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Reconstructing British identity: Formula One, Michael Schumacher and the British Press at the turn of the century

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ABSTRACT

National identity is created through inclusions and exclusions; by who and what is included and who and what is excluded. This article examines how British identity was constructed, expressed, and re-constructed in the British press through articles about German Formula One driver Michael Schumacher in the 1990s and early 2000s. The representations of Schumacher, and the frequent invocations of the Second World War, illuminate insecurities in the British press about Britain's role in the world and their concerns about a newly reunited Germany playing a more prominent role on the global stage.

Nationale Identitäten entstehen durch Inklusion und Exklusion: wer oder was wird miteinbezogen und wer oder was ausgeschlossen? Dieser Artikel untersucht, wie die britische Identität in den 90er und frühen 00er Jahren durch Artikel in der britischen Presse über den deutschen Formel-1-Fahrer Michael Schumacher in diesem Zeitraum konstruiert, ausgedrückt und rekonstruiert wurde. Die Darstellungen Schumachers sowie die häufige Beschwörung des Zweiten Weltkriegs verdeutlichen die Unsicherheit der britischen Presse in Bezug auf die Rolle Großbritanniens in der Welt sowie die Besorgnis über ein wiedervereinigtes Deutschland, das auf der globalen Bühne eine wichtigere Rolle spielt.

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From his debut in 1991 to his first retirement in 2006, Formula One driver Michael Schumacher won a then unequalled seven World Drivers' Championship titles and received various accolades for his skill. The facts of his career speak for themselves, however, in British newspapers, his reputation was often tied to Germany's Nazi past and accusations of arrogance. For example, in September 1998, the *Daily Mail*, a tabloid newspaper, wrote 'the sight of Michael Schumacher stalking down the pit-lane like a deranged rottweiler reminded me of another German who was never in the wrong' (Wooldridge, 1998, p. 66). On the other hand, a recent documentary put forward a very different picture of the man; a loving father who was shy rather than arrogant, unsure of what to say rather than standoffish (Kammertöns et al., 2021). Neither of these depictions provide access to the 'truth'; to the real man behind the headlines. These media representations tell us nothing about him as a person or about him as a driver; however, by examining the newspaper coverage more closely, we can uncover the construction of British identity through the press during these decades. I focus on *The Sun, The Daily Mail, The Daily Telegraph and The Guardian*. These newspapers represent the reading material of a broad swathe of the population, both tabloid and

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broadsheet, and a cross section of the political spectrum. To ensure a tight focus, I will examine his first career from 1991 to 2006, although he returned to racing briefly between 2010 and 2012 with less success. Schumacher, as a prominent and successful German sports star, became a foil for Germany in these newspapers and the response to him indicates that Britain was a backward-looking nation, obsessed with past glory and uncertain about its current and future place in the world.

Schumacher's career and how it was described by these newspapers is particularly useful to examine because his career intersected with key moments for Britain that provided opportunities for Britain to reflect on its past and to consider how Britain wanted to move forward at the turn of the century. Britain's relationship with the rest of Europe was under the microscope; the Cold War was supposed to be over and the European Union was growing in importance. The Berlin Wall had been torn down in 1989 and a unified Germany was growing in importance. The Channel Tunnel, opened in 1994, was a physical link that altered the identity of Britain that had understood itself as cut off. As *The Guardian* commented on the opening of the tunnel: 'It may be the undoing of us as a nation, unless the end of physical insularity also marks the end of our psychological insularity' (Engel, 1994, p. T2). Later, it also became a visible site of tension as the Red Cross reception centre for refugees in nearby Sangatte, open between 1999 and 2002, led to fears that the tunnel was a security risk (Zhang, 2019, p. 738). Britain and its newspapers were grappling with how to understand its changing role and relationship with its neighbours.

Moreover, there were political changes in the late 1990s and early 2000s. After their victory in 1997, Prime Minister Tony Blair and Chancellor Gordon Brown led attempts to create a positive image of Britain in the world and positive relations with other European powers but, as my discourse analysis demonstrates, this did not necessarily reach much beyond political circles. After 2001 and the War on Terror, borders and the limits of identity became central and the relationship between Britain and the US seemed weaker than that between Germany and the US (Wittlinger, 2004, p. 455). There were also sporting events that highlighted the British German relationship. The European football championship in 1996 hosted in England saw a resurgence of nationalistic attitudes that culminated in a riot after England lost to Germany in the semi-finals. Engaging with sporting events can form part of a practice that contribute to Anderson's 'imagined community' (2006, p. 6), with the depictions of these events both being understood through, and adding to, a framework of traditions, myths and narratives (Black, 2021, p. 1957). The media discourse surrounding sporting events both 'represent' and 're-present' the nation (Poulton, 2004). Sport has also had a long association with nationalism and is recognised as providing an opportunity to experience belonging, although due to the unpredictable nature of live sporting events and the multinational nature of many sports teams, feelings of belonging to a nation are negotiated and incomplete (Black, 2021, p. 1960). Sport and the surrounding discourse have also been used to analyse relationships between nations, including Britain and Germany, in the 1990s and early 2000s. However, the vast majority of articles use football as the lens through which to examine these relationships (see Maguire et al., 1999; Young, 2007). A detailed analysis of the discussions of Michael Schumacher illustrates the insecurity of a nation sensing a decline in its own importance and fears about the world moving on without them.

