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Get a Real Job: Authenticity on the Performance, Reception and Study of Celebrity

Abstract

This paper considers the place of attraction within debates on normative citizenship. Reconsidering my research on public reactions to UK Tory MP Boris Johnson, alienated audiences can read themselves into the world of representative, and represented politics. John Street warns that it is too early to condemn the celebrity about how such a figure can be within specific modes of media organisation. The Johnson case study shows the idea that politics should be entertaining does not stand as critical/structuralist positions, that tend to concentrate on information as the touchstone of democratic communication. As a result, the gulf between structure and landscape may not be as wide as it seems.

Keywords: authenticity, politics, celebrity, fans, public opinion.

Introduction.

This article will consider the role that qualitative, pleasure focussed audience research, much of it influenced by theoretical and empirical fan scholarship, can play in and engagement in the field of political communication.

It is inspired by three things; critical reception of my work on public reactions to a media scandal involving the British Tory MP Boris Johnson's in October 2004 (of political celebrity as an object of academic inquiry and means of sparking exchanges between pluralist, constructivist and structuralist camps within political communication), my earlier research on the occasion of the reprinting of *Issues, Images, Impacts: The Media and Campaign '92* (Lewis, Morgan & Ruddock, 1992/2006). The latter, on how US voters understood the Presidential contest between Bill Clinton, George Bush I and Ross Perot, is best known for its structuralist conclusion; that voters' policy intentions, due to the myopic informational and ideological spectrum presented to them by television in particular. The study also, however, made tentative claims about affective political communication; a theme that can be developed in the context of recent work on fans that opens positive readings of intense yet ephemeral bonds. Celebrity politics is a rational, explicable and even desirable outcome of shifting forms of political representation, in this piece I revisit my Johnson study to ask how he has attracted to displays of difference that make the political world relevant. This directly addresses our 1992 complaint that 'managerial' politics discourage participation and belief. However foolish or calculated his actions appeared, and however uniformed or superficial public responses were, somewhere in all of this social class struggle are detractors.

Street's work informs a distinction between playful remarks and the ill informed, unstable opinions, that dilute the quality of democratic speech (Converse 1975). "superficial" political pronouncements can still have a logic that is worth exploring, and that the gap between "top down" and "bottom up" studies of political communication, this is not to celebrate any sort of public reaction to the political realm, but simply to recognize that even casual observations have a genealogy. My argument that Boris Johnson emerged as an analytical topic. Second, I discuss the media and academic responses to the research. Third, I consider how Street's work and my own critiques. Finally, I revisit some of the more "superficial" public remarks, arguing they have a cultural history that explains Johnson's infamy. However one may feel, enough to suggest something is afoot beyond any simple collapse of an idealized public sphere. As respected figures such as Al Gore in the US and Tony Benn in the UK, channels of politics and political communication, it is worth thinking about how celebrity politicians look to draw audiences before worrying about votes.

Why Boris Johnson?

Journalist, broadcaster, popular historian and novelist, Boris Johnson enjoys a far higher public profile than would normally be expected for an opposition MP who is not. There is no doubting the public relations acumen of a man who cultivates public affection by cloaking arch Conservatism and a Herculean capacity for multi-tasking in his aesthetic absences; somehow, the question of how it is possible to edit the political magazine *The Spectator*, write for *The Daily Telegraph*, research and present the work of a constituency MP and shadow minister gets lost in the aura of crumpled suits and disheveled, youthfully blond hair, owing more to pudding bowls, motherly familiarity than to the familiar figure of the 'upper class twit'.

Johnson's affable mask slipped, however, in October 2004. *The Spectator* published an anonymous leader criticizing emotional public reactions to the execution of an Iraqi militia. The magazine represented Merseysiders' commemoration of Bigley's passing as indicative of Britain's new un-British blame culture. Once a nation of football fans, Bigley did not deserve his horrific fate; but he had decided to ply his trade in a war zone. Did his demise therefore warrant a two-minute silence before a Premier's speech? A minute more than is granted to mark the death of the Commonwealth's war dead? And was this evasive public sentimentality a particular problem in itself? The formulas developed after the 1989 Hillsborough tragedy, where 96 Liverpool FC fans had died in an overcrowded football stadium. The earlier public wake, so that it was how the fans themselves contributed to the disaster.

