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Abstract

This article provides a critical discourse analysis of Scottish newspaper reports relating to football and 'sectarianism' in Scotland. It claims that there is a powerful and longstanding ideological 'framing' of sectarianism in sections of the Scottish press that is latently power-laden. This discourse attempts to construct and reaffirm a unified non-'sectarian' core identity that 'real' and 'authentic' Scots (should) share in opposition to a set of sectarian 'others'. The various connotations attached to sectarian and sectarianism, together with their use in particular ways that reflect an ideological hegemony, are illustrated. Much of the press's treatment of sectarianism is shown to lack sensitivity to the historical, hierarchical and relational aspects of religious, political and ethnic identities in Scotland.

Keywords: Scotland; football; sectarianism; hegemony; press

Introduction

Despite the increasing development of informative analyses of media-sport dynamics (Wenner (ed.), 1998; Boyle and Haynes, 2000/2009; Jackson and Ponic, 2001; Whannel, 2002; Bernstein and Blain (eds.), 2003; Bruce, 2004; Rowe (ed.), 2004; Boyle, 2006; Elder et al., 2006; Falcous, 2007) critical commentary of mediated discourse on 'sectarianism'[i] in Scotland remains under-developed, with Bradley (2006a, 2006b, 2008) and Reid (2006, 2008) providing perhaps the most thorough exceptions. This article seeks to build on these examples and to critically analyse the press treatment of sectarianism in Scotland. It utilises Willis's (1982) "analytic cultural criticism" approach demonstrating that effective analyses of mass media should acknowledge the production and appropriation of texts as products of particular social-historical power dynamics. Texts do not exist in isolation and intertextual analyses help illuminate how power dynamics influence the construction of messages, favouring particular interpretations. Willis (1982) asserts,

> even if ideology cannot totally submerge itself as common sense, it can at least forward plausible suggestions for the reinterpretation of events. Ideology can never afford to let contradictory interpretations of reality go free from at least a crippling ambiguity (p.127).

A "crippling ambiguity" still exists within Scottish analyses of sectarianism partly because of a lack of sensitivity in relation to specific social, cultural and political contexts. Therefore, potential interpretations of press texts relating to sectarianism and Scottish football are discussed in their Scottish context explicating the power relations inherently embedded in their applications.

The rhetorical devices of representation applied by the Scottish press which challenge or reinforce meaning in and around football and sectarianism is analysed, illustrating how mediated frameworks of understanding are likely to become, in certain circumstances, appropriated and interpreted in ideologically laden preferred ways. The *active* role played by press institutions in representing identity discourse is investigated, highlighted and critiqued rather than assumed neutral. In developing

critical reflections on sectarianism, clear parallels with racism and sexism are shown, suggesting that in seeking more robust explanations and clearer understanding of mediated power-dynamics, greater intra-disciplinary theorising can prove fruitful[ii].

The article begins by providing a social and historical context to understanding the discourse of sectarianism in Scotland, revealing power hierarchies similar to those found in studies on 'race' and gender. The theoretical framework is then outlined, with an explanation of the methodological approach adopted, before presenting examples of the hegemonic discourse around sectarianism in Scotland. These discourses are shown to utilise a number of rhetorical devices and three of these (dysconscious sectarianism, sincere fiction and symbolic annihilation) are discussed in order to critically inform future readings of press discourse of sectarianism in Scotland.

Understanding *The* Discourse of Sectarianism in Scotland

Whilst there is little doubt that the 'Old Firm' of Rangers FC and Celtic FC[iii] are the two football clubs most closely associated with the dominant discourse around sectarianism in Scotland, the term remains problematic. Dimeo and Finn (2001) assert that "'sectarianism' is a coy, confusing term that can often obscure much more than it reveals" (p.34). They, and others (Finn, 1990, 1991, 1999a, 1999b; Bradley, 1995; Walker, 2000; Bradley, 2006a; Maley, 2006; Kelly, 2007a, 2007b) have called for greater analytical clarity when using these terms, while others cite the lack of rigorous research and dearth of knowledge about sectarianism (Lynch, 2000; NFO Social Research, 2003). There is continual disagreement as to the extent sectarianism continues to influence Scottish society, as illuminated in Devine's (2000) excellent collection of essays on the subject; (also see Boyle and Haynes, 2000; NFO Social Research, 2003). The extent is debateable in large part due to the fact that few agree what the term actually means, what does and does not constitute sectarian. Attempts to clarify and define the terms have ranged from discourse being sectarian itself (Lappin, 2002; Smith, 2002; Cosgrove, 2004a, 2004b; Scotsman Editorial, 2006; Hodgart, 2008; Smith, 2009) to sectarianism being described as quintessentially

Scottish (Murray, 1988) or being seen to be acceptable when compared to 'racism' (see Dimeo and Finn, 2001 for analysis; Spiers, 2002). For some, simply being Catholic, Protestant, openly Irish, having a stated position on Irish politics or being a Rangers or Celtic fan is sufficient condition to be labelled sectarian (Lappin, 2002; see Kelly, 2007a and 2007b for other clubs/sports supporters' accounts according with these positions). At times sectarianism obscures anti-Catholic and anti-Irish prejudice (Finn, 1990, 1991; Bradley, 1998; Finn, 1999a, 1999b; Dimeo and Finn, 2001; Bradley, 2006a; Kelly, 2007a).

In contextually analysing sectarianism, Finn (1990) suggests that "much that is claimed to be sectarianism is better described as anti-Irish racism" (p.6). He convincingly adds that when used in Scotland the ambiguous term:

> avoids any identification of causality, neglects any analysis of social and political power within Scotland and implies equal culpability for prejudice between majority and minority communities and helps retain the myth of Scotland as a democratic and egalitarian society free from the strains of racism. (p. 5-6).

This absenting of power relations and lack of contextual sensitivity relating to sectarianism and football in Scotland, has also been acknowledged by Bradley (2006a), who broadens the scope of discussion:

> Having knowledge of Ireland's conquest, exploitation and domination by Britain is crucial to understanding the position of the Irish and their offspring within British society, particularly in Scotland … Almost all the relevant political, popular and academic literature, including from the Scottish media industry and the developing anti-sectarian industry, do not acknowledge this colonisation in any relevant commentary (p.25).

