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**German Soccer Stars and the Politics of Media Representation: A Case
Study in Ethnicity and Celebrity Culture**

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by

Sabine Waas

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Abstract

German Soccer Stars and the Politics of Media Representation: A Case Study in Ethnicity and Celebrity Culture

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This dissertation examines the (self)representation of German soccer players in social media, sports media, popular literature, and fan discourses. It emphasizes the role of ethnicity in the creation of celebrity sports branding and fan–athlete relationship.

Ever since West Germany won its first FIFA World Cup in 1954, soccer has allowed for the construction of an “imagined community” in West Germany and then unified Germany. Since the 1960s, soccer culture has been increasingly intertwined with the entertainment sector, resulting in more money through advertising, merchandising and television coverage. The soccer player Franz Beckenbauer capitalized on that, becoming the first German sports celebrity, scoring endorsement deals, attending social events, and writing his autobiography. Other soccer celebrities followed, including German players *mit Migrationshintergrund* (a term literally meaning “migration background;” it refers to people who did not acquire German citizenship at birth or whose parents did not acquire German citizenship at birth). While there is scholarship on people *mit Migrationshintergrund* and sports celebrities separately, there are not many studies about soccer celebrities *mit Migrationshintergrund*.

My dissertation analyzes how soccer players like Lukas Podolski, Jérôme Boateng, and Mesut Özil use their *Migrationshintergrund* to further their celebrity status and thereby their brand(s). I argue that their branding is governed by fan expectations, masculinity norms, entrepreneurialism, and specific models of migration discourses.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	9
List of Abbreviations	11
INTRODUCTION	12
Chapter 1: Diversity in West German Society and Soccer	19
(West) Germany from the 1960s to a Country of Immigration	20
"Mit Migrationshintergrund" and Integration Efforts.....	26
The Commercialization of European Soccer	31
Migrants in the <i>Bundesliga</i>	37
Migrants on the National Team	42
Conclusion	45
Chapter 2: Methodology and Literature Review	47
Lukas Podolski	53
Jérôme Boateng	54
Mesut Özil	55
Literature Review	55
Fandom	55
Masculinity and Sports	59
Advertisement and Branding of Athletes	62
Migration and the Media	64
Methodology and Sources	66
Chapter 3: "Germanness" in Sönke Wortmann's <i>Das Wunder von Bern</i> (2003) and <i>Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen</i> (2006).....	72
"Germanness"	74

German Soccer Films.....	77
<i>Das Wunder von Bern</i> (2003).....	80
<i>Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen</i> (2006).....	91
Conclusion	107
Chapter 4: Lukas Podolski	109
Depiction by the Media and Fans	112
Self-presentation	125
Conclusion	145
Chapter 5: Jérôme Boateng.....	149
Depiction by the Media and Fans	150
Self-presentation	171
Conclusion	183
Chapter 6: Mesut Özil.....	186
Depiction by the Media and Fans	188
Self-presentation	200
Conclusion	217
CONCLUSION	221
Glossary	233
Bibliography	236

List of Figures

Figure 1:	Rahn's shrine	83
Figure 2:	Richard discovers his love for soccer	84
Figure 3:	<i>Kohlenpott</i> in the 1950s	86
Figure 4:	Munich in the 1950s	87
Figure 5:	Return of the West German national team	88
Figure 6:	Return of the POW	89
Figure 7:	Fan display after the loss to Italy	97
Figure 8:	Lahm after the loss to Italy	99
Figure 9:	Ballack after the loss to Italy	99
Figure 10:	Frings hidden by two nearly naked players	100
Figure 11:	DVD cover	102
Figure 12:	Torch lighting before the first World Cup match	103
Figure 13:	Podolski's send-off	117
Figure 14:	Adidas advertisement for the 2014 World Cup	132
Figure 15:	Podolski encouraging everyone to love their city	134
Figure 16:	Podolski with his son Louis	136
Figure 17:	Adidas ad on Facebook	138
Figure 18:	Strassenkicker ad on Facebook	139
Figure 19:	Podolski using daughter as a model for Strassenkicker	141
Figure 20:	Podolski's picture comparison in Poland	143
Figure 21:	Mine shaft in Poland	144
Figure 22:	Boateng as a James Bond character	157
Figure 23:	Boateng as a Rocky Balboa character	158

Figure 24:	Boateng in New York City	160
Figure 25:	Boateng at a designer photo shoot	161
Figure 26:	Boateng on June 2016 <i>Kicker</i> cover	163
Figure 27:	Boateng and his brothers on a wall in Berlin	167
Figure 28:	JBL's website with Boateng	176
Figure 29:	Boateng on Facebook	179
Figure 30:	Özil on the July 2018 <i>Kicker</i> cover.....	189
Figure 31:	Özil picture done by a Facebook fan	194
Figure 32:	Fans post picture of Özil shirtless.....	195
Figure 33:	YouTuber Weller making fun of Özil	198
Figure 34:	Özil's Adidas ad	202
Figure 35:	Özil advertises M10 Streetwear on Facebook	212
Figure 36:	Özil in the holy city Mecca.....	217

List of Abbreviations

AfD: Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland)

BAMF: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und
Flüchtlinge)

CDU: Christian Democratic Union (Christliche Demokratische Union)

CL: Champions League

DFB: German Football Association (Deutscher Fußball Bund)

ECJ: European Court of Justice

EU: European Union

EURO: UEFA European Championship

FIFA: International Federation of Association Football

FRG: Federal Republic of Germany/West Germany (Bundesrepublik Deutschland)

GDR: German Democratic Republic/East Germany (Deutsche Demokratische Republik)

Galatasaray: Galatasaray Istanbul

HSV: Hamburger SV

SPD: Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)

PEGIDA: Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (Patriotische
Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes)

UEFA: Union of European Football Association

Introduction

As the most popular sport in Germany, soccer has become part of the collective self-understanding of the nation, as exemplified by films like *Das Wunder von Bern* (The Miracle of Bern, 2004) and *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* (Germany: A Summer Fairy Tale, 2006). Its role in Germany has changed throughout the years, from being a working-class pastime in the Weimar Republic to becoming part of the entertainment industry in West Germany in the 1960s and continuing to be so to this day.¹ Whereas the 1954 iteration of the West German national team “expressed a collective identity as 11 friends,”² the 1974 squad consisted of star players like Franz Beckenbauer and Günter Netzer. Beckenbauer is known for being a 1972 European champion, 1974 World Cup winner, coach of the 1990 World Cup champion-team, organization committee chair for the 2006 World Cup in Germany, former FC Bayern München player, singer, television commentator, father of five children, and advertiser for consumer goods. He identified soccer as a commodity. Beckenbauer and the other players of the 1974 West German soccer team earned the right to be compensated for their participation in the 1974 World Cup in West Germany. The West German soccer functionaries reluctantly agreed to a

¹ Television shows such *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* helped to soccer’s rise to mainstream culture. Kay Schiller, “Social Climbing, Cultural Experimentation and Trailblazing Metrosexual: Franz Beckenbauer in the 1960s and 1970s,” in *Football and the Boundaries of History Critical Studies in Soccer*, ed. Brenda Elsey and Stanislao G. Pugliese (New York City: Palgrave, 2017), 206.

² Matthias Kaelberer, “From Bern to Rio: Soccer and National Identity Discourses in Germany,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 30 (2017): 281.

60,000 DM (German mark)³ bonus for winning the title, which they had to pay after West Germany's 1974 World Cup victory.⁴ Beckenbauer followed the capitalist route further by becoming the "first fully 'marketized' German athlete and set the stage for other German top athletes."⁵ In particular the deregulation of German television in 1987,⁶ as well as new consumption patterns (increasing leisure sector, expanding consumerism, etc.), made it possible for athletes like Michael Schumacher and Boris Becker to achieve celebrity status in (West) Germany. Those athletes are a product of their continuous work to become successful sportsmen and media figures.

Without consumption by fans, however, these celebrities would cease to exist.⁷ Managers have played an integral role in promoting celebrities, including getting them on the cover of sports magazines and securing lucrative endorsement deals for them. With the help of his business manager Robert Schwan, Beckenbauer landed deals with the instant soup company Knorr, sports giant Adidas, and the gasoline brand Aral.⁸ Starting in the 1970s, athletes were not only competing on the field but also off the field for

³ The German mark was the official currency of West Germany from 1948 to 1990 (60,000 DM was ~\$23,282 in 1974).

⁴ Bonuses had been paid before 1974, but nothing was ever expected. Schiller, "Social Climbing," 215.

⁵ Schiller, "Social Climbing," 209.

⁶ The *Bundesverfassungsgericht* (Federal Constitutional Court) allowed public and private broadcasters to co-exist.

⁷ Sabine Hake, *The Proletarian Dream: Socialism, Culture, and Emotion in Germany, 1863–1933* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 121.

⁸ Beckenbauer was the first soccer player who employed a business manager. Schiller, "Social Climbing," 209.

television commercials, advertisement space, newspaper articles, and lucrative endorsement deals. This commercialization of soccer goes hand in hand with its entry into global consumer culture. Not just soccer fans were interested in Beckenbauer anymore. Tabloid readers tried to keep up with Beckenbauer's celebrity lifestyle, including his three marriages, celebrity friends like Henry Kissinger and Andy Warhol, appearances at high society events such as the Vienna Opera Ball, Bayreuth Festival, and Metropolitan Opera in Europe and in the United States.⁹

Beckenbauer and his life achievements paved the way for subsequent soccer generations such as 2014 FIFA World Cup winners Lukas Podolski, Jérôme Boateng, and Mesut Özil. This generation, however, adds another layer to soccer celebrities. In 2005, the statistical term “mit Migrationshintergrund” (with a migration background)¹⁰ was introduced for the annual census of one percent of German households. It was discovered that almost sixteen million Germans have a *Migrationshintergrund*. Those people are “all migrants who entered the current territory of the Federal Republic of Germany after 1949, and all foreigners born in Germany and all those born in Germany as Germans with at least one parent who immigrated to Germany or who was born as a foreigner in

⁹ The Brazilian forward and soccer legend Pelé helped to ignite a soccer boom in the United States in the 1970s that opened the doors for European top players in the North American Soccer League (NASL). Players such as Beckenbauer, Giorgio Chinaglia, and Carlos Alberto came to US soccer clubs like the New York Cosmos to play for the remainder of their soccer careers. For his involvement and influence, Pelé was named the Honorary President of the New York Cosmos in 2010.

¹⁰ Throughout this dissertation, I will use the German term because there is no adequate English translation for “mit Migrationshintergrund.”

Germany.”¹¹ After some changes in 2011 and 2016, the current definition reads as follows: “The population with a migration background includes all people who do not have German citizenship by birth or who have at least one parent to whom this applies.”¹²

Since national teams are often seen as representatives of the nation, soccer players can facilitate discussions about national belonging.¹³ Starting in 2006, Germany’s national team became more multicultural, but the 2010 South African World Cup offered the most diverse German squad, with eleven players *mit Migrationshintergrund*.¹⁴ Journalists and scholars alike compared the German team with the 1998 French World Cup champions “as the Germans fielded a young, ambitious, harmonious, multiracial and – perhaps most importantly – successful team.”¹⁵ This phenomenon of seeking out people *mit Migrationshintergrund* has become more prevalent and normalized in Europe. The last three teams in the 2018 World Cup, England, Belgium, and France, distinguished

¹¹ Anne-Kathrin Will, “The German Statistical Category ‘Migration Background’: Historical Roots, Revisions and Shortcomings,” *Ethnicities* 19, no. 3 (2019): 544.

¹² Unless otherwise indicated, all translations into English are my own: “Zur Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund zählen alle Personen, die die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit nicht durch Geburt besitzen oder die mindestens ein Elternteil haben, auf das dies zutrifft.” “Personen mit Migrationshintergrund,” Destatis, accessed August 17, 2021, <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Methoden/Erlauterungen/migrationshintergrund.html>.

¹³ Nira Yuval-Davis defines belonging as “feeling ‘at home,’ feeling ‘safe,’ and if not necessarily feeling in control, at least feeling able enough generally to predict expectations and rules of behaviour.” Nira Yuval-Davis, *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations* (London: SAGE, 2011), 35.

¹⁴ The number of players *mit Migrationshintergrund* decreased in the 2014 and 2018 World Cup (six players).

¹⁵ Peter Hess, “Small-Country Soccer and the Integration Debate: The Case of Switzerland,” *Soccer and Society* 15, no. 3 (2014): 335.

themselves with their players *mit Migrationshintergrund*, such as Raheem Sterling, Romelu Lukaku, and Kylian Mbappé.

The soccer generation around Podolski, Boateng, and Özil grew up in a society in which soccer players surround themselves with a team of specialists, such as agents and managers, who help them with personal and business matters. These managers may spin a player's recent break-up or help sell them to the consumer audience. In addition to being soccer players in the late stages of their careers, 2014 World Cup winners Podolski, Boateng, and Özil have gained attention in tabloids, social media, literature, music, and fan forums, elevating them to entrepreneurs, philanthropists, designers, musicians, writers, friends of heads of state, and role models for fans. In a capitalist society, “celebrities [function] as both products (the preponderance of celebrity-driven media and commodities) and processes (the pre-eminence of celebrity endorsement).”¹⁶ There has been, though, a representational shift of celebrities: In the beginning of celebrity culture, “*representational media*” (film, television, radio, magazines, newspapers, and books) dominated, while more celebrities tend to produce their own content through “*presentational media*” nowadays.¹⁷ Sports celebrities have often been overlooked in academia, although they can be used as a valuable lens from which to investigate broader patterns of cultural change (self-presentation, representational media, consumerism, masculinity, and diversity).

¹⁶ David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson, ed., introduction to *Sport Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity* (London: Routledge, 2001), 4.

¹⁷ David P. Marshall, “Persona Studies: Mapping the Proliferation of the Public Self,” *Journalism* 15, no. 2 (2014): 157.

This dissertation helps to understand the connection between soccer and consumer culture and emphasizes the role of ethnicity in celebrity sports branding and fan–athlete relationship. It compares the depiction by fans and media with how German soccer players like Podolski, Boateng, and Özil, use their *Migrationshintergrund* to further their celebrity status and thereby their brand(s). I argue that their branding is governed by fan expectations, masculinity norms, entrepreneurialism, and specific models of migration discourses.

In order to analyze the representation of soccer celebrities *mit Migrationshintergrund*, I will first outline the connection between postwar immigration and soccer culture, the commercialization of soccer, and the history of migrants in Germany’s top soccer league, the *Bundesliga*, and the national team.

In the second chapter, I will explain my methodology, review corresponding literature, and introduce three members of Germany’s 2014 World Cup championship team who emerged as soccer celebrities due to their branding: Podolski, Boateng, and Özil.

One way to untangle the ways in which West Germany’s, and later, to reunified Germany’s self-understanding as a *Fußballnation* (soccer nation)¹⁸ is inscribed and problematized is to look at cultural representations in popular culture. Therefore, in my third chapter, I will analyze two widely distributed soccer films that deal with the

¹⁸ Throughout this dissertation, I will provide English translations of German terms, titles, and concepts when introducing them initially and will then refer to them by their original German terminology.

German national soccer teams of 1954 and 2006, respectively: *Das Wunder von Bern* and *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*.

In chapters four through six, I will analyze the branding of Podolski, Boateng, and Özil, with a chapter devoted to each celebrity. In doing so, I will examine (auto)biographies, advertisements, sports media, social media (by fans and athletes), and published songs (by fans and athletes). The depictions will be analyzed through close readings and a cultural discourse analysis¹⁹ to reveal how the discourse-produced knowledge connects with questions of celebrity culture and ethnicity. My dissertation will therefore shed light on the intersections between political and legal debates, media (re)presentation, fandom, marketing, migration studies, celebrity culture, and soccer commercialization.

¹⁹ It is an approach that analyzes languages and communication practices and connects it to other discourses on power, authority, and identity. Stuart Hall, introduction to *Representation*, 2nd ed., ed. Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon (Milton Keynes: SAGE, 2013), xxii.

Chapter 1: Diversity in West German Society and Soccer

The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG; West Germany), France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg recovered quickly from the devastation of World War II and soon labor shortages ensued which were met through the recruitment of migrant workers. The former colonial powers, Great Britain and France allowed entry of mostly migrant workers from their former colonies. Great Britain accepted ““Commonwealth passport holders””²⁰ from the Caribbean and South Asia (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka), while France invited individuals from mainly Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. The FRG first began to recruit guest workers to fuel the economic miracle in 1955. After the FRG’s first recruitment agreement with Italy in 1955, contracts with Spain (1960), Greece (1960), Turkey (1961), Morocco (1963), South Korea (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965), and Yugoslavia (1968) followed. While Italians, Spaniards, and Greeks dominated in the beginning stages, the number of Yugoslavs and Turks increased in the 1960s.²¹ The “*Gastarbeiterprogramm*” (guest worker program) lasted until the 1973 oil crisis, resulting in 2.6 million migrant workers.²² Afterwards, guest workers were suddenly seen as an economic burden that taxpayers had to support. While the FRG expected them to leave

²⁰ Lutz Holzner, “Minority Relations and Conflict in the Emerging European Community Specifically Germany, France and Great Britain,” *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 19, no. 2 (1993): 172.

²¹ Klaus J. Bade and Jochen Oltmer, “Germany,” in *The Encyclopedia of European Migration and Minorities*, ed. Klaus J. Bade, Pieter C. Emmer, Leo Lucassen, and Jochen Oltmer (New York: Cambridge University, 2011), 75.

²² Isabelle Hertner, “Germany as ‘A Country of Integration’? The CDU/CSU’s Policies and Discourses on Immigration during Angela Merkel’s Chancellorship,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2021): 2.

West Germany, as can be seen in the term “Gastarbeiter” (“guest worker”), many of them remained in their new host country due to economic and family reasons.

This chapter traces the history of migration in the FRG as well as in Germany’s top soccer league and the national team. To include the immigration history and soccer history of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, I will focus on West Germany (1949–1990), where Germany’s top soccer league was founded, with most of the discussion focused on reunified Germany (1990–present).

(WEST) GERMANY FROM THE 1960S TO A COUNTRY OF IMMIGRATION

While West Germany banned labor recruitment in 1973, the ban paradoxically increased the immigrant population.²³ During the guest worker program, fourteen million workers came to West Germany, and about eleven million returned to their countries of origin, as a result of financial incentives from the FRG.²⁴ However, for every worker who stayed, a family member immigrated to West Germany.²⁵ The FRG became “an informal immigration country,” i.e., “a county in which immigration in the broadest sense consistently exceeds emigration.”²⁶ A similar phenomenon took place in France, albeit with

²³ Michael Bommers, “Migration and Migration Research in Germany,” in *International Migration and the Social Sciences: Confronting National Experiences in Australia, France and Germany*, ed. Ellie Vasta and Vasoodeven Vuddamalay (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 149.

²⁴ Klaus J. Bade, “Von der Arbeitswanderung zur Einwanderungsgesellschaft – Teil 1,” *Zeitschrift für Ausländerrecht und Ausländerpolitik* 1 (2010): 9.

²⁵ Holzner, “Minority Relations,” 178.

²⁶ Bade and Oltmer, “Germany,” 81.

the integration of former colonies rather than labor migrants from other countries, as it was the case for West Germany. Even after the former colony Algeria became independent in 1962, the flow of emigrants did not stop in France. While worker migration was stopped, family immigration continued throughout the 1970s.²⁷ In the British case, there was very little immigration from the 1970s until the 1990s due to Margaret Thatcher's restrictive immigration policy.²⁸ Although the British government had a liberalized immigration policy from 1997 until 2010, immigration has been restricted to a bare minimum again since 2010.²⁹

The FRG and later reunified Germany rejected the idea of being an *Einwanderungsland* (a country of immigration).³⁰ This has had far-reaching effects on children of guest workers in all parts of their life, school, sports, university, job market, etc. Despite the guest workers' tremendous contribution to West Germany's economic miracle in the 1950s, laws were introduced to restrict the rights of guest workers. The first *Ausländergesetz* (aliens act) went into effect in 1965. This law made it almost impossible

²⁷ James F. Hollifield, "Immigration and the Republican Tradition in France," in *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, 3rd ed., ed. James F. Hollifield, Philip L. Martin, and Pia Orrenius (Stanford: Stanford University, 2020), 165.

See also: Rogers Brubaker and Yasemin Soysal, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1992).

²⁸ Thatcher was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990. Randall Hansen, "Paradigm and Policy Shifts: British Immigration Policy, 1997–2011," in *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, 3rd ed., ed. James F. Hollifield, Philip L. Martin, and Pia Orrenius (Stanford: Stanford University, 2020), 201.

See also: Christian Joppke, *Immigration and the Nation State: The United States, Germany, and Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999).

²⁹ Hansen, "Paradigm," 200.

³⁰ Barbara Laubenthal, "Refugees Welcome? Reforms of German Asylum Policies between 2013 and 2017 and Germany's Transformation into an Immigration Country," *German Politics* 28, no. 3 (2019): 415.

for non-German citizens to acquire permanent residency. The recession of 1966/67 led to reservations regarding the employment of foreigners.³¹ Simultaneously, the student protests in the 1960s produced a new social awareness, which included an increased interest in the needs of migrant workers. This resulted in the first attempts to integrate migrants at the municipal level.³²

At the same time, the voices that had expressed skepticism towards the guest workers in the years prior grew louder in the 1970s. Various surveys at the beginning of the 1980s showed that the attitude of the German population towards foreigners had deteriorated.³³ Especially Turkish guest workers were made responsible for the FRG's socio-economic problems during that time. In reunified Germany, the situation escalated and culminated in arson attacks on Turks in Mölln and Solingen in the early 1990s.³⁴ Whereas earlier waves of xenophobic violence were targeted at asylum seekers, long-term residents fell victim to the right-wing instigators in 1992 and 1993.³⁵

³¹ During that time, the right-wing extremist and anti-foreigners party NPD won elected seats in several state parliaments. Kirsten Hoesch, *Migration und Integration: Eine Einführung* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2017), 230.

³² Intercultural education, youth work, homework help, and socio-pedagogical family assistance were among the first initiatives to help migrants. It took until the 1990s that the states could institutionalize and modernize integration policy through, for example, the establishment of a government office for migrants. Hoesch, *Migration*, 309–10.

³³ Karl-Heinz Meier-Braun, *Deutschland: Einwanderungsland* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 56.

³⁴ In November 1992, right-wing extremists set fire to the home of a family with Turkish roots in Mölln, killing a girl, her grandmother, and the grandmother's niece. A few months later three young Turkish girls and two Turkish women died in a second firebombing in Solingen.

³⁵ James D. Ingram and Thadafilos Triadafilopoulos, "Rights, Norms, and Politics: The Case of German Citizenship Reform," *Social Research* 77, no. 1 (Spring, 2010): 368–71.

The domestic problems in the 1990s were countered with modifications to the *Ausländergesetz* that established clear rights for permanent residents, but it took the German government until the year 2000 to revise German citizenship law. The territorial principle (*ius soli*) is a modification of the 1913 concept of blood descent (*ius sanguinis*).³⁶ Children, who were born in Germany to non-German parents can now acquire German citizenship under the condition that at least one of the non-German parents had resided legally for a minimum of eight years in Germany.³⁷

To address the issue of dual citizenship via *ius soli* further, the *Optionspflicht* (obligation to choose) was introduced that same year. According to this law, every immigrant child born in 2000 or after had to renounce their second citizenship by the age of twenty-three or lose their German citizenship. Since 2014, it is no longer mandatory to choose between country, thereby paving the way for dual citizenship for second generation migrants.³⁸

³⁶ The 1913 *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz* (citizenship law) took the father's nationality as the deciding factor for determining the child's citizenship. Only from 1975 onward, could the mother influence the child's German nationality. Thomas Diez and Vicki Squire, "Traditions of Citizenship and the Securitisation of Migration in Germany and Britain," *Citizenship Studies* 12, no. 6 (2008): 568.

³⁷ "Staatsangehörigkeitsrecht," BMI, accessed May 27, 2021, <https://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/verfassung/staatsangehoerigkeit/staatsangehoerigkeitsrecht/staatsangehoerigkeitsrecht-node.html>.

³⁸ Since 2014, "persons born in Germany to foreign parents and who have lived in Germany for at least eight years by the time of their 21st birthday, who have attended six years of school in Germany, or who completed schooling or occupational training in Germany will be able to keep both their German citizenship and that of their parents." "New Rules on Dual Citizenship," BMI, December 22, 2014, <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/kurzmeldungen/EN/2014/12/dual-citizenship.html>.

While migrant researchers Klaus J. Bade and Jochen Oltmer called West Germany in the 1970s “an informal immigration country,”³⁹ Germany only accepted its status as an immigration society legally by implementing a new *Zuwanderungsgesetz* (immigration law) in 2005, which made it possible for highly skilled workers to permanently stay in Germany. In 2016, an *Integrationsgesetz* (integration law) was passed, giving refugees who want to stay in Germany access to state integration measures.⁴⁰

While the legal issues have largely been resolved, culturally Germany is still grappling with the idea of being an *Einwanderungsland*. Germany has various cultural centers such as Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Munich, and Cologne that also show a large number of migrants and people *mit Migrationshintergrund*. While some believe that migrants should embrace their own culture, others demand that they adhere to mainstream culture. This can be seen through the debates surrounding the term “Leitkultur” (guiding culture). Bassam Tibi used this term in the context of dealing with Islam in his book *Europa ohne Identität: Die Krise der multikulturellen Gesellschaft* (Europe without Identity: The Crisis of the Multicultural Society, 1998).⁴¹ He contrasts a culturally diverse society that has a dominant culture with a multicultural society without one. Two years later, the Christliche Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union; hereafter CDU) politician Friedrich Merz urged immigrants to conform to the German *Leitkultur*. In political

³⁹ Bade and Oltmer, “Germany,” 81.

⁴⁰ Hertner, “Germany,” 4.

⁴¹ Bassam Tibi, *Europa ohne Identität? Leitkultur oder Wertebelibigkeit* (München: C. Bertelsmann, 1998).

discussion, *Leitkultur* has become the opposite of multiculturalism and emphasizes the expectation that immigrants should adhere to German ideas and values in order to integrate into society and to avoid parallel societies.⁴² German politicians utilized the term to “express instinctive fears of the Other in a politically acceptable way.”⁴³

This culture-centered way of thinking has been extended to religion since the late 1990s and even more so after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. According to Jörg Hüttermann, immigrants became Muslim subjects instead of objects that are not only perceived as fundamentally different foreigners from a cultural perspective, but also portrayed by the media as dangerous and opposed to the West.⁴⁴ Although Muslims have lived in Germany for decades, their faith has only recently become a controversial subject. In 2010, Thilo Sarrazin, a PhD-holding economist and former Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party; hereafter SPD) member, published his books *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany Abolishes Itself, 2010) and *Feindliche Übernahme: Wie der Islam den Fortschritt behindert und die Gesellschaft bedroht* (Hostile Takeover:

⁴² The then British Prime Minister Tony Blair responded in a similar vein to the 2005 terrorist bombing attacks in London by reiterating the importance of the British way of life and its upkeep by migrants and immigrant.

⁴³ Stefan Manz, “Constructing a Normative National Identity: The *Leitkultur* Debate in Germany, 2000/2001,” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 25, no. 56 (2004): 495.

⁴⁴ Hüttermann outlines the integration processes of the (West) German population and the former guest workers over the last sixty years. At the beginning of the guest worker program, West Germany consisted of the initially existing society members, called “ushers,” and the guest workers who were peripheral strangers. During the 1970s and 1980s, a conflict arose between the uncertain West German society and the strangers who were now workers and consumers at the same time. The former guest workers advanced in the 1990s to *Neubürger* (new citizens) as the immigrants were increasingly exercising their right to participate. Jörg Hüttermann, “Zur Soziogenese einer kulturalisierten Einwanderungsgesellschaft,” in *Wider den Kulturreizwang: Migration, Kulturalisierung und Weltliteratur*, ed. Özkan Ezli, Dorothee Kimmich, and Annette Werberger (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), 97, 102–15.