This was an offensive and factually incorrect charge (Liverpool fans were entirely blameless for Hillsborough). As the author failed to step forward in the scandalous piece in his capacity as Editor. The Liverpool press was incensed. Merseyside MP Peter Kilfoyle called for a public apology. He was duly obliged. Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith was not the person. The tarnished star complied – after a fashion. By his own admission, "Bigley's demise" made factual errors in underestimating the numbers killed at Hillsborough and robbed the dead and dying, long since discredited as tabloid fantasies. Johnson was sorry for these hurtful mistakes. He was not, however, sorry that his re-

responsibility for one's actions. Ken Bigley had not deserved to die. Neither had Captain Robert Falcon Scott in his 1912 attempt to cross the South Pole. Both Bigley, like Scott, should have been prepared to accept his fate.

In October of that same year, I decided that this story said something about audiences and their dis/engagement from political issues and figures. Here, apparer breaking images of civic apathy. Or did they? What would we find by going beyond media vox pops? Searching for data, I wrote to Boris Johnson's Parliament and if so, could I see the letters?^[1] To my surprise Melissa Crawshay-Williams, who manages Johnson's office, immediately agreed the request. May 13th 2006 them. Over the next months, I made some sense of the letters by using both quantitative and qualitative methods, presenting my work at the Celebrity Culture C MeCCSA 2006, and subsequently publishing in *Social Semiotics* in 2006.

The research, in published form, aimed to assess structure/agency tensions in looking at how general shapes of response addressed audiences' abilities to critic Categorizing correspondents' themes via SPSS produced the following patterns:

1. 40.8% (n=128) of letters agreed with Spectator/Johnson comments on "Culture of sentimentality"
2. 40.8% (n=128) of praised Johnson's honesty, courage, integrity,, authenticity
3. 36.3% (n=114) opposed Michael Howard's treatment of Johnson
4. 30.6% (n=96) of letters agreed with negative depiction of Liverpool and its citizens
5. 30.3% (n=95) of letters praised Johnson's performance as public political/media figure
6. 17.5% (n=55) of letters agreed with Spectator comments on Ken Bigley
7. 16.2 % (n=51) of letters criticized "political correctness"
8. 15% (n=47) of letter writers claimed to speak for a "silent majority"
9. 13.4% (n=42) of letters criticized "media hype"
10. 12.7% (n=40) of letters criticized the reception Johnson was given by Paul Bigley/the people of Liverpool on his visit.
11. 9.2% (n=29) of letters blamed Liverpool fans for Hillsborough.

On one hand, the letters showed a surprising trend. Despite the near universal public venom directed at the errant MP in the media, most of the people who had this seemed to be that in taking his public gaffe on the chin, Johnson shone as a rough diamond in the flotsam of rhetorically evasive political figures.

However, if this enthusiasm contained a latent critique of spin, ergo the colonization of politics by media management, at the same time there was evidence that scandal, which of course was entirely a media matter, had actually played itself out. Sizeable minorities missed Johnson's apology to Liverpool. When writers a forlorn hope that one day politics could happen face to face (Ruddock, 2006a).

In October 2005, I was asked to discuss the project on Radio 4's *Thinking Allowed*, a program that reviews developments in the social sciences for a general au 12's edition featured a discussion on public authenticity, and the show's producers thought the Johnson research relevant. I subsequently spent around twelve m performance in politics (the main point being that real is not something you "have", it's something you "do") with sceptical *Times* journalist Andrew Pearce and Pr

Tuning in the following week, I was aurally assaulted by a listener's dismissive review:

I've just listened to someone discussing if Boris Johnson is a real person. Are you sure *he* is authentic?

This attack sided with Pearce in construing my work as an entirely misguided effort to rescue something of worth from the superficiality of celebrity politics. My o for the way that we would like citizens to think, act and engage sealed my own public fate; I was a fake scholar making something out of nothing about a fake po

Although public ridicule goes with media studies territory, it is still useful to consider how generic hostility to the discipline played out here. First, subsequent eve who was merely playing at politics. In 2004, Johnson was a novice MP holding a minor position (Shadow Minister for Culture) in a party that could barely define figure who dabbled in politics. Local academic Peter Stoney urged Liverpooldians to ignore the comments of a political lightweight (Stoney, 2004). Developments sentiments. As David Cameron campaigned to become Tory party leader, so it was whispered that Johnson would be asked the rejoin the shadow cabinet (havir appeared determined to do the job properly this time around:

...Mr. Johnson appears to have accepted that he can no longer moonlight as journalist and politician, revealing that his lust for power has eclipsed his des presenter) Sue Lawley that he "would choose politics" over journalism when the time was right. (Elliot, 2005).