Being Protestant or Catholic and supporting Rangers or Celtic are not sufficient conditions to be labelled 'sectarian'[iv]. Sugden and Bairner, (1993) explain that:

> sectarianism can be best understood in two overlapping ways: first as *symbolic labelling process* through which community divisions are defined and maintained, and second, as an ideological *justification for discrimination*, community conflict and political violence (p.15, my emphasis).

This definition[v] demonstrates the two primary, yet significantly different, areas of sectarianism that apply to much Old Firm discourse and may help provide a more

accurate framework for understanding the nature of Rangers' and Celtic's respective clubs (fans and club policies), and for critically informing interested parties about both clubs and their sectarian relationship. For example, Sugden and Bairner's first area, *symbolic labelling process*, applies to both Rangers and Celtic, while *justification for discrimination*, appears to apply largely, if not exclusively, to Rangers in terms of the culture and practices of the official club. In much Scottish discourse Celtic is branded sectarian for simply having Irish-Catholic links (see Kelly, 2007a, 2007b, 2008 for critical discussion) while Rangers is branded sectarian for having Unionist-Protestant links *and* being anti-Catholic in culture[vi]. Indeed, Rangers openly (though unofficially) refused to employ Catholics until 1989[vii] whilst Celtic has never operated such an exclusionary practice. Both types of sectarianism are often used ambiguously and equally, showing no distinction, therefore apportioning blame uncritically and equally. This lack of contextualisation in relation to the production of media texts has possibly been *the* major flaw in most press (and wider media)-driven analyses of Old Firm sectarianism in Scotland. Being sensitive to the distinction between Rangers' anti-Catholic Protestant culture and Celtic's catholic Roman Catholic culture is crucial yet also almost universally unacknowledged in mediated accounts which simplistically anchor Rangers as a 'Protestant' team and Celtic as a 'Catholic' team.

Thus, in Scotland an apolitical and culturally naïve version of sectarianism has become institutionalised to such an extent that *a* way of thinking about and relating to it has materialised and become embedded as *the legitimate* way to frame it revealing a common administrative, political and cultural pattern, resulting in a "discursive formation" (Foucault, 1972: 210). As Hall (1997) explains, discourse for Foucault:

> constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others. Just as a discourse 'rules in' certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write, or conduct oneself, so also, by definition, it 'rules out', limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it (p. 44).

In Scotland, the discursive formation constructs the 'Old Firm' as a non-hierarchical dualism constituting 'Protestant' Rangers and 'Catholic' Celtic, and this discursive formation serves to embody a powerful ideological construction of equal culpability[viii] The press do not simply numb the masses into submission but, unless the masses are extremely aware of the nuances of the issue/s, and the ideologically laden referential frameworks within which these nuances are situated, the press powerfully influences the ways in which the masses interpret and appropriate the social world. The imprecise use of the term sectarianism does lead to *a crippling ambiguity*, and it is precisely this crippling ambiguity that has helped shape and sustain much of the prejudice that is hidden within the ubiquitous term sectarian and which has allowed it to be shorn of its power dynamics and to be used indistinguishably to describe anti-Catholic/Protestant prejudice, *and* legitimate labels of identity.

This discursive formation rules in, restricts and limits the parameters of (il)legitimate discussion around sectarianism. It is within this discursive formation that in 2006 UEFA's disciplinary body acquitted Rangers FC (in relation to its fans) of 'sectarian chanting' based on the conclusion that the song[ix] targeted in the case had been "tolerated" in Scotland for many years without intervention from "either the Scottish football or governmental authorities" (UEFA statement, 2006). This discursive formation emerges from the society where it is alleged that a leading Scottish spreadsheet newspaper, as recently as 1981, actively and without criticism, practised an anti-Catholic recruitment policy (Kemp, 1999[x]) and where in 1994 it is alleged that a senior law officer "faced apparent sectarian bias when standing for a senior post in the Bar" (Donnelly, 1999). More recently, Alex Salmond, Scotland's First Minister, recalling his own personal experiences revealed that in the mid 1980s "as a young economist with the Royal Bank of Scotland it was a period where you could still get the lingering smell of sectarianism in the banks" (cited in Spiers, 2009). When critically analysing Scotland's mediatisation of sectarianism, the historical context of anti-Catholicism being camouflaged as the ambiguous 'sectarianism' and tolerated without interference for many years, the differing practices and trajectories of the clubs (and their respective supporters) and the social-historical contexts of their development should be acknowledged alongside any potential contemporary legacy

Theoretically Framing Press Discourse on Sectarianism

This section outlines Willis's (1982) "analytic cultural criticism" approach, focusing specifically on the importance of textual analysts being sensitive to power and ideology. The latent power of a discursive formation is then shown, illustrating clearly how this discursive formation (preferred reading) of Celtic's Catholic linkages (and to a lesser extent, Rangers' Protestant linkages) should be understood as an ideological product itself. The example reveals how this type of discourse serves to mystify rather than clarify understanding. The section concludes with an outline of the critical discourse analysis approach employed in this study.

As Willis (1982) has convincingly argued, in simply mapping cultural variables, one's knowledge or understanding about the *nature* of social attitudes, cultural values or meaningful symbols remains partial, ambiguous and confusing. Willis, (1982) notes that one cannot understand social phenomena by mere "linear determinism" (p.119). "The understanding of interrelationship and interconnection is of the essence if we are even to set the right questions" (p.119). In order to overcome the limiting and linear determined approach Willis, (1982) proposes a method described as "analytic cultural criticism" that is concerned with locating "meaning and values, and social explanation" (p.120). It is "*most* interested in the manner," (p.120, original emphasis) in which social realities are understood and appropriated into the popular consciousness. The position of ideologically laden power is implicitly assumed by Willis:

> The analytic socio-cultural task is not to measure these differences precisely and explain them physically, but to ask *why* some differences, and not others, are taken as so important, become so exaggerated, are used to buttress social attitudes or prejudice… why do people *think* a particular difference is important, how do they *use* the difference, is this use related at all to a general system of attitudes and beliefs: to ideology (p. 120, original emphasis)?

Interpretations, therefore, must be considered as part of a broader process of production and diffusion of texts that are inescapably connected to particular social, political and historical perspectives – circuits of power.