How Islam Impedes Progress and Threatens Society, 2018), in which he advances cultural and biological racism. Sarrazin connects Muslim immigrants with criminality and exploitation of the state's welfare system, resulting in Germany's recession and ethnocultural decline. The anti-Muslim sentiment is not a solely German phenomenon. It can be seen around Europe, especially since the majority of migrants fleeing to Europe in the 2010s were Muslims.⁴⁵ Studies show that European attitudes towards Muslims are more negative than towards other migrant groups and that Eastern Europeans are more opposed to Muslims than Northern or Western Europeans.⁴⁶ In France, most Muslims come from its former North African colonies. Islamophobia in France reached its high point when legislation started to impact some religious behaviors such as banning face coverings in public areas (excluding mosques) in 2011. Six years later, France introduced a controversial law that allowed authorized officials to search homes and to close places of worship.

“MIT MIGRATIONSHINTERGRUND” AND INTEGRATION EFFORTS

Under the chancellorship of Angela Merkel, the Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees; hereafter BAMF) became responsible for the integration of migrants in Germany, resulting in the formation of two

⁴⁵ Egle Gusciute, Peter Mühlau, and Richard Layte, “All Welcome Here? Attitudes Towards Muslim Migrants in Europe,” *International Migration* 59, no. 5 (2021): 149.

⁴⁶ E.g., Zan Strabac and Ola Listhaug, “Anti-Muslim Prejudice in Europe: A Multilevel Analysis of Survey Data from 30 Countries,” *Social Science Research* 37, no. 1 (2008).

consultation bodies for migrants.⁴⁷ Then Chancellor Merkel's government launched the Integrationsgipfel (National Integration Summit) and the Deutsche Islam Konferenz (German Islam Conference) in 2006 in order to understand migrants' needs better.⁴⁸ The Integrationsgipfel implemented a national integration plan in 2007, improving integration in the education sector and labor market.

The integration of migrants as well as the 2015 European migration and refugee crisis triggered political debates about multiculturalism and contributed to the emergence of anti-immigration, right-wing populist parties such as the Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany; hereafter AfD) and far-right extremist and anti-Islam groups like Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West; hereafter PEGIDA). Originally a party that opposed the European Union (hereafter EU), the AfD has evolved into an overtly anti-immigration party. The AfD has generally been described as a right-wing populist party⁴⁹ that has been working with far-right extremist and anti-Islam groups such as PEGIDA in more recent years.⁵⁰ This radical shift is tied to former Chancellor Angela Merkel's welcoming policy,

⁴⁷ BAMF is under the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and is responsible for the registration, integration, and repatriation of migrants.

⁴⁸ Hertner, "Germany," 4.

⁴⁹ Frank Decker, "Follow-up to the Grand Coalition: The German Party System before and after the 2013 Federal Election," in *The Merkel Republic: An Appraisal*, ed. Eric Langenbacher (New York City: Berghahn, 2015), 34.

⁵⁰ Matthias Meisner, "Pläne für gemeinsame Kundgebung: AfD und Pegida planen Schulterchluss," *Der Tagesspiegel*, May 2, 2017, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/plaene-fuer-gemeinsame-kundgebung-afd-und-pegida-planen-schulterchluss/19743318.html>.

accepting over a million refugees who were fleeing from the Syrian civil war between 2015 and 2018.

In order to better understand migration-related inequalities, the demographic term “mit Migrationshintergrund” was introduced by the Federal Statistical Office through a microcensus in 2005.⁵¹ Even though the term was used as early as 1998, as part of a youth welfare discussion, it took another seven years for a clearer definition to emerge.⁵² While the statistical term was supposed to help underprivileged minorities, Anne-Kathrin Will highlights the exclusionary effects of it, “especially due to the way the Federal Statistical Office operationalized the official concept of ‘migration background’ and represented the microcensus results.”⁵³ Helmut Groschwitz identifies the term as a successor to the terms guest worker, foreigner, and foreign fellow citizens, thereby continuing to alienate people within German society.⁵⁴ People *mit Migrationshintergrund* have experienced discrimination due to their ethnic roots, as studies show. For example, soccer players *mit Migrationshintergrund* are sometimes punished more severely in sports courts than other players.⁵⁵ Rainer Geißler identifies the ethnic origin of employees as a key factor in the

⁵¹ Unlike the US Census, the German microcensus does not ask a self-identification question. Anne Unterreiner, “The Weight of German History: Racial Blindness and Identification of People with a Migration Background,” in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Mixed Racial and Ethnic Classification*, ed. Zarine L. Rocha and Peter J. Aspinall (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave, 2020), 310.

⁵² Will, “Statistical Category,” 541.

⁵³ Will, “Statistical Category,” 550.

⁵⁴ Helmut Groschwitz, “Kritische Anmerkungen zur populären Zuschreibung ‘Migrationshintergrund,’” *Rheinisches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 39 (2011-2012): 129.

⁵⁵ Youth players *mit Migrationshintergrund* are more often than average responsible for a match to be abandoned. However, they are also more often provoked and discriminated against than other players.

application process of some companies.⁵⁶ While Germany needs workers to fill many empty positions as craftsmen, caregivers, logistics, and academics in order to compete economically, especially young people with a Turkish and/or Arab background experience difficulties in the job market, in the school system, and in advancing in their careers.⁵⁷

To further address the issues of discrimination, the first comprehensive study that deals with perspectives and experiences of Black, African, and Afro-diasporic people in Germany was conducted under the name “Afrozensus.” In the 2021 survey, almost 6,000 people out of a total of one million people of African origin, who are estimated to live in Germany, participated. The survey confirmed that racism is widespread in Germany whether at school, at university, or in the police force (for example, racial profiling).⁵⁸ The discrimination and disadvantages that the African or diasporic population face align with findings for people *mit Migrationshintergrund* in general.

Germans have reluctantly dealt with racism since the collapse of National Socialism (1933-1945). While in Germany the term “race” is not a clearly defined (legal) concept,

Ronny Blaschke, “Integration im Fußball: Das Spiel ist bunt,” Deutschlandfunk Kultur, January 13, 2019, <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/integration-im-fussball-das-spiel-ist-bunt-100.html>.

⁵⁶ Rainer Geißler, “Migration und Integration,” BpB, December 16, 2014, <https://www.bpb.de/izpb/198020/migration-und-integration?p=all>.

⁵⁷ Twice as many people *mit Migrationshintergrund* than Germans without *Migrationshintergrund* are unemployed. Twenty-six percent of the Turkish population has no high school diploma and forty-five percent has the *Hauptschulabschluss*, the lowest education degree in Germany. Heinz-Herbert Noll and Stefan Weick, “Zuwanderer mit türkischem Migrationshintergrund schlechter integriert: Indikatoren und Analysen zur Integration von Migranten in Deutschland,” *Informationsdienst Soziale Indikatoren* 46 (2011): 3.

⁵⁸ “#Afrozensus –Diskriminierungserfahrungen, Perspektiven und Engagement Schwarzer Menschen in Deutschland,” Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, November 30, 2021, https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/aktuelles/DE/2021/20211130_Afrozensus.html.

the United States asks its citizens to self-identify their race and ethnicity in the United States census. Theories about and possible effects of racial differences exist. Sports in general can be seen as a race-less arena on the one hand, and as a way to (re)produce racialized ideologies on the other hand.⁵⁹ John M. Hoberman argues that sports preserve the myth of race and contributes to social divisions among nonwhites and whites. Black athletes, such as NBA star Michael Jordan and baseball legend Jackie Robinson, have become the most “prominent symbols of African American achievement” in the United States⁶⁰

The US race relations (Black/white) are similar to Germany’s distinction between Germans with and without a *Migrationshintergrund*. Sports, and soccer in particular, has become one way for migrants and their children to integrate into society, as initiatives like “Integration durch Sport,” “Mehr Migrantinnen in den Sport,” and “spin – sport interkulturell” demonstrate.⁶¹ It can be a vehicle for social inclusion by learning the target language, by building a feeling of belonging and self-esteem, and by promoting respect, loyalty, and inclusiveness. Soccer, the most popular and globalized team sport in the world, contributes to not only global but also national, regional, and local identities. In Germany, the regional aspect has always been important to identity formation, i.e., Germans tend to

⁵⁹ Ben Carrington, “Sport, Masculinity and Black Cultural Resistance,” *Journal of Sport and Social* 22, no. 3 (1998): 279–80.

See also: Kevin Hylton, ed., *“Race” and Sport Critical Race Theory* (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁶⁰ John M. Hoberman, *Darwin’s Athletes: How Sport Has Damaged Black America and Preserved the Myth of Race* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), xxiii.

⁶¹ Sebastian Braun and Tina Nobis, ed., “Migration, Integration und Sport: Perspektiven auf zivilgesellschaftliche Kontexte vor Ort,” in *Migration, Integration und Sport: Zivilgesellschaft vor Ort* (Wiesbaden, Springer VS, 2011), 13.

define themselves as Bavarians, Franconians, etc. The regional division of Germany is still present in today's society and becomes apparent during *Bundesliga* soccer matches, such as the North-South Summit between FC Bayern München and Hamburger SV (hereafter HSV).

THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF EUROPEAN SOCCER

In 1962, the *Bundesliga* was founded and a year later the first season started in West Germany. The European governing body of soccer, the Union of European Football Association (hereafter UEFA), consists of Europe's national associations.⁶² The so-called "Big Five European Leagues" are Spain's *La Liga*, England's *Premier League*, Germany's *Bundesliga*, Italy's *Serie A*, and France's *Ligue 1*. Unlike other countries, soccer players in West Germany were not paid until 1962, and it was not until 1972 that players were acknowledged as professional athletes without a salary cap.⁶³ The *Bundesliga* remained closed-off to the other European leagues until the 1980s, when European matches and competitions gained popularity and importance.⁶⁴ This is especially seen in the revenues that *Bundesliga* clubs have gained over the years in the top European competition, the Champions League (hereafter CL). They collected almost nine times as much money from

⁶² Besides governing European soccer, UEFA is responsible for soccer in Israel, Russia, Turkey, Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan. Due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, UEFA suspended all Russian club and national teams from any UEFA competitions.

⁶³ Tobias Hemmersbach, "Globalisierung im deutschen Profifußball," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 32, no. 6 (December 2003): 492.

⁶⁴ Nowadays, European matches take place roughly every two weeks between August until December and February until May.

the CL between 1994 and 2001 than the years before.⁶⁵ Whereas *Bundesliga* clubs formerly generated their income mostly from ticket sales and donations, they nowadays obtain money through broadcasting rights sales, European competitions, sponsoring, merchandising, licensing, and marketing.⁶⁶

Television contributed to the popularity of sports between 1960 and 1980, but television also changed it, making various sports “commodified global spectacles, producing huge audiences and massive new sources of income.”⁶⁷ The coverage of soccer games changed from printing press and radio to television in 1958, which added to the nationwide popularity of soccer. The first public television broadcaster ARD and the Deutscher Fußball Bund (German Football Association; hereafter DFB) signed a contract, allowing ARD to broadcast one club game and two games in total per month (albeit not on Sundays).⁶⁸ With the introduction of the dual broadcasting system, private broadcasters were competing with public ones over soccer match broadcaster rights.⁶⁹ More cameras,

⁶⁵ Eighteen million DM in 1994/95 and 153 million DM in the 2000/01 season. Hemmersbach, “Globalisierung,” 498.

⁶⁶ Hemmersbach, “Globalisierung,” 497.

⁶⁷ Garry Whannel, “Television and the Transformation of Sport,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 625, no. 1 (2009): 206.

⁶⁸ Just how influential national broadcast rights are for sports showed the American Basketball Association (ABA). Founded in 1967, the ABA struggled financially due to a lack of television contracts and bad business decisions, such as no copyright for the popular, red-white-blue ball. The National Basketball Association (NBA) agreed to a merger in 1976 in order to get star players like Julius Erving into the league. The NBA picked four out of seven teams (Denver Nuggets, the Indiana Pacers, the New York (later Brooklyn) Nets, and the San Antonio Spurs) to join the league.

⁶⁹ In 1989, the private broadcaster RTL plus bought the exclusive rights to air the *Bundesliga* season 1988/1989 for forty million DM. From then on, the rights switched back and forth between private and public broadcasters.

instant replays, slow motion, as well as expert and player interviews have been introduced to attract more viewers. In 1991, the pay-TV channel Premiere offered for the first time a full-length *Bundesliga* match live.⁷⁰

Within the past twenty years, commercialization, professionalization, and globalization have changed the landscape of sports and have contributed to crossmedial marketing of associations, institutions, clubs, and soccer celebrities.⁷¹ The *Bundesliga* began to attract players from other countries, resulting in an increase in foreign players from 12.4 percent in 1990/91 to 42.4 percent in 2000/1.⁷² The number of foreign players in European top leagues in the 1990s and early 2000s changed due to the so-called “Bosman case.”

In 1990, the Belgian soccer player Jean-Marc Bosman asked to be transferred from Royal Football Club de Liège to the French club Union Sportive du Littoral de Dunkerque. The transfer failed because Royal Football Club de Liège wanted to collect a transfer fee of around €300,000 despite Bosman’s expired contract. Bosman sued the soccer club and

⁷⁰ A year later, the private broadcaster Sat.1 bought the rights and established the soccer show *ran* that included raffles for the audience and displayed graphs and statistics during the game. Joachim von Gottberg, “Fußball und Fernsehen in Deutschland,” *TV Diskurs* 86, no. 4 (2018): 36.

⁷¹ John Bale and Joseph Maguire’s edited volume, *The Global Sports Arena*, was the first major study to seriously address sporting migration. John Bale and Joseph Maguire, ed., *The Global Sports Arena: Athletic Talent Migration in an Interdependent World* (London: Frank Cass, 1994). See also globalization in sports: John M. Hoberman, *Age of Globalization* (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, 2013). Claus Leggewie, “‘Marke Deutschland’ Sport als Medium kollektiver Identität im Globalisierungsprozess,” in *Wettbewerbsspiele: Die Inszenierung von Sport und Politik in den Medien*, ed. Jürgen Schwier and Claus Leggewie (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2006). Joseph Maguire, Katie Liston, and Mark Falcois, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of Globalization and Sport* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

⁷² Hemmersbach, “Globalisierung,” 495.

the Liège Court of Appeal in Belgium referred the case to the European Court of Justice (hereafter ECJ), which ruled the fees illegal due to the player being an EU citizen and the transfer taking place within the EU. Additionally, they declared limits on the number of foreign professionals on a team (three-plus-two rule on foreign players)⁷³ as illegal since they contradicted the free movement of workers under Article 48 of the EU law, as well as Article 85 and Article 86 (on free competition) of the Treaty of Rome.⁷⁴ The growing popularity and commercialization of soccer prompted the ECJ to intervene more strongly with UEFA's transfer system.⁷⁵ As a reaction to the Bosman ruling, the UEFA decided that every soccer club in a professional league in Europe could sign and deploy as many foreigners from UEFA member states as they wanted, but that only three non-EU players could play in the same match.⁷⁶ This number was increased from three to five players in 2001/2002. After the 2006/2007 season, the restrictions on the use of players of other nationalities (EU and non-EU) were generally lifted except for the home-grown player rule which is an attempt to increase the number of nationals. The rule requires eight players to

⁷³ In 1992, the two-foreign-professionals-rule was replaced by the three-plus-two rule. A professional team was not allowed to use more than three foreign players at the same time in a match, in addition to two players who had been in the host country for at least five years with three of them on a youth team. Marc Thomé, "Ausländer in der Fußball-Bundesliga," *Volkskunde in Rheinland-Pfalz* 18, no. 2 (2003): 158.

⁷⁴ Christos Kassimeris, "Football in Europe: Apolitical UEFA Plays Politics with Football," in *Routledge Handbook of Football Studies*, ed. John Hughson, Kevin Moore, Ramón Spaaij, and Joseph Maguire (London: Routledge, 2016), 440.

⁷⁵ Kassimeris, "Football in Europe," 440.

⁷⁶ Gerd Dembowski, "Ballarbeit. Szenen aus Fußball und Migration im Profifußball," in *Der Ball ist bunt: Fußball, Migration und die Vielfalt der Identitäten in Deutschland*, ed. Diethelm Blecking and Gerd Dembowski (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2010), 35.

train in a club or association in Germany, with four of them being from the club's own youth system.⁷⁷

The reasons for players to work in other countries are manifold. Through interviews with male soccer, basketball, cricket, and rugby players Joseph Maguire established a typology for athletes who migrate. The categories that Maguire found in 1999 (mercenaries, settlers, nomadic cosmopolitans, pioneers, and returnees) were further analyzed by Jonathan Magee and John Sugden in 2002. They identify six types of migrants into English league soccer: mercenary, settler, nomadic cosmopolitan as well as the newly added, exiled, expelled, and ambitionist.⁷⁸ Soccer players migrate due to economic reasons (mercenary), desire to see the world (nomadic cosmopolitan), political or personal reasons (exiled), forced migration (expelled), and their ambition to play soccer anywhere or in a better league (ambitionist). Magee and Sugden also proposed to include “*celebrity super star[s]*” as another category. This individual is a player “who demands front-page coverage, as well as back-page exposure, and has become, more or less, public property. It is difficult to imagine this type of player accepting a transfer to a club that will not suit or match his celebrity status.”⁷⁹ One example of such a player would be Portuguese star player Cristiano Ronaldo.

⁷⁷ “Mindestens 12 deutsche Profis und Local-Player-Regelung,” DFL, accessed August 17, 2021, <https://www.dfl.de/de/hintergrund/transferwesen/local-player-regelung/>.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Magee and John Sugden, “‘The World at Their Feet:’ Professional Football and International Labor Migration,” *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 26, no. 4 (November 2002): 431–3.

⁷⁹ Magee and Sugden, “‘The World at Their Feet,’” 433.

Due to the migration of soccer players, one could identify soccer players as “Eurostars” or transmigrants. They are “pioneer individuals, who learn – while crossing national borders and making their way in strange yet familiar cities – to be able to see and use all sides, to adapt and change without ever losing that sense of where they came from.”⁸⁰ In a similar vein, Sine Agergaard and Nina Clara Tiesler describe “sports labor migrants” as “transmigrants.”⁸¹ The concept of transmigrants goes back to Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, who define them as individuals who have “multiple relations – organizational, religious, and political – that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously.”⁸² These transmigrants develop a transnational identity that is pluri-locally distributed, without a clear center–periphery relation.⁸³ They can share a transnational collective identity with others who do not live in the same place or even country.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Adrian Favell, *Eurostars and Eurocities: Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrating Europe* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 433.

⁸¹ Sine Agergaard and Nina Clara Tiesler, ed., “Introduction: Globalization, Sports Labor Migration and Women’s Mobilities,” in *Women, Soccer and Transnational Migration* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 5.

⁸² Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Christina Blanc-Szanton, “Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration: A NEW Analytic Framework,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 645, no. 1 (1992): 1–2.

⁸³ Ludger Pries, “Ambiguities of Global and Transnational Collective Identities,” *Global Networks* 13, no. 1 (2013): 30.

⁸⁴ Pries, “Ambiguities,” 34.

Hartmut Esser calls the integration of migrants into the host country and their country of origin “*multiple inclusion*.”⁸⁵ However, there are various possible scenarios for integration into the new host society:⁸⁶

- *marginality*, no integration.
- *individual segmentation*, integration within the ethnic group.
- *individual assimilation*, integration into the host society.

Assimilation in Esser’s sense is a subcategory of integration, whereas sometimes people use integration (inclusion) and assimilation (exclusion) as opposites.⁸⁷ Esser refers to assimilation as “the inclusion of individual immigrants into the various subsystems of the host society and/or their (increasing) similarity to individual actors in comparable segments of the native population.”⁸⁸ One way to help the integration of migrants into host societies is through sports, and in Germany’s case, soccer.

MIGRANTS IN THE *BUNDESLIGA*

Germany’s top soccer league comprises eighteen teams and operates on a system of promotion and relegation to the lower league, 2. *Bundesliga*.⁸⁹ Albrecht Sonntag

⁸⁵ Hartmut Esser, “Ist das Konzept der Assimilation überholt?”, *Geographische Revue* 5, no. 2 (2003): 7–8.

⁸⁶ Esser, “Ist das Konzept,” 7–8.

⁸⁷ Ewa Morawaska, “Research on Immigration/Ethnicity in Europe and the United States: A Comparison,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (2008): 470.

⁸⁸ Hartmut Esser, “Does the ‘New’ Immigration Require a ‘New’ Theory of Intergenerational Integration?” *International Migration Review* 38 no. 3 (2004): 1130.

⁸⁹ The *Bundesliga*’s counterpart in East-Germany was the *DDR-Oberliga*. It was founded in 1948 as “DS-Oberliga.” They had their own national team, which defeated West Germany during the group stage of the 1974 World Cup.

identifies the *Bundesliga* as “one of the big cultural unifiers across the administrative, linguistic and cultural divides of a heavily federalised state.”⁹⁰ During the FRG’s guest worker program from 1955 to 1973, soccer offered many (male) migrants the opportunity to integrate into society whether it was during work breaks, through workplace soccer teams, or in their free time.⁹¹

As a form of self-organization, guest workers have started to establish their own soccer clubs in order to support fellow countrymen in terms of language skills and knowledge about Germany. Among the most well-known are SC Lupo in Wolfsburg, Türkiyemspor in Berlin, and Türk Gücü in Munich.⁹² The Deutscher Sportbund (German Sports Association)⁹³ first discouraged the formation of those clubs but advocated for the so-called “ethnic sports clubs” in 1981 in places where too many foreigners were part of a German club or where the capacity of the clubs was exhausted.⁹⁴ Some players, such as Lukas Podolski, Jérôme Boateng, and Mesut Özil, tried their luck at local sports clubs and eventually made their way to the *Bundesliga*.

⁹⁰ Albrecht Sonntag, “Germany,” in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Football and Politics*, ed. Jean-Michel De Waele, Suzan Gibril, Ekaterina Glorizova, and Ramón Spaaij (Cham: Palgrave, 2018), 62.

⁹¹ Gerd Dembowski, “Ballfreiheit. Szenen aus Fußball und Migration im Amateurfußball,” in *Der Ball ist bunt: Fußball, Migration und die Vielfalt der Identitäten in Deutschland*, ed. Diethelm Blecking and Gerd Dembowski (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2010), 79.

⁹² Blaschke, “Integration.”

⁹³ In 2006, the Detuscher Sportbund merged with the Nationales Olympisches Komitee für Deutschland (National Olympic Committee for Germany) to form the Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund (German Olympic Sports Confederation; DOSB).

⁹⁴ Dembowski, “Ballfreiheit,” 80.

Five non-German citizens played in the first *Bundesliga* season of 1963/64.⁹⁵ On August 24, 1963, there were three non-citizens: Austria's Willy Huberts (Eintracht Frankfurt), Dutchman Jacobus Prins (1. FC Kaiserslautern), and Yugoslavia's Petar Radenkovic (TSV 1860 München).⁹⁶ The first Turkish player, Arkoç Özcan, played in the *Bundesliga* in 1967.⁹⁷ It took another six years until the first Black player, Peru's Julio Baylon, was signed.⁹⁸ Austrian, Swedish, Danish, and Yugoslavian players came to the *Bundesliga* in the 1980s, while more players from Poland and the Czech Republic tried their luck after the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union.⁹⁹ In 2008, for the first time, over fifty percent of professional players in the German league were foreigners.¹⁰⁰

Despite the high percentage of foreign players in the *Bundesliga*, only a few players *mit Migrationshintergrund* made it to Germany's top soccer club leagues or the German national team in the early 2000s.¹⁰¹ The reason that there was such a low number of people

⁹⁵ Two foreigners could play for each team. Diethelm Blecking, "'Ethnisch gemischte Teams funktionieren besser,'" BpB, December 13, 2016, <https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/medien-und-sport/bundesliga/155901/integration-inklusion-fluechtlingsmigration>.

⁹⁶ Christos Kassimeris, "Deutschland über Alles: Discrimination in German Football," *Soccer and Society* 10, no. 6 (2009): 758.

⁹⁷ The first Turkish player in West Germany was Coskun Taş. He transferred to 1. FC Köln in 1959 and won the German championship but was not allowed to play in the finale because the people in charge only wanted to see German players. Dembowski, "Ballarbeit," 35.

⁹⁸ Kassimeris, "Deutschland," 758–9.

⁹⁹ Thomé, "Ausländer," 158.

¹⁰⁰ There are no statistics regarding Germans *mit Migrationshintergrund* in the *Bundesliga*. Blecking, "'Ethnisch.'"

¹⁰¹ Andreas Merx, "Nationalmannschaft und Integration," in *Fußball & Integration*, ed. Heinrich Böll Stiftung (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2006), 10.

mit Migrationshintergrund in the top German soccer leagues is that soccer clubs often lacked intercultural competence, seeing integration as a one-way street.¹⁰² Clubs expected players to integrate into the team without help or knowledge about the player's cultural background. Until 2006, players with a Turkish background who played their way up to Germany's third and fourth top soccer leagues often directly transferred to the first Turkish league, the *Süper Lig*, without any interest from a German club.¹⁰³ In 2018, forty percent of players in the youth centers have a *Migrationshintergrund*,¹⁰⁴ but no data exists for the *Bundesliga*. However, according to the DFB, almost every fifth member of the DFB has a *Migrationshintergrund*.¹⁰⁵

One reason for the discrepancy in youth and professional players has been the discrimination that players *mit Migrationshintergrund* face. Quite a few migrant players have transferred to migrant clubs or changed their club names to sound more German; for instance, Galatasaray Berlin became Rixdorfer SV.¹⁰⁶ Since the German government called integration their key task in 2007, the DFB has invested time and money in the establishment of an integration concept that puts interaction and identification in the

¹⁰² Merx, "Nationalmannschaft," 10.

¹⁰³ Merx, "Nationalmannschaft," 10.

¹⁰⁴ Ronny Blaschke, "Serie: Doppelpässe – Migration im und durch Sport – Teil 1 Bunt an der Basis, blass an der Spitze," Deutschlandfunk, August 5, 2018, <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/serie-doppelpaesse-migration-im-und-durch-sport-teil-1-bunt-100.html>.

¹⁰⁵ "DFB von A bis Z: Integration," DFB, December 28, 2014, https://www.dfb.de/news/detail/dfb-von-a-bis-z-integration-113688/?no_cache=1.

¹⁰⁶ Blaschke, "Serie: Doppelpässe."

foreground.¹⁰⁷ Research on integration through sports has been made public by the Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat (Federal Ministry of the Interior; BMI) through BAMF and the Bundesinstitut für Sportwissenschaft (Federal Institute of Sports Science; BISp).¹⁰⁸ Improvements in terms of integration and sports included the appointment of integration officers in sports associations and clubs as well as the implementation of intercultural training within the sports association qualification system.¹⁰⁹ The DFB appointed the first voluntary integration officer, Gül Keskinler, in 2006 and has awarded integration prizes (cash and non-cash benefits equivalent to €150,000) to clubs, schools and other institutions since 2007.¹¹⁰ The initiatives “1:0 für ein Willkommen” and “2:0 für ein Willkommen” were launched from 2015 to 2021 in order to support clubs that demonstrated special efforts to integrate refugees. The DFB itself developed a new integration concept in 2019, with the following five goals: further develop and use structures; participate, appreciate and promote; inform, raise awareness, advise and qualify; exchange, cooperate and network; and protect and step in.¹¹¹ As a way to further improve the integration efforts of the DFB, the German association launched a new

¹⁰⁷ Dembowski, “Ballfreiheit,” 88.

¹⁰⁸ Sports research since 2000 has mostly focused on integration efforts by sports clubs and organizations. Sebastian Braun and Tina Nobis, “Migration and Integration in Germany,” in *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Race and Ethnicity*, ed. John Nauright and David K. Wiggins (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2016), 188.

¹⁰⁹ Braun and Nobis, “Migration, Integration und Sport,” 13.

¹¹⁰ *Integration A-Z* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Fußball-Bund, 2014), 79–82.