Retrospectively, we would have to conclude, then, that at the time of the *Spectator* article, Johnson was toying with politics. Worse still, his apologies were indee charged by the impression that Johnson's remorse was genuine. As one writer put it:

I was incensed to read yet more negative comments about the city I love. We're always copping it in the media, and we're sick of it. But it takes a big mar face.

At the time, Johnson echoed the importance of facing up to things in the flesh:

...having been to Liverpool, and having stood eyeball to glistening eyeball with those who felt they deserved an apology, I am glad I went, and I think at lea 2004).

On *Thinking Allowed*, Andrew Pearce mocked this faux humility. Johnson was not sorry for a word of the article, and he had gagged on every syllable of the Hov otherwise glib political world. When in the Lawley radio interview Johnson claimed that in hindsight he wished he had not visited Merseyside, it seemed that Pea

At this juncture, it seemed that 'structuralist' accounts of political communication were appropriate. How could one find anything of value in 'readings' of a charac

Academic Critiques

None of the general scepticism directed at my Johnson study came as a surprise. It made perfect sense within a public forum accepting that political ignorance ; reflections on this state of affairs. But peer reaction was often more hostile. The title of the Social Semiotics piece won a place in the satirical magazine *Private academe's* tendency to "over-egg" with arcane jargon. What made this surprising was that the title had been reported to the editors by a certain John MacInnes, *Semiotics* (2006).

More substantially, exploring the Johnson letters as expressions of 'fandom' proved controversial, as it seemed the writers lacked the commitment and knowledg the structuralist conclusion that what the letters evidenced, if anything, was how poorly equipped audiences were to participate in politics. At first blush, the fan s affective spaces. As the numbers revealed, the joint most popular motivation for writing to Johnson was to express feelings of admiration. It was this emotional act of physically writing to an MP. Apparently, then, Johnson's Liverpool adventure enabled

Forms of political participation in which fans position(ed) themselves in cultural and political debates in relation to their own values and beliefs...(also) prov concepts of traditional liberal (politics) (Sandvoss, 2003. 170-171).

Certainly in this regard, Johnson allowed his "fans" to redraw the political map using their own co-ordinates:

How come you're a Tory? You always seem to make sense...I've grown up thinking that all Tories I happen upon haven't got an original thought in their bc anyone can explain the whole Tory ideals thing to me, it's got to be you. (female, North of England).

Though implacably opposed to your politics...I fully concur with the views that you and your journal recently expressed...I don't think you're a real Tory....I (male, London).

However, presenting these ideas at the 2006 MECCSA conference (Ruddock, 2006b), I was confronted with the critique that fandom implies a sense of committr with Will Brooker's research on *Star Wars* fans (2002) illustrates the point. For many filmgoers, the original trilogy was the most profound cultural experience of t of the self and the world, *Star Wars* came to embody a series of everyday moral and political positions. These ideologies were not, however, "in" the films. Stan quantities of their own material to keep treasured characters and stories alive. This creative activity took on a life of its own. So, when George Lucas finally end rejected the prequel as a betrayal of his own legacy. The audience's commitment was theological. Having spent two decades pouring over the original texts, ab could mean, *Star Wars* fans attained a feeling of deity-like ownership. They cared more about *Star Wars* than its creator. But they also knew more about it.

"Borisphiles", in my first reading of their work, lacked this omnipotent aura. Many were unaware that Johnson had not actually written the offending editorial. Th Johnson's denunciation of his own "scouse-bashing".^[2] In this respect, they resembled the ersatz fans that Giulianotti blames for diluting the relevance of British (2002). Giulianotti paints the majority of soccer "fans" as Johnny/Jenny come-latelies drawn as moths to the flame of a media spectacle. They are fascinated by "authentic" fans, those who remember the days of standing on concrete terraces whatever the weather or quality of play. Yet this is a transient sort of captivation As a result, they will soon move along. Turning to Borisphiles, lack of attention to the narrative of the scandal paints a picture of the car-crash rubber necker, not

Indeed the letter writers could be described as being closer to Dayan's "almost" public (2001) than Brooker's fans. The categories are similar. "Almost publics" af level of engagement. Within the almost public, however, this "caring" is undermined by an ephemerality and flippancy. In this regard, it is interesting that a numt scandal. One did so in verse.