Thompson (1988) and Philo (2007) reinforce that textual analysts need to consider the (overlapping) stages of production, content and reception, though recognise that readers of text do not necessarily or inevitably receive, interpret and appropriate messages in identical ways. The interpretive stage is described by Thompson (1988) as the "space of transformation" while Philo (2007) refers to it as "circulation". These variations within *spaces of transformation* and *circulation* are often overlooked in Scottish sectarian discourse, leading to the dominant ethnocentric reading being presented as the *real* or *correct* reading. As Thompson (1988) asserts, "appropriation of media messages is a process of creative interpretation in which individuals actively construct sense and plot, actively approve or disapprove of what is said and done" (p.366). It would be remarkable therefore, if media producers did not also construct sense and plot, actively approve or disapprove of what is said and done and if these outcomes were not inextricably influenced by the power dynamics situated around the religion, class, ethnicity and gender of both the producer/s and its intended audience.

In Scotland, sections of the press and society define and measure sectarianism against what Willis would describe as "absolute values" (p.122). These absolute values represent the dominant yardstick of measurement, the dominant regime of truth and, when situated in Scottish sectarian discourse, alternative readings are themselves often invidiously and inappropriately demonised as sectarian.

These absolute values accumulate widespread legitimacy and this in turn leads to ethnocentric decoding of the social world, even by non-dominant groups themselves. Audiences are, thus, positioned as partisan actors and divisions between 'we', the decent, 'non-sectarian' ones and they, the 'sectarian', are defined and reinforced. As Willis recognises, ideology operates as "a powerful force of definition seeking its own reflection from reality in order to confirm itself" (p.124). Bruce (2004) acknowledges a similar point in her analysis of racist discourses of sports commentators:

> If the sports media systematically reinforce racist ideologies … it is not because media workers are active racists. It is through the sets of practices and discourses by which knowledge is constructed in the media, not the personal

> inclinations of media workers, that racist ideologies continue to be recreated (p.863).

These ideological assumptions should be considered when analysing the mediatisation of sectarianism in Scotland. For although Rangers has Protestant linkages and Celtic Catholic linkages, the Scottish press's apolitical and historically deficient linear determined approach, which posits 'Protestant Rangers' against 'Catholic Celtic', mystifies rather than clarifies understanding.

By analysing Celtic more closely the limitations of the linear determined approach is further shown. Celtic's large percentage of Catholic fans is not *simply* a matter of sectarian choice. For Catholic football fans in the central belt of Scotland their choice of club is limited for two primary reasons. First, Rangers' historically embedded anti-Catholic policy and fan culture[xi], together with other central belt clubs with similar (real or perceived) anti-Catholic fan-cultures like Airdrie, Hearts, Motherwell and Falkirk, make it unremarkable that many, if not most, football supporting Catholics from this part of Scotland would be likely to support Celtic. Second, in addition to legitimate habitus-forming factors (family, geography, ethno-political attachments), Celtic has always had an historical association with Ireland and Irish-Catholic immigrants (Campbell and Woods, 1996; Bradley, 2004, 2006a), and consequently, many Scots of Irish descent grow up supporting Celtic and being raised in families that are 'Celtic minded'[xii]. Yet revealingly both of these inter-linked factors are continually overlooked in mediated commentary on the relationship between football and sectarianism. Furthermore, whilst the specific social, cultural and religious context here is almost[xiii] unique to Celtic, the effects (of being raised in a football club tradition), with its inevitable dyadic formulation of defining and conceptualising one's club in opposition to loathing and demonising an antithetical opposition, are unique to neither Celtic nor Rangers. The absence of acknowledgement of these factors is part of the institutionally accepted discourse that serves to reinforce the relational order by which these identities are to be negotiated in Scottish discourse and which provide a crippling ambiguity. The reasons why many Catholics support Celtic and many Protestants support Rangers are more complex than crude linear determinism and in

failing to be sensitive to these political and historical complexities the press's integrity is questionable and its accuracy flawed.

A key task, therefore, for any critical analysis is to locate the study within "an ongoing narrative of struggle that blends individuals and collective action or agency with political, economic and cultural flows and forces" (Sugden and Tomlinson, 2002: 8). It is to these political and cultural forces that attention now turns in order to outline how this article seeks to analyse the selected press accounts of sectarianism and football in Scotland.

There are no fixed theoretical and methodological procedures for textual analyses, which cross a variety of disciplines, each with potentially different methodological and theoretical approaches. Two of the most common methods are content analysis and discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Philo, 2007). Whilst these share commonalities of method and procedure – involving a degree of semiotic analysis for example - content analysis tends to focus on quantitative words and/or images, whilst discourse analytical approaches describe these words and images (texts) in relation to particular social and political contexts (Van Dijk, 2000). Critical discourse analysts, such as Fairclough (2001; 2003) and some of those involved with the Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG), including Philo (2007), link discourse analysis more explicitly to power and social interests. One should be sensitive to the fact that whilst actors may be socially differentiated, their cultural and ideological frames of reference ensure that they interpret, construct, transform and appropriate social truths within particular social-historical contexts. Sectarian and sectarianism are polysemous words that require varying degrees of subjective interpretation. However, one should consider the position of power by locating mediated expressions of anything meaningful:

> in relation to the historically specific and socially structured contexts and processes within which, and by means of which, these symbolic forms are produced, transmitted and received (Thompson, 1988: 361).

Echoing Thompson's call, Philo (2007) criticises those textual analysts who fail to adequately consider the production and context of mediated texts. In describing the pioneering work of the GUMG (of which he is part) he adds,

> we were interested in how language was linked to wider social processes and how individual meanings and communications related to conflict and divisions within society as a whole … The issue then was not to look simply at the descriptions which were offered of the world in a specific text, but to look at the social relations which underpinned the generation of these descriptions (p.5[xiv]).

