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A Golden Silence? Acts of Remembrance and Commemoration at UK Football Games

Abstract

This paper reviews the use of minute's silences and applause at football (soccer) games in the UK, considering why acts of remembrance take place and for whom. Examining the variation in commemoration the paper explores the extent to which these acts serve as liminal events to reinforce or diminish football fans' sense of ('fictive') kinship and cohesion. Uncertainty about how to conduct them, and their purpose, is complicated by the way in which they are now used for a wide variety of people, regardless of their affiliation to a club, alongside their organisation and spontaneity.

Introduction

On February 6th 1958, following the club's European Cup game against Red Star Belgrade, a plane carrying the Manchester United Football (soccer) Club (from the north-west of England) was attempting to take off in poor weather conditions after stopping to re-fuel in Munich. It crashed, killing 23 of the passengers on board, including eight members of Manchester United FC and former Manchester City goalkeeper Frank Swift. Fifty years later, on February 10th 2008, local football club rivals Manchester United and Manchester City met in the Premier League at Manchester United's ground, Old Trafford, for the 149th time. It was at this match that the board of

Manchester United announced that those who died in the plane crash were to be publicly remembered by a minute's silence.

Following Manchester United's decision considerable discussion ensued in UK newspapers and online among journalists, pundits and fans alike regarding whether a minute's silence was the most fitting way to commemorate those who died in the crash. These discussions reflected ongoing sociological debate both in the UK and US regarding what constitutes "appropriate" public remembrance (Doss, 2008; Santino, 2005; Walter, 1999, 2001), the social cohesion fostered through shared commemorative activity (Barron et al, 2008; Simpson, 2006) and further ambiguity about what comprises a 'tragedy' worth remembering (Doka, 2003). For many journalists and social commentators debating Manchester United's decision, the issue was whether instead of a minute's silence a minute's applause should take place, as it does in many parts of Europe. One consideration within this discussion was whether or not an organised silence would be honoured (Samuel, 2008). There was considerable apprehension, including from the Manchester City Supporters' Club, that the rival fans of Manchester City would not obey the request for silence and that applause would be more suitable as it could mask any spontaneous and deliberately deviant behaviour.

This concern fuelled, and was fuelled by, uncertainty regarding what 'respectful' commemorative behaviour consists of in the twenty first century, not only at football matches but within UK society more generally. Uncertainty of this ilk is not new, as discussion about the way that death is remembered can be traced back to dilemmas about remembrance following World War One (Jalland, 2010; Winter, 1997), further ignited by high profile deaths such as that of Diana, Princess of Wales in 1997 (Walter, 2001) or highly publicised disaster/events that lead to multiple deaths (Brennan, 2008;

Darby et al, 2005; Eyre, 2001; Simpson, 2006; Tharyan, 2005; Walter, 1991). Indeed, debates about public remembrance, its history and social value, have long been taking place within academia (for example Jorgensen-Earp & Lanziliotti, 1998), whereby it has been asserted that how people are commemorated is a reflection of their society's specific cultural representation of mortality (Noys, 2005; Simpson, 2006). In the UK, where grieving behaviour is still largely shaped by the Victorian ideal of solemnity and soberness (Howarth, 2007), the suppression of emotional expression in public is seen as a way of bestowing the gravitas of loss (Jupp & Walter, 1999). Accordingly, silence is often regarded as the most "dignified" way to venerate in public, based on the expectation that grief is expressed behind closed doors, in private (Walter, 1999).

This paper explores for whom acts of remembrance are conducted at football games, their variation, and the tension that can arise between fans, players, managers and football club boards regarding their use. This has previously been explored by Russell (2006), who focused on the "commemorative turn" in football and how this reflected upon both fans and players. Taking this further, this paper considers the extent to which remembrance at football games reflects the broader social issue of *who*, *how* and *why* to remember the dead in public, alongside whether or not silence remains the most "appropriate" way to do so.