Oh Boris Johnson

What can you do?

Opened your gob again

What will they do to you?

Mind you no-one's perfect

It's just a little impasse

But think twice before you open it

Or you'll sound like a silly Arse!

I still love you Boris.

But as I reflected on the project, I began to wonder how my own methods and sensibilities may have contributed to the conclusion that the "Borisphiles" were nei represented tiny clues about the lives they led. Who was to say that if they knew little about the Bigley scandal, or representative politics, that they were not also Alternatively, if the writers did pay so little attention to mediated politics, what was it about Johnson that piqued their interest? In other words, the *fact* of the writi how celebrity politics works; processes that were certainly worth exploring regardless of the banalities and inaccuracies of anything that was actually written.

I realized that whatever my efforts to give a broad structural shape to divergent audience comments, in turn inspired by my ongoing argument that quantitative my thoughts and conclusions were haunted by a particular quote: "As a boy I loved Jennings books."^[3] What I really want to know about is this: do they really h could have been raised vis-à-vis the Johnson/Liverpool rumble, the writer chose to center on how closely the MP's experiences mirrored fictional accounts of Bri assumptions of the study were that the *Spectator's* attack on "excessive mourning" was also an assault on politics from below. Public commemorations of Hillsb ordinary people a real visibility (Walter, 1991). Depicting the *Spectator* scandal as nothing more than a jolly jape gone wrong entirely missed the point, or so I th

I don't want to necessarily abandon this conclusion; but I do want to reflect on how, in its original conception, my decision to identify this as an "inappropriate" ex contemporary debates on fan cultures. Taking the latter point, my distaste for the comment echoed the tendency to divide "good" and "bad" audiences that had a canonic status, Matt Hills (2002) criticized Henry Jenkins' *Textual Poachers* (1993) for allowing its empirical content to be driven by the desire to prove the value over the voices of the people he studied, Jenkins produced a calculative vision of fandom bearing little resemblance to the affective rough and tumble of actual fa interested in exploring 'bad' audiences. Given that most of our media experiences fall outside the fan spectrum, where we watch, listen or read simply to pass th audience researchers to explore the cultural logic of the relatively uncommitted. In this shifting context, my instant dismissal of an apparently superficial commer

Exploring the issue of how to treat data further, it is important to reflect on the wisdom of objectifying comments that were not written with the contemplation of cil clear where the data falls on the public/private continuum. If some acknowledged the fact that they were writing to a public figure, others used familiarity tones r letters to present considered reflections on citizenship was a bit like commanding David Cameron to explain, in technical detail, his understanding of what replac

The *Jonathan Ross Show*.^[4] Although the idea that audiences can and should be allowed to speak for themselves can still be used to good effect (see, for exam time empirical researchers accept that they do not simply "find" what people think, but build encounters that impact how audiences process their media relations. were designed to challenge and work on, rather than measure, what people know and think about real life issues (the Israeli occupation of Palestine. and child su book, Philo & Berry hound a focus group participant who at first argues that television news is biased against Israel. Having performed an extensive content ana firmly believe that the respondent has not understood what they are asking of him. As a result, they refuse to accept his first as his final answer, having him revis technique of producing interview transcripts, then having interviewees re-read and reflect upon their own comments. As a result, her project is as much about he abuse is, who does it and where it happens. Hills follows suit in his research on cyclical fandom (2005). Using a series of regularly scheduled individual intervie work up their narratives of media taste.

These methods do not reflect the desire to check analysis against the audience to ensure that the researcher has "got things right"; nor do they allow editing that fluidity of cultural processes. The point here is that the "pillow fight" comment does not necessarily speak for itself, in terms of where it comes from and what it r logic did it appear sensible? This interrogative demeanour is hard to simulate in archival work. However, the changing shape of writing on political communicac deeper reflection on the quote, something I think I owe to both the writer and an MP who generously granted access to valuable data. Succinctly, I would hypoth someone perceived a fellow traveller in an otherwise alien world of electoral politics. In what follows, I explore the possibility that this off the cuff question has a calculated the imbroglio truly was) worked by couching the image of the maverick MP within an honorific tradition of English amateurism, for which the 'naughty p class as a meaningful idea that not only 'attracted' his supporters, but also rallied opponents who felt their voices were rarely heard in public.

Or perhaps the writer just really liked Jennings books.

John Corner: Structure, agency & celebrity politics.