Formula One is a complex sport to negotiate with regards to nationalism due to the international make up of the teams and drivers racing for brands that are from a different country. However, as Schep (2023) highlights, nationalist feelings still emerge although it may have a diverse range of attachments, from the nationality of drivers, locations of racetracks, even the make of tyres has promoted discourses of national pride. Even though the sport offers a rich array of aspects to examine, it has received comparatively little scholarly attention in spite of its global popularity in the 1990s (Sturm, 2011, p. 227). Much of the academic literature surrounding Formula One is about the engineering and technical aspects of the sport. A notable exception is Damion Sturm's research discussing the sport as a glamorised global phenomenon (2014) and as an expression of masculinity (2021). Sturm's (2011) autoethnographic analysis of Formula One fandom and Canadian driver

Jacques Villenenuve in which he discusses the relationship between the drivers, their teams, the journalists, and the fans is vastly different in Formula One than in other sports, due to the ways in which the drivers are subsumed by their vehicles and their physical presence is hidden (p. 228). Medak-Seguín (2016) examines masculinities, death and safety narratives after the death of Ayrton Senna in 1994, with a particular focus on the changes introduced, ostensibly to improve driver safety. Schep (2023) explores nationalism, gender and class in the 1980s French and British newspaper coverage of Formula One. My research builds on the work of Sturm and Schep with a new look at British German relations in the 1990s and early 2000s through the lens of representations of Michael Schumacher.

Michael Schumacher's career

Within the world of Formula One racing, Michael Schumacher (born in 1969) is considered to be one of the best. He learnt to race on a go-kart track, using the discarded tyres of his wealthier competitors, in Kerpen, West Germany. He won his first race aged 5 and first championship aged 6. He preferred to race in the rain, as driver skill was more important in these conditions than who had the superior kart, something which remained a feature of his Formula One career (The MS Office SA, n.d.-b, *Until 1988: Early Records and Superlatives in Kart Racing*). In 1991, he had his first start in a Formula One race and joined the team Benetton. In 1994, he won his first championship and successfully defended his title in 1995. Schumacher then joined Ferrari but did not win the championship again until 2000, due to frequent problems with his car and injuries in 1999, which included a broken leg, although he still won a number of podium finishes each year. 2000 marked the start of his dominance and he won five consecutive championships. In 2005, rule changes resulted in a radically different car with Renault becoming the dominant team, and Schumacher did not win another championship (The MS Office SA, n.d.-a, *2005: Things are never as bad as they seem*). He retired initially in 2006, returned to racing in 2010 and retired permanently in 2012. In 2013, he suffered a severe craniocerebral injury after a skiing accident (The MS Office, 2013, *Michael suffers severe craniocerebral injury*). He remains in rehabilitation and out of the public eye.

Like all leading Formula One drivers, Schumacher's career contains victories, accidents, near-misses, and rivalries with other drivers that were reported in the media. I will now provide some background to several key incidents that were widely reported and that provide the focus for analysis within this article. One of the most shocking moments in Formula One that intersected with Schumacher's career was the death of Brazilian champion driver Ayrton Senna in 1994 at the San Marino Grand Prix. Schumacher had been just behind Senna and witnessed the crash and when the race was restarted, Schumacher won. He went on to win the championship that year, despite controversies surrounding the team using potentially illegal software in their vehicles and a collision with British driver Damon Hill at the Australian Grand Prix that was ruled to be accidental but was seen by some to be an example of ramming. As well as his victories, Schumacher was also involved in several controversial moments that received a great deal of attention from newspapers. In November 1997, he was accused of deliberately 'shunting' another driver's car (Jacques Villeneuve) and found guilty of dangerous driving. He was stripped of his runner's up title and fined but articles in *The Sun, The Daily Mail and The Guardian* all called for more stringent punishment. *The Daily Mail* headline, 'A verdict that flies in face of sanity' (Wooldridge, 1997, p. 77) and 'Alan Henry on the repercussions of a Schumacher verdict that undermines F1' (Henry, 1997, p. 27) from *The Guardian* both featured prominent criticisms. *The Sun* speculated whether this perceived lighter punishment was special treatment for Schumacher (Piecha, 1997, p. 44). In 1998, he was involved in a collision while attempting to lap a slower vehicle and confronted the other driver, David Coulthard, in the pit lane afterwards (Henry, 1998, p. 6). Formula One, like many sports, also has its fair share of behind-the-scenes' tactics that could draw the pundits' ire. In May 2002, Schumacher's team-mate Rubens Barrichello was ordered to move aside and allow Schumacher