To do this, we consider the relationship between the minute's silence and its potential to act as an integrative liminal event, strengthening membership of a football community. The paper draws on literature concerning football community identity (Giulianotti, 2002), fictive kinship (Winter, 1997), liminality, the idea of the reversal of "the everyday" (Turner, 1969) and *communitas* to illustrate that uncertainty over how best to commemorate deceased people at football games is indicative of a contemporary

societal uncertainty (in the UK specifically but also evident in the US and Australasia) about how to mark death in public (seen elsewhere, for example, in debates about “spontaneous shrines” at the roadside, see Santino, 2005). Drawing predominantly on journalistic accounts of remembrance at football games, the paper is also motivated by the view that academic critique in this area has not kept pace with insight being generated by journalists and social commentators, where anecdotal interpretations of remembrance have blossomed (Berlins, 2007; Lawson, 2008).

Death and Football: An Overview

In the last two decades respective sociological insights into football and contemporary remembrance practices have grown significantly. Within these burgeoning literatures there is much scope to make connections between sport and death, particularly in terms of high profile disasters/events at large football grounds, such as that at Hillsborough football stadium in 1989, where 96 Liverpool FC fans lost their lives (Brennan, 2008; Darby et al, 2005; Scraton, 2004; Walter, 1991; see also a special issue of the journal *Soccer and Society*, 2004, volume 5, number 2). Yet beyond analyses of extra-ordinary disasters there has been limited insight into the association between remembrance and football, and what the use of silence/applause at a game reveals about public commemoration more generally. This paper shows that there is much that can be learnt by bringing these topics together, particularly in terms of the extent to which the issues raised here reflect broader shifts within UK society regarding ritual and custom after someone has died (Howarth, 2007).

Certainly, there has been work undertaken on the identity and cohesion of football fans elsewhere (Brown, 1998; Guilianotti 2002; Guilianotti & Williams, 1994).

Often this has been explored through examining fan' activities on the margins of attending the game itself, such as hooliganism (see Spaaji, 2008 for example). This has echoed broader academic interest in sport and identity in Europe and the United States, where there have been a number of studies on the relationship between sport, community and identity (Crolley, 2008; Lewis, 2001). A pervasive theme to emerge from these discussions on both sides of the Atlantic has been the way in which people associated with sports clubs - be they players, supporters or managers – can demonstrate their unity through, for example, club mascots, clothes and songs (Clark, 2006). In an international sporting context this is epitomised by the singing of national anthems prior to the start of fixtures. Indeed the “glocalisation” of the consumption of football characterised by, “transnational circulation of labour, information, capital, and commodities that can underpin non-national forms of cultural particularity” (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2004, p. 549) has arguably resulted in an increased need to denote local football identity. In effect, spectator cultures play a heightened role in representing the locality by actuating particularistic symbolism before global audiences.

The promotion of cohesion is central to this paper as we suggest that minute's silences (and applause) are used to the same effect – to consolidate and (re)confirm a community identity and fictive kinship associated with a football club. Often the problem emerges, as you will see, when there is disagreement about who these commemorative moments are held for and how they are conducted. Scholars interested in football and sport more generally are not the only academics who have considered solidarity and public acts of allegiance. Within sociological studies into death there has also been considerable interest in death and social cohesion. Shaped by well worn debates about the perceived concealment of death in late-modern society (Ariès, 1974;

Walter, 1994) and how individuals negotiate social expectations about their grieving behaviour (Walter, 1996, 1999, 2001), within this literature there has been a growing questioning of the way(s) in which people commemorate the death of someone and memorialise in the public sphere (see for example Bradbury, 2001; Doss, 2008; Grider, 2006; Santino, 2005). Historian Jay Winter (1997) has considered this in relation to what he termed acts of “fictive kinship” after war, to which we now turn.

The History of Silence

The origins of commemorative silence as it is known today in the UK can be found in the early twentieth century when a nationwide minute’s silence was held in 1910 to mark the death of King Edward VII, followed by a minute’s silence in 1912 to mark the sinking of the Titanic. The ritual symbolism of a minute’s silence did not become a formalized part of UK society, however, until Sir Percy Fitzpatrick suggested to King George V that victory and loss of life in the First World War should be commemorated in accordance with the mood of the moment (McSmith, 2008). Unsurprisingly this was far from celebratory (Gregory, 1994), with many people living in economic dislocation, facing continuing shortages and many manufacturing factories and shipyards crippled (Fraser, 2009). To recognize the scale of the loss that the people of the country had endured and the difficult circumstances in which the country was operating, it was decided by the monarchy that a two minute’s silence would be held to remember those that died in the Great War. On 7 November 1919 King George V (cited in McSmith, 2008) subsequently issued a proclamation stating:

That at the hour when the Armistice came into force, the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, there may be, for the brief space of two minutes, a complete suspension of all our normal activities. All locomotion should cease so that in perfect stillness, the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead.