Suspending the second possibility, John Street's work on the mapping of political communication, and the normative role that celebrity can play in democratic sp comment with a relevance that is worth exploring. Street's typology, which marshals scholarship on the media/politics nexus into the camps of pluralism, constr simplification, particularly in its division between the latter two areas (Corner & Robinson, 2005). However, in conjunction with his writing on celebrity, Street's us counts as political dialogue proper.

Street's distinction between pluralism (with its assumption that political communication is a clearly demarcated area whose task is to show how effective commur within electoral politics), constructivism (where the media are seen to constitute rather than represent the political, even if the latter retains structures having an i economic determination of symbolic forms) is less important than his call for dialogue between "competing accounts of...communication ... the political ... and th clearer in his earlier work on politicians who court celebrity, celebrities who woo office, and showbiz stars who, like fame, either seek or have the activist mantle t

As with the later work, Street's efforts to define the range of celebrity politics is not flawless. He identifies two sorts of celebrity politicians. First, we have electec MP George Galloway's participation in the 2006 *Celebrity Big Brother* springs to mind. Second, we have celebrities who use their fame to run for electoral office although in Britain Glenda Jackson also fits the bill. Quite how "Gopher" from *The Love Boat* parlayed his clumsy asexual charm into a career as a hawkish Rep who use their public profile as a platform for political activism, as in the cases of Bob Geldof and Bono (Street, 2002).

To illustrate the difficulty of giving order to a fluid field, it is not to dismiss Street's work to argue that his typology is not exhaustive. Al Gore currently embodies a *Inconvenient Truth*. The former US Vice President has translated his political capital into cinematic success. Claiming no ideological axe to grind, Gore remains second tilt at the Whitehouse. The bigger point, however, is that Street believes it is important to examine how celebrity politics is structurally possible (and here Governor's success had as much to do with his evasion of FCC equal time regulations via talk-shows as it did personal charisma) and why exactly it raises us

However, Street also recognizes that explaining celebrity politics as predictable outcome of media organization means little to those whose "main objection ... is attention given to image and appearance, and the second has to do with the irrelevance of the expertise which the celebrities possess" (2004: 441). Street's sol "representation" means in "political representation". The term either means standing for, or acting for. Critics of celebrity politics *tout court* tend to prefer the latte act in the interests of those he or she represents. There is no necessary connection between serving the people and appearing to be one of them. Celebrity poli that standing for, or resembling silent yet widely held public sentiment, is tantamount to acting in its interest. We can return to George Galloway to explain the dif was designed to give the anti-Iraq war lobby a higher profile. One can demur for two reasons. The first was that it was hard to see what impersonating Elvis and Jody Marsh and disgraced light entertainer Michael Barrymore, did to promote peace. Second, Parliamentary colleagues asked who was acting in the interests c

Against representational critiques, Street simply offers that stylistic political performances aimed at winning audience empathy have ever been a part of the demc in a complicated world of policy and ideology: "Just as art creates a version of reality, making present what is otherwise absent ... political power is a product of c reflect on the rights and wrongs of Galloway's argument. However, what we can say is that if we accept that communication is material, then to symbolically 'sta

The idea that a politics of attraction is not an anathema to democracy-in fact, quite the reverse-directs attention to one of the less considered parts of *Images/Issues/Impacts* habitually located within the corpus of what Corner & Robinson (2005) identify as "critically structuralist" research. Two of the authors, Lewis and Morgan, have I media systematically narrows the range of views and experiences offered to audiences. Indeed, the quantitative part of the report was the second of three survey factual error on the behalf of those polled (Morgan, Lewis & Jhally, 1991; 1999). In this fashion, *Images/Issues/Impacts* aimed to intervene in a poll dominated by what they knew about candidates Clinton, Bush I and Perot .

Our survey complemented the general thrust of the work that emerged from the University of Massachusetts's Centre for Mass Communications Research: the man Clinton intended to pursue an agenda based on high welfare expenditure, funded in part by higher taxation, and the erosion of tough crime legislation . But given we see why, when asked about his policies, most of the sample were wont to paint Clinton as far more left of centre than was truly the case. The narrow spectrum of issues in Campaign '92 voters should and would act on issues, not ideology.

Yet the report was *not necessarily* a call for more fact based news discourse. Some years later, Ekstrom (2002) argued that television news never has and never will have the depth of knowledge, making it unfair to judge its output exclusively on informational criteria. The focus group section of the *Images/Issues/Impacts* hinted at a move in the direction of the idea of voting on issues made little sense when the sample demonstrably knew so little of what the candidates planned to do about the economy, welfare and law and right and wrong; we argued that the reality of policy is that some groups are favoured over others.

