123
affairs, of celebrities, 5, 14, 47,
159–62
Ahmed, S., 60, 61
Alexander, H., 91
Allen, G., 58, 60
Andrews, D. L., 9
Ang, I, 32, 120, 121
Arscott, B., 155–6
Arsenal, 8
Ashley/Cheryl Cole marriage, 63, 83–4
athletes, wives of, 49
Atkinson, L., 105
Atkinson, P., 139
attributed celebrity, 40
audience, 7
autobiography, 14–15, 33, 62, 67–9
Angie Best, 145, 146–7, 148–50,
154–5, 158, 160, 165, 168
Becky Tallentire, 147–8
cautionary tales, 163–7
Coleen McLoughlin, 144, 146–7,
149, 152–3, 156–7, 158, 162,
165–6, 169, 171–2, 173–4, 182
competition from wannabe wags,
159–62
fairytale, 162–7
Shelley Webb, 150–1, 156, 157,
158–9, 160–2, 163
theory, 142–4
Victoria Beckham, 144, 146–7, 149,
151–2, 158, 163, 165–7, 170,
174–6
weddings, 153–4
Bacchilega, C., 31, 32, 33, 79, 126
Baker, L., 112
'barbie doll' image, 27, 49
Barley, S. R., 48
Barthes, R., 56
Baudrillard, J., 113
Baumeister, R. F., 146
BBC, 115, 127, 137
The Beautiful Game, 80, 109
Becker, K. E., 73
Beckford, M., 84
Beckham, D., 1, 8, 9, 46–7, 62, 83, 114,
158, 165, 174, 176, 177, 180
endorsements, 8
as icon, 9
wedding, 83
Beckham, V., 1, 63, 66, 69, 83, 93, 94,
99, 111, 114, 124, 144, 146, 149,
151, 153, 154, 158, 160, 163, 166,
167, 170, 174, 175, 180
autobiography, 144, 146–7, 149,
151–2, 158, 163, 165–7, 170,
174–6
independent career, 94
wedding, 83, 154
Benedict, J., 36, 47, 102, 103, 106, 161
Bennett, B., 2, 17, 30, 42, 44, 45, 76,
78, 89, 97, 104, 108, 119, 165,
173, 174, 179, 184
Bennett, T., 58, 59, 60, 61, 112
Benstock, S., 142, 146
Beresford, J., 155
Best, A., 69, 146, 148, 149, 153, 154,
155, 160, 165, 168

- autobiography, 145, 146–7, 148–50,
 154–5, 158, 160, 165, 168
 wedding, 154
 ‘wife of’ career, 155
 Best, G., 103, 145, 148, 162, 176
 Bignell, J., 53, 54, 66
 Biressi, A., 74, 113
 ‘bitch culture’, 45, 46, 51
 blogging, 45
 Boden, S., 84
Bond and Beyond, 58
 Bond, J., 58
 Boorstin, D. J., 10
 Booth, R., 80
 Boshoff, A., 85, 103
 Bourdieu, P., 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22,
 23, 24, 26, 57, 84, 96, 120, 135,
 171, 183
 Boyle, R., 7, 8
 broadcasting rights, 7
 Brooks, L., 100, 102, 103
 Browne, H., 78
 Bruegel, I., 52
 Brunson, C., 17, 32, 36, 37, 109, 111,
 113, 137, 155, 179
 Bryman, A., 54
BSkyB, 7
 Bullen, J., 50, 51, 52
 Burchill, J., 90
 Burrows, T., 83
 Butler, J., 25, 26
 Byrne, C., 137

 Cadwalladr, C., 92, 93
 career, ‘wife of’, 4, 47–8, 92–9, 181
 depiction in autobiographies, 154–9
 two-person, 93, 155–9
 Carrabine, E., 31
 Carrington, B., 47, 94
 Case, P., 104
 Cashmore, E., 8, 9, 46, 76, 94, 152
 cautionary tales, 3, 32–3, 75, 78, 131,
 150, 163–7
 celebrity
 attributed, 40
 contemporary, 40–2, 72
 female working class, 42–6
 gossip, 41–2
 magazines, 1, 62
 masculine, 47
 star system, 40
 vicarious, 16