¹¹¹ *Fußball für alle: Gemeinsam für Teilhabe, Zugehörigkeit und Vielfalt in der Migrationsgesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Fußball-Bund, 2014), 7.

“Leadership-Programm” in 2021, which supports and consults people *mit Migrationshintergrund* who want to volunteer in soccer leadership positions.

MIGRANTS ON THE NATIONAL TEAM

Until the end of the 1990s, migrant soccer players were rare on the national team. German policies and politics made it difficult for people *mit Migrationshintergrund* to play for Germany. The history of migrants in the West German national team, however, is surprisingly long. Among the world champions of 1954 were three people who were not born in West Germany: Jupp Posipal (Rumania), Fritz Laband (Poland), and Richard Herrmann (Poland). But it took the national team twenty more years to let the first non-white player, Erwin Kostedde, start for FRG. He was followed by Jimmy Hartwig in 1979. Both were children of Black American GIs and German mothers.¹¹² In order to attract more talent to the German national team, players with foreign nationalities, such as Sean Dundee from South Africa, had their German citizenship process expedited. Three years later, Mustafa Doğan, the first player of Turkish ancestry, started playing for the national team.¹¹³

The 1998 World Cup in France became a turning point for the German national team and the DFB’s reluctance to change. France, like Great Britain, was able to select their best players from a large pool of foreign-born players from former colonies. Those players proved themselves to be crucial for France’s World Cup victories in 1998 and 2018. While Germany lost against Croatia in the quarterfinals, the multicultural French team with

¹¹² Dietrich Schulze-Marmeling, ed., “Die Multi-Kulti-Nationalelf,” in *Die Geschichte der Fußball-Nationalmannschaft* (Göttingen: Die Werkstatt, 2010), 519.

¹¹³ Blecking, ““Ethnisch.””

the Algerian-French Zinedine Zidane won in 1998.¹¹⁴ The so-called “black-blanc-bleur”¹¹⁵ generation surrounding Zidane, Lilian Thuram, and Youri Djorkaeff, became decisive for the DFB’s integration policy. German soccer coach Ottmar Hitzfeld pointed to the unused potential of players in immigrant communities.¹¹⁶ As a reaction, the DFB invested in and restructured its youth teams.¹¹⁷ It took the DFB until 2006 to fully open its arms to people *mit Migrationshintergrund*, which is now reflected in the national team squad history.

Starting with the preparation for the World Cup in 2002, players *mit Migrationshintergrund* became more important to the German national team. Miroslav Klose, Oliver Neuville, Serdar Tasci, Gerald Asamoah, and Kevin Kuranyi, among others, chose to play for Germany, although they had the opportunity to play for a different country (due to descent or birth right).¹¹⁸ The worldwide governing body of association soccer, International Federation of Association Football (hereafter FIFA), allowed players to represent any national team up until 1962 if the player held citizenship of that country. The reason players nowadays must choose between two countries, if they have the right to play for either, goes back to the thirty-third FIFA Congress. After Alfredo di Stefano played six

¹¹⁴ Zidane was born in Marseille, France, and grew up playing soccer in the poor town of La Castellane. His parents emigrated from the Berber region of Algeria in the 1950s.

¹¹⁵ The “black-blanc-bleur” team denotes how Black, white, and North African players came together. *Beurs* is a term for those of Algerian (and Moroccan and Tunisian) descent while having French nationality.

¹¹⁶ Blecking, ““Ethnisch.””

¹¹⁷ All first and second-division clubs were required to operate youth academies, where they train their youth players such as Philipp Lahm, Bastian Schweinsteiger, Mario Götze, and Manuel Neuer. Kaelberer, “From Bern to Rio,” 286.

¹¹⁸ Schulze-Marmeling, “Die Multi-Kulti-Nationalelf,” 522.

times for Argentina and thirty-one times for the Spanish national soccer team, the FIFA Congress decided to end unregulated nationality swapping and introduced the following rules: “(1) a player must be a naturalized citizen, according to the relevant country’s laws, to be eligible to represent the country; (2) if a player has been included on a national team, he is ineligible to represent another country.”¹¹⁹ In 2004, provisions were made that include that a player can still ask to change a team for which he is eligible to play for “if he has not played at the ‘A’ international level for his Association.”¹²⁰ This rule made it possible for an athlete to play for the youth German national team (e.g., U-21) but to choose to play for another country’s senior national team. Jérôme Boateng’s half-brother is such a case. Kevin-Prince Boateng played for Ghana in the 2010 World Cup, after going through all German national youth levels. In 2020, the FIFA Congress approved a rule change and now players can switch national teams if they have not played more than three official matches in a senior team if they “held the nationality of the association which they wish to represent [at the time they first played for a senior national team].”¹²¹

Many players with Turkish backgrounds (e.g., Nuri Sahin. Yildiray Bastürk, and the brothers Hamit and Halil Altintop) and from the former Yugoslavia (e.g., Ivan Klasnic), however, decided to choose not to play for the German national team, even though they

¹¹⁹ Gijssbert Oonk, “Who May Represent the Country? Football, Citizenship, Migration, and National Identity at the FIFA World Cup,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 37, no. 11 (2020): 1050.

¹²⁰ Oonk, “Who May,” 1051.

¹²¹ *Guide to Submitting a Request for Eligibility or Change of Association*, FIFA, 2021, 16.

were born and raised in (West) Germany.¹²² According to Gijs van Campenhout, Jacco van Sterkenburg, and Gijsbert Oonk, soccer players' decision to play for a certain team is based on heritage, residency (loyalty to a soccer club), or marriage rather than loyalty to the country of birth. They compared the diversity of fifteen national teams at the World Cups from 1930 to 2018 and concluded that nowadays, as opposed to 1930, foreign-born soccer players prefer to represent other national teams instead of their country of birth.¹²³ Andreas Merx identifies a deficient integration policy stemming from Germany's late recognition as a country of immigration as a possible reason talents did not choose to play for the German national team in the early 2000s.¹²⁴ This has changed because, according to the DFB, every second German national player at the 2030 World Cup is likely to have a *Migrationshintergrund*.¹²⁵

CONCLUSION

(West) Germany's belated identification as a country of immigration has caused significant roadblocks for immigrants in their daily personal and working lives. It took decades for players *mit Migrationshintergrund* to join the *Bundesliga* and Germany's

¹²² "M 03.10 Die Kinder von Einwanderern in der Nationalmannschaft," BpB, June 10, 2014, <https://www.bpb.de/lernen/grafstat/fussball-und-nationalbewusstsein/185974/m-03-10-die-kinder-von-einwanderern-in-der-nationalmannschaft>.

¹²³ Gijs van Campenhout, Jacco van Sterkenburg, and Gijsbert Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory? A Comparative History of Foreign-born Players in National Football Teams, c. 1930-2018," *Comparative Migration Studies* 7, no. 22 (2019): 14.

¹²⁴ Merx, "Nationalmannschaft," 9.

¹²⁵ "DFB von A bis Z: Integration."

national team. Even though the government of SPD and the Green Party already made immigration policy changes in 1998, it took the DFB a longer time to grapple with the multiethnic reality of the *Fußballnation*. It was not until the 2006 World Cup in Germany that one could visibly see the changes in the diverse German soccer team.¹²⁶ Since then, German soccer has become increasingly commercialized and globalized, resulting in soccer players becoming transmigrants and even celebrities. Before taking a closer look at German soccer celebrities' branding strategies, I will first explain the methodology I will apply.

¹²⁶ A similar phenomenon occurred in Switzerland after the U-17 youth team won the 2009 World Cup with a diverse soccer team, thereby contributing to the acceptance of multiculturalism. Hess, "Small-Country," 347.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Literature Review

Celebrities are famous individuals who receive attention from mass media and negotiate social structures and questions of belonging. They are also commodities that consumers want to possess or imitate.¹²⁷ According to Chris Rojek, one can become a celebrity in three ways: ascription, achievement, and attribution.¹²⁸ The “traditional” celebrities follow the logic of lineage (such as royals), whereas achieved celebrities accomplish their status through “perceived accomplishments.”¹²⁹ Those individuals usually distinguish themselves from others by exceptional talent or skill, such as athletes or actors. The “classical” film stars from the 1930s and 1940s, who were systematically created by the studio system in Hollywood, fall under this category. The globalization of media as well as consumer capitalism has contributed to the popularity of celebrity culture.¹³⁰ In Germany, the nationwide newspaper *Bild* contributed to celebrity coverage as early as the 1950s but has made it its main emphasis, together with sports, since the 1960s.¹³¹ The best-selling European newspaper enjoys a high reputation for its sports coverage, but it is notorious for its gossip, inflammatory language, and sensationalism. If cultural intermediaries like the mass media consider someone ordinary “noteworthy or

¹²⁷ Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 15.

¹²⁸ Rojek, *Celebrity*, 17.

¹²⁹ Rojek, *Celebrity*, 18.

¹³⁰ David P. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997), xiii.

¹³¹ The boulevard media outlet was created in 1952 and its chief editor Peter Boenisch made the change from political to celebrity and sports coverage. It is similar to the British “The Sun.”

exceptional,”¹³² this individual is considered an attributed celebrity. The idea that an ordinary individual could attain celebrity status, is part of the democratization development of celebrity culture. Those individuals are not only consumers but also producers of celebrity culture.¹³³ Graeme Turner points to online platforms like YouTube and reality TV such as *X-Factor*, *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, and *American Idol* as some key examples for the origin of attributed celebrities.¹³⁴

The following question arises: What is the difference between a celebrity and a sports celebrity? To answer this, an engagement with Richard Dyer’s analysis of a film star’s function is required.¹³⁵ Dyer points to the interplay between the stars’ image as represented through film performances, and as publicized via various media texts, such as fan clubs and promotional material, through which the stars’ “constructed personages”¹³⁶ are formed in the minds of the consuming audience. Film stars were the object of fan magazines and newspaper columns that paid attention to popular individuals and wrote about their private lives.¹³⁷ During the Third Reich, the American star system was also part

¹³² Rojek, *Celebrity*, 18.

¹³³ Mark Andrejevic, “The Kinder, Gentler Gaze of Big Brother Reality TV in the Era of Digital Capitalism,” *New Media & Society* 4, no. 2 (2002): 268.

¹³⁴ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2004), 4. Mainstream platforms like YouTube also made it possible to experience celebrities throughout different phases of their lives. Sean Redmond, *Celebrity & the Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), 119.

¹³⁵ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York City: St. Martin’s, 1986). Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979).

¹³⁶ Dyer, *Stars*, 90.

¹³⁷ Anne Jerslev and Mette Mortensen, “Celebrity in the Social Media Age Renegotiating the Public and the Private,” in *Routledge Handbook of Celebrity Studies*, ed. Anthony Elliott (London: Routledge, 2018), 161.

of German cinematic reality. After World War II, German film culture consisted of stars like Romy Schneider, Ruth Leuwerick, and Sonja Ziemann.¹³⁸ Television not only helped to establish a closer relationship with fans through an increasing exposure to the private lives of celebrities in the 1950s, but also gave rise to TV hosts and entertainers who became celebrities, such as Peter Frankenfeld and Hans-Joachim Kulenkampff.¹³⁹ While it was almost exclusively directors who could become stars during the “New German Cinema” era of the 1960s till early 1980s, more show and singing stars such as Caterina Valente und Peter Alexander arose as well.¹⁴⁰ Since the 1970s, there have been two trends on German television: celebrities that were popular among children and adults, e.g. B. Rudi Carrell and Thomas Gottschalk, and target group stars such as Alfred Biolek and Carolin Reiber.¹⁴¹ However, the deregulation of television stations as well as changes in film funding, the expansion of the film market, and the reorientation of directors towards films for a wider audience (as opposed to art house films) have led to the reappearance of the film star

¹³⁸ Stephen Lowry and Helmut Korte, *Der Filmstar: Brigitte Bardot, James Dean, Götz George, Heinz Rühmann, Romy Schneider, Hanna Schygulla und neuere Stars* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2000), 260.

¹³⁹ Ricarda Strobel and Werner Faulstich, ed., “Fernsehstars im Kontext ihrer Zeit: Die Herausbildung des neuen Startypus der neunziger Jahre,” in *Die deutschen Fernsehstars - Band 4: Zielgruppenstars* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 11.

¹⁴⁰ Strobel and Faulstich, “Herausbildung des neuen Startypus der neunziger Jahre,” 11.

¹⁴¹ Ricarda Strobel and Werner Faulstich, ed., “Fernsehstars im Kontext ihrer Zeit: ‘Familienstars’ über drei Jahrzehnte,” in *Die deutschen Fernsehstars - Band 3: Stars für die ganze Familie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 12.

system.¹⁴² The number of celebrities increased significantly in Germany from 1973 till 2003 (also the coverage of women and non-traditional celebrities).¹⁴³

Sports celebrity culture has not only separated itself from other cultural areas but has also changed dramatically since the 1960s. Relationships between sports celebrities and others were infrequent in the 1950s.¹⁴⁴ Nowadays, relationships between celebrities from different cultural areas seem to be more the norm than the exception. Some examples include David and Victoria Beckham, actress Eva Longoria and Tony Parker, and model Gisele Bündchen and Tom Brady.¹⁴⁵ Due to the extension of the sports sphere into other cultural sectors, celebrities now have two options for media coverage, through sports media and the boulevard press.¹⁴⁶ Sports celebrity coverage offers multiple staging opportunities, opens the door to more fans, and depicts the celebrities in a positive light.¹⁴⁷ This depiction of celebrities has changed from “*representational* media,” to

¹⁴² Lowry and Korte, *Der Filmstar*, 260.

¹⁴³ Schierl looked at the gossip magazines *Bunte* and (*Neue*) *Revue* and discovered that the average length of media articles decreased, and more images have been used in celebrity coverage. Thomas Schierl, ed., “Prominenz in den Medien: Eine empirische Studie zu Veränderungen in der Prominenzberichterstattung im Zeitraum 1973 bis 2003,” in *Prominenz in den Medien: Zur Genese und Verwertung von Prominenten in Sport, Wirtschaft und Kultur* (Köln: Halem, 2007), 39.

¹⁴⁴ Joe DiMaggio and Marilyn Monroe as well as Glenn Davis and Elizabeth Taylor in the US were exceptions to the rule. Chris Rojek, “Sports Celebrity and the Civilizing Process,” *Sport in Society* 9, no. 4 (2006): 683.

¹⁴⁵ The Beckhams are the only couple who are still together.

¹⁴⁶ While women tend to engage with celebrity coverage, sports coverage is targeted towards men. Christoph Bertling, “Medienpräsenz in People-Magazinen als produktpolitische Strategie für Hochleistungssportler,” in *Prominenz in den Medien: Zur Genese und Verwertung von Prominenten in Sport, Wirtschaft und Kultur*, ed. Thomas Schierl (Köln: Halem, 2007), 335.

¹⁴⁷ Bertling, “Medienpräsenz,” 339–40.

“*presentational media*,” which means that celebrities have started to produce their own content.¹⁴⁸ Due to the emergence of social networking sites, celebrities or their publicists can present themselves as they wish, and thereby produce three forms of self-presentation: the public, public private, and transgressive intimate self. The “*public self*”¹⁴⁹ is “the official version”¹⁵⁰ of the celebrity, including semi-official Facebook pages, which share film release dates or event schedules. Publicists are usually in charge of maintaining “the public persona as a valued cultural commodity”¹⁵¹ of high-profile celebrities. To counter this impersonal image, celebrities tend to use Twitter to present their “*public private self*.”¹⁵² Twitter is a platform that enables celebrities to respond immediately and in short texts. However, engaging with the public on a more personal level can also be problematic for celebrities when they are motivated by emotions. This “*transgressive intimate self*”¹⁵³ can offer new insights into the “authentic” individual celebrity.¹⁵⁴ Social media platforms

¹⁴⁸ Marshall, “Persona Studies,” 157.

¹⁴⁹ David P. Marshall, “The Promotion and Presentation of the Self: Celebrity as Marker of Presentational Media,” *Celebrity Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 44.

¹⁵⁰ Marshall, “The Promotion,” 44.

¹⁵¹ Marshall, “The Promotion,” 44.

¹⁵² Marshall, “The Promotion,” 44.

¹⁵³ Marshall, “The Promotion,” 45.

¹⁵⁴ An example for this kind of self would be Elizabeth Taylor’s tweet in response to Michael Jackson’s death, expressing her grief and close relationship. Marshall, “The Promotion,” 45.

are one of the most important tools for promoting personal and sponsor brands as well as for forming a consumer relationship.¹⁵⁵

Contemporary celebrities usually stem from the sports or entertainment industries, and sometimes even connect the two sectors. Athletes, according to David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson, must first demonstrate “performative excellence”¹⁵⁶ in their field of sports in order to achieve and maintain celebrity status. Therefore, their celebrity status is considered more authentic than others. It is also easier for athletes to become a celebrity due to their “heightened presence and affection within popular consciousness.”¹⁵⁷ David L. Andrews and Bryan Clift apply the filmic differentiation between performers, actors, and stars to the soccer world. The so-called “labourers,”¹⁵⁸ who are equivalent to the performers in the filmic sense, present limited footballing abilities, and attain almost no recognition. A significant level of talent is ascribed to actors and their soccer counterparts, the “players,” who are recognized as key contributors to their respective teams by people within and outside the soccer industry.¹⁵⁹ “Stars” are usually offensive soccer players who are “routinely capitalized upon [their excellence], within the extra-football world, whereby

¹⁵⁵ Kevin Filo, Daniel Lock, and Adam Karg, “Sport and Social Media Research: A Review,” *Sport Management Review* 18, no. 2 (2015): 167.

¹⁵⁶ Andrews and Jackson, introduction to *Sport Stars*, 8.

¹⁵⁷ Andrews and Jackson, introduction to *Sport Stars*, 8.

¹⁵⁸ David L. Andrews and Bryan C. Clift, “Football and Stardom: On Context, Intertextuality and Reflexivity,” in *Routledge Handbook of Football Studies*, ed. John Hughson, et al. (New York City: Routledge, 2016), 202.

¹⁵⁹ Andrews and Clift, “Football and Stardom,” 202.

the individual becomes celebritized.”¹⁶⁰ This dissertation analyzes three members of Germany’s 2014 World Cup Championship team who emerged as soccer celebrities: Podolski, Boateng, and Özil.

Before reviewing existing scholarship on sports fandom, masculinity and sports, advertisement and branding of athletes, and migration and the media, and explaining my methodology and source material, I introduce the three soccer celebrities analyzed in this dissertation.

LUKAS PODOLSKI

Even though Podolski is considered a star player in the traditional soccer sense, he promoted himself to celebrity status with his contributions outside soccer. Podolski published an autobiography, titled *Dranbleiben! Warum Talent nur der Anfang ist* (Keep Going! Why Talent Is just the Beginning, 2014; hereafter *Dranbleiben!*). Two years later, he released a song together with German rapper Mo-Torres and the band Cat Ballou called “Liebe deine Stadt” (love your city), a love letter to his hometown Cologne.¹⁶¹ Podolski owns multiple Cologne-based businesses, including his fashion label LP Strassenkicker, an ice cream parlor, and a kebab restaurant. His popular appeal has not been lost on advertisers either, as he has advertised for a myriad of businesses, ranging from grocery stores (REWE), to food and drink companies (Funny Frisch, Pepsi), to hygiene products (AXE). Podolski also supports charities and even founded an organization of his own, the

¹⁶⁰ Andrews and Clift use “stars” as a synonym for “celebrity” in this case. Andrews and Clift, “Football and Stardom,” 202.

¹⁶¹ He had already released a song with the Cologne band “Brings” in 2012.

Lukas-Podolski-Stiftung. Over the last few years, Podolski has appeared on German national television shows such as *Schlag den Star*¹⁶² and *Wer wird Millionär*,¹⁶³ and served as a judge on *Das Supertalent*, the German version of *Got Talent*.¹⁶⁴

JÉRÔME BOATENG

Boateng has become one of the most visible and popular Black celebrities in Germany. In 2015, Boateng became the first professional soccer player to sign with US rapper Jay-Z's Roc Nation Sports. Three years later, he launched his lifestyle magazine BOA. He has worked as an eyewear designer and has advertised his glasses via Edel Optics. His proclivity for international travels due to his US agency and his activities outside soccer was one of the reasons for Boateng's departure from *Bundesliga* club FC Bayern München.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, Boateng has frequently made headlines in gossip magazines regarding his alleged infidelity (his affair with model Gina-Lisa Lohfink), legal issues with the mother of his twin daughters Sherin Senler, and the suicide of his ex-girlfriend Kasia Lenhardt. In September 2021 a Munich court found Boateng guilty of assaulting Sherin Senler in 2018. He was ordered to pay €1.8 million, which was later reduced to 1.2 million.

¹⁶² In this show, *Schlag den Star*, two celebrities compete against each other in various sportive and intellectual disciplines. In Podolski's episode, he won against comedian Elton.

¹⁶³ It is a game show based on the British format of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* Podolski won €125,000 for his foundation.

¹⁶⁴ While it is common for athletes to work in the media industry as a reporter, commentator, or expert for instance, after their career, it is unusual for players to engage in so many different activities beyond soccer.

¹⁶⁵ "Welche Rolle Rapper Jay-Z bei den Bayern-Streithähnen spielt," *Focus*, September 3, 2018, https://www.focus.de/sport/fussball/bundesliga1/rummenigge-vs-boateng-welche-rolle-rapper-jay-z-bei-den-bayern-streithaehnen-spielt_id_9390018.html.

MESUT ÖZIL

Özil has become a high-profile celebrity who received Germany's most coveted media prize, the Bambi award, for being a prime example of successful integration within German society in 2010. His rise to German celebrity status includes a lifelike wax figure in Madame Tussauds Wax Museum in Berlin.¹⁶⁶ In 2013, Özil created his own logo and wrote his autobiography *Die Magie des Spiels (Gunning for Greatness: My Life, 2017)*. He has also supported many good causes such as the "BigShoe project" or the "My Shining Star." His activism ranges from supporting Zaatari refugee camps in Jordan to Azerbaijan in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. In 2020, Özil launched his streetwear label, "M10 Streetwear." Besides his religious and political interests, his media coverage also reports on his love life, documenting his history with German singer Mandy Capristo and marriage to Amine Gülşe, who was Miss Turkey in 2014.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fandom

As an intersection of sports and cultural studies, scholarship on fans has emerged in the last two decades as a result of the rise of electronic media, mass culture, and public performance.¹⁶⁷ Research on fan consumption and behavior is necessary because it has

¹⁶⁶ Mesut Özil. "Grüße aus New York und Berlin Greetings from New York and Berlin New York ve Berlin den selamlarla Saludos desde Nueva York y Berlin M1Ö." Facebook, image, June 18, 2013. <https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/553031198108790/>.

¹⁶⁷ According to Jonathan Gray, et al., three generations of fan scholarship can be identified. Whereas fan studies scholars in the 1980s "set out to rigorously defend fan communities against their ridicule in the mass media and by non-fans," social and cultural hierarchies among fans form the basis of works during the second wave. The third wave gives insights into the global aspect of fan culture as well as consumption

become such an essential part of daily life.¹⁶⁸ Sports fandom “is both a private reality experienced at deep psychological and emotional levels, and a social phenomenon manifested and expressed publicly amongst communities of fellow fans and/or anti-fans.”¹⁶⁹ According to Mark Duffett, “[s]ports fandom remains the most accepted model for fandom in our society. It has gradually been extended as mass spectacle and its elite players have increasingly taken up the associated trappings of stardom.”¹⁷⁰

German soccer has tried to uphold the perceived sacred trust between the club and its fans in a commercial, globalized era. Despite all these changes, fans “celebrate the uniqueness of the local: the neighborhood of the club’s origin, the region’s language (dialect), and the area-specific customs and culture.”¹⁷¹ It is possible for German fans, unlike in other European leagues, to purchase cheap tickets to stand in the bleachers, for instance, Borussia Dortmund’s fans can support their team starting at €18.50. Before the establishment of the *Bundesliga*, fans saw players of their team as representatives of their district or city. Players were on the same social and financial level as their fans and were

patterns. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, ed., introduction to *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (New York City: New York University, 2007), 2–8.

¹⁶⁸ Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington, introduction to *Fandom*, 9.

¹⁶⁹ Vivi Theodoropoulou, “‘Just to Pique Them’: Takings Sides, Social Identity, and Sport Audiences,” in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott (New York: Routledge, 2017), 222.

¹⁷⁰ Mark Duffett, *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture* (New York City: Bloomsbury, 2013), 25.

¹⁷¹ Stephan Schindler, “Local Fans, Global Players: Contradictions in Postindustrial Football,” in *Football Nation: The Playing Fields of German Culture, History, and Society*, ed. Rebecca Dawson, Bastian Heinsohn, Oliver Knabe, and Alan McDougall (New York City: Berghahn Books, 2022), 66.

more of a friend than unapproachable figures with a higher status.¹⁷² Increasing professionalization and the globalization of soccer contributed to the distance between fans and soccer players. Not only has the status of players evolved, but fandom has advanced as well. Wilhelm Heitmeyer categorizes three kinds of fans: *konsumorientierte* (consumption-oriented), *fußballzentrierte* (soccer-centric), and *erlebnisorientierte* (experience-oriented) fans.¹⁷³ The *konsumorientierte* fan is concerned about sporting success (soccer itself is arbitrary and interchangeable).¹⁷⁴ They attend matches alone or in a small group and prefer to be seated. The *fußballzentrierte* fan is loyal to a club (even when the team is unsuccessful).¹⁷⁵ These fans belong to a fan club or express their soccer identification within a clique. The *erlebnisorientierte* fan is in the stadium to experience a soccer game without concerns about the sporting situation.¹⁷⁶

With the emergence and popularity of social media in the 2000s, the relationship between celebrities and their fans has become considerably more intimate. Ties to the celebrity tend to feel stronger, resulting in positive feelings towards the celebrity and increasing the level of life satisfaction.¹⁷⁷ Social media allow fans and celebrities to

¹⁷² Peter Becker and Gunter A. Pilz, *Die Welt der Fans: Aspekte einer Jugendkultur* (München: Copress, 1988), 18.

¹⁷³ Wilhelm Heitmeyer and Jörg-Ingo Peter, *Jugendliche Fußballfans: Soziale und politische Orientierungen, Gesellungsformen, Gewalt* (München: Juventa, 1998), 32.

¹⁷⁴ Heitmeyer and Peter, *Jugendliche Fußballfans*, 32.

¹⁷⁵ Heitmeyer and Peter, *Jugendliche Fußballfans*, 32.

¹⁷⁶ Heitmeyer and Peter, *Jugendliche Fußballfans*, 32.

¹⁷⁷ Minseong Kim and Jihye Kim, "How Does a Celebrity Make Fans Happy? Interaction between Celebrities and Fans in the Social Media Context," *Computers in Human Behavior* 111 (2020): 9.

communicate with each other more directly through new features such as likes, comments, and replies. Every celebrity can decide for themselves what and how to share publicly. Facebook, as the largest social network in the world, connects the peculiarities of most other social media channels with each other and is also ideal for fan loyalty due to its popularity. Athletes who like to communicate in a few characters or write creative statements utilize Twitter. Others are more visual types, and therefore more suited for platforms such as Instagram.

While many scholars have researched fans in the stadium or sporting events, less research has been conducted on the online community of fans. Despite various studies on supporters around the world, most academic research focuses on soccer fans in England, hooligan culture, and fan rivalry.¹⁷⁸ Research in the online section has mainly revolved around the communication efforts of sports organizations and professional athletes.¹⁷⁹ The online environment enables new target groups to join the conversation, such as women. Although the number of women attending sports events has increased, their fan authenticity has often been questioned by men and women alike.¹⁸⁰ In the German context, Oliver Fürtjes concludes that female stadium attendance comprised only twenty to twenty-five

¹⁷⁸ E.g., Carrie Dunn, *Female Football Fans: Community, Identity and Sexism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti, ed., *Fear and Loathing in World Football* (Oxford: Berg, 2001). Ramón Spaaij, "Men Like Us, Boys Like Them: Violence, Masculinity, and Collective Identity in Football Hooliganism," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 32, no. 4 (2008).