The intention was that in these two minutes “time out” people could take the opportunity to quietly reflect on those who had died, standing together in a highly visible act of solidarity before resuming their day-to-day activities (Winter, 1997); “silence speaks of the power of remembrance, yet without a word being spoken” (Walter, 2001, p. 505). This temporary period of quiet reflection represented a liminal period of suspension¹ from normal day-to-day life given the noise of industrial society at that time, dominated by raucous factories and trains (Walter, 2001).² Winter’s (1997) interpretation of this use of transitory silence is that it fostered a sense of “fictive kinship” between those who have suffered bereavement(s), and those who empathised with them either because of their own loss or because of their strength of sympathy and compassion. The empathy shown to others during this time is well (and movingly) documented in Jalland’s (2010) accounts of mothers and families consoling one another, sharing information about the death(s) of their sons, the location of graves and so on.

On the 11th November 1919, a two minute silence was held to mark the first anniversary of Armistice Day. Silence to remember those who died at war has become a prevailing feature of UK society ever since. After World War Two, the day shifted from the 11th November to the nearest Sunday (Remembrance Sunday) and although initially intended to honour the dead of both the First and Second World Wars, throughout the twentieth century its scope has continued to evolve to include *all* those who have died in

conflict (such as the Falkland Islands, Iraq and Afghanistan). What is more, since 1995 remembrance of the British war dead has grown, “with many supermarkets, work places and colleges now marking a two-minute silence not only on Remembrance Sunday but also on November 11th” (Walter, 1999, p. 42). This has been described elsewhere as “silence inflation” (McSmith, 2008).

At the same time, there have been signs that the use of silence in public has been expanding beyond the war dead. In 1996, following the murder of 16 primary school children and their teacher in Dunblane, Scotland, a two minute silence was held across the UK. Deaths resulting from events in New York and Pennsylvania in September 2001 were commemorated by a one-minute silence across the Western world. Following the train bombs in Madrid, Spain in March 2004, Bertie Ahern, the Prime Minister of Ireland (which held the European Union presidency at the time), called on member-nations of the EU to observe a silence for Madrid's dead. This was Europe's first three-minute silence. Just over a year later, at noon on 14 July 2005, a three-minute silence across the UK was conducted for the people killed a week earlier by suicide bombers in London. These three-minute silences drew public criticism from military veterans who noted that the dead of two world wars were remembered with only a two-minute pause (Cowell, 2005). In response to the three-minute silence for victims of the Asian tsunami disaster at the end of 2004, military historian Max Hastings (cited in Cowell, 2005) suggested in the national newspaper, the Daily Mail, that, “the three-minute silence diminishes the only such event that matters, our annual two-minute commemoration of those who fell in the world wars”. He went on to declare that it is “a political stunt that betrays our war dead and demeans the awesome generosity of the British public”. Correspondence to the national newspaper The Times letter pages went

further and argued that minute's silences were a "*useless gesture... equivalent of the footballers' black armband, the bunch of flowers by the roadside, or the teddy bear left on a child's grave*" (The Times, 2005, emphasis added).

Journalists' and social commentators' concerns over "silence inflation" should not be regarded as an isolated occurrence in late-modern Western society. In the latter years of the twentieth century there has been a growing trend towards acknowledging the evolution of customs and rituals to mark the death of people in non-conventional, non-traditional and non-religious ways (Cook & Walter, 2005). A corresponding example of an increasingly popular "non-conventional" act of remembrance is those memorial spots that have been termed 'spontaneous shrines' (Grider, 2006; Santino, 2005). These include roadside memorials and temporary shrines that 'spring up' at the site of a tragedy or somewhere significant connected to a death (such as outside Kensington Palace in London following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales). Contributing to what Simpson (2006) has termed a "culture of commemoration", these shrines are typically highly visible through photographs, candles, flowers, toys, clothing, garden ornaments and so on left at the site (Doss, 2008), and often become visited as akin to an act of ritual pilgrimage, sacred to the visitor although not necessarily religious (Wojcik, 2008). A particularly well known example of a spontaneous shrine in UK football was the way in which through the display of flowers and scarves people turned Liverpool Football Club's football ground, Anfield, into a place of pilgrimage following the deaths of fans at Hillsborough Stadium (Brennan, 2008; Scraton, 2004).