 celebrity culture, 78
 cynical turn in, 2
 celetoids, 40
 Challis, C., 80, 109
 charity work, 30, 101, 157
 ‘chav’ culture, 28, 44, 50, 53, 57, 60,
 74–5, 79, 90, 97
 cheerleaders, 6
 Chittenden, M., 85
 Chouliaraki, L., 17
 Churchill, M., 75
 Churchwell, S., 80
 Clarke, N., 87, 88, 89
 class, and feminism, 25
 and gender, 17–18, 25–8, 57
 hidden injuries of, 24–5
 judgements about, 170–6, 182–4
 and morality, 28–30
 struggle between, 21–3
 ‘class drag act’, 44
 Clayton, B., 6, 16, 47, 52, 80, 81
 Clément, J. P., 23
 Clerkin, B., 78
 Clifford, M., 79, 99
Closer, 98
 Cobb, J., 24, 25, 98, 124
 Cole, A., 46, 63
 independent career, 94–5
 infidelity, 104–5
 Cole, C., 104–5
Coleen’s Real Women, 41
 Conboy, M., 73, 75, 87, 100, 106
 Connell, I., 11
 consumption, conspicuous, 43, 133–5,
 167–70
 Coontz, S., 52
 Coppock, V., 17, 34, 35, 102
 Corner, J., 110, 120
 Crompton, E., 91
Crossroads, 32
 cultural capital, lack of, 17, 19, 26–7,
 78, 86, 90, 96, 98, 120, 135
 cultural exclusion, 20
 culture, 57–8

- Curran, A., 83–4, 93–4
 and Steven Gerrard's nuptials, 83–5
 independent career, 95–6, 99
- Custis, N., 114
- Cutting Edge*, 172
- Daily Mail*, 1, 64, 72, 74, 78
- Davies, E., 78
- Dean, D., 8
- DeCordova, R., 40, 53
- discourse analysis, 54–5
 defined, 54–5
 persuasive, 57
- Distinction*, 10
- distraction, to masculine world of
 football, 3, 5, 14, 47, 51, 183
- divorces, 14, 99–107
 mixed reactions in press, 105–6
- domestic violence, 100–3, 115–17
 Paul Gascoigne, 100–3
- Dow, B. J., 116, 159, 186
- drag, 26
- Dyer, R., 40, 53, 56, 119
- Edgar, D., 119
- Ellen, B., 89, 90, 101, 121
- Ellis, J., 40
- emotional labour, 48–9, 155, 158, 177
- endorsements, 8, 99, 145, 153,
 167, 182
- Entwistle, J., 49, 50, 155
- envy, objects of, 2, 4, 9, 30, 31,
 72–3, 187
- 'Essex girl', 50, 175–6
- European Cup Winners Cup
 (1991), 154
- Evertons, 8, 141, 147–8, 153
- Fairclough, K., 17, 45, 46, 183
- Fairclough, N., 53, 55, 56, 57, 59
- fairy tales, 3, 13–15, 31–3, 51, 73,
 76, 181
Footballers' Wives (FW), 126–7
 as 'interpretive devices', 33
 myth of, 33
 as narrated in autobiographies,
 162–4
- Faludi, S., 35
- fashion, 74
 models, 49–50
- Felski, R., 144
- femininity, 3, 22, 26–7, 38–9
 exaggerated, 50, 93–4
 and marriage, 2
- 'feminisation' of media, 10
- feminism, 2, 3
 and autobiographical theory, 142–4
 and class, 25
 negative representation by
 media, 35
 and popular culture, 2, 36
 second wave, 1, 13
see also postfeminism
- Ferguson, E., 103
- Fernando, H., 105
- Figo, L., 8
- figuration, 60–1
- Finch, J., 47, 48, 52, 93, 123, 129,
 130, 155
- The First Ladies of Everton* (2004),
 147–8
- Fiske, J., 58, 66, 134
- The Footballer's Wife*, 109
- Footballers' Wives* (FW), 33, 62, 66–7,
 74, 109, 181