Thus, my approach, which is a critical discourse analysis influenced by Willis's analytic cultural criticism approach, avoids a quasi-experimental design content analysis seeking to 'discover' patterns over a fixed event or mediated product (such as those used by Kennedy 2001 and Bruce, 2004). Rather, its procedural and theoretical approach locates *one* common discourse (discursive formation) around mediated versions of 'sectarianism' and theoretically engages in a critical discourse analysis of it. Whilst Philo (2007) outlines the GUMG's first step in their methodological procedure was to "identify the range of arguments which existed on an issue" (p. 6), this is overly ambitious for this article's scope, and surplus to current requirements, which is merely to present one (longstanding and common) type of argument (discourse) on the mediatisation of sectarianism. Thus, I select some illustrative examples (or "explanatory themes" as Philo terms it) over the last decade from a range of the most popular Scottish newspapers in order to inform the study. This period coincides with an increase in media and political 'interest' in sectarianism[xv]. The main aim is to locate these examples within their wider ideological systems in similar ways the GUMG's critical discourse analyses have done with their substantive topics.

> The key conclusions in terms of methods which we drew, was that it was not possible to analyse texts in isolation from the study of the wider systems of ideologies which informed them and the production processes which structured their representation … This linking of production, content and reception became the basis of our methodological approach (Philo, 2007:14).

The illustrative examples all relate explicitly to broader historical, political and national discourses around sectarianism and have been selected because of their

suitability in revealing an overarching ideological discourse around the production, content and reception of Scotland's press articles. The first two examples reveal a particularly powerful and interconnected discursive production – the de-legitimising of Celtic's Irish-Catholic links alongside the implication that Celtic (fans and club) has an underlying anti-non-Catholic (which translates in Scottish discourse as anti-'Protestant') culture. Two further examples – both linked to An Gorta Mor (The Great Hunger in Ireland) – are included because they were high profile incidents, widely reported and, whilst once again being interconnected, the latter example reveals the discrepancy between press-created discourse and the Scottish judiciary, exposing further the wider systems of ideology informing Scottish press accounts. All examples originate from prominent national (Scottish) newspapers – Scotsman (Edinburgh based), Daily Record (Glasgow Based), Sunday Herald (Glasgow based) , Scottish News of the World (Glasgow based) – and all journalists (except Hodgart) are nationally recognised senior journalists in their field.

Clearly this selection involves overlooking other discourses and other media sites. However, remaining true to a critical discourse analysis epistemology, selection, subjectivity and interpretation are inescapable inevitabilities of all textual analysis. Thus, it is unsurprising that despite the GUMG's determination to *identify the range of arguments*, even they have not escaped accusations of flawed and biased selection (see Quinn, 2006 for detailed overview of these debates). However, just as Falcous's (2007) work on New Zealand sporting identities and mediated constructions was not intended to "offer an essentialist interpretation of media texts but to reveal workings and displace their hierarchical assumptions" (p.381), this article seeks similar ambitions.

Dysconscious Sectarianism, Sincere Fictions and Symbolic Annihilation: Press Accounts of Celtic FC's Irish-Catholic Links

Jarvie and Reid (1997) warn against applying universal theories to sport, ethnicity and racism in developing an authentic gaze. In developing an authentic gaze into Scottish football's (and society's) 'sectarian problem', sectarianism's historical legacy and

contemporary setting have to be acknowledged and contextualised within a power framework if one is to begin to meaningfully analyse its mediatisation.

We may furnish our understanding by drawing on King's (1997) work on the power dynamics surrounding 'race'. King's term "dysconscious racism" describes the uncritical acceptance of "dominant White norms and privileges" (p.128). Thus, we are reminded here of other studies in sport, notably Falcous, (2007), Elder et al, (2006), Bruce, (2004) and Jackson and Ponic, (2001) that reveal whiteness being (re)constructed in the media as 'normal' against the constructed 'other' of Maori, indigenous Australian, black American and black Canadian (or Jamaican-Canadian more specifically) respectively. Thus, it could be proposed that a dysconscious – or *institutional* – sectarianism occurs in Scottish media discourse. As Spencer (2004) has informatively explicated in her work, by utilising Feagin and Vera's (1995) concept of "sincere fictions", despite sustained participation in a racist culture, few Whites ever admit to being racist. Spencer (2004) argues:

> What obscures the reality for most (Whites) is the creation of *sincere fictions* that enable Whites to resolve the dissonance between beliefs in equality and participation in a racist society. This form of White racism is usually predicated on the "belief that White prejudice is no longer a factor" (Reeves and Campbell, 1994, p. 73) (p. 119, original emphasis).

Indeed, despite it being likely that some individuals within the press consciously seek to present *their* biased perceptions, it is contended that the dysconscious sectarianism is so deeply embedded many (perhaps most) press actors may be consciously unaware of the ideologically laden nature of their reflexive acts. Hall (1997) reminds us of the intimacy between cultural norms and values and their collective representation in language:

> We are born into a language, its codes and its meanings. Language is therefore … a social phenomenon. It cannot be an individual matter because we cannot make up the rules of language individually, for ourselves. Their source lies in society, in the culture, in our shared cultural codes, in the language system – not in nature or in the individual subject (p.34).

The parallels here with gender analyses are instructive if we consider Scraton and Flintoff's (2002) observations on gender relations:

> What is seen to be missing is an analysis of gender *relations* rather than simply sex difference. What we understand about 'masculinity' at any one time is always defined *in relation* to 'femininity'. However, these ideas are not just relational, but are also *hierarchical*, where one set of attributes and associated activities (men's) are viewed as more important than the others (women's). Gender relations can therefore be defined as relations of power (p. 34, original emphasis).

Lenskyj (1998) is aware of the power hierarchies when critically analysing women and sport media texts, utilising the term "symbolic annihilation" (p.20) to describe a set of processes that trivialise, stereotype and under-represent female sporting achievement. These parallels help us analyse the hierarchical relations of power that constructs the framing of sectarianism in Scotland.