In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that minute's silences have "inflated" given that as a non-religious public act, a transitory period of contemplation does not

require an individual to subscribe to a particular set of beliefs or uphold a specific value system. Public acts such as roadside memorials or minute's silences can therefore be interpreted as (in part at least) a way of overtly showing that a family and/or community is impacted upon by the loss of that person/group of people (Mellor, 2004; Walter, 2001). Comparable analyses about the way in which acts of remembrance are a way of demonstrating cohesion in football have come from Brennan (2008) who examined the seven condolence books created following the deaths of Liverpool FC fans at Hillsborough Stadium. He hypothesised that some messages left were as much about publicly asserting a belonging to the city of Liverpool as the people who died themselves. Similarly, in analysis of the media surrounding the Munich air crash in 1958, Mellor (2004) argued that at the time Mancunians saw themselves as "family" grieving together, unified by their affiliation to the city.

Despite the majority of the aforementioned academic discussion regarding acts of remembrance being orientated around their cohesive purpose, it is interesting to note an adjoining perspective proposed by Seine (2005) and Mitchell (2007) who respectively argue that public acts of remembrance are a method to protest or promote social change. They are, in other words, a way of (re)establishing moral boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour, of marking out the enemy (Simpson, 2006) and making a public call for transformation. At football games commemoration has started to be utilised to this effect; for example, those silences (or applause) held following the death - often murder - of a child, such as Manchester United supporters Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in 2002 and Everton supporter Rhys Jones in 2007. In these cases, cohesion is generated by the nature of the death(s); "the more disturbing a death, because of its tragic circumstances or because of the high status of the deceased, the

greater the tendency for mourners to come together in an attempt to glue the social bonds back together again” (Walter, 2001, p. 495). Coming full circle, in this approach marking death is deemed to be the time to repair society’s torn fabric, to rectify its wrongs, a time to promote change through showing solidarity to one another (Berger, 1969). The difficulty arises when there is divergence in opinion regarding the type of commemorative act that should be conducted and for whom.

Manchester 2008

As detailed in the introduction to this paper, in early 2008 the decision of the Manchester United board to hold a minute’s silence at Old Trafford to remember those who died in the air crash in 1958 was much debated in the national press. Certainly, it directly contradicted Manchester City Supporters’ Club’s desire to request fans to applaud as a way of remembering those that died and celebrate their (cut short) lives. Arguably however, and as revealed in the debate that followed, much of Manchester City Supporters’ Club’s stance was due to the fact that they wanted to avoid potential deviancy from their fans. As is commonplace in football, the fact that the two Manchester clubs' supporters live in close proximity has generated an intense historical rivalry and, unsurprisingly, there were concerns that this rivalry could compromise the silence. These concerns were not unfounded; there is a lengthy and irreverent tradition in the north-west of England for rival fans to refer to United supporters as “Munichs” and sing offensive songs about the air crash:

Who’s that dying on the runway?

Who’s that dying in the snow?

It’s Matt Busby and his boys and they’re making all the noise,

cos they can't get the aeroplane to go.

From the perspective of Manchester City Supporters' Club a minute's applause thus provided the opportunity to cover up any disrespectful noise made by Manchester City fans. Manchester City Supporters' Club spokesperson, Kevin Parker, was very aware of this in an interview broadcast on BBC Radio 5 Live, when he spoke disparagingly about his fellow fans: "It will only take one of those idiots to decide to shout something stupid and then the whole situation has been spoilt forever. We are calling for applause just in case" (BBC, 2008).

Concerns about the use of a minute's silence on February 10th 2008 were not taken lightly, as a precedent had already been set following the death of well known Manchester United and Northern Ireland player George Best in November 2005, whose life was commemorated throughout football grounds across the UK. At the City of Manchester Stadium, Manchester City's ground, officials tried to have a minute's silence following Best's death, but a few Liverpool Football Club fans (the visiting club) started to heckle and the silence had to be cut short.³

Despite these concerns, however, the board of Manchester United were determined that it would be silence, not applause, that would be used to mark the 50th anniversary of those who died in the crash. Manchester United spokesman Phil Townsend told BBC Radio Five Live, "Our view is that the minute's silence is a more appropriate way of recognising a disaster that killed 23 people. I don't think we should change those plans because of the fear of a few idiots who might want to spoil it" (BBC, 2008). On the day itself the silence was respectfully observed and Manchester United's decision was vindicated.