through as the team decided that Schumacher needed the points; a move that attracted criticism and accusations of unsporting behaviour and also cost Barrichello the victory after dominating the race (Matts, 2002, p. 68). In his final season before his first retirement in 2006, at the Monaco Grand Prix, Schumacher deliberately stopped his car during his rival Fernando Alonso's qualifying lap and Schumacher was stripped of pole position and had to start the race from the back. Of course, all Formula One teams and drivers have been accused of manipulating the rules of the sport and engaging in behind-the-scenes politicking at different points, including during Schumacher's career. Schumacher may have attracted more attention, as author and pundit James Allen (2000) argues, because he was so often at the front and therefore in the spotlight (p. 155). Over the course of his career, Schumacher demonstrated both his flair and was involved in incidents that were seen as negative, like many drivers, yet even his victories attracted opprobrium from British newspapers, as will be reflected in my analysis.

Methodology

The timeframe of Schumacher's career peak (1992–2004), that provides the scope for this article, is a useful lens through which to examine his representation in the press. This was before celebrities were able to use social media or reality television to speak more directly to their fans. Schumacher was mediated through journalists and for English-speakers living in Britain, this meant they only had access to him and his words through what was written about him by journalists. For those who watched the television coverage, the footage cuts between different drivers to capture the different battles for position across the track, providing a disjointed experience for any fan wishing to focus on their favourite driver and a further level of mediation (Sturm, 2011, p. 228). This article is also structured around key moments of Schumacher's career to uncover how his triumphs as well as losses were represented.

This article uses approaches from critical discourse studies to explore the language used to describe Schumacher and his actions (see Gavriely-Nuri, 2018). The discourse produced and re-produced in the newspapers contributes to the creation of a 'narrative' which in turn forms part of a cultural code (the package of 'shared values, norms, ethos, and social values') (Gavriely-Nuri, 2018, p. 124). These codes are also closely linked to 'framing' as the journalists, their sources and editors choose which aspects to highlight and how to present 'what happened' to their readers (Brüggemann, 2014, pp. 65–66). This framing as a way of creating, as Goffman (1974) put it, 'the organization of reality' is both shaped by the societal context in which it was produced but also contributes to shaping that context (p. 562). Through analysing the texts and considering the context in which they were written, we can interpret and draw conclusions about the society that produced them (see Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, pp. 1–10). It is only through applying close reading to the text and balancing this with the context in which it was written that the discourse analysis can be drawn out. No newspaper article is produced in isolation as each relates to previous ones, draws on conventions within the field of journalism, and contributes to the discourse. This article uses a qualitative approach to unpick the ways in which narratives surrounding Schumacher were constructed rather than a quantitative approach that could overlook the detailed ways in which the narratives were created. Journalists and newspapers are also in competition with each other for a greater share of the market, meaning that merely reporting what happened at a particular event is not enough. As a result, the articles connect the events depicted to a range of socio-political issues to emphasise their importance (Blackett, 2022, p. 2). The word constructed is useful here as when journalists reported on a race or an interview, they chose which moments to include, how to put the events together into a coherent story, and how to interpret the race. There is a sense that the narratives put forward by the media must, to a certain extent, adhere to social conventions and be in accordance with each other, otherwise the readers would not be able, or would not be willing, to comprehend what was described. The 'interpretative resources', as Lawlor (2014) describes it,

available to us are limited and shared between individuals and are a key part of identity formation and preservation (p. 43).

For this article, a Thematic Analysis was conducted. I selected key moments from Schumacher's career (as identified in the 'Michael Schumacher's Career' section of this article) and searched for articles written on the days following the event in *The Sun, The Daily Mail, The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian* using the database LexisNexis and the newspapers' archives. *The Mirror*, a left-leaning tabloid has not been included due to a lack of consistent Formula One coverage. These newspapers represent the reading material of a broad swathe of the population, both tabloid and broadsheet, and a cross section of the political spectrum. Although these newspapers have different readers and are in competition with each other, the construction of national identity is fairly stable as they must rely on shared themes and symbols (Conboy, 2006, p. 46). While collecting and reading the articles, themes were identified mostly through the repetition of topics and the use of metaphors and comparisons (see Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Through an iterative process of reading and re-reading, the themes were reduced to four that provide depth to my analysis and a structure to this article. These themes are arrogance, wealth, dangerous driving and the Second World War. Naturally, there are issues with the subjectivity of the researcher affecting the themes selected and how the data is subsequently coded according to the theme. However, this method offers a clear way to ensure that the subsequent analysis reflects the nuances and complexities of the articles analysed (Guest et al., 2012). I am not claiming that my research is the definitive understanding of the representation of Michael Schumacher, instead, this article is opening a discussion about the intersections between identity, the Other and Formula One in some of the British media.