The following sincere fictions created by the press reveals more about the dysconscious sectarianism of the press than it does about the sectarianism of either Rangers or Celtic (clubs and fans). For example, the following two press illustrations, which, ironically, were intended to appear as critical challenges to sectarianism, merely expose not only the sectarianised misconception of the journalists but, given the prominence of the publications and/or journalists, also the culture of acceptance pervading the society in which the prejudiced comments are made. Both examples refer to the press-created sincere fiction surrounding Celtic's ex-manager Gordon Strachan. This sincere fiction frames Celtic fans as disliking Strachan because he is (allegedly)[xvi] not a Catholic, has not played for Celtic and did not support the club. The Sunday Herald's Hodgart (13th April, 2008) criticises Celtic fans, and trivialising Catholic rosary beads, exclaims, "some [Celtic] fans would probably rather have a bead-rattling Hoopy Hound[xvii] in the dugout" (p.14). Aiden Smith (31st May, 2009), in the Scotsman, criticises Celtic's search for a new manager in the aftermath of Strachan's departure, by caricaturing an ex-Celtic player pleading for the job. Smith speaks the imaginary words of this 'candidate', mocking, "but unlike Gordon Strachan I played for Celtic … the fish on a Friday after training? You couldnae whack it". These examples are highly revealing on two counts. First, the determination to promote the preferred ideological position results in the press overstating its (often speculative) supporting evidence whilst overlooking the (factual)

evidence that contradicts the sincere fiction being produced. For example, in the aforementioned articles, Hodgart's unequivocal insinuation is that Celtic fans are so determined to have only a Catholic manager, even a cartoon-like dog-hound would do. Correspondingly, Smith's criticism of Celtic fans for being "Celtic-minded" – a term which when used by the media, is a sincere fiction itself, euphemistically and pejoratively meaning Irish-Catholic - implies that Celtic fans have a fear of non-Irish-Catholic managers. Although Smith acknowledges that there are some "who insist that Celtic-minded has nothing to do with religion", his one page article referred to religion four times, and when considered in the context of the article and the wider press sincere fictions around Celtic-minded, it clearly implies intimate (and negative) connection between Celtic-minded and Catholicism. Smith attempts to placate this fear of non-Catholic managers by informing the reader that with regard to the club's "romantic history", "any new manager would have no difficulty acknowledging [it], whether or not he was Scottish or Irish or Catholic". Smith then re-introduces religion, informing the reader that Strachan is "the wee, red-haired, Presbyterian" before wondering whether some Celtic fans did not welcome him "from day one". Additionally, in juxtaposing Celtic with its major rivals, Rangers, Smith adds the significant claim, "you never hear the phrase Rangers-minded". The consideration that this latter reality is itself a reflection of press discourse is seemingly overlooked, along with the factual reality of the situation. Celtic's previous non-Catholic managers number approximately[xviii] six out of fifteen from those employed after 1965.[xix] Celtic's most successful manager, Jock Stein, a Scottish Protestant, employed as manager from 1965 to 1978, was voted 'the greatest ever Celt' by Celtic fans in 2002. Meanwhile, Rangers employed its first and only Catholic manager in 2006 and Paul Le Guen's six month managerial reign remains the club's shortest in one hundred and thirty eight years of existence. It is far from obvious that anti-Catholicism figured in Rangers' (club and fans) increasing antipathy towards Le Guen. However, the media's duplicity is merely compounded by the fact that it is comparably doubtful that Celtic's (fans and/or club) antipathy towards Gordon Strachan was connected to his religious background or lack of it. These facts are absented from the mediated sincere fictions. The second revealing aspect to these examples is the press's open denigrating references to Catholicism, referring to "bead-rattlers" and "fish on a Friday". This

exposes aspects of the press's supposed anti-sectarian view, revealing that in some discourse around Catholicism in Scotland, it is unremarkable to use potentially offensive and derogatory language and to trivialise practical elements of that faith. Moreover, by constructing a picture of a cartoon-like cuddly dog-hound reciting the rosary, one need not be a semiotician to read the message being produced to depict Catholic rosary bead users. One may contrast this reality with the potential response if these sections of the Scottish press had trivialised and parodied the Sikh turban, Islamic veil, Jewish kappel (skullcap) or indeed alternative signifiers of these (or other minority) faiths. The ideological power of these sincere fictions is further revealed when one considers they appeared in articles purporting to be criticising the sectarianism of others (Celtic FC and its fans).

There is an underlying symbolic annihilation of Celtic FC's Irish-Catholic links corresponding to the broader processes of dysconscious sectarianism. Gruneau, (1993) reminds us:

> In struggles over 'common sense' and public consent, dominant interests are often able to de-legitimise alternatives by labelling them as frivolous, unnatural or archaic. In the meantime, other sources of difference frequently get incorporated in a compromised and non-threatening manner (p.99).

Willis (1982) contends that this often occurs in two overlapping and related ways; first, by promoting laughter or cynicism at the expense of non-dominants; second, by drawing attention to unarguable differences out of context. As the previous examples showed, laughter and cynicism are commonly used in Scottish press reports on sectarianism by ridiculing, de-legitimising and stereotyping Celtic's links with Ireland and Catholicism transforming these into pseudo-religious kitsch. The latter practice (drawing attention to unarguable differences out of context) is used to anchor the incontestable facts in the preferred ideological frame. That is, the fact that prior to managing the club Gordon Strachan had no Celtic links, together with the press-induced assertion that he is not a Catholic, were stripped of their context to be reconfigured into the press's preferred anchoring, thus positioning a significant number of Celtic fans as having a problem with non-Catholics managing their club.

Aidan Smith of The Scotsman again, exhibits this symbolic annihilation by simultaneously ridiculing Celtic supporters' knowledge of Irish politics – thus attempting to frame their political associations as illegitimate - and reducing their 'felt Irishness' to that of the racially stereotyped. He informs the reader that Celtic supporters have little "grip on Irish politics," and that this poor 'grip' is similar to that of the handle on an old "Oirish dresser" (5th January, 2002). Gerry McNee of The News of the World similarly stereotypes whilst also attempting to de-legitimise the political association of some Celtic fans. He writes of "plastic Irishmen and women who drink in plastic Irish pubs and don't know their Athenry from their Antrim when it comes to Irish history or politics" (6th May, 2001). By assuming the "decontextualised voice" (Wertsch, 1990), the voice of reason, Smith and McNee reveal their ideologically laden framing of sectarianism, a frame that is continually reproduced by ideologically laden sections of the Scottish media. As Finn (2000) has shown by adapting Wertsch's (1990) framework for contextualised / de-contextualised voices, power dynamics can help explain how dominant voices often appear to be those of de-contextualised rationality. Smith and McNee present themselves as the neutral, independent, rational and wise voices of reason to be contrasted with the biased, contextualised, irrational and ignorant voices of the Celtic supporters. In addition to drifting perilously close to racially stereotyping, both journalists overlook their own (personal and structural) subject position, inherently claiming – as critical journalist John Pilger (2007) refers to in relation to other journalists - "to have risen to the nirvana of 'impartiality". By placing themselves (media) in the de-contextualised frame, and Celtic fans in the contextualised, they have only acknowledged the contribution of half of the power dynamic. Overlooking the central role that the Scottish press play within the power network is bound to produce malnourished social accounts.