This was reflected by working class respondents who saw politics as a system wherein their opinions, knowledge or whatever counted for nothing:

This is the first year I'm saying, should I vote? Whoever they want gets in there. I've always believed that if they don't want you in there, then you don't get in there they'll get in there.

I feel like politicians are out of touch. I believe that if you cannot live like me, then you cannot serve me. If you have not lived my life, then you don't know how to

In the context of the criticisms we made about the inadequacy of media coverage, these comments indicated a perfectly sensible response to a situation in which voters are asked to make issue based decisions. The idea that the successful candidate would be chosen by the system, not voters, was an entirely reasonable reaction to a campaign where the candidates had to do. American voters witnessed the same dynamic in the Bush II/Kerry race; run along the Mekong Delta since military service provided the only chink of light

It was therefore unsurprising that in 1992 people turned to emotional, interpersonal criteria drawing on standing for understandings of representation in making their

One of the things I respect most about Clinton the man is his beginnings, where he came from. You've got to understand where he came from. I mean, we think that a guy like Clinton serves as a good role model, and I think if we're looking for anything today, we're looking for people to be role models.

The idea of choosing a candidate based on where he or she comes from, on the understanding that this will shape their general world view that will in turn guide their

What it is reasonable to do is to expect voters to make informed decisions based on their understanding of a candidate's basic political philosophy; for example, on free market or laissez-faire economics. In other words, the democratic system runs through, not in spite of, ideology. We vote for the people who we feel best represent us in another way, who are closest to us ideologically. While many within the news media tend to portray political ideologies as negative and unnecessarily dogmatic, the political shorthand is an invaluable form of political shorthand which allows candidates to succinctly communicate the essential elements of their platforms to the electorate.

What we failed to do is to consider how this "political shorthand" might run best through the integration of politics and entertainment; surprising given Lewis' writing (1991). And it is with this failure in mind that Johnson became relevant, as a public figure whose infamy rested on a performance of difference. Calculated or not, Johnson's issue at a time when both his own party and the ruling Labour government wished it away. Many audience researchers have argued that our field should spend more time on sense, the fact that the letters were mostly written by people who did not fit the fan or citizen profile makes them a valuable resource. In outlining what Johnson's political communication to work. In this symbolically standing for *something* acts, recasting the political as a realm of choice and action, not fate.

Proper Citizens: Commitment, Community, Network.

The problem with dismissing "Borisphiles" as inauthentic citizens is that it is difficult to say what the real deal would look like. The citizen/fan metaphor changes 'fan democracy' (2003) is premised on the importance of integrating emotional content and political discourse. Coleman (2005) concurs. Within current arrangements when we stand alone in the voting booth. This is an antiseptic, anomic experience that simply does not feel right. As Barry Richards (2004) continues, we can only be emotionally invested in its form and content. These ideas have been echoed in public discussions of proposed "citizenship tests" on migrants to the UK. There is a tension between identity and culture to would be Brits. First, many people who are already "in" would probably fail them. Second, citizenship is an emotional obligation that cannot be met

Unfortunately, likening authentic citizenship to fandom does not necessarily clarify the picture. There is some question over what it means to be a proper fan turn a useful obstacle, as it allows us to overturn Dayan's critique of the "almost" public by arguing for the efficacy of ephemeral networks rather than structured communities

Take "intensity". As Jancovich points out, the heat fan cultures generate often has profoundly undemocratic outcomes. Battling to prove they belong, fans have high investment. Honohan's "collegial" citizenship model (2003) portrays this sort of intensity as an anathema to democracies that have to deal with extreme differences in communication between constituencies, not the values within each. Intense fandom is therefore an inappropriate model for citizenship. This is made explicit in the "enclave" among Arab football fans in Israel (2003). Here, the preservation of fan identity depends on its excommunication from the political realities of Arab life. strengthened by a determined effort to divorce football from everything else. In my own work, I have used the enclave idea to argue that fan commitments mean they are processed in football fanspeak (Ruddock, 2005).