¹⁷⁹ E.g., Matthew D. Meng, Constantino Stavros, and Kate Westberg, "Engaging Fans through Social Media: Implications for Team Identification," *Sport, Business and Management* 5, no. 3 (2015).

¹⁸⁰ Victoria K. Gosling, "Girls Allowed? The Marginalization of Female Sports Fans," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York City: New York University, 2007), 255.

percent of all visitors in 2014, which is only a slight increase of five to ten percent since 1997.¹⁸¹ A growing number of studies has focused on the experiences and socializations of female soccer fans, especially in the British context.¹⁸²

Masculinity and Sports

Even though soccer has remained largely a sphere for the expression of masculinity, it has become a mass phenomenon that reaches people who had previously not been interested in it. This is particularly true during big tournaments, such as the World Cup. One of the most important figures in linking national identity, masculinity, and sports was the founder of the widely popular gymnastics movement, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. He promoted physical exercises and body training of men under the concept of patriotism and nationalism.¹⁸³ The German sports system consists of two kinds of sports: *Breitensport* (sports for all) and the more competitive and training intensive *Leistungssport* (competitive sports). While *Breitensport* in the nineteenth century emerged “as an institution of social fatherhood to provide training in manly pursuits – war, commerce, and government,”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Oliver Fürtjes, “Frauen, Fußball und Kommerz – Eine besondere Liaison? Eine empirische Untersuchung zum Frauenprofil in Fußballstadien,” *Spectrum der Sportwissenschaft* 26, no. 2 (2014): 29.

¹⁸² E.g., Svenja-Maria Mintert and Gertrud Pfister, “The FREE Project and the Feminization of Football: The Role of Women in the European Fan Community,” *Soccer and Society* 16, no. 2–3 (2015). Gertrud Pfister and Stacey Pope, ed., *Female Football Players and Fans Intruding into a Man’s World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

¹⁸³ Jahn was part of the *Vormärzbewegung* (pre-March movement), a period before the 1848 March Revolution in the association of predominantly German-speaking sovereign states, that sought national unification. Léon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism: From Voltaire to Wagner*, trans. Miriam Kochan (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 381.

¹⁸⁴ Varda Burstyn, *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999), 45.

sexual anxieties (femininity and homosexuality) created the hypermasculine athlete in the early twentieth century sports culture.¹⁸⁵ Hypermasculinity is “an exaggerated ideal of manhood linked mythically and practically to the role of the warrior.”¹⁸⁶ Persistent homophobia in the 1980s and 1990s (in part due to the AIDS crisis) gave academics the opportunity to study the relationship between masculinity and sports, with a focus on homophobia.¹⁸⁷ Contemporary research emphasizes the progressive attitudes and behaviors of team athletes and new possibilities for identity construction, for both homosexual and heterosexual athletes.¹⁸⁸ Eric Anderson argues that “[h]omophobia made hyper-masculinity compulsory for boys, and it made the expression of femininity among boys taboo.”¹⁸⁹ Anderson developed the inclusive masculinity theory, which states that “multiple masculinities will proliferate with less hierarchy or hegemony.”¹⁹⁰ These types of changes in the notion of masculinity have been researched by others as well, among

¹⁸⁵ Sports movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries always defined military preparedness as a motivation.

¹⁸⁶ Burstyn, *The Rites of Men*, 4.

¹⁸⁷ E.g., David Plummer, *One of the Boys: Masculinity, Homophobia, and Modern Manhood* (London: Routledge, 2016).
Brian Pronger, *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, Homosexuality, and the Meaning of Sex* (New York City: St. Martin's, 1990).

¹⁸⁸ E.g., Adi Adams, “‘Josh Wears Pink Cleats’: Inclusive Masculinity on the Soccer Field,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 58, no. 5 (2011).
Andrew Schrack-Walters, Kathleen A. O'Donnell, and Daniel L. Wardlow, “Deconstructing the Myth of the Monolithic Male Athlete: A Qualitative Study of Men's Participation in Athletics,” *Sex Roles* 60, no. 1–2 (2008): 81–99.

¹⁸⁹ Eric Anderson, *Inclusive Masculinity: The Changing Nature of Masculinities* (New York City: Routledge, 2009), 7.

¹⁹⁰ Anderson, *Inclusive Masculinity*, 9.

others, Matthias Kaelberer who states that homophobia in German soccer is a structural problem. Thomas Hitzlsperger is Germany's first professional, well-known soccer player who came out as homosexual in 2014 after he retired from German soccer. It took the German magazine *11 Freunde* until 2021 to launch a campaign in support of LGBTQIA+, with images of several stars of the *Bundesliga*, holding signs reading, "You can count on us!"¹⁹¹

The focus on traditional masculinity changed, as the emergence of metrosexuality signifies. First introduced by journalist Mark Simpson in 1994, the term describes heterosexual men who mostly pay attention to their looks (highlighting their vanity and narcissism through consumer products), live in the city, have a high income, and like to take care of themselves.¹⁹² Simpson revived the discussion about metrosexuality in 2002 and started to link it with sports culture, and in particular with David Beckham.¹⁹³ Beckham is the "'poster-boy' for metrosexuality"¹⁹⁴ in soccer due to his marriage to former Spice Girl Victoria Beckham "his ever-changing hairstyle and his courageous fashion choices."¹⁹⁵ Ellis Cashmore and Andrew Parker argue that Beckham signifies the "'new-

¹⁹¹ "Ihr könnt auf uns zählen!" Even though the public discourse surrounding the coming-out of Germany's first homosexual soccer player was positive, homosexuality is still not desirable or normalized in professional German soccer. Matthias Kaelberer, "Inclusive Masculinities, Homosexuality and Homophobia in German Professional Soccer," *Sexuality & Culture* 24, no. 3 (2019): 806.

¹⁹² David Coad, *The Metrosexual: Gender, Sexuality, and Sport* (Albany: SUNY, 2008), 19.

¹⁹³ Coad, *The Metrosexual*, 19.

¹⁹⁴ Ben Clayton and John Harris, "Sport and Metrosexual Identity: Sports Media and Emergent Sexualities," in *Sport and Social Identities*, ed. John Harris and Andrew Parker (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 135.

¹⁹⁵ Clayton, and Harris, "Sport and Metrosexual Identity," 135.

lad’/‘dad-lad’ (soccer hero, fashionable father, conspicuous consumer— some would argue, all round, cosmetically conscientious ‘metrosexual’) while still demonstrating vestiges of ‘old industrial man’ (loyal, dedicated, stoic, breadwinning).”¹⁹⁶ Soccer offers “the most visible manifestations of the metrosexual movement,”¹⁹⁷ linking metrosexuality with a lifestyle, not a sexual orientation.

Twenty years after Mark Simpson coined the term “metrosexuality,” he introduced a new generation of men, the so-called “spornosexuals.”¹⁹⁸ The term combines the words “sport” with “porn.” Spornosexual men have “painstakingly pumped and chiselled bodies, muscle-enhancing tattoos, piercings, adorable beards and plunging necklines.” Simpson emphasizes the commodification of their body as a key element for the marketing of for example athletes like rugby player Thom Evans. The focus for those of kind of men is not being dressed well, but rather displaying their well-trained body.

Advertisement and Branding of Athletes

Scholarship on self-branding is a more recent phenomenon, including studies on athletes.¹⁹⁹ Starting in the 1990s, branding questions have become increasingly popular in

¹⁹⁶ Ellis Cashmore and Andrew Parker, “One David Beckham? Celebrity, Masculinity, and the Soccerati,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 20, no. 3 (2003): 225.

¹⁹⁷ David Coad, “Euro 2004 and Football Fashion,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 29, no. 1 (February 2005): 126.

¹⁹⁸ Mark Simpson, “The Metrosexual Is Dead: Long Live the ‘Spornosexual,’” *Telegraph*, June 10, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/fashion-and-style/10881682/The-metrosexual-is-dead.-Long-live-the-spornosexual.html>.

¹⁹⁹ E.g., Lauren Reichart Smith and Jimmy Sanderson, “I’m Going to Instagram It! An Analysis of Athlete Self-Presentation on Instagram,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 59, no. 2 (2015).

academia.²⁰⁰ Recent studies tend to focus on the consumer's perspective as well. Various studies have found that brand choice and brand loyalty are influenced by the perceptions and associations that consumers make with a brand.²⁰¹ How successful celebrity brands can nowadays be is illustrated by Kylie Jenner's Kylie Cosmetics, which made \$420 million in revenue eighteen months after its launch in 2014.²⁰²

In the sports sector, the athlete's style of play, personality off the field, and fan perceptions create one such unique brand. Akiko Arai, Yong Jae Ko, and Stephen Ross define an athlete brand as "a public persona of an individual athlete who has established their symbolic meaning and value using their name, face or other brand elements in the market."²⁰³ Scholars have studied how athletes self-present themselves via face-to-face interactions, mass media, and social media.²⁰⁴ Social media have become one of the most influential avenues to promote a personal brand. Jimmy Sanderson explored how rookie athletes in Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Basketball Association (NBA), the

²⁰⁰ E.g., David A. Aaker, "Measuring Brand Equity Across Products and Markets," *California Management Review* 38, no. 3 (1996).

²⁰¹ E.g., Hans H. Bauer, Nicola E. Stokburger-Sauer, and Stefanie Exler, "Brand Image and Fan Loyalty in Professional Team Sport: A Refined Model and Empirical Assessment," *Journal of Sport Management* 22, no. 2 (2008).

²⁰² Brittany Talarico, "Kylie Jenner Made \$420 Million in 18 Months from Her Cosmetics Company, Says Kris Jenner," *People*, October 24, 2017, <https://people.com/style/kylie-jenner-cosmetics-company-worth/>.

²⁰³ Akiko Arai, Yong Jae Ko, and Stephen Ross, "Branding Athletes: Exploration and Conceptualization of Athlete Brand Image," *Sport Management Review* 17, no. 2 (2014): 98.

²⁰⁴ E.g., Andrea N. Geurin-Eagleman, and Lauren M. Burch, "Communicating via Photographs: A Gendered Analysis of Olympic Athletes' Visual Self-Presentation on Instagram," *Sport Management Review* 19, no. 2 (2016).

Katie Lebel and Karen Danylchuk, "Facing Off on Twitter: A Generation Y Interpretation of Professional Athlete Profile Pictures," *International Journal of Sport Communication* 7, no. 3 (2014).

National Football League (NFL), and the National Hockey League (NHL) used Twitter to “actively and diversely assert their identity”²⁰⁵ by posting about their daily life, devotion to work, motivations, popular culture preferences, fandom of other athletes, but also by requesting fans to assist them with questions.

Migration and the Media

In recent years, the role of media in connection with integration has become more pronounced, resulting in studies about media representation of migrants. According to Rainer Geißler’s survey article, the print media in Germany mainly portrays migrants as threats to public security, economic and social burdens for the state, and as “problem groups.”²⁰⁶ Geißler highlights two German print outlets for their one-sided negative view of Muslims (terrorism, violence, fundamentalism): the tabloid-like national newspaper *Bild* and the news magazine *Der Spiegel* (similar to *Time* magazine in the United States).²⁰⁷ This negative depiction can also be found on television, where one-third of migrant coverage ties migrants to terrorism. Marcus Maurer, Pablo Jost, Simon Kruschinski, and Jörg Haßler examined the media coverage of refugees and migration in six German leading media (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Bild*, ARD’s *Tagesschau*, ZDF’s *Heute*, and RTL *Aktuell*) between 2016 and 2020. More than every tenth

²⁰⁵ Jimmy Sanderson, “Stepping into the (Social Media) Game: Building Athlete Identity via Twitter,” in *Handbook of Research on Technoself: Identity in a Technological Society*, ed. Rocci Luppacini (Hershey: Information Science Reference, 2013), 419.

²⁰⁶ Rainer Geißler, “Mediale Integration von ethnischen Minderheiten: Der Beitrag der Massenmedien zur interkulturellen Integration,” in *Zur Rolle der Medien in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft*, ed. Abteilung Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2010), 11.

²⁰⁷ Geißler, “Mediale Integration,” 12.

contribution connects migrants with terrorism and crime.²⁰⁸ The depiction of the refugees is mostly negative, and German media emphasizes above all the dangers of immigration for Germany.²⁰⁹ Lina-Marie Wintzer, however, also sees a change in migrant representation (from the 1990s to 2015) in magazines, such as *Der Spiegel*. The negative depiction of migrants (burden, threat) in the 1990s is slowly replaced by a more positive framing (enrichment for society and economy).²¹⁰ Margreth Lünenborg, Katharina Fritsche, and Annika Bach identify the depiction of victims as the dominant representation of migrant women in German, national daily newspapers.²¹¹ This representation of migrant women depends not only on the newspaper but also on the department, topic, and time of reporting. Gender relations, sexist practices, and sexual violence feature prominently in assessing Germany's migrant population and in particular male Muslims and Turks.²¹² German media paints foreign workers in a less negative light than migrant men; foreign

²⁰⁸ Marcus Maurer et al., *Fünf Jahre Medienberichterstattung über Flucht und Migration* (Mainz: Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz Institut für Publizistik, 2021), 3.

²⁰⁹ More liberal newspapers (such as *Süddeutsche Zeitung*) report less negatively than more right-leaning ones (such as *Bild*). Maurer et al., *Fünf Jahre*, 3.

²¹⁰ Lina-Marie Wintzer, "Die visuelle Darstellung von Migranten – Wandel und Kontinuitäten im deutschen Mediendiskurs," *Global Media Journal* 6, no. 1 (2016): 23.

²¹¹ Margreth Lünenborg, Katharina Fritsche, and Annika Bach, *Migrantinnen in den Medien: Darstellungen in der Presse und ihre Rezeption* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), 105.

²¹² Iris Wigger, "Anti-Muslim Racism and the Racialisation of Sexual Violence: 'Intersectional Stereotyping' in Mass Media Representations of Male Muslim Migrants in Germany," *Culture and Religion* 20, no. 3 (2019), 266.
Christoph Ramm, "The Muslim Makers: How Germany 'Islamizes' Turkish Immigrants," *Interventions* 12, no. 2 (2020): 185.

athletes are even depicted positively.²¹³ Celebrity migrants are portrayed as successful because they are integrated, and their success proves their integration.²¹⁴ Now, I would like to turn to the methodology used to analyze the soccer celebrities' media and self-representation.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

Whereas earlier text analysis methods provided insights into language, in more recent years, scholarship on representation has concerned itself with the role of discourse in culture. Discourses “are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society.”²¹⁵ It is produced through specific languages, including visual, and practices, while it concerns itself with how the discourse-produced knowledge connects with power, authority, identity, other related discourses, and the question of the subject.²¹⁶ In this dissertation, I will examine discourses (e.g., masculinity) surrounding soccer celebrities by drawing on specific critical concepts

²¹³ Daniel Müller, “Die Darstellung ethnischer Minderheiten in deutschen Massenmedien,” in *Massenmedien und die Integration ethnischer Minderheiten in Deutschland: Problemaufriss – Forschungsstand – Bibliographie*, ed. Rainer Geißler and Heinz Pöttker (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2005), 100–2.

²¹⁴ Kate Zambon, “Celebrity Migrants and the Racialized Logic of Integration in Germany,” *Popular communication* 19, no. 3 (2021): 218.

²¹⁵ Stuart Hall, introduction to *Representation*, 2nd ed., ed. Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon (Milton Keynes: SAGE, 2013), xxii.

²¹⁶ The pioneer of discourse theory was Michel Foucault. See, e.g., Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York City: Pantheon Books, 1972).

(e.g., celebrity categories). These types of discussions can be analyzed through discourse analysis, which according to Hall, belongs to “*constructionist*” approaches.²¹⁷ Sports celebrities function as role models and sources for identity formation. At the same time, they represent what is appropriate and what is not, which type of knowledge is useful and which type is not, and who embodies its features and who does not.

To determine the intertextual assembly of media representation in Germany, the following chapters focus on the analysis of two soccer films and the interpretation of sports celebrities through close readings and a discourse analysis as represented in one of Germany’s most prominent soccer magazines (*Kicker*) and sports television shows (*Das aktuelle Sportstudio*), advertisements, social media (by fans and athletes), (fan) songs, Boateng’s biography by Michael Horeni, and Podolski’s and Özil’s autobiographies. One chapter is dedicated to each soccer celebrity, analyzing how discourse-produced knowledge connects with questions of fan expectations, masculinity norms, entrepreneurialism, and migration discourses have influenced the depiction and self-representation of Podolski, Boateng, and Özil.

The sports media is represented by *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* and *Kicker*. The latter focuses primarily on soccer and was founded in 1920 by German soccer pioneer Walther Bensemann. It is published twice per week. Analyzing every article published on Podolski, Boateng, and Özil would be an impossible task, and I therefore focus on specific sporting

²¹⁷ The other two representation theories are “*reflective*” and the “*intentional*” approaches. The “reflective approach” concerns itself with the “object, person, idea or event in the real world, and language functions like a mirror.” In contrast, the “intentional approach” centers on the author as the creator of meaning. Stuart Hall, “The Work of Representation,” in *Representation*, 2nd ed., ed. Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon (Milton Keynes: SAGE, 2013), 10.

events in the players' lives that gained, in my opinion, enormous media attention. *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* has aired late on Saturday evenings at the German public-service broadcaster ZDF since August 24, 1963. Even though the sports show *Sportschau*, airing on the public broadcaster ARD, has been broadcasting soccer games since 1961, *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* was the first to connect sports with entertainment elements such as a live band and the famous *Torwandschießen* (soccer goal scoring competition).²¹⁸ It covers main events from all different sports, but most importantly Germany's top soccer league, the *Bundesliga*. *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* invites major sports stars for in-depth interviews. The three episodes chosen for this analysis are from Boateng (January 30, 2010, and March 19, 2016) and Podolski (August 6, 2005). Unfortunately, there are no episodes with Özil.²¹⁹

Özil and Podolski followed in Beckenbauer's footsteps by writing their own autobiography (*Die Magie des Spiels* and *Dranbleiben!*, respectively). Even though sports autobiographies are, according to journalist Claus Vetter,²²⁰ a dying business due to the

²¹⁸ The literal translation of the word is "goal-wall-shooting." This is a competition in which people kick a soccer ball at a wall with several holes in it, mimicking a shot at a soccer goal.

²¹⁹ He declined an invitation by *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* presenter Dunja Hayalis who wanted to talk about racism after Özil's resignation in 2018. "Bei Dunja Hayalis Premiere hagelt es Absagen," *Welt*, August 22, 2018, <https://www.welt.de/sport/article181262822/ZDF-Sportstudio-Bei-Dunja-Hayalis-Premiere-hagelt-es-Absagen.html>.

²²⁰ Claus Vetter, "Warum Fußballer-Autobiografien immer seltener werden," *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 5, 2020, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/sport/sport-in-der-literatur-warum-fussballer-autobiografien-immer-seltener-werden/25888560.html>.

disinterest of the younger generations, international soccer celebrities like Zlatan Ibrahimović²²¹ and Megan Rapinoe²²² published their autobiographies in recent years.

Getting young people interested in sports and soccer today, though, is often accomplished through social media and music. In the UK, various soccer players released their songs such as Glenn Hoddle and Chris Waddle's *Diamond Lights* (1987), Ian Wright's *Do the Right Thing* (1993), and Andy Cole's *Outstanding* (1999). In Germany, the musical contributions of soccer players reach as far back as the 1960s with Petar "Radi" Radekovic's *Bin i radi, bin i König* (Am I Radi, Am I King, 1965) and Beckenbauer's *Gute Freunde kann niemand trennen* (Nobody Can Separate Good Friends, 1966).²²³ The songs discussed here include Mo-Torres featuring Cat Ballou and Podolski, "Liebe deine Stadt," Mesut Özil and Jan Delay performing a version of "Large" (2010), and Jack Whitehall featuring Boateng with the song "Mannschaft" (2018).

Athletes promote not only their music and products but also their sponsors on social media. Some of the biggest athletes make an income through endorsement deals. It all started in the 1920s when baseball player Babe Ruth endorsed a line of athletic, cotton underwear even though he preferred to wear silk.²²⁴ Babe Ruth became an American icon

²²¹ Zlatan Ibrahimović and David Lagercrantz, *Jag är Zlatan Ibrahimović* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers, 2011). (I am *Zlatan Ibrahimović*)

²²² Megan Rapinoe and Emma Brockes, *One Life* (New York City: Penguin, 2020).

²²³ The German national team also has a history of published songs, such as "Fußball ist unser Leben" (Soccer Is Our Life; 1973) or "Buenos Dias Argentina" (Good Morning Argentina, 1978).

²²⁴ Thomas Barthel, *Babe Ruth and the Creation of the Celebrity Athlete* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2018), 106. He endorsed everything, from cereal and Girl Scout cookies to soap. One company that profited from Babe Ruth was Curtiss Candy Company. They released a candy bar named "Baby Ruth"

for exuberance on and off the field (radio appearances, press articles, endorsements). In 1930, during the time of the Great Depression (1929-1939), he made more money than then-US President Herbert Hoover.²²⁵ Since then, sporting celebrities have been trying to associate their names with the latest products and international brands, such as the basketball player Michael Jordan signing a \$7 million deal with Nike in 1984.²²⁶ Celebrities and companies, such as Nike, Adidas, and Apple, are increasingly connected and promote consumerism that depends on celebrity culture and vice versa. The following chapters cover some of Podolski, Boateng, and Özil's personal endorsement deals to explore celebrity presentation.²²⁷ The chosen advertisement campaigns reflect endorsement changes from the beginning of the celebrity's career until later (usually after the World Cup win in 2014).

Globalization, new media structures, and changes in consumer culture have paved the way for soccer players to become media celebrities. In order to understand the connection between soccer and consumer culture, one has to recognize soccer's importance

in 1921 but disputed its connection to Babe Ruth to avoid paying him any royalties. They claimed they named the bar after Ruth Cleveland, the daughter of former US President Grover Cleveland.

²²⁵ He earned \$80,000 a year, which was \$5,000 more than Hoover.

²²⁶ Jordan created the "Air Jordan" brand with Nike, establishing him as one of the most well-recognized public figures in modern society.

²²⁷ Both soccer teams as well the individual players earn income through sponsorship deals. Soccer players have endorsement deals as an individual and with their soccer club's sponsors. Sometimes, the endorsement deals of players can clash with the team's sponsors. In 2013, German national team player Mario Götze enraged FC Bayern München team sponsor Adidas by wearing a Nike T-shirt at his introduction as a new player.

for the construction of an “imagined community,”²²⁸ in Benedict Anderson’s sense. Soccer can create foundation myths, as the so-called “Das Wunder von Bern” and “Das Sommermärchen” signify. These are then retold in various media including soccer films such as Wortmann’s *Das Wunder von Bern* and *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*.

²²⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (New York City: Verso, 2006), 24.

Chapter 3: “Germanness” in Sönke Wortmann’s *Das Wunder von Bern* (2003) and *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* (2006)

“Schäfer puts in the cross... header... cleared. Rahn should shoot from deep... Rahn shoots! Goal! Goal! Goal! Goal! Goal for Germany!”²²⁹ This legendary radio commentary by Herbert Zimmermann occurred during the World Cup final between Hungary and the FRG on July 4, 1954. Winning their first soccer world championship is seen as the starting point of the FRG, giving West Germans legitimate reasons to celebrate for the first time following World War II.²³⁰ “Das Wunder von Bern,” as the media dubbed it, forged a connection between soccer and postwar Germany retold in books²³¹ and films²³² to this day. This surprise win against Hungary, the World Cup favorite, was the starting point of the FRG’s rebirth as a unified nation following World War II.

The 2006 World Cup in Germany, the so called “Sommermärchen,” forced discussions of patriotism and nationalism into the realm of soccer. According to Jonathan Grix, some of Germany’s aims were to increase its international reputation, to improve its image, and to attract more tourists and investments, accomplished by means of so-called “Fan Zones.” The positive image was fostered by the ethnic diversity of Germany’s national soccer team, including players such as Miroslav Klose and Lukas Podolski (Polish

²²⁹ “Schäfer nach innen geflankt... Kopfball... Abgewehrt. Aus dem Hintergrund müsste Rahn schießen... Rahn schießt! Tor! Tor! Tor! Tor! Tor für Deutschland!”

¹²⁹ Werner Krauss, “Football, Nation and Identity: German Miracles in the Post-War Era,” in *Sport, Dance and Embodied Identities*, ed. Noel Dyck and Eduardo P. Archetti (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 199.

²³¹ E.g., Friedrich C. Delius, *Der Sonntag, an dem ich Weltmeister wurde* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1994).

²³² E.g., *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1979; Leipzig: Kinowelt, 2005), DVD.

background), Oliver Neuville (Swiss/Italian heritage), as well as Gerald Asamoah and David Odonkor (Ghanian roots). Even though Germany only placed third in the World Cup in 2006, the events of the match significantly shifted the image of the *Fußballnation*, underscored by Sönke Wortmann's documentary about the German team's journey through the tournament.

Wortmann is one of the few to celebrate the (West) German national soccer team during the two World Cups mentioned above in his commercially and critically acclaimed films *Das Wunder von Bern* and *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*. *Das Wunder von Bern* captures the importance of soccer to West Germany's values and self-understanding in 1954. In a similar vein, *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* portrays the rise of the German underdog during the 2006 World Cup through its depiction of soccer celebrities Lukas Podolski and Bastian Schweinsteiger.

To study how soccer has been used in connection with (West) German identity creation, this chapter will explain the ways in which German self-understanding is inscribed and problematized in *Das Wunder von Bern* and *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*, two films focusing on the German national as opposed to regional teams. More precisely, I address how "Germanness" has been dealt with visually and narratively in both films. First, I explain and define "Germanness" as a concept before reviewing German soccer film scholarship. Then, I analyze the two films in terms of how they depict "Germanness."

“GERMANNESS”

From 1913 to 1999, nationality law in West Germany (and later reunified Germany) was based on the principle *ius sanguinis*: acquiring citizenship through descent from a German parent. It was easier to declare and accept a territorial citizenship in a society that was mostly ethnically homogeneous. However, this changed with the *Gastarbeiterprogramm* and the resulting citizenship issues for guest workers and the generations that followed. Changes were made to German nationality law, permitting birthright citizenship (*ius soli*) for children born since January 1, 2000, to noncitizen immigrants. Few markers of identity are more contentious than that of nationality; therefore, questions arose during this time: What does it mean to be “German?” Who is considered “German” by whom?

Multiple scholars have tried to define what “Germanness” means.²³³ Alexander Maxwell and Sacha E. Davis use the term “Germanness” to avoid the ambiguous term “identity.” “Germanness” in Maxwell and Davis’s usage is a collective, self-proclaimed but sometimes also externally ascribed, socially and historically dependent “category of practice.”²³⁴ This means that “Germanness” is tied to a collective, evolves over time, and can be changed by the actors themselves, by social practices, and by institutions. In contrast, Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper state that the term “identity” is used to talk either about individuals or collectives as well as to discuss it as an external (as a

²³³ An idea of “Germanness” as a marker of identity had already been articulated by Johann Gottfried Herder, who emphasized language and culture as markers for “Germanness.” Royal J. Schmidt, “Cultural Nationalism in Herder,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 17, no. 3 (June 1956): 407.

²³⁴ Alexander Maxwell and Sacha E. Davis, “Germanness beyond Germany: Collective Identity in German Diaspora Communities,” *German Studies Review* 39, no. 1 (2016): 2.

product of social and political action) or an internal (as a product of various discourses within the “self”) ascription.²³⁵

Several scholars either frame it in terms of the state(s) governing the core German ethnoterritory or according to regional loyalties.²³⁶ Others, such as Jürgen Habermas, have explored “Germanness” in studies of legal citizenship, called *Verfassungspatriotismus* (constitutional patriotism). Habermas proposes citizenship based on an attachment to norms and values of a pluralistic liberal democratic constitution instead of to a national culture.²³⁷ This is especially important in nations with multiple ethnic groups and cultures such as Germany. According to Habermas, national identities are culturally inherited artifacts that must be learned by others, for example, foreigners or guest workers.