To Clap or Not to Clap?

Similar debates to those that took place in February 2008 have been echoed at many football clubs over the last couple of years. There have been several occasions at UK football games when applause has been used rather than silence to commemorate the death of someone. At Everton Football Club's ground, Goodison Park, at the request of his parents, 33,000 football fans applauded 11-year-old Rhys Jones, local schoolboy and Everton fan, who was shot dead nearby in August 2007. In this case, like at Manchester United's ground, the decision whether to be silent or applaud had already been decided (in this case by the parents) and announced to the spectators prior to the event. Applause was also forthcoming at grounds around the country for England World Cup player Alan Ball following his death in April 2007, and 18-year-old Queens Park Rangers (QPR) striker Ray Jones, who was killed in a car crash in August the same year. A well known example of applause being used as a commemorative act in recent times was at some grounds when fans gave a spontaneous minute's applause to mark the aforementioned death of footballer George Best. This indicates that despite the organisation of the form of remembrance by a football club spontaneous fan behaviour may still occur, this may be as other behaviour is deemed more "appropriate", or in the form of deviant behaviour. Guardian sports writer Richard Williams (2007 cited in Winterman, 2007) argued that this was a reflection of the person that Best was, stating "I think it's a good idea when the person is someone whose achievements were accompanied by the cheers of vast crowds, for people like George Best applause will always seem far more appropriate than silence". Further reflecting an ambiguity over how to commemorate someone at a football game, when cricketer Fred Trueman died in 2007, minute's silences and applauds were held at football clubs across the country and

the same occurred when former England international footballer Sir Nat Lofthouse died (London, 2011).

In the UK the Premier League states it has no official line on how football clubs should pay their respects, admitting that, “often applause is an impromptu reaction from the crowds and not something that's premeditated” (Winterman, 2007). A minute’s applause thus appears to have developed largely as a spontaneous act of remembrance within the football terraces, much like the spontaneous shrines referred to earlier, or at the specific request of individuals. Reflecting an embryonic societal trend towards a rejection of Victorian solemnity in death, this move towards applause on the terraces could be regarded as a “reversal” of a conventional liminal silence to mark death (Turner, 1969). Creating a more carnivalesque atmosphere, applause is a deliberate negation of everyday rules and customs that point towards public restraint and calm (Stallybrass & White, 1986).⁴ What is more, it suggests “a new appetite for displays of public grieving (Russell, 2006, p. 10) and points to the discrepancy between organised acts of remembrance that are sanctioned from “on high” and spontaneous commemoration that either erupts from the masses or is the result of a direct request “from below”.

Often, whether or not silence or applause is used corresponds with the age at which the deceased died and/or the manner of their death. As a result, the act of remembrance is to “celebrate” a long life lived well or to lament a premature loss. If someone led a long and achievement-filled life then applauding their successes and celebrating their contribution is typically articulated by officials and fans as “appropriate” – seen in the case of applause being used after the death of former England Football Team Manager Sir Bobby Robson in 2009. In contrast, Manchester

United's board felt that the Munich Air disaster was the premature and untimely loss of lives of many young men and therefore best represented by silence.⁵ Therefore, the use of applause needs to be recognised not merely as an *alternative* to a silence. Both silence and applause are entwined with social values attached to the mode of death. This includes expectations about death's timeliness, where the expectation (in the UK at least) is to live a long life and anything but is an untimely end (Howarth, 2007). In this way, silence and applause in such a public arena are *tools* through which to convey different public messages about the person and the circumstances in which they died. As sports journalist Berlins (2007) argued in his newspaper column:

Silence signifies different emotions, a different state of mind. Applause is the commonplace expression of appreciation and enthusiasm for a sporting feat, an enjoyable entertainment or a speech at a wedding. It recognises that something good has occurred. But people clap prolifically, whereas they will seldom be asked to be silent. It is that rarity that makes silence special and important. And, in contrast to applause, it signifies something bad and sad - a war, a disaster, the death of a loved and admired individual.