 audience pleasure in fault-finding,
 119–21
 blurring of fact and fiction, 113–15
 characters, 121–6
 class, 135–7
 conspicuous consumption, 133–5
 demographic appeal, 111
 divisions among women, 116–17
 exaggerated figure of wag, 111–12
 fairytale, 126–7
 institutionalised adultery, 130–1
 intertextuality, 112–15
 marriage as work, 129–31
 parenthood, 131–3
 postfeminist programming, 115–17
 soap opera, 117–19
 tips on becoming footballer's
 wife, 120
 unruly women, 127–9
see also soap operas
- Footballers' Wives Extra Time*, 66

- Footballers' Wives Tell Their Tales*, 150–1
- FootballSuperStars.com*, 6
- Foucauldian approach, 53
- France, 19
- France, L., 1, 106
- Friedman, S. S., 112, 142, 143, 146
- Frith, M., 73–4, 74, 91
- Fry, K., 155
- Gamson, J., 41
- Gascoigne, S., 100–3, 159
- Gascoigne, P., 83, 99, 100, 101, 103
- gender, and class, 25–8
- George and Me* (2001), 148–50
- Geraghty, C., 31, 32, 40, 42, 72, 118, 120, 133, 135, 146
- Gerrard, M., 76, 83, 84, 100
- Gill, R., 17, 34, 38, 39, 94, 108, 117
- Gillis, S., 34
- Gitlin, T., 3, 162
- glamour, *see* consumption, conspicuous
- Gluckman, M., 146
- Goffman, E., 48
- gold-diggers, 2, 13, 17, 38, 43, 97, 102, 125, 155–6, 174, 182–3
- gossip, 14, 41–2, 45, 120, 146, 180–2
- Gough Yates, A., 186
- Gould, P., 86
- The Guardian*, 64, 72–3, 80
- Guiltenane, C., 95, 104
- habitus, concept of, 21–2
- Hall, S., 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58
- Hammersley, M., 139
- Hardcastle, E., 1
- Hard Looks*, 53
- Hargreaves, J., 5
- Harries, E. W., 32, 33
- Harris, J., 6, 16, 47, 52, 81
- Hartley, J., 109, 110
- Harvey, M., 172
- Harvey, S., 172
- Haynes, R., 7, 8
- Hayward, K., 75, 78, 90, 97, 183, 184
- Hayward, P., 92
- heat*, 63, 65, 73–4, 78, 91, 104–5, 181
- Heck, M. C., 56, 57
- Hello!*, 13, 65, 73, 74, 77, 78, 83–4, 91, 101–2, 105, 138, 154, 181
- Henderson, M., 95
- Hendry, S., 87
- Hirst, C., 159
- Hobson, D., 31, 32, 117, 118, 121
- Hochschild, A. R., 48, 123
- Hodgson, J., 124
- Holden, W., 107
- Holland, P., 10
- Hollows, J., 17, 30, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 137, 155, 179
- Holmes, S., 2, 17, 30, 40, 43, 44, 45, 77, 78, 102, 157, 179, 182, 183
- Holt, R., 42
- HotStars*, 65
- 'housewife chic', 82
- How to be a Footballer's Wife*, 66
- Hyde, M., 89, 92, 94
- ideology, defined, 56–7
- image, of footballer's wife, 46–51
- career of, 47–8
- emotional labour, 48–9
- infidelity, of players, 49
- Ashley Cole, 104–5
- Paul Gascoigne, 100
- Wayne Rooney, 100
- see also* adultery, institutionalised
- Ingraham, C., 83, 84, 85, 86, 89
- interpretations of texts, 57
- intertextuality, 40, 58–60, 112–15
- Footballers' Wives* (FW), 112–15
- ITV, 14, 66, 98, 109, 111, 137, 157
- Jackson, S. L., 9
- James, A., 8
- Jelinek, E., 143, 144, 152