Additionally, of course, in attempting to annihilate aspects of Celtic's Irish-Catholic links, neither Smith nor McNee seem willing to acknowledge that being well informed about the history and politics of an identity is not a necessary condition of having that identity. This is not to suggest that all Celtic fans or Irish songs are beyond reproach. There is legitimacy in questioning aspects of some Celtic fans'

'Irishness', but large sections of the media, in their determination to de-legitimise the club's Irishness, tend to throw the baby (and its grandparents) out with the bathwater. Moreover, beyond Celtic's Irish-Catholicism, it is difficult to find equivalent annihilations within the Scottish press, which remains conspicuous by its absence. For example, Scotland's national football supporters' group, the 'Tartan Army' sings of 700 year old Scottish battles against the English, and of "sending (England's) Proud Edward's army home tae think again" without any such similar annihilation or questioning of their historical and political knowledge from the Scottish press. Meanwhile, the fans of the other half of the Old Firm, Rangers, who presumably also do not know their Belfast from their Ballymena or who lack knowledge of the intricacies of Protestantism, Loyalism and Britishness escape such annihilation, revealing contrasting treatment towards Irish-Catholicism compared to other groups in Scotland.

Two further illustrative examples of the symbolic annihilation of Celtic's Irish-Catholic identity are shown which represent mediated attempts to treat events out of context and which ultimately serve to neutralise and label frivolous the anti-Irish acts of sections of Rangers fans whilst simultaneously accusing the victim of "desperation" and "political-correctness". First, the Daily Record's Stuart Cosgrove (May 13th 2004) comments on a derby match incident between Celtic and Rangers, when some Rangers fans threw potatoes onto the Celtic Park pitch in an apparent derogatory reference to An Gorta Mor (the Great Hunger) in mid-19th century Ireland. Cosgrove writes:

> I find it difficult to get upset by the tatty controversy. It is so obviously a part of the gallows humour of football rivalry that only a very irate Celtic fan could take seriously. To elevate it to the status of sinister sectarianism borders on desperation.

On the contrary, to reduce it to the status of frivolity, borders on the prejudiced. Stripping this act of its undeniable social, historical and political context – context that presumably contributed to the Rangers fans' eagerness to perform the act in the first place - merely illuminates the press's ideology and its embedded prejudices. This "blame the victim" anchoring is replicated again in a related issue also involving

reference to An Gorta Mor, this time around the anti-Irish song, which revealingly in itself, is referred to in media discourse as "The Famine Song". This song is sung by sections of Rangers (and Hearts[xx]) fans and includes the line "the famine's over, why don't you go home?" The Daily Record's James Traynor (22nd September, 2008) titles his article "isn't there enough to worry about without beating ourselves up over a line in a song?" and proceeds to set the scene by comparing "the political correctness" of offended Celtic fans to a number of self-evidently ridiculous and out of context comparisons. These range from "Queen of the South can't be called Queens because Republicans and gays will be upset" to the ironic mocking description of how one *should* react to the song; "You will abhor it. You will write to your MSPs, MPs, UEFA, FIFA, the EU and the Vatican. This is the most divisive, anti-social and downright malicious trend to be visited upon us yet". The discursive framing is further affirmed:

> Don't tell me a line in a song about the decade-long potato famine that made people flee Ireland in their tens of thousands in the middle of the 19th century is what we should be beating ourselves up about.

Traynor's anchoring of this song's insignificance, whilst simultaneously ridiculing uncooperative whistleblowers, betrays an ideological short sightedness. Rather than anchor the meaning on being *about the 19th century*, he could have simply considered the actual line in the song and its potential 21st Century significance; notably, that singing "the famine's over, why don't you go home?" to large groups of Irish-Catholic Celtic fans residing in Scotland could be interpreted by them (and others) as prejudiced and/or racist. Indeed, upon upholding a conviction against a Rangers fan for singing the song, the Scottish Judiciary Appeal Court branded the 'famine song' racist. In specific reference to the line in the song deemed insignificant by The Daily Record journalist, the presiding Lord Carloway judged, "they are racist in calling upon people native to Scotland to leave the country because of their racial origins" (cited in Robertson, 2009). It is therefore ideologically illuminating that Traynor asks, "when did the gallows humour of the terracing, which for decades has made us all smile by cutting right through pomposity and politically-correct boundaries, become such a terrible thing?" "Pomposity" and "politically-correct" are used to symbolically annihilate the Irish-Catholic experience whilst simultaneously camouflaging an

historically embedded culture of anti-Irishness[xxi] which in turn serves to demarcate *us* - the established group who appreciate gallows humour - from *them* - the pompous, politically correct outsiders hellbent on transforming humour into sinister sectarianism. Thus, with an ideologically preferred anchoring of meaning and the miraculous attainment of nirvana-like objectivity, victim is once more transformed into perpetrator by an apparently 'neutral' and objective press free of the religious, social, historical and political baggage that weighs on every other site in Scottish life.

Sections of the Scottish press often draw attention to differences out of context when discussing sectarianism in order to de-legitimise alternative viewpoints. Celtic fans' Catholicism, flying of the Irish flag and singing of Irish songs are often distorted by sections of the Scottish press. Celtic's non-Catholic fans, non-Catholic employees and the club's long historical association with non-Catholics are rarely mentioned. It is often the case that when they are discussed, the dominant ideological framework is revealed and it is discussed in suspicious or accusatory tones[xxii]. The historical and social contexts of the club's links with Catholicism are seldom discussed, and its legitimate and natural Irish associations are often ignored or distorted. Furthermore, alongside these symbolic annihilations, when Celtic's Irish identifiers are expressed (by club, players or fans) they are further annihilated by sections of the media informing them that they have no knowledge of Irish politics/history, no right to discuss or express Irish – however we define it - identities, and they continue to be ridiculed for doing so[xxiii]. Accompanying this symbolic annihilation has been a limited response to Rangers' previous anti-Catholic signing practices in addition to a revealing and almost universal silence on the history, context and effects of Rangers' dearth of Catholic supporters, managers and directors throughout its entire history up to and including the present day.