This dissertation draws on Willem Schinkel’s notion of moral citizenship.²³⁸ Schinkel distinguishes between the legal aspect of citizenship and the “*extra-legal*

²³⁵ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (February 2000): 6–8.

²³⁶ Maxwell and Davis, “Germanness,” 2.

For scholarship on German ethnoterritory see: Mark Blacksell, “State and Nation: Germany Since Reunification,” in *National Identity*, ed. Keith Cameron (Exeter: Intellect, 1999).

James Sperling, ed., *Germany at Fifty-Five: Berlin ist nicht Bonn?* (Manchester: Manchester University, 2004).

For scholarship on regional loyalties see: Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997).

Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California, 1990).

Levinger, Matthew, *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806–1848* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002).

²³⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Staatsbürgerschaft und nationale Identität: Überlegungen zur europäischen Zukunft* (St. Gallen: Erker, 1991).

²³⁸ A more cultural view on citizenship is not a new concept, as the term “Kulturnation” (nation of culture) developed in the nineteenth century in Europe. It identifies German national identity in common cultural values of the nation, such as cultural heritage, language, literature, art, and science. Katarina Sark,

normative concept of the good citizen.”²³⁹ Using the Netherlands as a case study, Schinkel looks at access to citizenship among migrants and presents citizenship as a chance for migrants to choose to belong to Dutch society. According to Schinkel, citizenship is tied to people adhering to practices of the dominant culture and becoming an “active citizen.”²⁴⁰ In addition, people who want to become or already are formal citizens must show their loyalty to be considered a “good citizen.”²⁴¹ Migrants who refuse to adhere to the dominant culture in the society are not really seen as Dutch citizens. The chance for migrants to show their loyalty involved in moral citizenship is the ultimate goal for immigrants.²⁴²

I argue that migrants, immigrants, and people *mit Migrationshintergrund* made it necessary to redefine Germany’s citizenship concept given the recent citizenship law changes. Applying Schinkel’s concept to the German context would mean that in addition to the aspects of citizenship through birthright and descent, prospects have to prove their loyalty towards Germany (be a good citizen) and adhere to the practices of the dominant culture (be an active citizen). The latter became prominent in the 2000s, when the term “Leitkultur” could have been interpreted as a requirement for being considered an “active

“Fashioning a New Brand of ‘Germanness’: The 2006 World Cup and Beyond,” *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 48, no. 2 (May 2012): 255.

²³⁹ Willem Schinkel, “The Moralisation of Citizenship in Dutch Integration Discourse,” *Amsterdam Law Forum* 1, no. 1 (2008): 17.

²⁴⁰ Schinkel, “Moralisation,” 19.

²⁴¹ Schinkel, “Moralisation,” 17.

²⁴² Schinkel, “Moralisation,” 22.

citizen.”²⁴³ Implicit in *Leitkultur* is the idea that there is a homogenous, territorial-bound group of people who have certain characteristics, values, and practices. Even adhering to those German “principles” cannot guarantee acceptance into society because one has to prove their loyalty through the soccer club and national team continuously. The loyalty aspect of the “good citizen”²⁴⁴ appeared prominently on the national level in 2018 when Özil together with his German national team soccer teammate İlkay Gündoğan and Turkish player Cenk Tosun took a picture with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Özil’s and Gündoğan’s loyalty towards Germany and its democratic values came under scrutiny because of this picture. During that time, Germany’s relationship with Turkey had deteriorated. Among others, Turkey had been criticized for imprisoning German-Turkish journalist Deniz Yücel for espionage in 2017. After multiple attempts at the intervention by the German government, Yücel was released a few months before the Erdoğan photo. In this chapter, I explore the complexities of “Germanness” in soccer films given that popular culture, including sports, film, and media, is one of the principal purveyors of the often-implicit assumptions about who is or is not a German citizen.

GERMAN SOCCER FILMS

The genre of “sport film” includes everything from mountain films from the late 1920s to racing films. German filmmakers’ fascination with sports dates back to the birth of cinema and reaches a high point with the use of sports for Nazi propaganda in the Third

²⁴³ Schinkel, “Moralisation,” 19.

²⁴⁴ Schinkel, “Moralisation,” 17.

Reich.²⁴⁵ Due to the film industry's propagandizing function during the National Socialist regime, the West German film industry was first shut down and then gradually re-introduced under supervision of the Allied forces. There have been only a few post-World War II West German soccer films, such as *Hinein!* (In, 1958)²⁴⁶ and *Libero* (Fullback, 1973).²⁴⁷ After the reunification of Germany, more soccer films, including documentaries like *Fußball ist unser Leben* (Soccer Is Our Life, 2000)²⁴⁸ were released. Soccer films up until Wortmann's works have focused on fandom, regional clubs, and the cult of sports celebrity in short films such as *Die Katze von Altona* (The Cat from Altona, 2002).²⁴⁹ These films focus more on regional aspects of German soccer culture, which is unique to Germany and its history. One of the first films about soccer dealing with soccer on the national scale is Wortmann's *Das Wunder von Bern* (2003). Since then, soccer has become more popular in cinemas. According to Michelle Langford et al.,²⁵⁰ two trends have emerged in soccer films: romantic comedies²⁵¹ and nostalgic dramas set in the past.²⁵² More

²⁴⁵ Michelle Langford, Rebeccah Dawson, and Victoria I. Rizo Lenshyn, "Sport Film," in *Directory of World Cinema: Germany 2*, ed. Michelle Longford (Chicago: Intellect, 2013), 43.

²⁴⁶ *Hinein!*, directed by Sammy Drechsel (1958; West Germany: UFA-Filmverleih).

²⁴⁷ *Libero*, directed by Wigbert Wicker (1973; Gladbeck: VZ-Handelsgesellschaft, 2012), DVD.

²⁴⁸ *Fußball ist unser Leben*, directed by Tommy Wigand (2000; Münster: Turbine Medien, 2012), DVD.

²⁴⁹ *Die Katze von Altona*, directed by Wolfgang Dinslage (2002; München: EuroVideo, 2004), DVD.

²⁵⁰ Langford, Dawson, Lenshyn, "Sport Film," 49.

²⁵¹ *FC Venus*, directed by Ute Wieland (2006; München: EuroVideo, 2006), DVD.

²⁵² *Der ganz große Traum*, directed by Sebastian Grobler (2011; Berlin: Senator, 2011), DVD.

recently soccer films about children,²⁵³ and queer men²⁵⁴ as well as films directed by women²⁵⁵ have been released.

Even though German scholarship on soccer is vast, scholarship on German sports film is limited.²⁵⁶ Besides works by Leni Riefenstahl or the mountain films of the Weimar era, Anglo-American scholarship offers many analyses of sports film but few of German sports or soccer in film.²⁵⁷ German-speaking film scholarship offers a sub-genre of the larger “sports film” genre, the “Fußballfilm.”²⁵⁸ This genre denotes soccer as the central theme of the film; however, scholars have not paid much attention to any set of aesthetic or cinematic styles. Jan Tilman Schwab, for example, lexically catalogued soccer films in *Fußball in Film: Lexikon des Fußballfilms* (Soccer in Film: Soccer Film Encyclopedia,

²⁵³ *Die Wilden Kerle*, directed by Joachim Masannek (2003; München: Concorde Video, 2004), DVD.

²⁵⁴ *Männer wie wir*, directed by Sherry Hormann (2004; München: Buena Vista, 2005), DVD.

²⁵⁵ *Eine andere Liga*, directed by Alakuş Buket (2006; Berlin: Neue Visionen Medien, 2006), DVD.

²⁵⁶ See: Markwart Herzog, ed., *Fußball als Kulturphänomen* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2002).

Dagmar Schediwy, *Ganz entspannt in Schwarz-Rot-Gold?* (Berlin: Lit, 2012).

Nils Havemann, *Fußball unterm Hakenkreuz* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005).

Studies on hooliganism are more recent phenomena:

Ina Weigelt, *Die Subkultur der Hooligans: Merkmale, Probleme, Präventionsansätze* (Marburg: Tectum, 2004).

Frank Willmann, *Ultras Kутten Hooligans: Fußballfans in Ost-Berlin* (Berlin: Jaron, 2008).

²⁵⁷ There are a few articles dealing with German sports films, e.g.:

Paul Cooke and Christopher Young, “Selling Sex or Dealing with History? German Football in Literature and Film and the Quest to Normalize the Nation,” in *German Football: History, Culture, Society*, ed. Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young (London: Routledge, 2006).

Friederike B. Emonds, “The Making of a Football Myth: Memory, Masculinity, and the Media,” in *Football Nation: The Playing Fields of German Culture, History, and Society*, ed. Rebeccah Dawson, Bastian Heinsohn, Oliver Knabe, and Alan McDougall (New York City: Berghahn Books, 2022).

²⁵⁸ For some examples for German film scholarship devoted to “Fußballfilm,” see:

Ulrich von Berg, “Kino-Kicks: Ein Streifzug durch die Welt des Fußballfilms,” in *Fußball als Kulturphänomen: Kunst – Kult – Kommerz*, ed. Markwart Herzog (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002).

Andreas Höfer, ed., *Doppelpass. Fußball und Film* (München: Belleville, 2006).

2006)²⁵⁹ without establishing any styles or similarities between the films. In the following section, I closely analyze the two most widely distributed and also nationally-focused soccer films of the early 2000s, *Das Wunder von Bern* (2003) and *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* (2006), in terms of how they depict “Germanness” visually and narratively.

***DAS WUNDER VON BERN* (2003)**

Das Wunder von Bern is a family drama and period piece directed by Sönke Wortmann, who played soccer in the German minor leagues (SpVgg Erkenschwick) and switched careers after an injury.²⁶⁰ The drama revolves around the underdog victory of the FRG’s men’s national soccer team at the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland. At the same time, it tells two other stories: the melodramatic story of a working-class family from Essen, who welcomes home the family patriarch after ten years in a Siberian POW camp, and the story of the young reporter Paul Ackermann and his wife Annette, who watch the development of the West German team at the team’s quarters in Switzerland.²⁶¹

German Studies scholarship on the drama *Das Wunder von Bern* is usually connected to the themes of *Heimat* (homeland) or nostalgia. Sabine Hake sees *Das Wunder von Bern* not just as a part of the “historical retrospection and nostalgic appropriation to

²⁵⁹ Jan Tilman Schwab, *Fußball im Film: Lexikon des Fußballfilms* (München: Belleville, 2006).

²⁶⁰ *Das Wunder von Bern*, directed by Sönke Wortmann (2003; Hamburg: Universal Studios, 2004), DVD.

²⁶¹ Horst Eckel, one of the few members of the 1954 World Cup team still alive, functioned as an on-set consultant and gave details about the 1954 team’s head coach, Sepp Herberger, that included his instructions and speeches. Franz Josef Colli, “Wortmann und das Wunder von Bern,” *Die Welt*, June 30, 2002, <https://www.welt.de/print-wams/article604875/Wortmann-und-das-Wunder-von-Bern.html>.

the postwar period,”²⁶² but also as the starting point for national reconstruction and “the rebirth of Germany’s national pride.”²⁶³ The problematic form of German nation-building in *Das Wunder von Bern* is realized through the nostalgic recreation of West Germany in the 1950s.²⁶⁴ This nostalgia is, according to Alexandra Ludewig, part of post-war *Heimat* films, a genre in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria that was especially popular from the 1940s to the 1970s and experienced a revival in the 1990s.²⁶⁵ Wortmann adopts this genre with its selective perspective, happy ending, and attempt to unify fans with the team. It is a consolatory depiction of West German post-war life that Paul Cooke and Christopher Young connect to “post-unification longing for normalization.”²⁶⁶

While film scholars and soccer fans alike lauded the drama, the German press has emphasized the faults of *Das Wunder von Bern*. Fritz Göttler from the national newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* calls it “the optimal missed penalty kick”²⁶⁷ with almost no dramaturgy. *Der Spiegel*, a weekly national news magazine, acknowledges the film’s flaws

²⁶² Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2008), 199.

²⁶³ Hake, *German*, 199.

²⁶⁴ Matthias Uecker, “Fractured Families: United Countries? Family, Nostalgia, and Nation-Building in *Das Wunder von Bern* and *Goodbye Lenin!*” *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 5, no. 3 (2007): 192.

²⁶⁵ Alexandra Ludewig, *Screening Nostalgia: 100 Years of German Heimat Film* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), 183.

²⁶⁶ Cooke and Young, “Selling Sex or Dealing with History?” 191.

²⁶⁷ Fritz Göttler, “Rahn hätte schießen können. Hätte,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 11, 2010, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/im-kino-das-wunder-von-bern-rahn-haette-schiessen-koennen-haette-1.425801>.

of the Hollywood-like drama but calls it an entertaining and loving film with famous actors.²⁶⁸

Das Wunder von Bern focuses on the working-class Lubanski family (mother Christa and her three children, Matthias “Mattes,” Bruno, and Ingrid) who have managed to reach a minimum standard of living without father Richard. The latter returns home from his imprisonment in Siberia after he was captured on the Eastern front during World War II in 1943. Throughout the film, Richard slowly re-establishes himself as a member of society, father, and husband. This is achieved through the relationship with his youngest son Mattes, whom Richard had never met before his return to West Germany, and their mutual love of soccer.

Even though Matthes is not a good soccer player himself, he is the biggest supporter of the local team (Rot-Weiß Essen) and follows its star player Helmut Rahn (also called *Der Boss*) everywhere. On the one hand, soccer is a sport played by “11 friends;”²⁶⁹ on the other hand, it celebrates individual, heroic players. In *Das Wunder von Bern*, Rahn functions as a local celebrity, even though one would expect all-around talent and national team captain Fritz Walter to fulfill this role. Whereas Matthes is depicted as a gullible, loyal fan of Rahn, others, including older supporters of Rot-Weiß Essen, openly criticize him. Rahn has the same socio-economic status as his supporters and critics, making him

²⁶⁸ Oliver Hüttmann, “Hollywood in Essen,” *Der Spiegel*, October 17, 2003, <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/das-wunder-von-bern-hollywood-in-essen-a-270103.html>.

²⁶⁹ Kaelberer, “From Bern to Rio,” 281.

more approachable than contemporary sports celebrities, such as Cristiano Ronaldo. Photos of Rahn hang on the wall in Christa's pub, making the corner appear as a shrine (fig. 1).



Figure 1: Rahn's shrine (Screenshot from Wortmann, Sönke, dir. *Das Wunder von Bern*. 2003; Hamburg: Universal Studios, 2004, 00:15:09. DVD.)

When Richard asks about the identity of the person in the pictures, his oldest son Bruno describes Rahn as a replacement father figure for Mattes. His hero worship goes as far as lighting a candle for Rahn in the hope that the national coach Herberger will put Rahn in the starting lineup for the national team's games in Switzerland (38:30-39:13). This earns Mattes a slap in the face from his father. Richard's parting words to Mattes are that a German boy does not cry, a mantra that Richard himself breaks at the end of the film after reading Bruno's farewell letter (44:16).

Richard symbolizes the "hegemonic military masculinity"²⁷⁰ expected from men in the early twentieth century. Playing soccer brings joy back into Richard's life and changes his views on masculinity and family. Richard seeks out the local priest to talk about his

²⁷⁰ Schiller, "Social Climbing," 217.

adjustment issues a few months after his return. He starts the conversation with the priest by saying that nothing is the same as it was, before a cut shows an abandoned building and presumably ruins left behind from World War II, while the priest's reassuring words continue in a voice-over. A few seconds later, the camera depicts Richard spotting an old soccer ball and starting to play with it. A high-angle long shot shows the ball descending towards him like a bomb before he meets it with an overhead kick (fig. 2).



Figure 2: Richard discovers his love for soccer (Screenshot from Wortmann, Sönke, dir. *Das Wunder von Bern*. 2003; Hamburg: Universal Studios, 2004, 01:10:27. DVD.)

For the first time, a smile appears on Richard's lips after scoring a goal on the abandoned soccer field. A cut to peeled potatoes in a pot shows Richard telling his children and wife about his life in Siberia. *Das Wunder von Bern* calls for new male role models in the postwar period.²⁷¹ The connection between soccer's growing importance for the West

²⁷¹ For a good overview for the discussion of post-World War II German masculinity, both in East and West Germany, see:

Anke Pinkert, "Can Melodrama Cure? War Trauma and the Crisis of Masculinity in Early DEFA Film," *Seminar* 44 (February 2008).

Joanne Leal, "American Cinema and the Construction of Masculinity in Film in the Federal Republic after 1945," *German Life and Letters* 65, no. 1 (2012).

Heide Fehrenbach, "Rehabilitating Fatherland: Race and German Remasculinization," *Signs* 24, no. 1 (Fall 1998).

German people and post-World War II life becomes visually apparent when the soccer ball looks like a falling bomb. This transition from World War II to post-World War II is further highlighted by Richard's change of attitude. Mattes's father, whose authoritarian nature and insistence on discipline has burdened his family, begins to open up, displaying a more measured form of masculinity. The image of a tough German soldier is replaced by a traumatized, confused husband and father who starts to realize that times have changed, and that he is now allowed to be vulnerable.

The transformation of the father mirrors West Germany's underdog success story, symbolizing the creation of a foundation-myth of West Germany. This myth is already hinted at in the film's promotional slogan, which translates to: "Every child needs a father. Every person needs a dream. Every country needs a legend." The German people needed a new myth to believe in, and that is created through soccer.

This supposedly German unity myth, however, is based on West German nationhood, not an East German one, thereby tying "Germanness" to West German values. In the beginning of the film, West Germany is depicted as a divided country with regional differences in the soccer team as well as in West German society. For example, a television reporter introduces the national soccer team by pointing out their club affiliation and commenting on the fact that athletes who are usually rivals are playing together (00:22:48-00:00:24:54). This scene gives the impression that individualization is more important than

Robert Moeller, "'The Last Soldiers of the Great War' and Tales of Family Reunions in the Federal Republic of Germany," *Signs* 24, no. 1 (Fall 1998).

Uta Poiger, "A New, 'Western' Hero? Reconstructing German Masculinity in the 1950s," *Signs* 24, no. 1 (Fall 1998).

team play, which is further emphasized through portrayals of Rahn as an egotistical player who is more concerned about his own playing time than his team's success. Regional (financial) differences in West German society are apparent from the beginning of the film. The working-class North Rhine-Westphalian Ruhr area, for instance, is contrasted with the wealthier and greener Bavarian city of Munich, where the fictional sports reporter Paul Ackermann and his wife live. The grey images of the *Ruhrgebiet* (Ruhr region, the industrial heartland of Germany) give glimpses of a polluted, dark working-class environment. The film opens with Mattes and his friends, dressed in old dark-colored clothes, who are waiting for the results of their local soccer team match played outside of town (fig. 3).



Figure 3: *Kohlenpott* in the 1950s (Screenshot from Wortmann, Sönke, dir. *Das Wunder von Bern*. 2003; Hamburg: Universal Studios, 2004, 00:01:56. DVD.)

The depressed atmosphere in the Ruhr region stands in stark contrast to the Ackermanns' life in a modern, colorful, stylish, and luxurious home in fashionable Munich (fig. 4).



Figure 4: Munich in the 1950s (Screenshot from Wortmann, Sönke, dir. *Das Wunder von Bern*. 2003; Hamburg: Universal Studios, 2004, 00:01:56. DVD.)

Wortmann suggests that social mobility for people with lower socio-economic status like Richard exists when Richard passes for Ackermann after finding his press pass at the end of the film (01:45:34-01:46-43). Despite Richard being able to board the train of the national soccer team as a reporter, he achieves only temporary access to a more privileged lifestyle, suggesting that there are still, among others, regional differences among West Germans.

The train is a manifestation of the so-called “economic miracle,” the reconstruction of West German economy after World War II. During the arrival of the national team, the train station, central to the wartime mobilization and Holocaust narrative,²⁷² is filled with people, decorations, banners, and German flags (fig. 5).

²⁷² The *Deutsche Reichsbahn* was responsible for the transport of Jewish people during the Holocaust. They charged the Nazi leadership money for each adult and child, which the Jewish people mostly paid themselves.



Figure 5: Return of the West German national team (Screenshot from Wortmann, Sönke, dir. *Das Wunder von Bern*. 2003; Hamburg: Universal Studios, 2004, 01:45:49. DVD.)

There is frenetic applause when the luxurious Deutsche Bahn train arrives at the train station. People shower the national soccer team players with gifts such as liquor, flowers, and food. Superimposed onto the train speeding through West Germany, the closing title says that the eleven players from Bern never played together again, thereby contributing to the foundation myth narrative. In contrast to this scene, the POW homecoming scene in the beginning of the film starts with a high angle shot of a sparsely decorated black cattle train and a small crowd of awaiting family members, accompanied by joyful brass music (fig. 6).



Figure 6: Return of the POW (Screenshot from Wortmann, Sönke, dir. *Das Wunder von Bern*. 2003; Hamburg: Universal Studios, 2004, 00:11:38. DVD.)

The cheerful music is slowly drowned out and then replaced with a sorrowful flute song when Richard's wife Christa voices her concerns about her husband. The World Cup victory serves as the turning point for personal and national identity in the drama.

Even though the film celebrates capitalism and West German values, it suggests that "Germanness" is still connected to East Germany. Towards the end of the film, the oldest son Bruno escapes to the GDR, where he watches the final match of the FRG on television together with his comrades (01:41:08). *Das Wunder von Bern* depicts Bruno's defection as an idealistic move motivated by Bruno's belief that everyone is equal in the GDR. While Mattes and Richard bond over soccer, Richard's relationship with Bruno deteriorates throughout the film. Bruno challenges his father's National Socialist ideals and defends the Soviet Union's right to imprison West German soldiers. Bruno accuses his father of continuing to live life according to a fascist ideology, reflected in his fixation on discipline and order. The Lubanskis' initial silence about Richard's past and the mother's defense of his involvement are representative of many people who failed to process the

National Socialist past. Unfortunately, the film does not pay much attention to this, an oversight also criticized by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* writer Fritz Göttler.²⁷³

Wortmann uses the children's outspoken rejection of their parent's generation to foreshadow the authority conflicts and protests of the 1960s.²⁷⁴ Mattes's siblings are drawn to American music, fashion, and soldiers as well as Communist and Socialist ideas, thereby widening the rift between the generations. Richard rejects his elder children's ways of thinking. He accuses Ingrid of sleeping with American soldiers and criticizes Bruno for his communist ideas, before forbidding them to go dancing and playing music. Wortmann presents two options for the generational conflict, either stay within the patriarchal system (Ingrid) or to defect to the GDR (Bruno). He does not favor one way over the other.

While the younger generation's reaction to their country's Nazi past is evident in the film, *Das Wunder von Bern* does not mention the problematic nationalist tendencies displayed at the actual World Cup final in Switzerland. There, parts of the audience chanted the controversial first verse of the national anthem,²⁷⁵ which is associated with the National Socialism period, rather than singing "Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit" as the trophy was presented to the West German team. Wortmann circumvents that problematic display of nationalism by playing the anthem before the match instead of showing how people sing it

²⁷³ Göttler, "Rahn."

²⁷⁴ The 1968 generation confronted West Germany's Nazi past openly due to the unresolved problem of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with Germany's past in the 20th century).

²⁷⁵ "Die Nationalhymne," Bundestag, accessed March 29, 2023, <https://www.bundestag.de/parlament/symbole/hymne/hymne-197462>.

at the trophy presentation (01:24:17-01:25:05). Wortmann, thereby, creates a myth of West Germany's (re)birth that glosses over controversies.

Das Wunder von Bern foregrounds the establishment of a West German unity and the importance of individual relationships during the 1954 World Cup. Despite the representation of East Germany in the film, "Germanness" as displayed in *Das Wunder von Bern* does not go beyond a territorial-bound political identity tied to a shared National Socialist past, capitalism, the economic miracle in the 1950s, and masculinity. The GDR is depicted as a "socialist" Germany, detached from National Socialism and capitalist thinking. Wortmann's foundation myth is mostly based on male experiences (Rahn, Mattes, Richard, Bruno), proposing a new West Germany forged by men. What follows three years after *Das Wunder von Bern* is a continuation of Wortmann's soccer myth picturing a reunified Germany as a utopian *Fußballnation* with a national soccer team that helped shape a new collective imaginary.

DEUTSCHLAND: EIN SOMMERMÄRCHEN (2006)

The 2006 documentary²⁷⁶ follows in the footsteps of Stéphane Meunier's *Les Yeux dans les Bleus*²⁷⁷ documentary on the 1998 World Cup hosted by France. *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* is a production by Little Shark Entertainment and supported by FIFA. Wortmann asked a wide variety of people to produce this documentary but was widely

²⁷⁶ *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*, directed by Sönke Wortmann (2006; Leipzig: Kinowelt, 2007), DVD.

²⁷⁷ *Les Yeux dans les Bleus*, directed by Stéphane Meunier (1998; France: Canal+, 1998), DVD.

rejected.²⁷⁸ This changed when Jürgen Klinsmann became the national coach and Oliver Bierhoff the new manager in 2004. One reason for his acceptance was Wortmann's previous soccer film: *Das Wunder von Bern*. The FIFA Confederations Cup in 2005, an international tournament for the World Cup host nation, served as the trial run for Wortmann. After the success of the Confederations Cup, Wortmann, together with his second cameraman Frank Griebe, had unrestricted access to the players and staff, from the first soccer camp to the fan celebration in Berlin. At the end of his time with the German squad, Wortmann felt like he had become part of the team rather than remaining an outsider, a transformation he commented on in an interview with the media.²⁷⁹

The documentary premiered on October 3, 2006, the so-called "Tag der Deutschen Einheit," on which Germans celebrate the reunification of West and East Germany. It was attended by many politicians and soccer officials, including then-Chancellor Angela Merkel.²⁸⁰ In 2010, *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* became the most commercially successful German documentary film.²⁸¹ FIFA, the DFB, and the German national team

²⁷⁸ Sönke Wortmann, "Interview mit Sönke Wortmann," *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*, directed by Sönke Wortmann (2006; Leipzig: Kinowelt, 2007), DVD.

²⁷⁹ Wortmann, "Interview."

²⁸⁰ Carola Daffner, "Football, Mythology and Identity in Sönke Wortmann's *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen*," *Austausch* 1, no. 1 (April 2011): 95.

²⁸¹ Bastian Ludwig, "Dokumentarfilme als Kinoerfolge. Wie deutsche Produktionen gegenwärtig an den Kinokassen funktionieren," *AugenBlick. Marburger Hefte zur Medienwissenschaft* 47 (2010): 87.

agreed that most of the box office revenue would go to the joint event campaign of SOS Children's Villages and FIFA "6 Villages for 2006."²⁸²

Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen has received less attention in the academic world than Wortmann's previous film. Wortmann depicts, in Friederike B. Emonds's opinion, German soccer "as the catalyst for transforming German society into a modern, confident, and inclusive union—an idealized vision for the future."²⁸³ Gavin M. Hicks²⁸⁴ and Lutz Koepnick²⁸⁵ see the film as an expansion of fan culture that is divided by class and generation.

Despite little scholarly research, the film is undoubtedly relevant to discussions on soccer celebrities, reunified Germany, and German soccer culture. Reinhard Mohr praised the documentary for being unpretentious, without a patriotic message.²⁸⁶ It portrays the refreshing change in Germany in the form of a home video or an intimate play. David Crossland points out the patriotic display of Germans wearing the flag's colors (black, red,

²⁸² "Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen' spielt mehr als 3 Millionen Euro für '6 Dörfer für 2006' ein," FIFA, June 6, 2007, <https://de.fifa.com/who-we-are/news/deutschland-ein-sommermaerchen-spielt-mehr-als-millionen-euro-fur-dorfe-533420>.

²⁸³ Emonds, "The Making of a Football Myth," 155.

²⁸⁴ Gavin M. Hicks, "Soccer and Social Identity in Contemporary German Film and Media" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2014).