- Jenkins, R., 19
- John Terry/Toni Poole wedding, 83
- Jonsson, U., 93
- Katona, K., 109
- Keane, R., 95
- Kervin, A., 2, 4, 76, 81, 85, 109, 186
- King, A., 7, 8, 19
- Kington, T., 83
- Kirkham, P., 127, 128

- kiss-and-tell stories, 79, 99, 142, 145,
166, 168
- Krippendorf, K., 62
- Labone, P., 159
- Labous, J., 77
- 'ladette', 50
- Lampert, N., 94
- Landscape for a Good Woman*, 31
- Lane-Pascoe, C., 113–14, 122–4, 128
- Lang, G. E., 77
- Language and Symbolic Power*, 23
- Lawler, S., 12, 17, 22, 29, 68, 137, 183
- Lawson, N., 38
- Learning to Fly*, 151–2
- legitimate taste, 19
- Levin, A., 79, 99
- Ley, R., 79
- Lieberman, M. R., 32, 163
- Littler, J., 162
- Loos, R., 99
- Lotz, A. D., 115, 116, 125, 129, 133
- Lovell, T., 18, 25
- Lucey, H., 29
- Lumby, C., 71
- Lury, K., 66, 112
- Lusted, D., 119
- magazines, celebrity, 1, 62
method analysis, 62–5
number of articles, 72
readership estimates, 190–1
see also individual magazines
- Malone, C., 101, 102
- Manchester United, 8, 80, 124,
156, 161
- marketing potential, of footballers,
7–8, 145
- marriage, as a means to achieve
femininity, 2
- Marshall, P. D., 10, 11, 73
- masculine celebrity, 47
- Masculine Domination*, 24, 25
- 'masculine' news, 10
- Mason, T., 42
- McCaffrey, J., 75
- McCracken, G., 145
- McKenzie, B., 16, 50, 52
- McLeod, N., 94
- McLoughlin, C., 62, 69, 78, 83, 84, 86,
100, 114, 126, 142, 149, 159, 160,
163, 168, 185
autobiography, 144, 146–7, 149,
152–3, 156–7, 158, 162, 165–6,
169, 171–2, 173–4, 182
independent career, 95–9
- McNay, L., 27, 98
- McRobbie, A., 2, 17, 27, 28, 36, 78, 88,
97, 117, 120, 154, 159, 171,
185, 186
- Medhurst, A., 121
- media
coverage, 42
representations, 2
- Media Semiotics*, 54
- Merritt, S., 152
- middle class interest, in football,
19–20
cultural exclusion, 20
- Minot, L., 87
- modeling world, 49–50
- Modleski, T., 32, 122, 132, 186
- Monaghan, K., 135
- Montague, B., 78
- Moodie, C., 86
- Moody, M., 89, 90
- Moore, S., 74, 102
- moral education, 17, 30–3, 43
and appearance, 26
and class, 28–30
mediation as, 31
soap operas, 32–3, 51, 114, 118–19,
125–6, 137–8, 167
- morality
and boundaries, 50, 57, 81–2,
89, 184
of concern, 75, 78
- Morgan, P., 100
- Morgan, S., 105
- Morley, D., 56, 57
- Morris, D., 6
- Moseley, R., 17, 35, 36
- Mott, S., 76
- Moyes, S., 102
- Mumford, L, S., 110
- Murphy, S., 77

- National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs, 5
- National Football Queen Competition, 5–6
- National Readership Survey, 64
social grading used by, 188
- Negra, D., 2, 17, 30, 43, 44, 45, 77, 78, 82, 102, 137, 157, 179, 182, 183
- Nelson, M. B., 35, 36
- newspapers, 1
circulation, 191
method analysis, 62–5
number of articles, 72
- NewWoman*, 78
- Nixon, S., 53