Identity is a key concept for this article, however, whenever it is invoked, it is a complex term that covers a multitude of situations. The interplay between how one thinks of oneself and how others engage with that sense of self is difficult to define and analyse. There is also a tension between the idea that as individuals we are each unique and yet we share characteristics (or we imagine we share) with others to create aspects of a shared identity (see Burke & Stets, 2009). For example, as this article discusses, the concept of 'British identity' is constructed through newspapers, which, due to their daily publication, are able to contribute to a dynamic discourse around British identity (Conboy, 2006, p. 68). This tension is also in constant dialogue with sameness and difference as the limits of British identity are defined by interaction with identities that apparently display characteristics that are seen as 'other' (in this case German identity). The group identity of 'British' is the result of a careful process of balancing 'internal cohesion and external distinctiveness of the group' against the 'group's internal diversity and external similarities' (Leerssen, 2007, p. 337). The idea of the nation is both inclusive and exclusive at the same time, a tension that can never be resolved (Wodak, 2018, p. 404). Identity is never static, tangible, or uncomplicated, it is a process that is always in flux, always challenged and always in dialogue with others (see Lawlor, 2014). Through discourse analysis, the concept of 'we' and 'they' can be analysed, concepts that are stable enough to allow for self-identification but, particularly in the 1990s when many geographical boundaries had recently shifted and political allegiances were changing, flexible enough to adapt to a new world (Wodak, 2018, p. 409).

There is also a tension within the concept of 'British' as it covers English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish identities, and further regional identities. Not all who have a British passport would consider themselves or others to be British. Yet within the press coverage used for this article, this tension is absent. David Coulthard (born in Twynholm, Scotland) and Damon Hill (born in Hampstead, England) are framed as British drivers as well as Scottish and English without acknowledgement of the differences between these labels. More contentiously Eddie Irvine (born in Newtownards, Northern Ireland, but with a racing licence from the Republic of Ireland) is sometimes described as British and sometimes as Irish, occasionally even in the same article. How these drivers self-identified is not considered and in this way, the newspapers are constructing and maintaining national identities through their framing of the drivers (Schep, 2023, p. 23). Moreover, even though the newspapers analysed are national 'British' papers, their place of publication and

London-focused reporting, indicate an 'English' perspective, albeit one that was labelled as 'British'. An examination of the reportage in regional newspapers or papers from the different nations could present a different perspective but is beyond the scope of my analysis. For this article, the tensions between how British people saw themselves, how this was constructed into a shared identity by the newspapers, and how this was positioned in opposition to German identity, will be borne in mind.

National identities are also based on historical narratives, which often emphasise a mythological 'golden age' in the past, with heroes who are celebrated and events that are commemorated (Wodak, 2018, p. 413). Theories of memory are important here and we need to reflect on what is being remembered here, how it is remembered and why. It is through shared awareness of historical moments that group identity can be solidified (Leerssen, 2007, p. 336). The quotation from the opening of this article indicates the importance of the Second World War in depictions of Michael Schumacher. Ruth Wittlinger (2007) reflects on this in her analysis of elite British and German relations since 1945, using the concept of collective memory. Collective memory is not necessarily the memory of events that happened. Rather, it is an emotional remembering by groups that enable them to make sense of the world and create frameworks through which to judge the actions of others. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the Second World War was in a transitional phase from an embodied social memory to a transgenerational collective memory as the numbers of those with direct experience of the war began to reduce (Assmann, 2008, p. 56). The possibilities for representation become greater and harder to challenge as those with direct lived experience are no longer present to offer a contradiction.

Understanding of the past undergoes perpetual negotiation and renegotiations based on the needs of the present. Within collective memory, there are dominant discourses that can be used to shape and justify the decisions of political actors (Wittlinger, 2007, pp. 43–46). Collective memory becomes more homogenous as it becomes understood and remembered through shared representations. Celebrations and commemorative events contribute to these representations and create a sense of 'our history' (Assmann, 2008, p. 65). By analysing the ways in which collective memory is constructed and perpetuated, including what is remembered and how, power structures can be laid bare. I use a broad understanding of power that aims to look at how one agency (certain newspapers) sought to influence another (the readers). Unlike Wittlinger's work that focuses on the bilateral nature of relations at the level of the elite, I have a narrower focus on how the depiction of a prominent German influenced the readers' perceptions of Germany and what this can tell us about British self-identity.