Scottish (British) analyses of sectarianism have often been caught in a crippling ambiguity. Anti-Catholic policies and culture by Rangers and its fans is discursively presented as 'Protestant tradition' or 'sectarianism' and is often brushed aside as a 'west coast', working class or 'Old Firm' problem. Celtic's non-exclusive Catholicism, a natural and inevitable consequence of its origins, linked to Rangers' anti-Catholicism,

alongside Celtic's inclusive culture - in terms of its supporters, players, managers and directors – and its links to Ireland are all questioned, ridiculed and problematised, resulting in Celtic and sections of its fans becoming the other equal half of the 'sectarian problem'. Since the sectarian problem is seldom analysed contextually, Rangers' anti-Catholicism and Celtic's links to Catholicism are reinterpreted as corresponding halves who are equally culpable. This forms the discursive formation, *regime of truth*, part of the re-defining on dominant terms - a re-defining where the Irish Republic's flag and Irish songs become 'sectarian' (see Kelly, 2007 for 'neutral' fans viewing Irish symbols as 'sectarian'), where the religious act of blessing oneself before or during a football game becomes an act to be punished[xxiv] or condemned in Scotland's media (see Scotsman front page and editorial 18th December, 2006). Becker's (1963) deviance work further informs our understanding here:

> *Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance*, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". The deviant is the one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label (p. 9, original emphasis).

The underlying definition, the ideological meaning and referential terms continue to frame Celtic as deviant 'outsiders' for having Irish-Catholic links and Rangers as deviant for having unionist-Protestant links, maintaining the crippling ambiguity around sectarianism in Scotland. As Bruce, (2004) citing Stam (2001) notes, "'in a systematically racist society, racism is the "normal" pathology from which no one is completely exempt' (2001:477)" (p.863).

Sections of the Scottish press harbour a sectarianised – or rather a non-Irish-Catholic hegemony – world-view whilst blissfully unaware (or in denial) of their own sectarianism. This dysconscious sectarianism relies on a series of *sincere fictions* to evidence media neutrality including denials of anti-Irish-Catholicism, accusing Catholics (and by crude extension Celtic fans) of paranoia[xxv], whilst simultaneously annihilating significant Irish-Catholic experiences in Scottish society.

Just as a symbolic annihilation reinforces hegemonic masculinity and dysconscious racism privileges white norms over non-white 'others', a hegemonic anti-sectarian stance (which is dysconsciously sectarian itself) is promoted in large part by stripping sectarianism of relations of power and symbolically annihilating Irish-Catholicism (and wider Catholic identifiers relating to Celtic) in the discursive formations of sport, culture and society in Scotland. Therefore Irish-Catholicism in Scottish society, like aggressive, muscular, determined, de-feminized females in sport and indigenous, black, non-white 'others' becomes the subordinate, the unusual, unnatural deviant to be reconfigured in order to maintain the dominant hegemonic order whilst annihilating any threat to the sectarian collective conscience[xxvi].

Conclusion

This article focused on sectarianism in Scottish press discourse, claiming that, rather than being passive, the press's position regarding sectarianism is active. The article contends that wider anti-sectarian initiatives should acknowledge these ideologically active roles played by institutions like the press. The article sought to present one type of Scottish press-constructed discourse on 'sectarianism'. One should be aware that there are likely to be alternative discourses. Additionally, of course, the discourse analysed here is likely to be interpreted in more than one way by recipients. The work of others provides a wider context suggesting that potentially valuable insights may occur by seeking out similarities (or differences) between the mediatisation of other power dynamics such as 'racism', sexism and nationalism.

Applying standardised 'measures' to sectarianism is problematic because examinations of prejudicial frameworks are often reliant upon what the actors *believe* to be 'prejudice' or not. As Becker (1963) reminds us, "deviance is not a quality that lies in behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who respond to it" (p.14). To avoid the obvious pitfalls in analysing sectarianism, one should begin by locating the facts and interpreting them within specific socio-cultural contexts remaining sensitive to overt and latent power dynamics. It is revealing that after one hundred and twenty two years of Old Firm

rivalry it is only in the last two decades that serious academic and social debate about sectarianism has occurred. Much of this discourse seeks to de-legitimise public expression of dual Scots/Irish-Catholic identities within Scotland, branding them sectarian in ways reminiscent of Norman Tebbit's infamous attack on the cricket allegiances of ethnic minorities in England. These concerned press voices continue to indulge in fetishizing what appears to be a waning social problem whilst furnishing the illusion of widespread sectarian malaise. Paradoxically, the press is one prominent arena in which the 'problem' shows little sign of abating. The press fetishization coincides with the period in which Rangers now sign Catholics, and when sections of Scotland's press have ceased being accused of practising anti-Catholic recruitment policies. It seems naïve to reduce the sectarian debate to Celtic and Rangers and their supporters. Whilst Scotland (rather than Glasgow, as is often misreported) is not Ulster minus the bullets, the 'no problem here' myth (Dimeo and Finn, 2001:35) is still alive and well. In its self-designated guise of public defender of morality, the press is often guilty of what it accuses others.

Rangers and Celtic provide Scotland's press with a convenient smokescreen, which serves to retain the sincere fiction, that the 'sectarian problem' is a football, Old Firm, west coast, and largely working class phenomenon. Indeed, Moorhouse's (1991) assertion that for those in England, the rivalry "exudes that enticing whiff of primitive savagery which it is one of the cultural roles of the fringe 'nations' of the UK to provide" (p.204), correspondingly titillates those within Scotland – including sections of its press – who also view the rivalry and its discursive formation as fulfilling that same role; nay, demands and ensures the rivalry exudes appropriately sufficient levels of primitive savagery which conveniently reinforces the press's self-fulfilling reality requiring the predictable mediated response of shock, horror and revulsion that they and all decent Scots ('should') feel.