²⁸⁵ Lutz Koepnick, "Public Viewing: Soccer Patriotism and Post-Cinema," in *The Collapse of the Conventional: German Film and Its Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Jaimey Fisher and Brad Prager (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2010), 75.

²⁸⁶ Reinhard Mohr, "'Das ist unser Spiel! Das ist unser Spiel!'" *Der Spiegel*, October 3, 2006, <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/wortmanns-wm-film-das-ist-unser-spiel-das-ist-unser-spiel-a-440495.html>.

gold), not seen since the reunification of West and East Germany in 1990.²⁸⁷ Florian Haupt's review in the national newspaper *Die Welt* shows significantly less excitement, accusing Wortmann of superficiality.²⁸⁸ A similar review is given by Kathrin Buchner in her *Stern* article, the second-most important weekly news magazine in Germany.²⁸⁹ Buchner as well as Peter Körte warn against the film's fairy tale title while they criticize the interview scenes for slowing down the documentary.²⁹⁰

Wortmann refers to the unexpected rise of the German national soccer team during the World Cup in Germany as the "Sommermärchen" (summer fairy tale)²⁹¹ which became part of the collective imaginary of the German nation. The title ironically alludes to Heinrich Heine's satirical epic poem *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen* (Germany: A Winter's Tale, 1844).²⁹² As opposed to Heine's melancholic and ironically critical view of Germany, this documentary presents the optimistic atmosphere in reunified Germany. While the poem's name evokes fairy tales, Wortmann plays with genre conventions. He

²⁸⁷ David Crossland, "Go Out and Kick Their Butts," *Der Spiegel*, October 3, 2006, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/team-germany-revisits-world-cup-on-film-go-out-and-kick-their-butts-a-440483.html>.

²⁸⁸ Florian Haupt, "Denen geben wir auf die Fresse," *Die Welt*, September 30, 2006, <https://www.welt.de/sport/article156767/Denen-geben-wir-auf-die-Fresse.html>.

²⁸⁹ Kathrin Buchner, "Im Bett mit Poldi," *Stern*, October 5, 2006. <https://www.stern.de/kultur/film/-deutschland---ein-sommermaerchen--im-bett-mit-poldi-3323824.html>.

²⁹⁰ Peter Körte, "Im Bett mit Ballack," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 6, 2006, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/sport/fussball/wortmanns-wm-film-im-fernsehen-im-bett-mit-ballack-1106208.html>.

²⁹¹ Ironically, the fairy tale turned into a scandal when news magazine *Der Spiegel* published a story about alleged bribes for votes surrounding Germany's 2006 World Cup.

²⁹² Heinrich Heine, *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen*, ed. Werner Bellmann (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1979).

begins by documenting Germany's defeat against Italy in the semi-final and then tells a moral tale of devastation and recovery of the German soccer national team. In fact, the documentary's aim is not to tell a fairy tale but to (re)create myths.

Myth, according to Aleida Assmann, can not only be created by fictitious events but also by distorted or transformed historical events.²⁹³ Wortmann's cinematic portrayal sought to transform the events during the World Cup in Germany for the collective memory of the nation. The most pronounced myth in this film is that of the unification between fans, team, and nation. The mutually beneficial relationship between players and fans is visible cinematically when Wortman switches between the perspective of players and fans throughout the film. The opening ceremony of the World Cup in Munich on June 9, for instance, is not shown from the audience perspective but rather from the players' (00:24:02-00:24:17), making it possible for fans to participate in the player's experience. After Germany's third-place victory against Portugal, the German players present themselves to the fans, who start to chant, scream frantically, and take pictures of their heroes (01:41:23-01:41:52). Wortmann sets up another camera in the building across from the athletes, so the film audience sees the perspective of the team as well as perceives the gathering as if they were fans in the crowd.

While the actual solidarity between fans and the team did not happen until after the second game against Poland, Wortmann shows early on the effect fans have on soccer players. Midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger, while lying in a hotel bed next to striker Lukas

²⁹³ Aleida Assmann, "Transformations Between History and Memory," *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 68.

Podolski, enthusiastically recaps the emotions the audience inspired in him: “And then the moment we go out how they cheer us on or how they scream and stuff. Root for us. It is a great feeling. So, I find again and again, it also inspires you when you come out” (00:47:57-00:49:09).²⁹⁴ Wortmann builds up this excitement by showing an ever-growing number of fans throughout the documentary. While the team is on its way to the quarter-final match against Argentina, only scattered supporters of the German national team are visible (01:00:54-01:01:00). This changes after the victory. A medium shot depicts goalkeeper Jens Lehmann on his phone, who had saved two penalty shots and paved the way to the semi-finals. The camera then moves to the bus windows behind Lehmann (01:11:25-01:12:45), showing thousands of fans celebrating them. Accompanying the bus tour is Xavier Naidoo’s emotional song “Dieser Weg” (this path), a song about prevailing over difficulties. Rows of people, including the *Bundeswehr* (German military), police, and civilians, cheer for the team in the bus. The ever-larger crowds of German fans include a growing number of official personnel figures representing the German government (such as police officers or soldiers) who celebrate and protect the team bus.

Wortmann visualizes his utopian ideal of a German soccer nation that consists of a team and 80 million patriotic, gullible supporters after Germany’s loss against Italy with a cut to a couple waving a German scarf with “Deutschland” on it, hidden by a German flag that is being waved in the foreground. He equates the team’s defeat with the devastation of

²⁹⁴ “Und dann in dem Augenblick als wir dann rausgehen wie sie [Zuschauer] uns dann anfeuern oder wie sie dann schreien und so. Uns bejubeln. Des is schon ein geiles Gefühl. Also, das find ich immer wieder, beflügelt des auch, wenn man rauskommt.”

fans in the stadium and with the disappointment of the entire nation when a medium shot shows the “Deutschland” scarf (fig. 12).



Figure 7: Fan display after the loss to Italy (Screenshot from Wortmann, Sönke, dir. *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*. 2006; Leipzig: Kinowelt, 2007, 01:24:25. Special Edition.)

FIFA introduced public viewing events that became known as “Fan Fests,” or “Fanmeilen” during the World Cup so that people without a ticket could participate in the celebrations.²⁹⁵ The end of the film takes place at the *Fanmeile* in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. The German team flies back to Berlin to celebrate their third-place finish with the fans at the *Fanmeile*. Instead of showing the winner of the World Cup, Wortmann focuses on the team reuniting with its fans in Berlin (01:42:38). A long shot of fans that evolves into an extreme long shot of the stage with the Brandenburg Gate in the background illustrates the dimensions of this event. To conclude the celebrations with the fans, the German pop star Xavier Naidoo takes the stage and performs a revised version of his song “Dieser Weg.” He changed some of the lyrics, reflecting the team’s rocky path but at the

²⁹⁵ Fan Fests for the 2006 FIFA World Cup were set up in twelve host cities (Berlin, Cologne, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Hamburg, Dortmund, Munich, Nuremberg, Hannover, Leipzig, Gelsenkirchen, and Kaiserslautern) and have become essential for future FIFA World Cups.

same time the ambition to be World Champion in 2010, while medium shots of the crowd show the excitement. Wortmann not only displays the bond between fans and players but also creates an emotional attachment between film audience and the German soccer team.

The film audience gets a glimpse of how athletes experience a tournament like the World Cup by changing the point of view as well as through the invasion of the locker room, “a sacred space, a refuge for prayer and reflection - and some friendly trash-talking.”²⁹⁶ By allowing an outsider, a film director, into a pseudo-private space that is usually off limits to the media, the documentary brings fans and team even closer and hence expands the fan experience. Throughout the film, Wortmann focuses on these “forbidden” or pseudo-private places. The locker room, for example, is transformed from a sacred space to a public one. This transformation features the use of doors, camera angles, and focus. The film begins with defensive player Philip Lahm and team captain Michael Ballack. Wortmann films both players from a distance and uses doors as a way to exemplify the separation of worlds, pseudo-private versus public (00:00:18). The camera depicts Lahm in a low-angle, medium long shot sitting on a massage table while the live television commentary of Johannes B. Kerner is heard, announcing Italy as the winner of the semifinal. On the right-hand side, a door is visible, making the scene appear like an invasion of privacy (fig. 7).

²⁹⁶ “The Locker Room: A Melting Pot, Where Football’s the Focal Point,” NPR, September 13, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/2015/09/13/440036895/the-locker-room-a-melting-pot-for-many-with-only-football-in-common>.



Figure 8: Lahm after the loss to Italy (Screenshot from Wortmann, Sönke, dir. *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*. 2006; Leipzig: Kinowelt, 2007, 00:00:26. Special Edition.)

Another cut reveals a crestfallen Michael Ballack in a shaky, medium close-up. This shot appears as though Wortman had filmed it from a distance zooming in on Ballack, resulting in a blurry face and door frame on the left (fig. 8).



Figure 9: Ballack after the loss to Italy (Screenshot from Wortmann, Sönke, dir. *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*. 2006; Leipzig: Kinowelt, 2007, 00:00:28. Special Edition.)

The black door frame occupies one third of the frame and gives it the appearance of a forbidden sight. These shots emphasize Wortmann's outsider perspective, giving the audience glimpses into places they are not supposed to be able to enter or see. Wortmann

even goes as far as to secretly enter Podolski's hotel room with the help of Schweinsteiger. However, it becomes obvious through Podolski's reaction that this invasion is not new for him (00:43:45-00:44:42), normalizing the commercialization and mediatization of the soccer world. Wortmann repeatedly shows players in an intimate situation, such as following Oliver Neuville to his doping test (00:43:06-00:43:43) or filming a seemingly surprised and tired David Odonkor brushing his teeth in his hotel room (00:37:53-00:38:11), thereby invading (pseudo-) private spaces.

Wortmann also transforms the locker room as a space for the male body. In the first locker room scene, after the defeat against Italy, he chooses to include a low angle shot of two players from behind, one naked and the other covered in a towel, before revealing a defeated looking midfielder, Thorsten Frings, who has been kept from playing the match for his role in a melee in the previous match against Argentina (fig. 9).²⁹⁷



Figure 10: Frings hidden by two nearly naked players (Screenshot from Wortmann, Sönke, dir. *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*. 2006; Leipzig: Kinowelt, 2007, 00:00:44. Special Edition.)

²⁹⁷ The FIFA suspended Frings for the semifinal match against Italy as punishment for his role in a melee after Germany's victory against Argentina.

Displaying players (half) naked fuels the male fantasy of potency and strength but also turns the players into objects of desire for male and female alike. While no women were interviewed for the documentary, they appear in *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* as cheerleaders, wives/girlfriends, and fans. After Italy scores its second goal in the semifinal against Germany, the camera cuts to a close-up of a disappointed female soccer fan, while sad music continues to play. She is wearing a flower garland with a German flag painted on her face (01:24:20), linking female fandom with the national soccer team. Sociologists Henk Erik Meier, Bernd Strauss, and Dennis Riedl provide empirical evidence regarding female soccer consumption and team identification for the German national team from 2002 until 2014. The diversification of the national team, as well as a general gender role liberalization in German society, “correlates with a boost of female *and* male team identification but the increase is significantly higher for women.”²⁹⁸

Even though women do not play a key role in *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*, Wortmann exposes female fandom in the soccer stadium and beyond. The female fan adoration is especially directed at the rising soccer celebrities Schweinsteiger and Podolski, nicknamed “Schweini and Poldi,” respectively. Those two young, promising players sparked a hype surrounding them and their friendship. When Schweinsteiger leaves the hotel in Dortmund on June 13, he is greeted by a mass of fans screaming his name and asking for autographs (00:29:21). A similar scene unfolds when the team leaves their hotel in Berlin for their last game against Portugal in Stuttgart. The camera reveals not only

²⁹⁸ Henk Erik Meier, Bernd Strauss, and Dennis Riedl, “Feminization of Sport Audiences and Fans? Evidence from the German Men’s National Soccer Team,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 52, no. 6 (2017): 729.

medium shots of children seeking autographs, but also female teenagers who hold up signs and scream hysterically for the attention of their heroes (01:31:30). The female admirers reinforce the masculine ideal of soccer celebrities. Looking at the promotional material of *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*, it is worth noticing that Podolski, the “Best Young Player” of the 2006 World Cup, is on the DVD cover instead of the German national team squad (fig. 10).



Figure 11: DVD cover (Photograph by Sabine Waas).

Despite German’s insistence on team spirit, Wortmann chooses to highlight individuals like *Schweini* and *Poldi* to capitalize on their popularity and fans. Schweinsteiger and Podolski were among the few players that have been interviewed for this documentary and are the only players that slipped into the role of cinematographer.²⁹⁹ Podolski, for example, filmed his colleagues after their victory against Portugal for third place, a move that is indicated by the words “Poldicam” (01:38:00-01:38:31). This can be seen as part of the recent celebrity coverage shift from “*representational* media” to

²⁹⁹ None of the interviewees’ names or job title are mentioned in the documentary.

“presentational media.”³⁰⁰ While the documentary itself is part of the former, Podolski and Schweinsteiger’s filming reflects the latter phenomenon.

Even though Podolski and Schweinsteiger became fan and media favorites, the German team mostly promotes the team aspect over individual star players.³⁰¹ To strengthen the team spirit, Bierhoff requested a ritual lighting of eleven torches in the hotel yard before their first World Cup game, reminiscent of the Olympic flame (fig. 11).



Figure 12: Torch lighting before the first World Cup match (Screenshot from Wortmann, Sönke, dir. *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*. 2006; Leipzig: Kinowelt, 2007, 00:16:21.

Each torch symbolizes one player, making the team and the hotel space seem mystical. The reference to Olympic fire further recalls Leni Riefenstahl’s *Olympia*.³⁰² Riefenstahl shows the Greek origin of the Olympics and illustrates the torch run from

³⁰⁰ Marshall, “Persona Studies,” 157.

³⁰¹ The emphasis on the team was one of the reasons for Germany’s World Cup win in 2014 according to goalkeeper Manuel Neuer and then-team-captain Philip Lahm. “Ganz Deutschland ist Weltmeister,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 14, 2014, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/sport/stimmen-zum-wm-finale-ganz-deutschland-ist-weltmeister-1.2045260>.

³⁰² Historic Clips, “Olympia (1938) Part 1 HD - (ENG SUBS),” YouTube, March 27, 2019, video, 2:07:22, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HV8055dbfc>.

Olympia to Berlin, the first of its kind.³⁰³ In *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*, the torches symbolize the tactical 4-4-2 formation of the team: four defenders, four midfielders, and two strikers. While the ritual was meant to emphasize team spirit, the act of lighting the torches in the evening together with Bierhoff's closing remark "Auf den Sieg" (to victory) gives this scene a nationalistic, mystic character (00:16:06).³⁰⁴ The danger of nationalistic behavior and the display of German flags was originally of public and political concern. Flag waving is still a controversial topic for groups such as the *Grüne Jugend* (Green Youth), a youth organization that is linked to the Green Party.³⁰⁵ Matthias Kaelberer sees the 2006 World Cup as a starting point for "a period during which international soccer tournaments became occasions for the display of a largely benign form of patriotism, the showcasing of a modern, multicultural Germany and a month-long celebratory public party

³⁰³ The 1936 Games were the first to employ the torch relay. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "[f]ormer German Olympian Carl Diem modeled the relay after one that had been run in Athens in 80 B.C. It perfectly suited Nazi propaganda techniques, which used torchlit parades and rallies to attract Germans, especially the youth, to the Nazi movement." The film shows the route from Olympia to Berlin with the help of superimpositions of the name of the city or country and an important landmark. The sequence ends with a superimposition of the Nazi flag and the word "Deutschland", signaling the torch's arrival in Berlin with other superimpositions of the flag, Berlin and finally the spectator filled *Olympiastadion*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "The Nazi Olympics Berlin 1936: Inauguration of the Olympic Torch Relay," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2023, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nazi-olympics-berlin-1936-inauguration-of-the-olympic-torch-relay>.

³⁰⁴ Ever since the 2006 World Cup, it has again become acceptable to display national affiliations, for example, through flag-waving. This practice had been a taboo since the National Socialist regime. Kate Zambon, "Producing the German Civic Nation: Immigrant Patriotism in Berlin's World Cup Flag Fight," *Popular Communication* 12, no. 1 (2014): 1.

³⁰⁵ Right before the 2016 UEFA European Championship, they asked for a flag boycott for the upcoming tournament. "Ist die Deutschlandfahne beim Fußball nationalistisch?" *Stern*, June 12, 2016, <https://www.stern.de/sport/fussball/em-2016/gruenen-nachwuchs-will-keine-deutschlandfahnen-sehen-6896182.html>.

atmosphere gripping the whole country.”³⁰⁶ The torch lighting, however, feeds into the *Grüne Jugend*’s fear of a dangerous displays of nationalism, as exhibited during the National Socialism period.

This scene, emphasized through the war cry “to victory,” also underscores a combative atmosphere that is evident throughout the documentary. The actual soccer match footage used in the documentary includes not only goals but also duels between players, reminiscent of warriors. Those warrior-like players exhibit “a hegemonic military masculinity.”³⁰⁷ Klinsmann’s locker room speech on the way to the Italy match highlights this war-like atmosphere and the resulting expectations for an athlete: “70,000 are waiting for you in their hearts ... This week, we are going to make history because we are seizing this moment ... 80 million, 80 million have fascinated you. You fascinated 80 million ... We are a team! We are a team! We are a team!” (01:17:30-01:18:23).³⁰⁸ Those German “warriors” are supposed to run more than Brazilian players, show enthusiasm, and use their organizational skills, according to the national team’s rehab specialist Oliver Schmidlein (00:04:51-00:05:50) and (then) assistant coach Joachim Löw (00:21:37-00:22:37). Throughout the documentary, the notion of being German is defined in opposition to other

³⁰⁶ Kaelberer, “From Bern to Rio,” 285.

See also: Ingeborg Majer-O’Sickey, “Out of the Closet? German Patriotism and Soccer Mania,” *German Politics and Society* 24, no. 3 (2006).

³⁰⁷ Schiller, “Social Climbing,” 217.

³⁰⁸ “70,000 die warten auf euch in ihren Herzen ... Diese Woche sind wird dabei Geschichte zu schreiben, weil wir packen diesen Moment ... 80 Millionen, 80 Millionen habt ihr fasziniert. Ihr habt 80 Millionen fasziniert ... Wir sind ein Team! Wir sind ein Team! Wir sind ein Team!”

nations, a trademark of how Western European societies express their identities.³⁰⁹ German-perceived soccer virtues such as the ability to run for a long period of time and to act fast, however, are basic requirements nowadays, according to Löw.

“Germanness” in Wortmann’s documentary goes beyond a territorial definition of belonging towards Schinkel’s moral concept of citizenship, as Podolski’s case demonstrates. Podolski is a German citizen but his loyalty towards Germany is questioned when he fails to score a goal against his country of birth (Poland). The diversity of the 2006 national squad is not directly highlighted in the documentary, but Podolski’s inability to score against Poland is. Wortmann inserts one of the few live sports commentaries into the documentary: “Come on, Lukas. He probably thought about his Polish grandma and therefore did not score” (00:35:07-00:35:22).³¹⁰ Pointing out Podolski’s Polish heritage when he fails to live up to the expectations of German society is a phenomenon that Mesut Özil addressed in his resignation from the national team in 2018. He not only accused the highest-ranking DFB official, then-president Reinhard Grindel, of racism, but also criticized German society for their unwillingness to accept him. That Wortman chooses to include Podolski’s scene could be interpreted as a way to differentiate between Germans with or without *Migrationshintergrund*.

³⁰⁹ Willem Schinkel, *Imagined Societies: A Critique of Immigrant Integration in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2017), 2.

³¹⁰ “Mensch Lukas. Hat an seine polnische Oma gedacht und macht das Ding nicht rein.”

Wortmann aims to create a new and positive “Germanness,” devoid of any negative political or historical context.³¹¹ Not even then-Chancellor Merkel’s appearance in *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* leaves room to address politics. Wortmann depicts her encounter with the team as a visit from a friend instead of a formal meeting between team and head-of-state, because, according to her, sports and politics are separate (00:16:21-00:19:06). Yet, Merkel emphasizes that the German government would support the German team in any way possible.

CONCLUSION

Both *Das Wunder von Bern* and *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*, propagate the myth of German unity. While *Das Wunder von Bern* emphasizes the regionality of West German proletarian soccer, Wortmann perfected his vision of the *Fußballnation* in *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*. The Germany presented in *Das Wunder von Bern* is a West German one, while *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* includes former East and West Germans as well as people *mit Migrationshintergrund* without labeling them as such. The documentary conveys a self-proclaimed, positive image of the Federal Republic of Germany, one that is ahistorical, utopian, and devoid of a National Socialist or East German past. This Germany is aware of its ethnic diversity but only in times of prosperity and victory, as shown by the comment concerning Podolski’s inability to score a goal against his country of birth. “Germanness” is portrayed as something that must be earned. The

³¹¹ In contrast, Stéphane Meunier’s *Les Yeux dans les Bleus* documentary addresses the disharmony and conflict between the French players and the *beurs*, players of Algerian (and Moroccan and Tunisian) descent. Meunier, *Les Yeux dans les Bleus*.

formal aspect of citizenship is not enough to be considered a “good” German citizen. *Das Wunder von Bern* models a “Germanness” that is based on West German values, regionality, a less rigid masculinity, and coming to terms with the National Socialist past. *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* and *Das Wunder von Bern* try to resolve the image issues the Federal Republic of Germany had faced before 2006: A country predominately defined by its National Socialist past, a country that cannot celebrate itself, and a country that consists mostly of people without *Migrationshintergrund*.

Soccer becomes a means through which the German nation is celebrated and a way to hide social tensions, divisions, and questions of belonging. This tension is especially evident in *Das Wunder von Bern* when team spirit clashes with the star players like Rahn. Whereas Rahn is painted as a local celebrity who is adored by a young boy, Podolski and Schweinsteiger become (female) love objects, celebrities, and creators of their own media footage in Wortmann’s utopian vision. During those fifty-two years between Rahn and Podolski, soccer celebrity culture has changed, resulting in a shift in media coverage (presentational to representational), fandom (more female fans), and marketing (celebrity branding). In the following three chapters, I will analyze how the soccer generation surrounding Podolski, Boateng, and Özil use their ethnic roots to further their celebrity status and thereby their branding.

Chapter 4: Lukas Podolski

Following the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, millions of *Aussiedler* (emigrants) immigrated to Germany. *Aussiedler* are ethnic Germans whose ancestors settled in countries like Poland, Romania, and former Soviet Union countries and essentially are entitled to return and live in Germany. Lukas Podolski and his family were among them, emigrating from Poland to West Germany in 1987.³¹² They were considered *Aussiedler*, because Podolski's paternal grandparents had German citizenship prior to World War II.³¹³ German minorities in Central and Eastern Europe "were subjected to various assimilation pressures ranging from the simple denial of their existence as a distinct minority group (in Poland) to the repression of their cultural, linguistic, and religious identities (in the Soviet Union)."³¹⁴ In 1989, the German government acknowledged German minorities in Poland and started to invest money into the protection of their culture.³¹⁵ The German population associated *Aussiedler* not only with Polish immigrants specifically, but also with foreigners more generally; as a result, *Aussiedler* experienced hostility and discrimination in Germany. Accordingly, laws in the early 1990s restricted

³¹² Podolski's birthplace, Gliwice (or Gleiwitz in German), was a part of Germany (German Empire, Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany) until 1945. Silesia was ceded to Poland after World War II. *Aussiedler* from Poland dominated the resettlement movement to Germany until 1989, with a total of over 1.2 million repatriates between 1950 and 1989. Marius Otto, "(Spät-)Aussiedler aus Polen," BpB, October 14, 2019, <https://www.bpb.de/izpb/298577/spaet-aussiedler-aus-polen>.

³¹³ "Centurion Podolski makes history," DW, June 21, 2012, <https://www.dw.com/en/centurion-podolski-makes-history/a-16035394>.

³¹⁴ Stefan Wolff, "Chapter 9: Germany and German Minorities in Europe," in *Divided Nations and European -Integration*, ed. Tristan James Mabry, John McGarry, Margaret Moore, and Brendan O'Leary (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013), 287–8.

³¹⁵ Wolff, "Chapter 9," 294.

immigration flow, accepting only *Aussiedler* living in the former Soviet Union, while constraining the path to citizenship for everyone else who faced ethnic discrimination.³¹⁶

Podolski arrived in West Germany when he was two years old and grew up near Cologne, first in the Bergheim neighborhood and later in Pulheim. He possesses both German and Polish citizenship, and as a result was eligible to play for either the German or the Polish national soccer team.³¹⁷ The governing body of association soccer, FIFA, formerly required players with dual nationality to choose between national soccer teams, which resulted in, among other things, teams recruiting players when they are as young as possible.³¹⁸ Podolski was eligible to play for the German and the Polish team but Poland's then national coach supposedly rejected him in 2003 after having played for Germany's youth level teams. Podolski enjoyed great success on the German national team, one of his greatest accomplishments being the World Cup victory in 2014. He participated in every UEFA European Championship (hereafter: EURO) and World Cup between 2004 and 2016. Podolski retired from the national team in 2017 after having played in 130 games, the third most appearances in German soccer history. With forty-nine goals, he has been the third most prolific goal scorer for the German national team.

³¹⁶ Panikos Panayi, *Ethnic Minorities in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany: Jews, Gypsies, Poles, Turks and Others* (London: Routledge, 2013), 251–2.

³¹⁷ “Politician Demands Poland Strip Podolski of Citizenship,” *Der Spiegel*, June 11, 2008, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/row-over-german-dual-nationality-footballer-politician-demands-poland-strip-podolski-of-citizenship-a-559011.html>.

³¹⁸ Gijs van Campenhout and Henk van Houtum, “‘I Am German when We Win, but I Am an Immigrant when We Lose’: Theorising on the Deservedness of Migrants in International Football, Using the Case of Mesut Özil,” *Sport in Society* (2021): 7.

Podolski became an icon for the *Ruhrgebiet* and achieved celebrity status by joining the Cologne-based soccer club 1. FC Köln in 1995, which he subsequently helped gain promotion to the *Bundesliga*.³¹⁹ He continued to play for them, despite their relegation to the 2. *Bundesliga*, until his transfer to FC Bayern München in 2006. Podolski seems to fall into the category of players like Oliver Kahn and Manuel Neuer who began their respective careers in their hometowns, only to transfer to a more successful club for various reasons (success, money, prestige, etc.). Podolski returned to 1. FC Köln after playing for FC Bayern München before going abroad to English Premier League club Arsenal. It is rare for a soccer player to play for one club his entire career, especially with the commodification of soccer in recent years. While there have always been players who only played for one club their entire career (e.g., Sepp Maier and Wolfgang Overath), soccer stars like Beckenbauer and Netzer transferred abroad in the later stages of their careers.³²⁰ In the beginning of the *Bundesliga*, transfers of players within the league were subject to a freely negotiable transfer fee of up to 50,000 DM.³²¹ The Bosman ruling in 1995 had a major influence on transfers, allowing players to accept offers from other clubs after they reached the end of their contract. This means that clubs have to offer satisfactory contracts in order to retain players.

³¹⁹ Each season the last two teams of the *Bundesliga* are relegated to the 2. *Bundesliga* and the first two teams of the 2. *Bundesliga* get promoted. The third last team in the *Bundesliga* and the third best team of the 2. *Bundesliga* have to play against each other twice to determine who will be playing in the *Bundesliga* the following season.

³²⁰ Beckenbauer went to New York Cosmos and Netzer to Real Madrid and Grasshopper Club Zürich.

³²¹ Free transfers are nowadays an everyday occurrence.

It has proven difficult for a number of soccer clubs to keep Podolski, who after his stint with Arsenal, signed with the Turkish club Galatasaray Istanbul (hereafter Galatasaray) in 2015. After three years with the Japanese club Vissel Kobe, he returned to the Turkish league and joined Antalyaspor in 2020 for one-and-a-half years. Since 2021, he has played for the Polish club Górnik Zabrze, where he will most likely finish his career. His most notable club achievements include winning the “Double” (i.e., winning both the Bundesliga championship and the German Cup) with FC Bayern München, the English FA Cup with Arsenal, and the Turkish Cup and Supercup with Galatasaray.³²²

I will examine how not only fans but also relevant media, including Germany’s leading sports TV show and magazine frame Podolski. These representations are then compared to his own narratives through a similar cultural discourse analysis and close readings of his autobiography, advertisements, published song, and social media account.