Gender is also an important aspect of identity with regards to the mostly male fans, Michael Schumacher as a male sports star, and the mostly male journalists who reported on Formula One. In the nineties and early 2000s, Formula One was starkly gendered as there was not a single female driver who qualified to race in a Grand Prix (see Matthews & Pike, 2016 for more about women in motor sport in general). One area in which women were highly visible was in the role of 'grid girls' who were promotional models and were most visible on the track before the start of each race, holding up signs with the drivers' names. As Anna Tippett (2020) has convincingly argued, the 'grid girls' were disconnected from the technical aspects of Formula One, serving as decorative, sexualised objects. Formula One therefore relates to the gendered stereotype of 'boys' toys', connecting the world of high-tech gadgets and their manipulation to the domain of men. However, the real technology behind the cars is mostly elided, only communicated sparsely to fans through journalism and it most frequently features as a metaphor rather than a real object (Fleming & Sturm, 2011, p. 169). Despite the highly gendered world, visible to spectators, Formula One has a different attitude towards the representation of the male body than many other sports. In Formula One, for the vast majority of the viewing experience, the driver is hidden inside the car, wearing overalls and a helmet that cover every inch (Sturm, 2011, p. 228). The spectator, whether watching in person or through a television screen, has a fragmentary viewing experience of the drivers, only seeing the driver either as they race by on the track or for the moment the cameras are focused on them. As a result, this is a highly mediated understanding of the drivers, one that can be more easily

constructed by third parties, particularly as the blank face of the helmet provides a canvas for projection more easily than a human face. This allows spectators to project their image of Schumacher onto him; if they are his fans, perhaps this leads to identification with him but if they are not, perhaps it becomes easier to project negative images.

Another way in which Schumacher is mediated through journalists for public consumption is through translation, including cultural translation. It is rarely clear in the articles when direct quotations from Schumacher are translated (and by whom) and when Schumacher was speaking in English, and thereby engaging in cultural translation. Translating Schumacher into English allowed readers access to his words that they would not otherwise have because German is not widely spoken in the UK. However, as Filmer (2021) has noted in the context of translating politicians: 'hidden manipulation and distortion may occur when political discourse is transferred across linguistic and cultural divides' (p. 338). Moreover, when Schumacher was speaking English, he was communicating in a second language, something that the mostly monolingual British journalists and readers would have likely not understood, and he was engaging in a process of cultural translation. I argue that this reaches beyond the sphere of politics and allows for the distortion and misrepresentation of cultures, in this case German. In this way, journalists and the public consuming print media, were able to construct a Michael Schumacher who fitted into pre-existing narratives about Germanness and masculinity, that was less likely, and less able, to be challenged by the real person. Through this framework, questions around British identity become clear and the deep insecurity at the heart of the British media around who they felt their readers were become highlighted.

British German relations

British identity, such that it is, is therefore defined by its interactions with neighbouring countries, in this case Germany, and how Germany was constructed as 'Other'. A brief overview of this changing relationship and the state of it in the 1990s and early 2000s will now be provided. Germany's relations to all European nations are coloured by the events of the Second World War and Britain, as one of the victors, is no exception. However, the Cold War and the division of Germany required a rapid change in perspective and relations between West Germany and Britain were largely positive during the 1950s and 1960s. There have been several articles published that examine how British German relations are both visible in, but also influenced by, football reportage. Indeed, the coverage of the 1966 World Cup when England defeated (West) Germany and won the tournament was largely polite and lacking in overt militaristic references (Young, 2007, p. 8). However, after the economic downturn in the 1970s and the jingoism inspired by the Falklands War, coverage of football matches used references to 'Krauts' and 'Huns' with increasing frequency (Young, 2007, p. 9). As Young (2007) argues, British football memory since 1945 has been bound up with trauma and defeat, the World Cup victory over (West) Germany in 1966 representing the end of a glorious past, which by the 1990s was more of a myth (pp. 18–19). The analysis of Euro 96 and England's defeat describes the media response as indicative of 'an illegitimate superiority complex, born of, in fact an inferiority complex' (Maguire et al., 1999, p. 68). Diplomatic relations were becoming more strained as Margaret Thatcher criticised the (West) German economic system and viewed their attempts to further European integration with deep mistrust. She also opposed German unification and comments by her and leaked comments from her cabinet about the supposed true nature of Germans legitimised anti-German rhetoric and comparisons to Nazis (Wittlinger, 2004, p. 455).

Analysis of the media commentary (both print and television) of the Euro 96 tournament has highlighted how this coverage fostered and contributed to a discourse whereby 'we' referred to a sense of Englishness and, to a lesser extent, Britishness rather than a sense of being European (Poulton, 2004, p. 452). When the BBC used the European Union's anthem 'Ode to Joy' (composed by the German Beethoven) in their coverage, the right-wing press was quick to express outrage (Poulton, 2004, p. 443). This discourse also celebrated Britain as an independent nation, putting up what

has been referred to as a 'fantasy shield' to protect individuals from facing a harsh reality (Poulton, 2004, p. 452). English and, by extension due to the conflation of Englishness with Britishness in the press, British identity was increasingly insular during the 1990s and this was expressed through the coverage of sporting events such as Euro 96 and also, as will be discussed Formula One. Schumacher, as a successful German sports star, is consumed by these narratives.

