

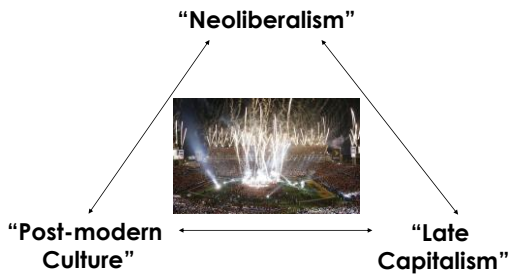
Lecture 4: Sport Celebrities

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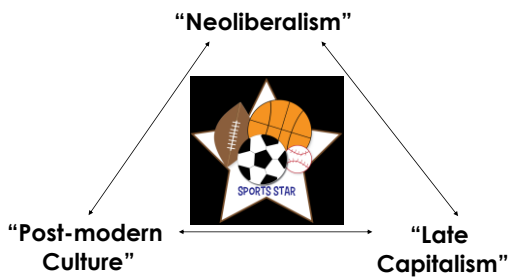
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Lecture 3: The Cultural Economy of Sport 'Spectacles'



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Lecture 4: The Cultural Economy of Sport 'Celebrity'



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(American) Culture of Sporting Celebrity

There's little doubt as to *the popularity and influence of celebrities* (esp. those linked to sports) within late capitalist, neoliberal, and post-modern American culture:

"To speak of a *culture of celebrity* nowadays is nearly to commit a redundancy." (Githin, 1998, p. 81)

"Its drama, its personalities and its worldwide appeal mean *sport is the new Hollywood*."

(Bell & Campbell, 1999, p. 22)



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Sport 'Hero' or Sporting Celebrity?

"The celebrity is a person who is known for his well-knownness..."

...the hero was distinguished by his[sic] achievement; the celebrity by his image or trademark.

The hero created himself; the celebrity is created by the media. The hero is a big man[sic]; the celebrity is a big name." (Boorstin, 1992, p. 57, 61)



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Cultural Economy of Sport Celebrity: 'Imaged Identity'



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(Sporting) Celebrity as “Imaged Identity”

The social identities of celebrities – based on social class, race/ethnicity, gender, etc. - are most often expressed through a ‘manufactured’ persona, an “*imaged identity*” of particular symbols, signs and images/experiences.



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Manufacturing the Sporting Celebrity Commodity-Sign

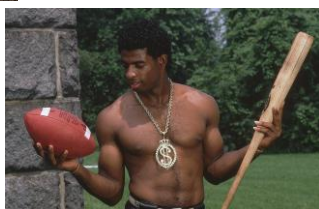
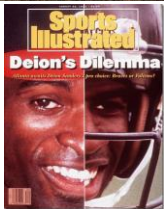
The ‘imaged identities’ of sport celebrities are ‘manufactured’ by different aspects of the sporting celebrity industry.

Within post-modern culture, this process is often about *turning the individual into a ‘commodity-sign’* - individuals are **material entities** (human bodies) that become associated with **particular symbolic values** (meanings and experiences).



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Sport Celebrity & ‘Imaged Identity’



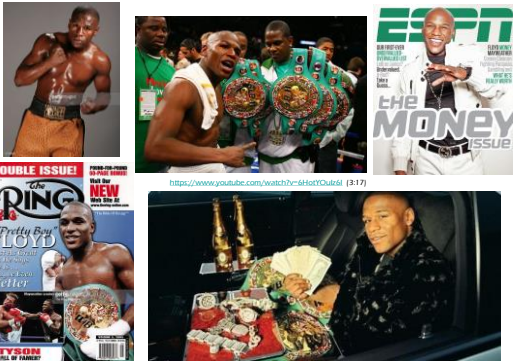
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Sport Celebrity & 'Imaged Identity'



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Sport Celebrity & 'Imaged Identity'



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Sport Celebrity & 'Imaged Identity'

"Stop pretending like you know your favorite athlete – you don't"