DEPICTION BY THE MEDIA AND FANS

Podolski achieved his local celebrity status at a young age when he contributed to 1. FC Köln’s promotion to the *Bundesliga*. While there are competing discourses about his *Migrationshintergrund* among fans and leading sports media, both discourses position Podolski in a positive light as long as his performance and behavior correspond with society’s expectations. *Kicker* and the TV show *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* privilege a coming-of-age narrative that emphasizes Podolski’s ethnic roots and enables players like Podolski to be presented as “good” integration stories despite negative behavior.

³²² For a complete list of his honors, see: “Lukas Podolski,” Wikipedia, accessed May 25, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lukas_Podolski.

The Cologne icon appeared on *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* once in August 2005.³²³ The television show is focused not only on the on-field achievements of athletes but also the entertainment factor that is gained through less formal interviews, behind-the-player intro videos, and the goal target practice. *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* invited Podolski and Franz Beckenbauer, who was organizing the 2006 World Cup, to appear on the show.³²⁴ The announcer presents the pair as stars, while Johannes B. Kerner, the then-presenter of *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*, describes this episode as “royal” (00:01:33). This hints at Podolski’s nickname “*Prinz Poldi*” (Prince Poldi) and Beckenbauer’s nickname “*Der Kaiser*” (the emperor), reminiscent of German and Austrian emperors.³²⁵ “*Prinz Poldi*” is also an allusion to the Cologne Carnival Prince, the most important representative of the carnival in Cologne, leading the main parades throughout the week.³²⁶ Both nicknames highlight the star quality of the players, both the former and the current, as well as emphasize their celebrity status, which is equated with quasi-regal status. Beckenbauer represents an experienced soccer celebrity who made it possible for players like Podolski, who is at the beginning of this career, to achieve the same status one day.

³²³ It is a German entertainment television show that broadcasts live from the ground of the second public broadcaster, ZDF, in Mainz.

³²⁴ *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*, hosted by Johannes B. Kerner, aired August 6, 2005, on ZDF. The show opens with a long shot of a black-and-white clock showing the time: 10 pm.

³²⁵ “*Der Kaiser*” also derives from Beckenbauer’s elegant style and his leadership on the field.

³²⁶ The carnival takes place every year, beginning at eleven minutes past eleven am on the eleventh of the eleventh month, November. After a period of suspension between Advent and Christmas, it picks up again after January sixth and lasts till Ash Wednesday.

The 2005 episode offers two competing discourses about belonging in regard to Podolski's personal and professional life. *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* positions an inexperienced, naïve Podolski as a Cologne celebrity who plays for 1. FC Köln, one of the teams promoted to the *Bundesliga* for that season. A short video about Podolski features Cologne Cathedral, a goat, and a close-up of Podolski's face covered in coal and wearing safety glasses (00:28:34-00:29:10). To understand the associations with Podolski, one must know that the mascot of 1. FC Köln is a goat, while the Cologne Cathedral is the city's landmark. His coal-covered face ties back to Cologne and the area west of it being a major producer of brown coal, one of Germany's primary energy sources.³²⁷

While the video frames Podolski as a Cologne icon, the presenter Kerner repeatedly questions Podolski in a teenage-celebrity-like celebrity interview about his hobbies and his *Heimat* Poland. Podolski acknowledges his ties to Poland and his love for its (national) cuisine but also expresses his appreciation for Cologne (00:32:42-00:33:09). He demonstrates in this instance Esser's *multiple inclusion*,³²⁸ living in and being integrated in Germany but also still connected to his country of birth (e.g., Polish-speaking household, relatives in Poland, Polish cuisine).

Like *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*, the *Kicker* analysis sets forth two competing discourses about highlighting Podolski's Polish roots in connection to his performance on the field. The *Kicker* analysis focuses on two important events in Podolski's life, namely

³²⁷ "Wichtigster Energieträger: Kohle löst Windkraft ab," Tagesschau, March 17, 2022, <https://www.tagesschau.de/wirtschaft/technologie/energie-strom-deutschland-101.html>.

³²⁸ Esser, "Ist das Konzept," 7–8.

his first game against his birth country, Poland, at the 2006 World Cup and slapping then-captain Michael Ballack in a 2010 World Cup qualifier game. In the 2006 World Cup, Podolski played against his country of birth Poland for the first time. In the previous chapter, I noted that Sönke Wortmann includes the live coverage of the Poland game in his documentary *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*, in which the commentator blames Podolski's Polish heritage for missing the goal.³²⁹ Instead of focusing on his German heritage, the *Kicker* articles prior to the Poland game emphasize Podolski's, as well as fellow striker Miroslav Klose's, close family connections in Poland.³³⁰ After the game, in which both strikers did not score, the media painted Podolski as a young player who needs to do more on the field.³³¹ Podolski's inexperience is reflected by the common use of the diminutive "Poldi," a nickname that was given to him by the media, which indicates uncertainty about his status as an adult.³³² One article goes so far as to make Podolski's and Klose's heritage responsible for their inability to score against their country of birth: "Oliver Neuville scored during added time. Maybe because he was not born in Poland, but

³²⁹ "Come on, Lukas. He probably thought about his Polish grandma and therefore did not score." Wortmann, *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*.

³³⁰ "Der Sturm: Das Duell gegen das Geburtsland – Klose/Podolski: Emotionales Spiel," *Kicker*, June 12, 2006, 39.

³³¹ "junger Bursche." Thomas Doll, "Auch wir können es zu null – Podolski muss mehr tun," *Kicker*, June 15, 2006, 2.

³³² "Poldi" is also the diminutive of the German name "Leopold," and its use as a nickname for him could therefore be a form of Germanization. However, given the relative rarity of "Leopold" as a first name today, it seems more likely that those who use "Poldi" as a nickname for Podolski denote his status as an adolescent.

in Switzerland.”³³³ The author clearly suggests that striker and Swiss-born Neuville scored the winning goal because he is not Polish. Podolski is painted as someone who repeatedly reaffirms his Polish roots as well as calling Polish players his “fellow countrymen.”³³⁴

Kicker even uses the rare, hyphenated form “Deutsch-Polen” (German-Poles),³³⁵ symbolizing the author’s ideal views on “Germanness:” one cannot be a German when one is not born in Germany. This is not untrue, however, because both Podolski’s and Klose’s paternal ancestors were citizens of the German Empire which existed from 1871 to 1918, and according to Article 116 of the German Basic Law, Podolski and Klose therefore have the right to German citizenship. While the term “Deutsch-Polen” may seem acceptable in light of similar descriptions like “Turkish German,” the *Kicker* articles analyzed here demonstrate the challenges of dual citizenship and integration in one’s country of birth and host country. The analysis highlights the fundamental problems of Germany’s nationality law and the acceptance of people who were not born in Germany but ethically speaking are German.

With this assertion in mind, one would assume a similar kind of media discourse when Podolski slapped Germany’s then-captain Michael Ballack in a 2010 World Cup qualifier game against Wales in 2009. Podolski later admitted that he overreacted and

³³³ “Oliver Neuville traf in der Nachspielzeit. Vielleicht, weil er nicht in Polen geboren wurde, sondern in der Schweiz.” “Podolski/Klose: Das deutsche Angriffsduo gehemmt und glücklos – Gebete auf polnisch, das Tor aus der Schweiz.” *Kicker*, June 15, 2006, 2.

³³⁴ “Landsleute.” “Podolski/Klose,” 2.

³³⁵ “Podolski/Klose,” 2.

agreed to donate €5,000 to a fair-play-campaign of the DFB.³³⁶ While initial reactions downplayed the altercation as “an argument,”³³⁷ or “violent action against the captain,”³³⁸ a more nuanced analysis of the incident can be found six days after the slap. Thiemo Müller and Karlheinz Wild dedicate an entire article to the incident, including a black and white picture of Podolski’s substitution after the slap. On the right-hand side is a photograph of national coach Löw and Podolski in profile while the stadium audience is blurred in the background (fig. 13).



Figure 13: Podolski’s send-off after he slapped Michael Ballack (Illustration in Thiemo Müller and Karlheinz Wild, “Nationalelf: Löw und Bierhoff sind gefordert: Der Fall Podolski und die fatalen Wirkungen,” *Kicker*, April 6, 2009, 40.)

³³⁶ “Poldi zahlt für seine Ohrfeige,” *Bild*, April 3, 2009, <https://www.bild.de/sport/fussball/5000-euro-fuer-dfb-7889282.bild.html>.

³³⁷ “Streit.” Lukas Podolski, interview by Oliver Hartmann, “Für einen Fußballer ist das Gift,” *Kicker*, April 2, 2009, 6.

³³⁸ “handgreifliche Aktion gegen den Kapitän.” Toni Schumacher, “Podolski gegen Ballack: Da ist eine Entschuldigung fällig!” *Kicker*, April 2, 2009, 2.

The caption reads: “Leaving without consequences.”³³⁹ With his erect stance, Löw appears in the picture as a patriarchal figure who does not reprimand his player; instead letting him walk away from the incident without confrontation. Despite being the same height, the picture makes Podolski, with his slumped shoulders, seems shorter than Löw, their bodies representing the integration discourse of ethnic Germans not born in Germany. The latter, for instance, is seen as the childlike second-class citizen who needs guidance and help from the paternal German who was born in Germany.

As a way to avoid talking about ethnicity and belonging, *Kicker* constructs the Ballack incident as part of a coming-of-age narrative. Neither Podolski’s roots nor his birth country have been mentioned by any *Kicker* article concerning this incident. Instead, various authors criticize his slap and compare him to a boxer and “hooligan,”³⁴⁰ fitting into the media discourse about migrants as threats to public security and as “problem groups.”³⁴¹ One *Kicker* reader letter even suggests a yearlong suspension and gives him a new nickname, “Prinz Prolo” (prince plebe).³⁴² Nicknames reflect celebrity status and can serve as a bond between the public and players.³⁴³ They are mainly based on certain

³³⁹ “Abgang ohne Folgen.” Thiemo Müller and Karlheinz Wild, “Nationalelf: Löw und Bierhoff sind gefordert: Der Fall Podolski und die fatalen Wirkungen,” *Kicker*, April 6, 2009, 40.

³⁴⁰ “Poldi trainiert wieder mit Ballack!” *Kicker*, April 6, 2009, 55.
Django Asül, “Abpfiff,” *Kicker*, April 6, 2009, 87.

³⁴¹ Geißler, “Mediale Integration,” 11.

³⁴² Werner Karl Böhm, “Nationalelf: Gomez und vor allem Podolski in der Kritik,” *Kicker*, April 6, 2009, 83.

³⁴³ Ernest L. Abel and Michael L. Kruger, “Nicknames Increase Longevity,” *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying* 53, no. 3 (2006): 243.

behaviors (like former NFL running back Marshawn Lynch and his nickname of “Beast Mode,” for one), physical aspects (e.g., former MLB pitcher Mordecai Brown’s nickname “Three Finger”), or the field/style of play (e.g., NBA legend Michael Jordan’s nickname “Air Jordan”).³⁴⁴ In Podolski’s case, it is not an honor to receive this nickname. On the contrary, it reflects his negative behavior and lower-class status, thereby tarnishing his image.

Even though the overall discourse concerning Podolski is negative, he did not face any consequences besides the €5,000 fine. One might suspect that Podolski’s public display of his frustration with Ballack could not have come at a better time for the then-national coach Löw, who was waiting for Ballack to retire. Ballack missed the 2010 South Africa World Cup after suffering an ankle injury from a foul by Jérôme Boateng’s half-brother Kevin-Prince Boateng. In 2011, it was announced that Ballack would no longer be part of the national team.³⁴⁵ Podolski’s actions and the DFB’s reluctance to punish him further underscore the relative unimportance of Ballack for the national team and the DFB’s unwillingness to discipline bad behavior from a promising player. While *Kicker* does not explicitly emphasize Podolski’s Polish roots, the magazine visually depicts Podolski as an aggressive, violent “child” who needs to be “educated” by the German national coach and should be punished more severely. One might argue that *Kicker* did not mention his Polish

³⁴⁴ Elena Negrea-Busuioac and Diana Luiza Simion, “What’s in a Nickname? Form and Function of Sports’ Team Nicknames,” in *Differences, Similarities and Meanings: Semiotic Investigations of Contemporary Communication Phenomena*, ed. Nicolae-Sorin Drăgan (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2021), 279.

³⁴⁵ Dana Eichhorst, “Ballack muss DFB-Kader verlassen,” DW, June 16, 2011, <https://www.dw.com/de/ballack-muss-dfb-kader-verlassen/av-6550031>.

roots because Podolski had passed his loyalty test to Germany after scoring against Poland in the EURO 2008.

Podolski elicits various reactions from different parts of society. His fans, for the most part, celebrate their Cologne legend both in the stadium and online. They have dedicated multiple songs to him.³⁴⁶ He also has numerous Facebook pages and groups. Most pages and groups range from three to 95,000 members or followers and cover his time at 1. FC Köln, FC Arsenal, Inter Milan, and Galatasaray. The majority of the pages and groups call themselves “fans of Podolski” but in reality, they support the club (Arsenal FC, Inter Milan, Galatasaray, 1. FC Köln) that he is currently playing for and therefore the discussion in those groups cover mostly soccer scores and games. Whether the fans in those groups are authentic cannot be determined; however, in this case, the fans are club fans rather than Podolski supporters.³⁴⁷

I examine the most prominent fan song, “Lu-Lu-Lu-Lukas Podolski” by Jürgen Milski and Libero 5,³⁴⁸ and the “Lukas Podolski Fans” Facebook group since it not only retraces the steps of Podolski throughout his seasons with Inter Milan and Galatasaray but

³⁴⁶ There are songs dedicated to soccer clubs and players such as Diego Maradona and Zlatan Ibrahimović. The most prominent German examples are the 2002 song “Ein Rudi Völler” (one Rudi Völler) from La Roca as well as the 2002 “Olli Kahn” hit by the German a cappella [this song has musical accompaniment] pop rock band Die Prinzen.

³⁴⁷ There is no public member list of the fan pages/groups on social media.

³⁴⁸ Derjuergende, “Lu-Lu-Lukas Podolski – BB Jürgen,” YouTube, May 19, 2008, video, 04:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hs6KAnOKxX0>.

also describes his national team appearances.³⁴⁹ The fan discourse analysis reveals the hype surrounding Podolski and shows how his consumption-orientated and soccer-centric fans³⁵⁰ embrace masculine tropes and emphasize soccer affiliations over national belonging.

Cologne natives Jürgen Milski and Libero 5 attempted to keep Podolski in Cologne (and away from FC Bayern München) with their homage “Lu-Lu-Lu-Lukas Podolski.” They elevate Podolski to the level of a soccer legend with their exaggerated, positive portrayal of him. Both performers wear polo shirts with the “Lu Lu ... Lukas ...” slogan in the video. In the background different sized screens show goals, plays, and photos of Podolski. The song itself has a simple, repetitive chorus and lyrics.³⁵¹ Combined with the fast and loud instrumentation, it could be called a “Ballermann Hit.”³⁵² Milski and Libero 5 idolize Podolski as a godlike figure who is wild, young, and celebrated around the world, as shown by lyrics like “Halleluja” and “Fußballgott” (soccer god). At the end of the song, one hears a presumed radio commentator saying: “The 90th minute of the game is on. The ball comes from midfield. He passes to Poldi. Poldi stands free in front of the goal.

³⁴⁹ The page was created on January 3, 2015, and currently has 1,481 followers. Lukas Podolski Fans, Facebook, accessed May 20, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/Lukas-Podolski-Fans-889881357741349/?ref=page_internal.

³⁵⁰ Heitmeyer and Peter, *Jugendliche Fußballfans*, 32.

³⁵¹ The full lyrics can be found at: “Der lu-lu-lukas song,” Genius, accessed May 25, 2021, <https://genius.com/Jurgen-der-lu-lu-lukas-song-lyrics>.

³⁵² Balneario 6 alias Ballermann refers to a beach bar on Platja de Palma on the Spanish Balearic Island of Mallorca, where one can find an overwhelmingly high number of Germans. Over the years, the Ballermann also became a name for a subculture, including parties and a music which incorporates folk elements combined with techno. Stars who have performed at the Ballermann include Jürgen Drews, Mickie Krause, Michael Wendler, and Milski.

Goal!”³⁵³ This radio commentary is an allusion to the legendary radio commentary by Herbert Zimmermann at the 1954 World Cup final between Hungary and the FRG.³⁵⁴ Podolski is compared to *Ruhrgebiet* legend Helmut Rahn, who scored the winning World Championship goal in 1954. Even though public commentary is mostly negative, the fan discourse reveals the true nature of soccer culture: the connection between local, regional, and national feelings of belonging.³⁵⁵ While many fans support the national team, German soccer is first and foremost a sport that celebrates above all the regional (for example North and South) and local aspect of a club (such as FC St. Pauli that was founded in the Hamburg district St. Pauli) over the national team.

The social media representation of Podolski is mostly a point of reference for male consumers with respect to the meaning and reproduction of dominant masculine values associated with soccer players: fame, success, heterosexually, and regional (soccer) identification.

The profile picture of Podolski’s Facebook page was updated in 2015, showing him wearing a Galatasaray jersey.³⁵⁶ Under the word “Aslanlar,” the caption reads, “Geissbock und Löwe” (billy goat and lion). “Aslanlar” is a Turkish nickname for Galatasaray,

³⁵³ “Die 90. Spielminute läuft. Der Ball kommt aus dem Mittelfeld. Schießt zu Poldi. Poldi steht frei vor der Hütte. Tor!”

³⁵⁴ The original radio commentary: “Schäfer nach innen geflankt... Kopfball... Abgewehrt. Aus dem Hintergrund müsste Rahn schießen... Rahn schießt! Tor! Tor! Tor! Tor! Tor für Deutschland!”

³⁵⁵ English, German, and Polish commentators expressed their dislike towards the singers and song but admit that it is a catchy song that could be sung when intoxicated.

³⁵⁶ Lukas Podolski Fans, Facebook, profile picture, August 8, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/889881357741349/photos/a.889882457741239/1023433577719459/>.

meaning lions. The billy goat is the mascot of his former club 1. FC Köln.³⁵⁷ The regional identification of Podolski stands above all else. Nevertheless, his accomplishments with Germany's national team are honored with a post on his last match for Germany.³⁵⁸ The post shows a collage of twenty-eight different Podolski photos during his time with the national team from 2004 until 2017. In the center of the photo montage is a smiling Podolski, dressed in sunglasses, a hat, and a black t-shirt, as he holds the World Cup trophy in one hand. After scoring the winning goal during his farewell game against England, the "Lukas Podolski Fans" page posted a video of his goal with positive German commentary.³⁵⁹ The fans celebrate his goal as the "goal of the millennium."³⁶⁰

The creators of the page update other fans on Podolski's sporting achievements, private life milestones (birthday, marriage), as well as his pastimes outside of soccer.³⁶¹ Social media reveal the changing landscape for soccer players. Nowadays, skills alone are

³⁵⁷ His Cologne connection is further highlighted in an update profile picture with then 1. FC Köln striker and German national teammate Jonas Hector on July 2, 2016. Lukas Podolski Fans. Facebook, image, July 2, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/889881357741349/photos/a.889882457741239/1217363501659798/>.

³⁵⁸ Lukas Podolski Fans, "Danke für alles Poldi ❤️," Facebook, image, March 22, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/889881357741349/photos/a.937778232951661/1466631656732980/>.

³⁵⁹ Lukas Podolski Fans, "Tor Lukas Podolski | Sportschau Tor des Monats? Tor des Jahres? Wir legen uns fest: Lukas Podolski mit dem Tor des Jahrtausends!" Facebook, video, March 22, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/sportschau/videos/10155332863354369>.

³⁶⁰ This is a reference to *Tor des Monats* (goal of the month) and *Tor des Jahres* (goal of the year), which are soccer awards for particularly spectacular goals selected by viewers of the ARD sports TV show *Sportschau*. With the goal against England, he not only earned the "Goal of the Month" but also "Goal of the Year." Podolski won "Goal of the Month" twelve times and thereby leads this category.

³⁶¹ E.g., Lukas Podolski Fans. "Lukas und sein Vater 😊." Facebook, cover photo, April 6, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/889881357741349/photos/a.890096747719810/945625478833603/>. Lukas Podolski Fans. "😊." Facebook, cover photo, May 20, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/889881357741349/photos/a.890096747719810/973683036027847/>.

not enough for athletes to earn publicity. An athlete's marketing relies on endorsement deals (starting as early as in college) and giving insights into their "authentic" celebrity personality. Fans like to know more about the person behind the "official" Podolski as well as to keep other supporters informed about his activities. One can easily follow this group without ever knowing who created the group and if they are affiliated with any clubs. Those social media followers can also include "Facebook trolls," i.e., people who post "inflammatory, irrelevant, or offensive comments or other disruptive content" in an online community.³⁶² In a picture of Podolski with five other men in a wooded area, titled "Moin^^,"³⁶³ a "fan" comments with the following: "Selfies world champion level... soccer well... could be better... but it will not get better."³⁶⁴ He criticizes Podolski for taking pictures instead of concentrating on soccer. A similar negative response can be found in three other posts by the same person. While social media can be used in positive ways such as facilitating stronger fan-athlete ties, it also opens up a new space for abuse, such as trolling. In general, however, there is a relatively low reaction among Podolski's fans. With almost 1,500 followers, only few (up to sixty-two) react to posts by commenting or liking. It seems that the online community of Podolski's fans is not very strong as

³⁶² "Troll," Merriam-Webster, accessed November 19, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/troll>.

³⁶³ "Good morning" in North German dialects. Lukas Podolski Fans, "Moin^^." Facebook, image, July 13, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/889881357741349/photos/a.890096747719810/1007850269277790/>.

³⁶⁴ "Selfis weltmeisterlich ... fußballerisch naja ... könnte besser sein ... wird aber nicht besser." Thomas Barth, July 13, 2015, comment on, Lukas Podolski Fans, "Moin^^," Facebook, July 13, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/889881357741349/photos/a.890096747719810/1007850269277790/>.

opposed to the fan-athlete relationship on his official Facebook site. This suggests that the fan group might not consist of “real” fans.

SELF-PRESENTATION

While film, radio, magazines, newspapers, and books dominated the depiction of celebrities in the first half of the twentieth century, social media reinforce the connection between fans and celebrities in later half of that century as the previous chapter showed. Nowadays, celebrities update fans regularly on their lives and communicate directly with them, sometimes even over various media channels to present different aspects of their lives.³⁶⁵

Podolski’s marketing in his earlier years emphasizes his role model function that incorporates masculinity associated with sports. His later strategy ties himself and his products to Cologne and embraces other forms of masculinities, such as hypermasculinity and metrosexuality.

Podolski has been the face of many companies over the years; his involvement with the pastry company Griesson-de Beukelaer and its cookies “Prinzen Rolle” (prince cookies) is the most iconic since Podolski’s nickname is *Prinz Poldi*. The Prinzen Rolle campaign with Podolski was in place from 2007 until 2011.³⁶⁶ It was largely supported by the “Prinzen Rolle” TV commercial directed by Sönke Wortmann, the director of *Das Wunder von Bern* and *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*. The commercial from 2007

³⁶⁵ Jerslev and Mortensen, “Celebrity,” 163–4.

³⁶⁶ “Poldi’ wirbt nicht mehr für die Prinzenrolle,” RP-Online, August 10, 2011, https://rp-online.de/nrw/staedte/kempen/poldi-wirbt-nicht-mehr-fuer-die-prinzenrolle_aid-13318423.

features two boys and Podolski.³⁶⁷ It opens with the voice of a young boy at an airport gate waiting area. An over-the-shoulder-shot reveals a boy holding a Podolski trading card in his hands while another boy tries to negotiate a deal: three Brazilian soccer player cards for one Podolski card. After the boy with the Podolski card declines the offer, the other boy offers a better deal by giving him all his Italian trading cards. That is the first time the name “Podolski” is mentioned in the commercial and is also the first time their surprised-looking idol is shown in profile, sitting behind the two boys and enjoying a “Prinzen Rolle” cookie. Podolski signs the “Prinzen Rolle” package and gives it to a delighted and smiling boy who is still negotiating the deal. Then, “Prinzen Rolle” cookies are shown, accompanied by their slogan “Fairy tales only come true with a prince. Princes go farther.”³⁶⁸ Podolski appears as a soccer celebrity who is a role model for the younger generation, which ranks Podolski higher than players from other countries. He received the “Best Young Player” award from FIFA at the World Cup in Germany, an accomplishment which can inspire children, especially younger ones, to follow his lead. Podolski’s nickname in combination with the Prinzen Rolle slogan fits into the bigger narrative of Podolski as a mischievous royal who enjoys being a role model for children and young, aspiring soccer players. The moral of the story is: princes advance in life and can help make dreams come true, in this instance, fulfilling the children’s dream of meeting or becoming Podolski. Podolski himself has had

³⁶⁷ Griesson – de Beukelaer, “Prinzen Rolle ‘Spielkarten,’” YouTube, March 8, 2007, video, 00:21, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-WxUDJoyvk>.

³⁶⁸ “Nur mit Prinzen werden Märchen wahr. Prinzen kommen weiter.”

a fairytale-like career, emigrating from Poland, integrating into German society, and climbing the professional soccer league ladder from regional to international soccer clubs.

In his autobiography *Dranbleiben!*, Podolski markets himself as a soccer player who wants to help children in need.³⁶⁹ The traditional chronological structure of the narrative is interrupted by children's profiles from *Die Arche*, a youth organization for socially disadvantaged children.³⁷⁰ *Dranbleiben!* was (ghost)written by journalists Anja Kömmerling and Thomas Brinx.³⁷¹ *Der Tagesspiegel* journalist Sven Goldmann refers to *Dranbleiben!* as a kind of autobiography with a social therapeutic approach.³⁷² In an interview with *Stern* journalist Viktoria Meinholz, Podolski admits that he wrote the autobiography to tell his story and to raise awareness for children needing guidance to discover their life goals and dreams.³⁷³

Similar to the “Prinzen Rolle” campaign, Podolski targets the younger generation by introducing *Die Arche* children in detail and by writing about his life story through the

³⁶⁹ Lukas Podolski, *Dranbleiben!*, ed. Bern Siggelkow and Wolfgang Büscher (Stuttgart: Gabriel, 2014).

³⁷⁰ Founding Pastor Bernd Siggelkow and press spokesperson Wolfgang Büschner edited Podolski's autobiography.

³⁷¹ Sports autobiographies are often “ghost-written” by journalists, so it is difficult to say how much input the athlete actually had. The worst-case scenario happened to former NBA player Charles Barkley who famously claimed that he has been misquoted in his own autobiography, *Outrageous!* (1992). “Barkley ‘Misquoted’ in Own Book,” *The Seattle Times*, December 13, 1991, <https://Archive.Seattletimes.Com/Archive/?Date=19911213&Slug=1322835>.

³⁷² Sven Goldmann, “Lukas Podolskis Buch ‘Dranbleiben!’” *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 5, 2020, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/gesellschaft/panorama/talent-ist-nur-der-anfang-lukas-podolskis-buch-dranbleiben/9602566.html>.

³⁷³ Viktoria Meinholz, “Ich habe nie vergessen, wo ich herkomme,” *Stern*, March 10, 2014, <https://www.stern.de/familie/kinder/-dranbleiben---von-lukas-podolski--ich-habe-nie-vergessen--wo-ich-herkomme--3392352.html>.

eyes of a naïve child.³⁷⁴ He describes his hometown, Bergheim, in an idyllic, child-like fashion: “Everyone cultivates their own language and customs. This creates a special atmosphere: everyone can be who they want, and be accepted by everyone, regardless of what they look like or what their preferences are.”³⁷⁵ Other acquaintances who could not find a way out of the crime-ridden neighborhood are only sporadically mentioned by Podolski. Only after Podolski himself became a father does he acknowledge his childhood district as being dangerous, while also recognizing it as the source of his fighting instinct.