- nouveau riche, 13, 21, 28, 78, 112, 133, 135, 138, 170, 185
- Nunn, H., 74, 113
- Oakley, A., 130
- OK!*, 13, 65, 73, 76–7, 83–90, 94, 104–5, 138, 181
- Orr, D., 34
- Ortiz, S. M., 16, 48, 49, 50, 52, 106, 115, 123, 130, 132, 157, 160, 161, 174
- ‘over-reachers’, 43
- Papanek, H., 93, 95, 96, 130
- paparazzi, 45, 73
- paradox, of wags as objects of admiration and derision, 5, 11–12, 16–17, 76
- parenthood, 131–3
- Parker, N., 94
- Parlour, K., 106
- Parlour, R., 106
- passivity, idea of, 3, 26, 33, 88, 127, 163–4
- patriarchal nature of football, 5–6, 127, 179, 185
- Paul Gascoigne/Sheryl Kyle wedding, 83
- Pittam, N., 145, 148, 149, 155, 160, 165, 168
- Platell, A., 87
- pleasurable contempt, 2, 17, 44, 76, 108, 184
- Pomerleau, C. S., 144
- popular culture, 18, 20, 46, 52, 84, 97, 109–10, 119
- postfeminism, 2, 12, 14, 17, 34–9
disagreements about, 34
and domesticity, 37–8, 155, 179, 181
equality and loss, 2
Footballers’ Wives (FW) as, 115–17
government approach, 34, 37
media approach, 12, 34–9, 74–5, 182–3
and neoliberalism, 39
and sexuality, 36, 39, 46
in USA, 35, 37–8
see also feminism
- pre-feminism, 2, 81, 93, 108, 157, 186
- Premier League, 7, 81
- Raisborough, J., 87
- Rawlings, P., 142
- reality TV, 40–2
- Real Madrid, 8, 94
- Reeves, C., 77, 86, 89, 90, 105
- revenues, broadcasting, 7
- Reynolds, J., 66, 120
- Ridley, I., 103
- Riegel, H., 146
- Roach, C., 119, 121, 126
- Roderick, M., 16, 18, 50, 177
- Rojek, C., 4, 5, 40
- role models, to wannabe wags, 4, 27, 63, 75–82
- Rooney, C., *see* McLoughlin, C.
- Rooney, W., 1, 62, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89–91, 100, 105, 114, 158, 159–60, 173, 176
- Rooney/McLoughlin wedding, 62, 83–4, 86–92
infidelity, 100
- Rowe, D., 3, 46, 47, 79, 148, 159
- Rowe, K., 128, 129
- Sandvoss, C., 7
- Saner, E., 74
- Sassatelli, R., 134
- Saunders, H., 161
- Savage, M., 18, 98
- Savage, T., 114
- Sawyer, F. A., 142

- Sayer, A., 12, 17, 20, 29, 30, 50, 88, 89, 135, 136
- Scott, A., 164–5
- second wave feminism, 13, 17, 46, 79, 82, 102, 115, 116, 157
and sport, 35–6
- semiotic textual analysis, 53–5, 56, 60, 66
film studies and cultural studies, 40, 53
- Sennett, R., 24, 25, 98, 124
- 'serial wags', 106
- sexual behaviour of footballers
women as sexual objects, 2, 11, 36, 41, 47, 49, 80, 94, 183
- Shed Productions, 111
- Sheridan, E., 1
- Short, S., 90
- Shulman, A., 172
- signs, 56
- Skeggs, B., 12, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 44, 50, 51, 52, 56, 57, 58, 80, 97, 98, 120, 127, 128, 171
- Sky, 6
- Smith, M., 114
- Smith, S., 68, 139, 144, 148
- soap operas, 32–3, 41–2, 51, 74, 186
see also Footballers' Wives (FW)
- Soccer AM*, 6
- 'soft' news, 10
- Sparks, R., 66
- Stanley, L., 68
- star system, 40
- Stars*, 53
- 'status incongruity', 24–5, 98