Two events in the mid-90s that should also be considered in this context are the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 1995 and the Euro 96 tournament, in which England lost in the semi-final to Germany. The fiftieth anniversary was the focus of many hours of television and a one-off bank holiday on VE day in 1995. This coverage was selective and focused on 'mainstream' British experiences of the home and war fronts, avoiding critical discussions of Britain's decisions, and instead promoting ideas of unity (Petersen, 2001, p. 258). While the Holocaust was a small part of the many hours of programming, Britain's pre-war reactions to the persecution of Jews and British Jews experiences were not discussed. Britain's choices during the Second World War and therefore Britain in 1995 as the inheritor of this legacy, is presented as a country with moral integrity, united in victory (Petersen, 2001, p. 270).

British German relations at the elite level improved after 1997 with Prime Minister Tony Blair and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder enjoying a closer relationship but analysis of the press does not reflect this change, indicating that the British public were consuming anti-German rhetoric, in particular with regard to sports (Wittlinger, 2004, p. 456). This was then compounded by a lack of knowledge about modern Germany. Research published by the Goethe Institut in 1996 and 2004 indicated a low level of German language skills, a lack of awareness of current German figures (both political and sporting), and negative associations due to the Second World War (cited in Wittlinger, 2004, p. 457; Young, 2007, pp. 5–6). This lack of engagement with contemporary Germany meant that the negative stereotypes could not be countered by real world experience. They also indicate that the media's use of Second World War references was being replicated by the British public, which was then reproduced in newspapers.

The question of why this rhetoric remained so common in the 1990s and early 2000s is difficult to satisfactorily answer but the idea that Britain had long since lost its global standing and was watching a new Germany take centre stage, at least within the European Union, is compelling. More widely, and particularly before the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early 2000s, the US was publicly recognising Germany as a valuable partner, something that was seen to threaten the 'special relationship' the British officials and public seemed to believe they enjoyed with the US (Wittlinger, 2004, p. 455). The references to the Second World War identify Germany as a threat and perhaps it is through this lens that we can perceive British self-understanding; Britain may have been able to dominate the world stage in previous decades but this obsession with feeling threatened indicates an awareness that these times have gone (Beck, 2003, p. 399). Germany may not have been a literal threat to Britain, but it may have represented the unknown threats that many felt Britain was not able to counter. By the time Schumacher was racing to prominence, a tradition of anti-German rhetoric built on World War Two symbols to mask British inferiority had become established.

Analysis

Overwhelmingly, Schumacher is described in the newspapers considered in this article as arrogant. During the early years of his career, British driver, and Schumacher's former team-mate, Martin Brundle's assessment of Schumacher's temperament was quoted in *The Daily Mail* as 'Michael is very fast, one of the fastest drivers I've ever seen, and confident to the point of being arrogant, which is a quality you need to win' (as cited in Matts, 1992, p. 29). However, while this arrogance was a positive trait at the start of his career, as Schumacher rose in prominence, it was quickly represented as negative. In 1999 when Schumacher was still struggling to find success with Ferrari, *The Sun* criticised Schumacher's performance at the Japanese Grand Prix as a return to 'his old, arrogant

self' (Piecha, 1999, p. 42). In 2003, as Michael Schumacher won a record-equalling sixth championship, *The Guardian* reflected on his unpopularity in Britain: 'But Schumacher is German and therefore a machine; calculating and arrogant, devoid of any semblance of fallibility', noting that his dominance in Formula One was liable to harm the image of the sport (Bierley, 2003, p. 29). This use of the word 'machine' has a dehumanising effect, similar to the depiction of Schumacher as a rottweiler. Just as one would struggle to empathise with an angry rottweiler or a machine, it is shown to be correct not to empathise with Schumacher.

This depiction can be most clearly seen in the descriptions of the events immediately following the 1998 Belgian Grand Prix. Schumacher and Scottish driver David Coulthard collided, resulting in both retiring from the race. Schumacher blamed Coulthard for the collision and went to his garage to confront him, which was caught on the television cameras. *The Sun* was quick to draw a distinction between 'Crazy Schu' and 'the driver regarded as the sport's true gentleman' (Piecha, 1998, p. 40). In the headline for that article, Crazy Schu is presented without quotation marks, indicating it is a factual statement, whereas 'killer Coul' (short for Coulthard) is indicated with speech marks. Distinctions were also drawn in the *Daily Mail* between Schumacher and the winner of the Belgian Grand Prix, British driver Damon Hill, who could sip champagne while Schumacher needed to 'eat humble pie' (Matts, 1998, p. 63). In the aforementioned Sun article, only one brief quotation containing an expletive is attributed to Schumacher: 'You tried to f-ing kill me' whereas Coulthard is allowed several lengthy quotations that explain his opinion that it was a simple accident rather than a deliberate act on his part (p. 40). As a result, Schumacher, with his 'face filled with hate', is shown to be irrational and behaving incomprehensibly whereas Coulthard's perspective is clearly demonstrated (p. 40). This scene, as it was described, builds on the us versus them narrative and encourages the reader to side with the Scottish/British driver over the German.