Yet despite applause becoming more commonplace, silence - so closely associated with Victorian sobriety in mourning - is still widely regarded as the most 'respectful' way to publicly mark death (Howarth, 2007) with London (2011) describing the minute's applause as a "ghastly attempt at forced positivity that does not sit easily with the British psyche". It has further been suggested that, "silence may be a more powerful way [than applause] in which human mortality can be confronted" (Walter, 2001, p. 505). So how does this correspond with acts of remembrance at football games and the carnivalesque potential of the terraces? We suggest here that silence is sanctioned by

club's management as a *rite* through which to publicly reinforce or reject an affiliation to the club and by either upholding or disrupting a silence, fans can demonstrate their affinity to the football community and its associated members.

So Just who is Remembered at Football Games?

How to commemorate at football games is just as complex as *who* to commemorate. In the past, a minute's silence was typically reserved for someone who had died that was associated with the football club in question, for example, a former player, chairman or club secretary. More recently, remembrance acts have taken place for a supporter or a player's family: footballer Frank Lampard's mother was remembered by a minute's silence on April 26th 2008 when Chelsea played Manchester United in the Premier League.

In recent years however fans have increasingly been expected to take part in remembrance for people not associated with their club. For example, there were minute's silences at football games across the UK to commemorate the events of 9/11 in 2001, the execution of Iraq hostage Ken Bigley in 2004, the victims of the Asian tsunami in 2004, and the deaths in 2004 of BBC Radio 1 DJ John Peel and Pope John Paul II. It has been argued elsewhere (Russell, 2006) that these minute's silences for non-football related deaths are a result of football decision-makers' anxiety to show a sense of national social solidarity and responsibility, underpinned by an acute consciousness of their club's public image now that most games are shown live on satellite/cable channels and can be viewed later on the internet. This new visibility of remembrance and "being seen" to commemorate has come from, and contributes to, a heightened awareness of club identity and image, and the branding of football

(particularly in the Premier League) more generally – something which has become a central and highly political issue within football across the board (Armstrong & Young, 1999).

As a result fans may be requested to publicly “remember”, regardless of whether they knew of the deceased person/people, and how they might feel about their death (Davies, 1997; Walter, 1999). Tension regarding this has begun to emerge. Indeed, it was the sudden death from heart failure during a game of 35 year old footballer Phil O’Donnell in 2007 that brought to light the potential for friction amongst fans, managers and pundits surrounding public acts of remembrance. A former Celtic and Sheffield Wednesday player, O’Donnell’s death led to a minute’s silences at all football games across the UK the following week. Opposing the nation-wide silence however, manager of Nottingham Forest Football Club Colin Calderwood stated that he did not wish the club to have a minute’s silence for O’Donnell at the Forest ground. O’Donnell had never played for Nottingham Forest, and had no association with the club. Calderwood told the national newspaper *The Sun*, “I don’t think it’s appropriate to have them for every tragedy that happens. Sometimes it needs to be a bit closer to home. The fact that it was a boy in Scotland, does that make it any different to a boy in Columbia?” (Cameron, 2008). His comments were publicly condemned by pundits as being “disrespectful” (for example see Cowan, 2008), but in terms of rejecting the aforementioned “silence inflation” they were significant: Calderwood’s sentiments were one of the first public denunciations of the growing trend to commemorate death amongst a football fan community that was not immediately connected to the person (or people) who had died. More recently an article in the UK *Economist* magazine by London (2011) criticised the prevalence of the use of the minute’s silence, “it felt as if

every fixture was preceded by players standing around the centre circle, heads bowed, remembering the death of ever more obscure players”, suggesting that it had the potential to devalue the importance of remembrance of those closely associated with clubs.

Cohesion in football

Disagreement over O'Donnell's death indicated the potentially cohesive/divisive nature of commemorative acts at football games. Certainly, it has long been agreed amongst sociologists that death has the potential to unify or fragment groups of people (Walter, 1991). When applied to football fans, remembrance acts can therefore be regarded as rites of rejection or restoration; as a liminal transient moment that distinguishes whether the fans are allied to - or anti - the club. Public remembrance is thus a contributor to the insider/outsider binary that so defines football culture (Armstrong & Young, 1999; Jenkins, 2008). While this insider/outsider distinction is present in much that is central to the commodification of football such as purchasing club merchandise this process, like football chants, may be seen to largely resist the commodification process. Instead, it is often dictated by fan's own rules and orthodoxies. Commemorative acts at a football game, where large numbers of people normally congregate, thus represent an ideal opportunity to demonstrate affiliation freely; through silence, applause or disruption fans can reinforce a “sense of collectivity that is absent from everyday experience” (Walter, 2001, p. 495). Indeed evidence suggests that remembrance at football games can be used to *bridge* usual club rivalries. For example, Sheffield Wednesday and Sheffield United fans both paid their respects for Derek Dooley, a former Sheffield Wednesday striker and Sheffield United chairman who died on the 5th