- Steedman, C., 31
- Steele, J., 6
- Stewart, R., 37–8, 38, 148
- Stubbs, F., 118
- Sullivan, M., 114
- The Sun*, 64, 73, 78, 80
- Sunday Times*, 96
- 'superwoman', 35
- Sutton, H., 152
- symbolic capital, 19
- symbolic violence, 10, 17, 23–5, 26, 57, 84, 92, 97, 120, 171
- tabloid press, 2, 73
popular culture, 20
sexualisation in, 2, 10
- Tallentire, B., 69, 143, 155, 158, 161, 164, 165, 167, 172, 177
autobiography, 147–8
- Tapper, J., 84
- Tasker, Y., 2
- taste, and distinction, 18–23
- Taylor, I., 7, 8, 19
- Taylor, R., 5, 6
- Taylor Report (1989), 7
- The Telegraph*, 81
- television, 32–3, 37, 43, 58, 59, 62
cameras, 7
contribution of, 109–10
makeover programmes, 27
method analysis, 66–7
- third wave feminism, *see* postfeminism
- Thistle, S., 52
- Thomas, B., 155, 164
- Thomas, D., 87, 155
- Thompson, W., 16, 50, 52, 157, 161, 185
- tickets, to games, 7
- titillation, 6
- Tolleneer, J., 153
- Topham, L., 87
- 'trophy wives', 6, 12, 47, 49, 51, 81
- Tuck, L., 121
- Tulloch, J., 111, 113
- Turnbull, D., 114
- Turner, G., 11, 41, 42
- Turner, L., 80, 81
- Turner, T., 113, 118–19, 122–4, 127–8, 132–3
- Tweedy, C., 46
- Tyler, I., 2, 17, 28, 30, 42, 44, 45, 53, 56, 57, 60, 74, 76, 78, 89, 90, 97, 104, 108, 112, 119, 165, 173, 174, 179, 183, 184
- USA, 10, 12
baseball, 16, 49, 77, 160
cinema, 82
postfeminism, 35–6, 37–8
television, 109, 115–16, 118, 129, 133

- Veblen, T., 38
 verisimilitude, 2, 117
 Vernon, N., 161
 virtual football game, 6
Vogue, 96–7, 171, 172, 185
- ‘wag’
 appeal of, 2
 figure of, 60–1, 186
 origin of term, 1
A Wag Abroad, 1, 109
 ‘wag lit’, 109
Wags’ Boutique, 41
The Wag’s Diary, 1, 109
Wags’ World, 41
 Walker, S., 155, 172, 176
 Walkerdine, V., 29, 75
 Walvin, J., 7, 8
 ‘wannabe wags’, 3, 47, 61, 63
 as competition to wags, 159–62
 and role models, 76–82
 Warde, A., 19, 20
 Watson, J., 68, 139, 144, 148
 Watt, I., 142
 Watt, T., 151, 175, 177
 wealth, undeserving, 4
 Webb, N., 157
 Webb, S., 69, 143, 148, 154, 155, 172,
 174, 176, 177
 autobiography, 150–1, 156, 157,
 158–9, 160–2, 163
 weddings, 13, 62–3, 82–92, 105, 107,
 114, 124, 135, 153–4
 Welcome to My World, 152–3
 Weldon, F., 81, 82
 West, Ann, 161, 164
 Wetherall, T., 95
 Whannel, G., 47, 94
 Whelehan, I., 34, 71
 Whitaker, T., 91
 White, R., 104
White Weddings, 83
 Williams, J., 5, 47
 Wissinger, E., 49, 50, 155
 Woan, K., 157
 Woodhouse, J., 5, 47
 Woods, J., 138
 Woollacott, J., 53, 58, 59, 60, 61, 112
 Woolridge, J., 9
 working class woman, 12–13, 17
 celebrity, 42–6
 Footballers’ Wives (FW), 135–7
 sexuality of, 26–7
 version of femininity and
 respectability, 26–7
 World Cup (2006), 1, 62
 England team, 3
 invitation to media, 5
- Yalom, M., 52
 Yar, M., 75, 79, 90, 97, 183, 184
 Zelizer, V., 81
 Zipes, J. D., 32