There are inconsistencies in this depiction; how can Schumacher be both calculating and crazy? However, the consistency of the accusation of arrogance is striking and warrants further investigation. Why was arrogance the characteristic that was chosen and what does that choice tell us about those making the claim? When articles that included a lengthy interview with Schumacher were written, the journalists frequently reflect on how he did not seem arrogant after all. In October 2000, pundit and presenter Jeremy Clarkson described spending the day at a test track with Schumacher and encountering a humorous, family-focused man, acknowledging that Clarkson 'failed to spot the arrogant monster we've seen in the past'. Arrogance seems to be attributed at a distance, once the subject becomes the focus of an intimate interview, this characteristic is absent. Even Clarkson uses 'we' to describe the arrogance, perhaps acknowledging that he has not identified it personally before but that the readers should recognise this narrative.

What does arrogance signify and when is it applied? A 2012 study by Tracy and Prehn identified the difference between when the terms hubristic pride (or arrogance) and authentic pride (or self-confidence) were applied to photographs. The labels were used by the participants depending on the contextual information given. When information was provided that the subject of the photograph was a hard-working team member, the study participants were more likely to identify the subject as displaying authentic pride. When the information was that the subject attributed their success to natural talent, the participants were more likely to refer to the subject as arrogant. By attaching this label to Michael Schumacher, the overwhelming implication is that he has not earned his success, but he is displaying unearned pride. We can see this evolution of descriptions of arrogance as Schumacher became more dominant in the sport. In 1994, when Schumacher won the championship after a controversial manoeuvre that knocked out British racer Damon Hill in Australia, the debate seems far more nuanced. Schumacher's skill as an emerging driver is noted and the *Daily Mail* avoids overtly condemning Schumacher's driving: 'So fair or foul a day, to paraphrase the Bard, I cannot say' determined Alan Fraser (1994), summing up that neither Schumacher nor Hill blamed the other for the incident (p. 58). However, the death of Senna overshadowed the season, perhaps rendering such conversations as trivial, particularly as both Hill and Schumacher were still making their way to the top of the elite sport. As Fraser concluded the article: 'Safety first and

safety last was a good end-of-term message' (p. 58). However, in a *Daily Mail* article about the 2000 Australian Grand Prix, there are multiple mentions of Schumacher bragging, posturing, and displaying a 'strutting arrogance' (Matts, 2000, p. 89). Notably this has been triggered by a comment Schumacher made after the race but the actual comment is not quoted so the reader is unable to determine for themselves whether it was arrogant.

Another feature of the reportage surrounding Michael Schumacher is a focus on his wealth. This is particularly prominent in *The Sun*. When Schumacher was found guilty of dangerous driving in 1997 and disqualified from the Championship, *The Sun* noted 'the richest driver on earth, is allowed to race next season without a dent in his £40 million-a-year wages' (Piecha, 1997, p. 39). Even when he was portrayed as a victim of circumstance, as seen after a crash in 1999 that broke his leg and forced him to miss six races, his wealth is included 'With a personal fortune touching £100m' (Piecha, 1999, p. 60). His wealth, and decision to live in the tax haven of Switzerland, was also featured in *The Guardian*: 'Michael Schumacher, with estimated earnings of £50 m a year, chooses to live in Switzerland' (Hooper, 2001, p. 11). There is very little evidence provided of what Schumacher does that earns him this vast sum or how his salary or personal fortune compares with other drivers. While Schumacher was the top earner in the sport, without an explanation of how much more he earns than other drivers and how his 'personal fortune touching £100m' is calculated, the readers are left with little understanding of what these numbers actually mean. Moreover, many drivers, and sport stars in general, choose to live in tax havens but this is also not explained in the coverage of Schumacher. This sense that he has a huge quantity of unearned wealth and that he is playing the rules of tax havens to his own advantage contributes to the idea that he is arrogant, underhanded, and not worth the acclaim or money he has attracted.