of March 2008. Almost twenty years earlier, following the Hillsborough disaster local rival clubs Liverpool and Everton's fans created a chain of Liverpool and Everton scarves around the stadium at half time when they met on the 3rd May 1989. In addition, symbolising the sense of unity in the city, alternate Liverpool and Everton scarves were knotted together between Anfield and Goodison Park, their respective grounds.

Reflecting the emergence of spontaneous applause from the terraces, this tying together of scarves was an organic and "grass roots" activity, organised by fans rather than the Football Supporters Association or the football clubs. Indeed the process of coordinating the tying of scarves between the grounds was instigated by a local taxi driver and Everton fan. This represented an example of *communitas* (Turner, 1969) where individuals were able to rise above structures that materially and normatively regulate their daily lives, this symbolic act enabled rival football fans to unite across boundaries of structure and rank (Ingram & McDonald, 2003). In essence, *communitas* is anchored in the liminalities of the marginalised and disenfranchised. The ability to transgress normal social boundaries was also apparent when police, actors and other famous individuals chose to queue to pay their respects to those who lost their lives in the Hillsborough disaster for several hours, despite the opportunity accompanying their respective position to enter Anfield without having to wait in line (Walter, 1991). In this sense, albeit for a short time only, social division and hierarchy was broken down with the identity of the city of Liverpool at the fore in the remembrance process.

Having said this, there can also be games when both cohesion *and* conflict are apparent. When Liverpool FC played Italian side Juventus FC in the first leg of the European Champions League quarterfinals at Liverpool's Anfield Stadium, on April 5th 2005, it was the first time the two clubs had met since the European Cup final in

Brussels on May 29th 1985 when rioting caused a wall to collapse, crushing 39 Italian spectators. To mark the event, both sets of fans had a desire to be gracious towards the rival supporters. To this end Liverpool fans carried a banner bearing the names of the dead across the field to where the Juventus fans were seated. The banner also had the words “*memoria e amicizia*” – in memory and friendship. In return, Juventus fans wore armbands carrying the colours of the two clubs. It was at the very same game, however, that commemorative behaviour very visibly conflicted. When the players and fans were asked to stand in silence to remember the recent death of Pope John Paul II, the typical Italian custom of the minute’s applause clashed with the Liverpool supporters’ expectations of a minute’s silence. As a result, Juventus fans gave spontaneous applause in the middle of the minute’s silence, and were aggressively booed by the Liverpool followers when the minute ended. Variation in what is regarded as appropriate remembrance at football games can thus be regarded as exemplifying the unspoken rules that exist related to public commemorative behaviour (Davies, 1997; Walter, 1999) and the way in which customs and rituals related to remembrance are evolving as what is “dignified” mourning behaviour in public in an increasingly secular society becomes open to speculation.

Discussion

Sociologically, the issue of whether silence or applause is used reflects a cultural contestation over how to mark death in the twenty first century. If, as Simpson (2006) asserts, commemoration is an occasion for assessing change and continuity within a culture, then what might this contestation over silence and applause at football games reveal? We suggest that the tension surrounding commemorative acts such as a minute’s

silence or applause mirror that of communal memorials, which simultaneously need to venerate the dead but also broadcast a particular message to others (Williams, 2007), be it of affiliation, shock or admiration. What is more, these ritual tools to publicly mark death have a redemptive quality in “who” they are held for. The sense of “honouring” the dead through a transitory, liminal moment of remembrance is a powerful identifier of whose life, and what form of death, is worth noting in a world where there are increasing demands to remember the dead of other nations and communities.