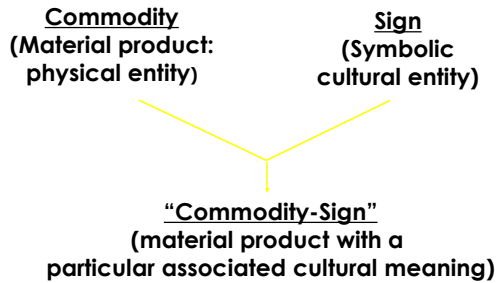
"Despite a constant stream of information about athletes from news outlets like this, TV, radio, podcasts and social media, we *still* don't really know anything about any of the athletes we watch perform, cheer for or boo. An athlete can tweet out, Instagram and Facebook most every waking moment of his or her day, but those are just a carefully curated snapshots he or she is allowing the world to see."

"You don't know a person because you saw the picture he posted of his lunch. Aaron Hernandez was active on Twitter and, to my recollection, never tweeted: 'Just had a busy day of killing some guys.' We're told who is good and who is bad and are encouraged to root accordingly. It's long past time to drop the curtain."

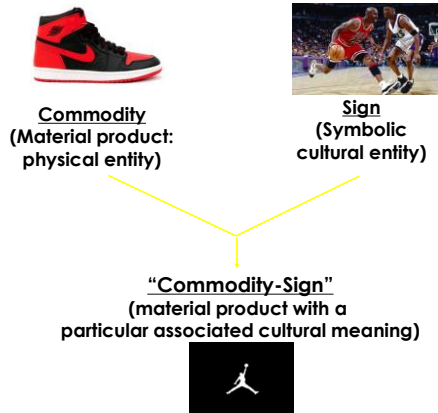
<http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2016/feb/17/peyton-manning-you-dont-know-your-favorite-athlete>

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RECAP: Branding and "Commodity-Signs"

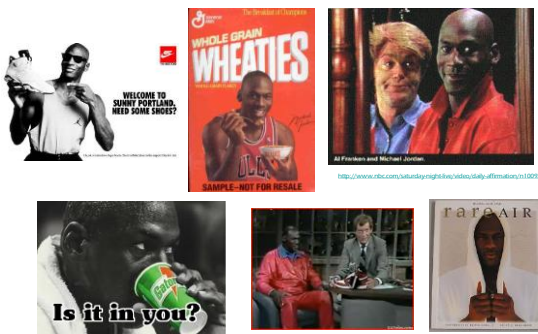


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Developing the Sport Celebrity 'Commodity-Sign'



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Reflection: **Context** of “Imaged Identity”

How does “**imaged identity**” relate to:

1. *The “Commodification of everything”?*
2. *Branding and Cultural Signs?*
3. *The Privatization of the Sport/Physical Culture?*
4. *Simulation and “Hyperreality”?*

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Manufacturing the (Sporting) Celebrity Commodity-Sign

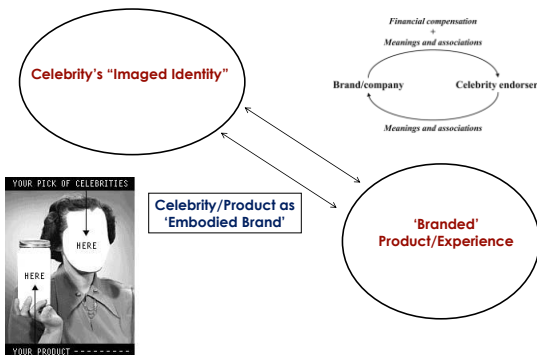
In contemporary U.S. society, *sporting celebrities*, as “**imaged identities**,” are effectively “**embodied brands**”.

Their bodies are imbued with particular meanings and experiences and represented through advertised products.