Within the narrative of Michael Schumacher, there are frequent depictions of him as a dangerous driver. In 2003, just after Schumacher had broken the world record by winning a sixth Drivers' Championship, *The Guardian* published a scathing 1200-word piece on his career, highlighting Schumacher's dangerous driving by Richard Williams. Williams (2003) reflected on the various penalties Schumacher endured throughout his career and the different investigations into the technology his cars used (p. 50). He does not provide a comparison with other drivers and cars, so it is unclear whether Schumacher broke rules more frequently than other drivers. The article also makes a reference to the death of Brazilian driver Ayrton Senna in 1994 who was killed during a race just ahead of Schumacher: 'When Senna was killed in the next race, at Imola, he was trying desperately hard to hold on to the lead, ahead of a car he believed to be illegal.' This is a cruel depiction of events, especially as Schumacher had been praised at the time for spear-heading a driver safety campaign (Matts, 1994, p. 50). The final paragraph acknowledges Schumacher's hard work and teamwork that could perhaps illuminate why he was a successful driver but with all that has gone before, the reader is left with a clear image of a man who was willing to break the rules and endanger others in pursuit of personal glory.

Many of the articles make references to the Second World War, cementing the depictions of Schumacher as dangerous and aggressive. The column from the *Daily Mail* that opened this paper continued to compound the comparison:

> True, Adolf Hitler's delusions as a military strategist left his nation in smoking ruins. Even so, there is something very Hitlerian about Schumacher's arrogant assumption of infallibility, even more so his petulant devolving of blame on all around him when things go catastrophically wrong. (Wooldridge, 1998, p. 66)

It is in these references that we see a continuation of the metaphors identified by Young and Poulton in their analyses of English football. The use of words such as 'delusions' and 'assumption' build a sense that both Hitler and Schumacher were not competent in their fields, and were also psychologically damaged. This, and the word 'petulant' also have the result of infantilising Hitler and Schumacher, possibly indicating that a British victory over these men is inevitable. In Jeremy Clarkson's (2000) description of visiting Schumacher at the Italian test track, when Schumacher states that his only regret was shooting a bird with an air pistol, Clarkson wrote: 'Resisting the temptation to point

out that on past form in recent German history, this was no big deal' (no pagination). Even in this article which attempted to find the man behind the wheel, Schumacher is othered and the reader is reminded of British glory. It is with these references to the Second World War that we can see the culmination of insecurities at the heart of British identity. The writers grasp for a metaphor that will reassure readers that Britain is still a global player by recalling past triumphs, which serves to highlight that there was perhaps a lack of current events and British figures that could fulfil this purpose.

Conclusion

These representations tell us nothing about who Schumacher was during this phase of his career. Particularly for readers who perhaps had not watched every single race and fully engaged with all the post-race analysis, these representations leave it to the reader to deduce the nature of his skill as a driver, the relationship between him and his team, and how he compared with other drivers. They do, however, tell us something about British identity and self-representation at that time. This obsession with the Second World War indicates a backward-facing nation that would rather bask in the constructed memory of past victory rather than recognise and tackle current challenges, something that was reinforced by similar rhetoric in discussions of football. The uncomplicated depiction of the war as an us versus them moment with a clear winner, flattens the reality of life in the 1940s and allows the readers of this media to avoid considering the more complicated history of the war and how it came to an end. It also positions Germany as a threat to Britain. As the German economy improved throughout the nineties and the nation began to take on a greater political role in the European Union, the political establishment in Britain may have felt threatened. Making frequent references to the Second World War served the multifaceted role of reminding the British public that they had experienced success in the past and could potentially again, casting Germany's political ambitions in a negative light, and ridiculing Germany as stuck in the 1930s. We learn nothing about Germany, or Michael Schumacher, through these depictions but the insecurity at the heart of British national identity is laid bare.

These depictions also display a lack of intercultural awareness in Britain at this time. A minority of British people had any knowledge of the German language and Nazi figures were still the most prominent Germans 50 years after the end of the Second World War (Young, 2007, p. 4). For many, these descriptions of Michael Schumacher were the only reference point to modern Germany. By creating Germany as an 'other', British people were forced into a confrontation with themselves. They can escape dealing with the reality of the current world and instead form an identity of a mythological past where heroes and villains were easily defined, and bad actions attracted negative consequences. Underneath this, however, is a gaping void of who and what Britain in the 1990s and 2000s was. What role should Britain play in this world? Who were Britain's allies? Without an empire and with a stuttering economy, did Britain have any influence?

The world had changed rapidly by the 1990s. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and Germany's reunification in 1990 had redrawn borders. Old enemies were changing once again as the Cold War was declared over but Britain and America became enmeshed in wars in the Middle East. Britain's economy was also in flux in this era, whereas Germany's, even though they were dealing with the difficulties of integrating the former East, was growing rapidly. Britain also continued to struggle with its relationship to the EU and the fears articulated by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s of a dominant Germany running the show, remained prominent. Ultimately, what we see through this depiction of Schumacher and Germans in the British press are the questions at the heart of British identity. Who were 'the Brits', what did they want, and what was their potential, are the questions that othering Germany sought to avoid answering.

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