Significant Scottish press discussion of Celtic (and Rangers to a lesser extent) often serves as an overarching framework within which to situate discussions around sectarianism that reflect and reinforce a dominant standpoint position. Whether it is the insinuation that ex-Celtic manager Gordon Strachan was never accepted at Celtic

because of his non-Catholic status, or whether it is anti-Irish singing being defended as "freedom of speech", or racially stereotyping the Irish-Catholic, a symbolic annihilation is often lurking beneath the concerned press accounts. This annihilation is manifested by the hierarchical dualism privileging non-Irish-Catholics whilst subordinating Irish-Catholics and typically involves parodying, trivialising and demonising Irish-Catholicism.

Press accounts that fail to historically and politically contextualise issues and relationships result in the caricaturing of complex group identities. Moreover, by (re)constructing an unreflexive self that is part of an imaginary appendage to a sectarianism-affected core, sections of the Scottish press merely serve to absolve itself from responsibility. Thus, in a space where the ideologies of the dominant dominate, where commentators are "spoken by ideology" (Bruce, 2004:875), it is unsurprising that when alternative realities are proposed these are seldom allowed to go free from press-created crippling ambiguities.

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[i] Single quotation marks are placed around *sectarianism* to indicate that, along with *sectarian*, they are subjective rather than objective entities and their use and understanding is grounded in subjective ideological construction rather than objectively validated fact.

[ii] Reid's (2006, 2008) work notes fleetingly the potential parallels between mediated sectarianism in Scotland and media treatment of females and ethnic minorities outwith Scotland.

[iii] Rangers and Celtic will be used as shorthand for Rangers FC and Celtic FC for the remainder of the article.

[iv] To be called 'sectarian' in the sense that it is commonly used in Scottish discourse – i.e. viewing 'sectarian' as necessarily involving bigotry and prejudice, and being, therefore, a folk devil to be criticised and avoided.

[v] Although this definition was applied in an Irish context, its utility in a Scottish context is unproblematic.

[vi] The club and increasingly significant sections of Rangers supporters appear to be less anti-Catholic in public expression than previously and the official club's anti-Catholic associations may now be largely historical

[vii] Despite reports of the occasional Catholic player signing for the club, Rangers did not knowingly sign a Catholic player for most of its history until the 1989 signing of Maurice Johnston. It is commonly acknowledged in Scottish discourse that when interested in players, Rangers would ask "what school did you go to?" in order to ascertain whether or not the player was a Catholic. It is also commonly believed that the club missed out on signing the Protestant Daniel Fergus McGrain, who captained Celtic for many years, as a result of mistakenly believing he was a Catholic.

[viii] A recent example can be found in the Arsenal FC website 1.7.09. In preparation for a friendly match against Rangers, Arsenal's website included a "Get to Know Rangers FC" page which included the following information – "The club's traditional support largely comes from the Protestant community, while Celtic's comes from the Catholic community."

[ix] The song was "the Billy Boys" a well-known song that includes the line "we're up to our knees in Fenian blood" ('Fenian' signifying Catholic in Scottish discursive formations).

[x] Arnold Kemp, was editor of the (Glasgow) Herald between 1981-1994.

[xi] Rangers fans' anti-Irish-Catholic chanting has recently resulted in the club being warned in 2006 by UEFA, fined by UEFA in 2007 and investigated by the SFA and SFL in 2008.

[xii] Despite some ambiguity and disagreement surrounding the precise meaning of 'Celtic-minded' its use in this example simply signifies a Celtic-supporting family. As argued later, sections of the Scottish media intend it to pejoratively signify Irish-Catholic Celtic fans.

[xiii] As Bradley correctly notes, this uniqueness is sometimes overstated. Other sports clubs have relatively similar histories, although in Britain, Celtic remains unique

[xiv] The page numbers for Philo's article correspond to the online version of the article rather than the printed journal. The article appears on the Glasgow University Media Group's website.

[xv] For example, in this period, Nil By Mouth, a charity dedicated to eradicating sectarianism, was formed and Scotland's First Minister hosted special summits into tackling sectarianism, leading to the introduction of legislation aimed at criminalising bigotry and discrimination.

[xvi] I use "allegedly" here to inform readers that outwith media commentary it is not well known or widely discussed what religion (if any) Gordon Strachan is.

[xvii] Hoopy Hound, a cartoon-like dog, is the official Celtic FC mascot.

[xviii] This is an approximation because some of the club's managers' religion (or lack of) is not common knowledge.

[xix] Both Rangers and Celtic had remarkably few managers up until the modern (1960s onwards) period, making the modern period a fairer reflection of deliberate choices regarding managers over the years.

[xx] Author witnessed groups of Hearts fans singing 'the famine Song' to passers-by on Easter Road (near Hibernian's stadium) before the derby match against Hibernian on 19th October, 2008.

[xxi] Or anti-Irish-Catholic to be precise - given that significant sections of Rangers fans claim proud links with Irish-Protestant(ism)s, it is reasonable to assert that it is the Irish-Catholic communities that are being urged to "go home".

[xxii] As evidenced by the referenced criticisms of Celtic regarding Gordon Strachan, whereby the club and fans are implicated as not fully accepting him due to his non-Catholic status. Also see the historical criticism of Celtic for not having a Protestant manager until Jock Stein in 1965 and the criticism against the club for not placing Stein on the board of directors at the end of his successful managerial reign.

[xxiii] See Bradley (2006) for in-depth analysis of the pejorative mediatisation of Celtic's Scotland-born Irish player Aiden McGeady.

[xxiv] In 1996 Partick Thistle player Rod McDonald got booked for blessing himself as he celebrated a goal against Rangers. See Scotsman Editorial, 5th February, 1996.

[xxv] Accusations of Celtic and Catholic paranoia within Scottish discourse – mediated and beyond – has a long history. Tom Campbell's book investigating the alleged phenomenon and entitled "Celtic's Paranoia: All in the Mind" was published in 2001 and updated in 2004.

[xxvi] An illustrative example can be seen in the Scotsman's front page and editorial (18th December, 2006) which unequivocally frames Celtic goalkeeper Artur Boric as a sectarian provocateur for blessing himself before a match against Rangers. Mediated construction presented Boruc as the deviant requiring chastisement.