Intensity and depth might therefore make for worse politics. Shemtov's research into local, single-issue political organizations (2003) identifies the importance of Such groups, often formed around very specific environmental concerns, are vital places where people develop bonds of loyalty and empowerment that are vital to be maintained insofar as these local concerns can be translated into the interests of other groups. In other words, NIMBY activism can only continue if it is willing to be

Hence, ephemerality can be a positive civic attribute. The idea that citizenship, like fandom, should be related to depth models of community, where co-dependence is maintained in globalized politics (Stevenson, 2003). This pushes us toward "network" thinking, where cultural experiences and ties come to resemble speed dating; our connections

However, "network" thinking is consistent with Matt Hills' notion of cyclical fandom (2005). Hills argues that fandom is more about process than object. Many of "thing" over which in many ways they exert no control. For example, Giulianotti (2005) points to the frequent claims from football supporters that they have no fandom is a more individual commitment to a journey of self-development, facilitated by a movement between objects. In reality, media audiences are fans of s that are stitched together into a life narrative. But this is not a functionalist claim. For Hills' interviewees, the fundamental pleasure of being a fan lies in the mor focus of affective and cognitive investment. The cyclical fan, then, is open to the idea that an external environment can rewrite what he/she cares about and why

This tunes with Kai Erikson's presentation of "network" as an anti-functionalist means of understanding totality. Erikson's essay makes three points that are rel acknowledges that cultural critique needs the idea of the whole, while at the same time recognizing that culture is not reducible to neatly defined influence or logi circulates between actors within a network, rather than being a quality of an overarching system. Third, as networks are conceived as relations between actors, narrative, and wherein the consequences of these networks are more than the sum of the intentions and needs of each actor, networks have the potential for infi and experience is in keeping with Hills' work, which questions the possibility of deciding where fandom begins and ends, and the idea that "authentic" citizenship possible that Johnson provided a moment of surprise for people generally uninterested in electoral politics? And does this indicate how the latter sphere might e politics? These are truly questions for further research, but what we can do is discuss what it was about this incident that lit the flame.

In defence of Borisphiles

If the lack of knowledge about what Boris Johnson really said and did in the Liverpool scandal signifies a general lack of interest in media coverage of politics, th writers recognized a fellow amateur. Johnson made two professional gaffes. As an editor, he had allowed the publication of an article containing serious factual culpa". The act of publicly admitting a public screw-up drew admiration. As evidenced by the first writer quoted, this was even true for the minority of corresponc For others, Johnson's professional failure as journalist and politician cohered into a much more successful performance of celebrity containing a distinctively Eng

You yourself would be the first to admit that certain aspects of the first article were ill-advised...but to your immense credit you had the good grace to since people in Liverpool and elsewhere who feel about you as I do, but unlike myself may not write and tell you so. I wish there were more like you in political I love your self deprecating sense of humour. No Boris, don't ever change mate. (Male, Liverpool).

You are the witty, humorous human face of politics...a counterbalance to excessive solemnity (the curse of contemporary Britain). (Male, West Midlands)

While you acquitted yourself well eating humble pie and I admire you, I fear for you in "Have I Got News For You" as those two, Merton and Hislop, will pul will come out of it in the inimitable manner that you are able to command. (Male, SW England).

These comments depict Johnson as escaping his Mersey maelstrom via the charming knack of not taking life too seriously. In doing so, they access an affectior central to the particularly English taste for WW II POW films.

This is a useful comparison as it combines amateurism with an interest in authenticity. British POW films aspired to empirical realism in using real life stories, an This empirical clout naturalized the ideological project of building an upper class image of English ingenuity. Often, POW camps were portrayed as extensions o nothing more than especially harsh matrons (Cull, 2002).

Johnson's bumbling public schoolboy persona was explicitly referenced by one of his Liverpool critics:

The Boris Johnson episode was simply a case of a public schoolboy getting it wrong yet again. He is not a serious commentator and we should treat him v

But Borisphiles were more prone to read the public school template in positive terms:

Dear Boris (Mr. Johnson seems too formal): What is all this fuss? (The media) probably attack you because of your background, schooling, wit and perso namby-pamby greyness. Don't change a thing-least of all you glorious hair! (Female, home counties)

Others connected this to a tradition of English heroism:

We seem to have moved, collectively, from the cult of hero (Nelson, Douglas Bader and Bobby Moore) to the cult of victim. (Unknown, south coast).