Moreover, they reveal the difficulty in establishing the boundaries of kinship (Pitt-Rivers, 1975). Stemming from insight into World War One, fictive kinship was conceptualised by Winter (1997) as a way of supporting non-family members in moments of empathy and compassion. Certainly, sharing the experience of loss through war, in particular, can be a powerful source of societal unity and kinship (Barron et al, 2008; Winter, 1997), yet when this filters through to smaller communities of people such as football fans and non-war deaths (Jalland, 2010) there is an inherent tension regarding for whom the boundaries of fictive kinship can accommodate and how these perimeters are marked. This was vividly seen in the rejection of commemoration for Phil O’Donnell, with Colin Calderwood’s decision to condemn an act of remembrance for O’Donnell going some way to drawing a metaphorical line in the sand regarding for whom these transitory contemplative moments are conducted.

As a result, acts of remembrance at football games need to be regarded not just as commemoration but also as tools to demonstrate who is “in” and who is “out” of the football community (Jenkins, 2002). In other words, remembrance acts are “a new *vehicle* for the strengthening of footballing allegiances and the dissemination of cultural knowledge” (Russell, 2006, p. 14, emphasis added). Similar to Walter’s (2001)

conclusions after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, it is our suggestion that these acts constitute a ritualised tool, much like songs sung on the terraces (Clark, 2006) and the wearing of “club colours” (Giulianotti, 1999), “symbols of membership” (Jenkins, 2008) through which footballing community’s kinship can be publicly demonstrated and rejected.

Conclusion

As can be seen in the wealth of sports commentators speculating on remembrance at football games, there is much scope for sociologists to become more actively engaged in collaboration at the intersection of football and death. This paper has drawn on media accounts and academic literature to consider acts of remembrance associated with football, focusing on the minute’s silence and applause and its usage as a way of publicly remembering those who have died (Mellor, 2004). Though it cannot claim to be representative of all deaths, it points to variation about how, and who, to remember at football games in the UK. Using excerpts from the popular press it has indicated some of the ambiguities that exist around silence and applause, particularly as a contemporary form and the notion of liminality – something so often associated with temporary quiet and consolation towards a more noise-filled, even celebratory, transitory moment. Certainly there is much scope for a more systematic investigation into the use of silence and applause at football games, including who decides that the silence (or applause) should take place, their justification (if documented) for doing so and whether it is adhered to.

The ambiguity over *who* is remembered at football games extends and contributes to sociological discussion about marking death publicly and concepts from

historians regarding fictive kinship boundaries. In terms of the connection between sport and social issues study into acts of remembrance at football games could benefit from developing beyond the remit of “disasters” to incorporate high profile murders, acts of terrorism, accidents, and deaths that are considered timely or premature to explore contemporary boundaries of kith and kin at both a local, national, and international level. It is a potentially fruitful avenue to explore contemporary forms of *communitas*.

Notes

¹ Liminality literally means ‘being-on-a-threshold’, a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day and cultural and social states and processes (Turner, 1979).

² In contrast, today ambient noise tends to be low and the use of loud noise such as applause may correspondingly be regarded as a liminal, temporary ‘reversal’ of the normal everyday hush to publicly symbolise the event of death. This can be seen, for example, in the use of the tolling bell to announce the death in Europe, or the gongs used in Chinese funerals.

³ Apart from Liverpool FC’s supporters noise in the minute’s silence held for George Best, there have been several occasions of a minute’s silence being deliberately disrupted by fans: for example, the booing of a minority of Leeds fans during their own minute’s silence for George Best or violence between Stoke City FC and Wigan Athletic FC fans at the end of the minute’s silence for Sir Stanley Matthews, who died aged 85 in 2000 (this is despite Matthews having a 69 year affiliation with Stoke City and his ashes being scattered at the side of the club’s pitch).

⁴ In essence, for fans, attendance at football matches, which have traditionally taken place on a Saturday, may represent an oscillation between ordinary life and the football match. This process in itself may be considered liminal with the match reversing everyday structures (Turner, 1969; Walter, 2001).

⁵ The connection between age at death, silence and applause is not a foregone conclusion however. For instance, the deaths of 18 year old QPR footballer Ray Jones and 11 year old Everton fan Rhys Jones were both remembered by a minute’s applause at their respective clubs. In the case of Rhys Jones, this was at the request of his parents, who said that he would have wanted noise, not a lugubrious hush. Rhys’ parents request for applause was not met with concord by all however; for example Times newspaper columnist Martin Samuel (2008) argued that applause was inappropriate stating “what was there to applaud about his tragically brief life?”

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