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Sport Celebrity as “**Embodied Brand**”



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The *Embodied Brand* of LeBron James



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Sport Celebrity & Embodied Brands

The role of the 'sporting celebrity industry', made up of corporate, sport, media and other partners, is to "manage" imaged identities, based on 4 principle aspects:

- I. The *initial manufacture* of an 'imaged identity'
- II. *Developing a consistent* 'imaged identity'
- III. Recognizing *the need to alter* an 'imaged identity'
- IV. Identity management in *times of crisis*

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The *Embodied Brand* of LeBron James

- I. The *initial manufacture* of an 'imaged identity'



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rv3niQ-w3y0>

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The *Embodied Brand* of LeBron James

II. Developing a consistent 'imaged identity'



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ex8Atdjr3Dg>

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The *Embodied Brand* of LeBron James

III. Recognizing the need to alter an 'imaged identity'

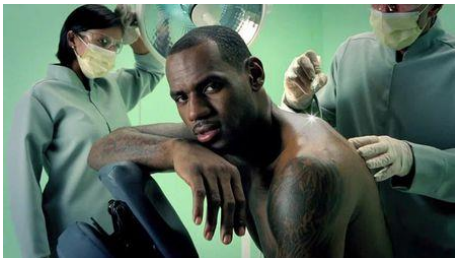


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joyBzoJ6S_8

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The *Embodied Brand* of LeBron James

IV. Identity management in times of crisis



<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xfdup3>

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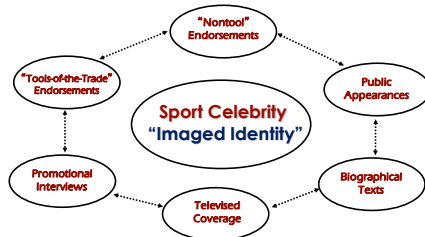
The *Embodied Brand* of LeBron James



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Sport Celebrity & Imaged Identity:

In general, we can study how the sporting celebrity industry **develops and manages** a celebrity **imaged identity** through the many ways celebrities are represented, what we can call "**intertextual sites**":



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Sport Celebrity & Imaged Identity:



What consistent and appealing imaged identity did Octagon (Pheips' management company) seek to develop across these intertextual sites? In other words, what is Michael Phelps' celebrity identity?

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Television Coverage



“NBC Phelps”

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Television Coverage



“60 Minute Phelps”

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“Tool-of-the-Trade Endorsement”



“Speedo Phelps”

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“Non Tool-of-the-Trade Endorsement”



“*Subway Phelps*”

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Promotional Appearances



“*SNL Phelps*”

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Sport Celebrity & Imaged Identity:



What consistent and appealing imaged identity did Octagon (Phelps' management company) seek to develop across these intertextual sites? In other words, what is Michael Phelps' celebrity identity?

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Sport Celebrity & Imaged Identity:

A sport celebrity will most often have a management 'team' that seeks to develop a consistent and appealing imaged identity.

However, other elements of the media industries may be looking to undermine this image for their own economic gain.



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'Imaged Identity' and the 'Promotional Vortex'

Sport celebrities are never fully in control of their imaged identities (though they may attempt to be as in control as possible).

Athletes often become both constituted by, and appropriated into, a 'promotional vortex' in which the different public and private media elements add together in a "whirlwind" of marketing...

Wardlaw, A. (2005). Promotional culture: Advertising, identity and celebrity appropriation. London: Sage.

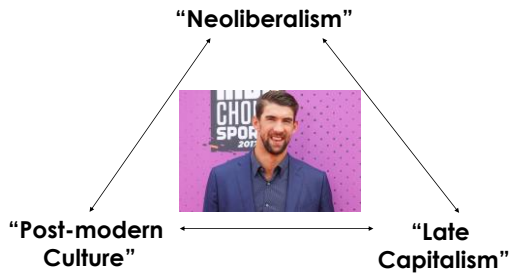
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'Imaged Identity' and the 'Promotional Vortex'



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Lecture 4:
The Cultural Economy of
Sporting 'Imaged Identities'



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