Here we see the POW theme explicitly invoked. Douglas Bader is an archetype for English "make do" ingenuity. Despite losing both legs in a flying accident, B down over France, so frequent were Bader's escape attempts that he was eventually held in to the infamous Colditz, placing him at the centre of POW mytholog

The WWII/public school theme emerges again among those who cast Johnson's trials in Churchillian terms:

You will rise again. Winston Churchill suffered wilderness years. He was more effective and impressive afterwards-and how! (female, south coast)

Think of Churchill. At your age, as I remember, he was sacked over the Dardanelles. It must have seemed as if everything was over. (Male, south coast)

It has been said...that Churchill had a sense of destiny throughout his Parliamentary career. However, on several occasions he had to regroup and reposit enemies. I hope you and your loved ones are able to overcome the current crisis (male, Oxfordshire)

Churchill's schooling at Harrow has been portrayed as central to the formulation of a maverick political career born of instinct rather than intellect (see for exam Borisphiles, these public school/WWII themes enabled them to narrate the Liverpool incident as a marker of a conventionally English unconventional politician.

So why not ask about pillow fights and prep schools? At the very least, the question locates why a lot of people cared about this story. But what does this say a Football Championships, where England fans adopted the theme from *The Great Escape* as their anthem. This, to Cull, represented; a. the importance of the P *The Great Escape* represents the exact moment when POW films stopped being about Englishness. Steve McQueen steals the show. Representation working movie also ended the image of the WWII POW experience as a gentlemanly game of catch. Similarly with regard to Liverpool, regarding Johnson's actions as a represented a calculated strategy to play to the Tory heartland.

The problem with Cull's argument is that what *The Great Escape* was as a piece of film history and what it is as a cultural resource might be two different things. '96 fans. In similar fashion, while it is easy to see Borisphiles as unwitting victims of a media savvy political showman, Johnson's intellectual and stylistic acumen that it did raise all sorts of questions about why other politicians and political issues are less engaging. Just as asking if they have pillow fights at prep schools or in the first place.

Images/Issues/Impacts concluded that politics is rarely a matter of good or bad, but good or bad for whom? Media politics needs clearly symbolized ideological (and scandal an exemplar). If we look at the people and events that draw audiences by taking politics into the popular; Arnold Schwarzenegger, George Galloway, Al Gore represent difference; the immigrant, the maverick, the insider who decides the system has lost its relevance. It is far from clear if Galloway's Big Brother strategy question of where politics should happen, how politicians should behave, and even who they should be.

In the Clinton/Bush/Perot study, we complained that aspirations toward managerial politics made little sense to voters for whom ideological difference still mattered. Labeled class discourse could only have helped make mediated politics more relevant. The "pillow fight" quote does show how class was at least visible in the JC discourse the showman controlled. Relatives of the Hillsborough victims claimed that the MP's visit and apology to Liverpool were acts calculated to play to the media; they projected themselves beyond local issue politics onto a national stage. Between these reactions, we can see how Johnson productively polarized audiences; a rebranding effort to rebrand Conservatism as classless, not class-based. Hence in drawing an audience, no matter how ephemeral, Johnson manifested class as a political act. In his/her letter, the Jennings fan returned to a dream world of public school nostalgia; but not before he/she indicated how beneath the factual confusion of the Johnson politics did become visible. The Member for Henley-On-Thames indeed "stood for" many things, but in doing so he also "acted for" those who did not share his politics.

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[1] My first inclination was to contact the *Daily Post* and *Liverpool Echo* to arrange access to all of the letters submitted by readers during the affair. The only one contrast, had kept, filed and responded to every letter sent. I have often been asked if it is possible that the MP had selected a sample of letters that he wanted unflattering picture of Johnson supporters. For example, the clash with Jewish Tory leader Michael Howard prompted a number of openly anti-Semitic missives. election campaign. Johnson and his staff had better things to do than worry about what I might say about Liverpool. Of course his openness was also entirely ir be face up to one's mistakes.

[2] "Scouse" is a colloquial term for "of Liverpool origin".

[3] "Jennings" here refers to an 11-year-old public schoolboy who was the eponymous hero of a series of children's books written by Anthony Buckeridge, most c

[4] Jonathan Ross, who has styled himself as the UK's David Letterman, has a late night talkshow on BBC1. Its stock guests are drawn from show business. In the opposition Tory party, was asked to appear. The ensuing interview focussed on the question of whether Cameron harboured masturbatory fantasies about h

Contact (by email): Andy.Ruddock

Biographical Note

Andy Ruddock is a Lecturer in the School of English, Communication & Performance Studies, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.