The role model discourse in the autobiography presents soccer as a solution for people *mit Migrationshintergrund* who come from a poorer neighborhood and have no educational opportunities.³⁷⁶ Podolski’s path to integration into German society was through soccer: “After all, it was soccer that helped me to feel at home in Germany, and everyone who was there back then still remembers the little blond guy today.”³⁷⁷ Given his limited opportunities, caused in part by financial hardship, Podolski invested much of his time in soccer. There he had the same social standing among his migrant friends but more recognition due to his ambition and advanced abilities. Whereas he describes the German children as blonde, tall, and docile, he characterizes the migrants as wild, rough, and robust.

³⁷⁴ Each of the seventeen chapters includes at least one child’s profile.

³⁷⁵ “Jeder pflegt seine Sprache und Bräuche. Dadurch entsteht eine ganz besondere Atmosphäre, jeder kann so sein, wie er möchte, alle sind akzeptiert, vollkommen egal, wie sie aussehen oder was sie für Vorlieben haben.” Podolski, *Dranbleiben!*, 24.

³⁷⁶ He was willing to learn a profession but not at the expense of his soccer career: “Schule lief für mich immer nebenher, weil ich keinen Sinn dafür und keine Zeit hatte.” Podolski, *Dranbleiben!*, 50.

³⁷⁷ “Der Fußball war es schließlich, der mir geholfen hat, mich in Deutschland zu Hause zu fühlen, und alle, die damals dabei waren, erinnern sich heute noch an den kleinen blonden Kerl.” Podolski, *Dranbleiben!*, 20.

On the surface, Podolski fits in with the German crowd but identifies more with the migrant children. He follows a similar logic as the media with their “us versus them” depiction of migrants and immigrants.

Podolski quickly learned though that being successful in German soccer requires being loyal to a club and a national team. His loyalty to Cologne brought him all the way to Germany’s most successful club, FC Bayern München. His move to the Bavarian team was motivated in part by economic considerations and in part by his ambition to play at a higher level, making him a “mercenary” and “ambitionist.”³⁷⁸ Podolski decided against more money, prestige, fame, glitz, and glamour when he returned home to 1. FC Köln after three years in Munich.³⁷⁹ His identification with Cologne, Bergheim, and his club 1. FC Köln comes to light in the nouns he uses throughout *Dranbleiben!* He equates “we” with “people from Cologne” and “I” with the “boy from this city.”³⁸⁰ It seems that Podolski protected himself from the trauma of migration by first refusing to speak German, not attending German kindergarten when young, and later depicting Bergheim as an idyllic home.³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ Magee and Sugden, “The World at Their Feet,” 431–3.

³⁷⁹ “Aber in Wirklichkeit war ich meinem Herzen gefolgt, hatte auf Glanz und Glamour, Ruhm und Prestige und sehr viel Geld verzichtet, um mich einer nicht weniger anspruchsvollen Herausforderung zu stellen.” Podolski, *Dranbleiben!*, 219.

³⁸⁰ “Wir Kölner sind anders und mit uns auch der 1. FC Köln.” Podolski, *Dranbleiben!*, 98. “Ich bin ein Junge dieser Stadt.” Podolski, *Dranbleiben!*, 103.

³⁸¹ The Podolski family got split up when they arrived in West Germany. His father and sister stayed with Podolski’s grandparents, while he stayed with his mother and aunt. Podolski, *Dranbleiben!*, 13.

While regionally Podolski identifies as a person from Cologne, nationally he is conflicted about being German or Polish: “It is a great honor to represent Germany in the football world, but there are just two countries that I belong to and I respect both of them and have never forgotten where I come from.”³⁸² Despite claiming that it was difficult for him to play against Poland at the World Cup in 2006 and the EURO in 2008, Podolski states that there was no loyalty conflict when he competed against his country of birth.³⁸³ He makes it seem as if he had no choice as to which country he should play for. According to Podolski, the question was settled after he played for the youth national team (U-21) at the EURO in 2004. Podolski could have switched national teams prior to his appearance on the senior team in 2004, as Kevin-Prince Boateng did, who participated in all youth levels in the German system before playing for Ghana’s senior team.³⁸⁴ Podolski’s oversimplification makes it possible for Polish fans to still support him, whereas a more honest statement might reveal that Podolski deliberately chose Germany so that he could win more titles. He is as a prime example of Esser’s *multiple inclusion*,³⁸⁵ signaling social integration in both the host country and country of origin. Despite the rejection by the Polish national team, he managed to hold on to his Polish roots (language, relatives,

³⁸² “Es ist eine große Ehre, Deutschland in der Fußballwelt zu vertreten, aber es gibt einfach zwei Länder, zu denen ich gehöre, und ich respektiere sie beide und habe nie vergessen, wo ich herkomme.” Podolski, *Dranbleiben!*, 128.

³⁸³ “Wir hatten die Möglichkeit uns für da Achtelfinale zu qualifizieren, wenn wir gewinnen würden. Und das war definitiv mein Ziel, dass wir weiterkommen, nicht Polen.” Podolski, *Dranbleiben!*, 185.

³⁸⁴ After Podolski played his first match for the German senior team in the EURO 2004, he was no longer allowed to switch teams in contrast to present day regulations.

³⁸⁵ Esser, “Ist das Konzept,” 8.

cuisine, customs) while also learning the German language, Cologne dialect, and German values. This, however, does not seem to be an achievable goal for the majority of people *mit Migrationshintergrund*, as the case of Mesut Özil will demonstrate.

Over the years, Podolski's narrative shifts away from children's hero worship to consumer-driven marketing campaigns that accentuates his hypermasculinity as seen by the Adidas campaign in 2014. Advertisements encourage traditional and sometimes even stereotypical beliefs about what society expects of men. In Podolski's case, he shows Germany's ideals about masculinity in connection to soccer. The German sportswear company Adidas has partnered with Podolski since 2004.³⁸⁶ For the 2014 World Cup promotion, Podolski along with other soccer players such as Spanish striker Diego Costa, Dutch midfielder Arjen Robben, and Brazilian defender Dani Alves, clutch a real, bloody cow heart with the tagline "During the World Cup, I will give my heart to the cause" (fig. 14).³⁸⁷

³⁸⁶ "Adidas," Lukas Podolski, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://www.lukas-podolski.com/partners-detail/alias/adidas.html>.

³⁸⁷ Madison Hartman, "Adidas World Cup Ad Featuring Soccer Stars Holding Bloody Cow Hearts Angers Animal Rights Activists," NY Daily News, June 2, 2014, <https://www.nydailynews.com/sports/soccer/adidas-world-cup-heart-ad-angers-animal-rights-activists-article-1.1814585>.



Figure 14: Adidas advertisement for the 2014 World Cup (Illustration from “Adidas verteidigt Kampagne mit blutigen Kuhherzen,” *Der Spiegel*, June 4, 2014, <https://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/fussball-wm-2014-adidas-verteidigt-werbung-mit-blutigen-kuhherzen-a-973305.html>.)

Here, Podolski is literally offering to give his heart for his country.³⁸⁸ Passion and soul, which Adidas took very literally, are key requirements for victory. Podolski’s facial expression is not one of humility but rather one of submissiveness. The shadow on his face, together with the low-key lighting, makes him appear like a villain, insinuating that he does not shy away from getting his hands dirty in order to win the World Cup. Accentuated by the Adidas shirt, Podolski signifies the twentieth century masculinity ideal: hypermasculinity. The lighting foregrounds Podolski’s physical characteristics (toned muscles, rigid posture, hard facial expression), reminiscent of a warrior. This hypermasculine soccer player stands in contrast to Podolski as a role model in the “Prinzen

³⁸⁸ The campaign triggered protests among animal rights activists. Podolski, however, defended himself. “Adidas verteidigt Kampagne mit blutigen Kuhherzen,” *Der Spiegel*, June 4, 2014, <https://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/fussball-wm-2014-adidas-verteidigt-werbung-mit-blutigen-kuhherzen-a-973305.html>.

Rolle” campaign. Podolski exudes and reinforces traditional masculine traits in sports such as aggression, strength, toughness, and stoicism.

His consumer-driven marketing reached a high point with the establishment of various businesses. Podolski founded his fashion label “Strassenkicker” in 2015 before opening his first ice cream parlor in Cologne two years later.³⁸⁹ Together with his business partners, Metin and Salih Dag, Podolski opened the first Mangal Döner restaurant in Cologne in 2018.³⁹⁰ Podolski engages in the practice of place branding, creating “mental images [concerning itself with culture, economy, and social aspects] and perceptions of nations, states and cities.”³⁹¹ This is best expressed in his song “Liebe deine Stadt.”³⁹²

Podolski released the song together with Mo-Torres featuring Cat Ballou³⁹³ in 2016. In the accompanying video, he perfects his place-branding with the city Cologne and embraces various masculinities to appeal to a wider audience. Despite only saying “Liebe deine Stadt” at the end of the song, the video revolves around Podolski’s story, from the

³⁸⁹ “Strassenkicker,” Strassenkicker, accessed October 20, 2021, <https://strassenkicker.com/>. His ice cream can also be bought at the German supermarket Lidl. “La Gazzetta del Gelato,” Ice Cream United, accessed October 20, 2021, <https://www.icecreamunited.com/>.

³⁹⁰ They expanded to other nearby cities such as Bonn, Bergisch-Gladbach and Düsseldorf. “Mangal Döner x Lukas Podolski 10,” Mangal, accessed October 20, 2021, <https://www.mangal-lp10.de/start>.

³⁹¹ Ankitha Gattupalli, “Place Branding: Reviving Cities through Brand Strategy,” ArchDaily, October 31, 2022, <https://www.archdaily.com/991419/place-branding-reviving-cities-through-brand-strategy>.

³⁹² A percentage of the proceeds went to the Lukas-Podolski-Stiftung. The single reached number twenty-six of the German single charts.

³⁹³ Cat Ballou is a rock band that sings their text in the Cologne dialect.

clothes everyone wears to the people that are featured in the video.³⁹⁴ The most obvious reference to his fashion label is rapper Mo-Torres (a musician mit *Migrationshintergrund* from Cologne) who is shown repeatedly throughout the video wearing different items from Podolski's label. Podolski shows off his own label when he wears a black sweatshirt with "CGN 10," standing in front of Cologne's most important landmarks: the cathedral and bridge (fig. 15).³⁹⁵



Figure 15: Podolski encouraging everyone to love their city (Screenshot from Lukas Podolski, "Mo-Torres, Cat Ballou & Lukas Podolski," YouTube, December 2, 2016. Video, 4:16, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x65_s8T1SGQ.)

The sweatshirt is a reference to Cologne and his jersey number 10, serving as a perfect branding opportunity.³⁹⁶ He encourages everyone to love their city and to do so by buying not only the single but also his Cologne-inspired fashion, including a Cologne jersey with his number. The video is an ode to the city of Cologne, as the song title "love

³⁹⁴ Lukas Podolski, "Mo-Torres, Cat Ballou & Lukas Podolski – Liebe deine Stadt (Official Video)," YouTube, December 2, 2016, video, 4:16, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x65_s8T1SGQ.

³⁹⁵ At the end of the video, it is mentioned that Strassenkicker sponsored the clip.

³⁹⁶ It is not unusual for sports fans to purchase throwback jerseys to pay homage to certain players, matches, or personalities.

your city” suggests. Podolski plays the role of a friend inviting the audience into his home. While Mo-Torres wishes the city Cologne a good morning (“Guten Morgen meine heißgeliebte Stadt!”), an extreme long shot reveals Podolski on a balcony that belongs to an apartment in the famous old harbor district.³⁹⁷ Despite his outspoken love for Cologne, Podolski “had” to leave it behind, supposedly to make more money and play against a higher level of competition.

Podolski’s Cologne is inclusive, symbolized through the LGBTQIA+ rainbow flag and the words “every nationality is an added value for us. Two towers watch over us. Without black and white glasses, this city is colorful.”³⁹⁸ The idyllic Cologne depicted here stands against racism, homophobia, and discrimination. This depiction might aim to counter the images associated with Cologne, stemming from the 2015-2016 New Year’s Eve’s celebrations, when hundreds of women were mobbed and sexually assaulted by around 1,500 men, including immigrants and refugees, further dividing the country over immigration.³⁹⁹ Podolski includes in his portrayal of Cologne a variety of inhabitants of the city: urban gardeners, street sweepers, garbage disposal men, 1. FC Köln fans, children, people *mit Migrationshintergrund* that own a kebab shop, and the local youth

³⁹⁷ There are three *Kranhäuser* in the old harbor district in Cologne. Nowadays, apartments, offices for companies, law firms, and cultural organizations are housed in those buildings.

³⁹⁸ “Jede Nationalität für uns ein Mehrwert. Zwei Türme wachen über uns. Ohne schwarz-weiße Brille, diese Stadt ist kunterbunt.”

³⁹⁹ Similar scenes happened in other cities in Germany, such as Hamburg, Frankfurt am Main, and Hannover, albeit not to the same extent and degree of brutality. Alison Smale, “As Germany Welcomes Migrants, Sexual Attacks in Cologne Point to a New Reality,” *New York Times*, January 14, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/15/world/europe/as-germany-welcomes-migrantssexual-attacks-in-cologne-point-to-a-new-reality.html>.

choir St. Stephan. As in his earlier years, Podolski presents the city Cologne through the eyes of a naïve, cheerful child. Children, just like in *Dranbleiben!* and in the “Prinzen Rolle” ad, play a central part in Podolski’s marketing. For example, the youth choir in the video roams around Cologne’s streets towards the end of the video and sings the catchy “oh-oh-oh” part of the chorus. The video also features his own son, Louis, who wears a white and red 1. FC Köln jersey and walks hand-in-hand with his father (fig. 16).



Figure 16: Podolski with his son Louis (Screenshot from Lukas Podolski, “Mo-Torres, Cat Ballou & Lukas Podolski,” YouTube, December 2, 2016. Video, 4:16, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x65_s8T1SGQ.)

This shot conveys the message that Podolski wants his son to follow in his footsteps. Both are longtime members of 1. FC Köln, which also features prominently in the video, alluding to a Podolski soccer legacy in Cologne.

Podolski’s self-representation as a family man, fashion entrepreneur, and philanthropist from the multicultural city of Cologne offers alternative forms of masculinity that counters the traditional masculine traits in sports (heterosexual athlete that is married to his long-time girlfriend, muscular, competitive, aggressive, tough, and desirable to women and men). He uses his migrant celebrity status to give voices to other

people *mit Migrationshintergrund*, such as his son Louis, rapper Mo-Torres, who has Spanish roots, as well as his kebab shop friends with a Turkish background.

Chloe Preece emphasizes the importance of authenticity for constructing a successful brand narrative and image.⁴⁰⁰ Consumers, especially on social media, want to see the “*transgressive intimate self*”⁴⁰¹ that can offer new insights into the “authentic” individual celebrity. In the era of social media, questions of agency and authenticity have to be considered. In Podolski’s case, his Facebook page is an accumulation of earlier and newer marketing strategies, establishing him as a working-class family man and entrepreneur from Cologne who was born in Poland and plays soccer.

His Facebook page was created in April 2010 and currently has 8.3 million followers.⁴⁰² Despite being advertised as “not currently running ads,” Podolski functions as an ambassador for fashion labels Adidas and Hugo Boss, the chip company Funny Frisch, the FIFA 12 videogame, and his own brands Strassenkicker, Ice Cream United, and Mangal Döner.

The number of fans liking and comments on Podolski’s posts has increased over time. During his time at Arsenal one post earned him over 92,000 likes.⁴⁰³ Despite receiving fewer likes in general after his move away from European soccer and the

⁴⁰⁰ Chloe Preece, “The Authentic Celebrity Brand: Unpacking Ai Weiwei’s Celebritised Selves,” *Journal of Marketing Management* 31, no. 5–6 (2015): 630.

⁴⁰¹ Marshall, “The Promotion,” 45.

⁴⁰² Lukas Podolski. Facebook. Accessed October 20, 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/LukasPodolski>.

⁴⁰³ Lukas Podolski. “Sweet dreams...#Poldi. Facebook, image, December 10, 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/LukasPodolski/photos/a.689898931021426/1090191174325531/>.

imminent end of his career,⁴⁰⁴ pictures of his private life still generate numerous likes (normally around 38,000), underscoring his celebrity status beyond the soccer sphere.⁴⁰⁵

In the beginning of Podolski's social media activity, he uses Facebook mainly as a tool to advertise his sponsors. A post from 2011 shows him in black Adidas underwear standing in front of lockers, appearing like a gym photo-op (fig. 17).⁴⁰⁶

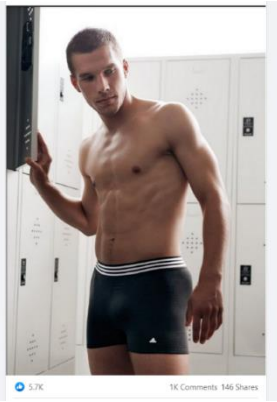


Figure 17: Adidas ad on Facebook (Screenshot from Lukas Podolski, “Hi Leute,” Facebook, image, February 9, 2011, <https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.122040664473925/198874393457218/>.)

The groomed hair, washboard abs, and tan skin make him appear as a god-like figure whose body can only be attained through sports. The message is thus that Adidas is

⁴⁰⁴ Lukas Podolski. “Good away win today, 3 points is what matters! 🇯🇵🏆 #poldi #kobe #japan 🙌.” Facebook, image, September 30, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/LukasPodolski/photos/a.689898931021426/1983619551649351/>.

⁴⁰⁵ Lukas Podolski. “My Queen and My Princess 👩👧👦 #family #love #japan.” Facebook, image, September 26, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/LukasPodolski/photos/a.689898931021426/1979606615383978/>.

⁴⁰⁶ Lukas Podolski, “Hi Leute, vor dem Spiel heute noch ein kleines Extra-Bild von mir. ist aus der aktuellen Unterwäschen Kampagne von adidas,” Facebook, image, February 9, 2011, <https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.122040664473925/198874393457218/>.

for athletes and people who want to look and feel good while exercising. In a similar pose seven years later, Podolski highlights his urban, working-class upbringing for his own brand: Strassenkicker (fig. 18).⁴⁰⁷

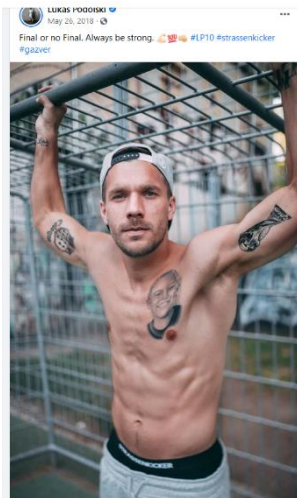


Figure 18: Strassenkicker ad on Facebook (Screenshot from Lukas Podolski, “Final or no Final,” Facebook, image, May 26, 2018, [https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.689898931021426/2278722785472358/.](https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.689898931021426/2278722785472358/))

Podolski is holding on to a metal box shirtless, showing off his tattoos and toned upper body. His backward baseball cap and his semi-frowning face show a more serious Podolski. In the background is a wall of graffiti on the front of an old building, suggesting to the audience that this is not a wealthy part of the city. As the name “Strassenkicker” (street soccer player), suggests, this ad targets people to whom street fashion appeals and who want to wear what Podolski sells. In comparison, these two posts show that Podolski favors an emphasis on his working-class upbringing with his

⁴⁰⁷ Lukas Podolski, “Final or no Final. Always be strong. 🍊👊 #LP10 #strassenkicker #gazzer,” Facebook, image, May 26, 2018, [https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.689898931021426/2278722785472358/.](https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.689898931021426/2278722785472358/)

own brand as opposed to traditional sportswear advertisement locations (as seen with Adidas).

Both posts, however, emphasize his metrosexuality, making him the object and subject of desire. He exudes boyish softness with his flawless skin and backwards hat but at the same time, he also demonstrates hypermasculinity, accentuated by his hard facial features, muscular arms and abdomen, and tattoos. His social media posts underscore his nurturing and compassionate qualities, which are not associated with traditional masculinity. Ever since the birth of his daughter Maya, Podolski has been giving his social media followers more insights into his family life. While he rarely posted pictures of his family before his daughter's birth, besides his wedding photo and pictures of his dog, the number of posts featuring his family has multiplied in the last couple of years.⁴⁰⁸ One picture in particular stands out: a picture of Maya in a baby bouncer with her face hidden by a black Strassenkicker cap (fig. 19).⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁸ E.g., Lukas Podolski. "Hallo Leute, schöner Tag, geiles Wetter, gestern hat endlich alles zeitlich gepasst um meine Traumfrau zu heiraten. Danke für die vielen Glückwünsche, euer Poldi." Facebook, image, April 19, 2011. <https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.122040664473925/216232898388034/>. Lukas Podolski, "Kleines #Workout mit meinem Hund:) Little #workout with my dog:) #dog #autumn #poldi #meandmydog #aha." Facebook, image, December 9, 2013. <https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.689898931021426/820367491307902/>.

⁴⁰⁹ Lukas Podolski, "She didn't want to see my new tattoo! 🙄❤️👄👄 #poldi #tattoo #strassenkicker #mylove," Facebook, image, September 25, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.122040664473925/1519447838066527/>.



Figure 19: Podolski using daughter as a model for Strassenkicker (Screenshot from Lukas Podolski, “She didn't want to see my new tattoo,” Facebook, image, September 25, 2016, [https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.122040664473925/1519447838066527/.](https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.122040664473925/1519447838066527/))

On the one hand, this post underscores Podolski’s business sense, using the cuteness of his baby to attract attention to his fashion label. On the other hand, this is part of the pressure celebrities experience to expose more of their private lives, thereby expressing their authenticity and “*public private sel[ves]*.”⁴¹⁰ Celebrities have had issues with privacy and paparazzi, especially regarding their children, since the beginning of celebrity culture. With the Maya picture, Podolski has taken away the pressure to post a photo of his newborn daughter and at the same time promote his own label.

Podolski’s business sense is further exposed through the use of language. Global celebrities write their posts in different languages, whereas others utilize language to target different fan groups. German soccer player Toni Kroos, for example, writes in Spanish to speak to fans of Real Madrid, in German when he talks about the *Bundesliga*

⁴¹⁰ Marshall, “The Promotion,” 44.

or the German national team, and in English to talk about international topics.⁴¹¹ In the beginning of Podolski's social media history, his posts are mainly in German (as seen with fig. 17). With his transfer to Premier League club Arsenal, he started to translate his posts also in English⁴¹² and since 2016 mostly in English only (as seen with fig. 18), reaching fans in the Premier League and around the world. Surprisingly, Podolski has rarely posted in Polish until his transfer to Polish team KS Górnik Zabrze.⁴¹³ One exception is the post about Podolski's autobiography *Dranbleiben!* which he promotes in German, English, Polish, and Chinese.⁴¹⁴ Podolski not only targets people from his country of birth (Poland) and host country (Germany) but also Chinese fans. He published his autobiography while he played for Arsenal and their target market besides Europe is China. Podolski's entry into consumer culture outside of soccer (Strassenkicker, Ice Cream United, Mangal Döner) goes hand in hand with his English language posts on social media.

⁴¹¹ Stefan Mellin, "Götze, Kroos und Co. – zur digitalin Kommunikation von Spitzensportlern," in *Der Einsatz Sozialer Medien im Sport*, ed. Christoph G. Grimmer (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017), 247.

⁴¹² E.g., Lukas Podolski. "Perfekter Tag gestern! Supercup gewonnen und auch erfolgreich für die Kids meiner Stiftung gekämpft 🏆 perfekter Samstagabend Perfect day yesterday! Won the Supercup and fought successfully for the Kids of my Foundation 🏆 just a perfect Saturday evening Lukas Podolski Stiftung #SchlagDenStar #Pro7 #Raab #Elton #Poldi #Kids #Stiftung." Facebook, image, August 9, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/119757088035616/photos/a.689898931021426/1231826213495359/>.

⁴¹³ Lukas Podolski, "Zabrze miasto Górnice, Górnik na całe życie 🤍💙❤️👤 @gornikzabrza @torcida_gornik 🏆💪," Facebook images, July 18, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=366372824848216&set=pcb.366372898181542>.

⁴¹⁴ Lukas Podolski, "Was hat mich dazu bewogen ein Buch zu schreiben? Warum bedeutet mir meine Aufgabe als Arche-Botschafter und die Arbeit für die Lukas Podolski Foundation so viel? Und wie fing in meiner Karriere alles an? Einen kleinen Vorgeschmack bekommt Ihr hier im Trailer zu meinem Buch 'Dranbleiben'! Klickt Euch rein," Facebook, image, March 5, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/LukasPodolski/photos/a.689898931021426/868302553181062/>.

Furthermore, Podolski’s *Migrationshintergrund* is central to the coding of masculinity on social media since Polish male migrants “are predominantly seen as blue-collar workers, and thus their masculinity is often linked to their role as breadwinners.”⁴¹⁵ Ever since his move to Poland, Podolski has repeatedly emphasized his Polish roots and rags-to-riches success story by, for instance, posting two pictures juxtaposed: the first of him as a boy playing soccer on a Polish street and the second a current picture of him playing at a similar location in Poland, which commentary in English (fig. 20).⁴¹⁶



Figure 20: Podolski’s picture comparison in Poland (Screenshot from Lukas Podolski, “Where everything began! Where it continues!” Facebook, image, July 27, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=372393067579525&set=pcb.372393130912852>.)

⁴¹⁵ Katarzyna Wojnicka, “Men and Masculinities in Migration Processes,” in *Routledge International Handbook of Masculinity Studies*, ed. Lucas Gottzén, Ulf Mellström, and Tamara Shefer (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 287–8.

⁴¹⁶ Lukas Podolski, “Where everything began! Where it continues! 🇵🇵❤️🇵🇵 #strassenkicker #LP10 #gornikzabrze #poland @gornikzabrzesza 🇵🇵❤️🇵🇵,” Facebook, image, July 27, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=372393067579525&set=pcb.372393130912852>.

The post is titled, “Where everything began! Where it continues!”⁴¹⁷ The narrative is clear: the Polish native, who is now successful and rich, returns home to his favorite Polish childhood club. Zabrze is famous for the Maciej mine shaft, a fact Podolski uses to his advantage in a three-picture-post, displaying his white and blue Zabrze uniform, orange shoes, and an orange construction helmet. The post targets Polish fans, suggested by the Polish text meaning “a mining town, a miner for a lifetime” (fig. 21).⁴¹⁸



Figure 21: Mine shaft in Poland (Screenshot from Lukas Podolski, “Zabrze miasto Górnice, Górnik na całe życie @gornikzabrzesza @torcida_gornik,” Facebook images, July 18, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=366372824848216&set=pcb.366372898181542>).

These photos are similar to the ones shown in a trailer of him in the *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*. Whereas back in Germany, mining and coal are a reference to Cologne, the

⁴¹⁷ One might have expected a “where is began! where it ends” since he himself said in his autobiography that he might end up playing for his home team at the end of his career one day. Podolski, *Dranbleiben!*, 123.

⁴¹⁸ Lukas Podolski, “Zabrze miasto Górnice.”

mine now connects Podolski to his favorite childhood club. What the two towns have in common is that they are associated with working-class attitudes and lifestyle. Podolski comes from an athletic family from the industrial city Gliwice. His father Waldemar was a former soccer player in Poland and Germany and his mother Krystyna played on Poland's national handball team. Podolski expresses his feelings of belonging to Germany as well as Poland on social media over the last few years.⁴¹⁹

CONCLUSION

Podolski presents himself as a rags-to-riches story of integration and role model for children. Podolski is an “ambitionist”⁴²⁰ who enjoys playing soccer in top European leagues (*Premier League, Bundesliga, Serie A*) but also likes to experience new cultures (like those in Turkey and Japan). While ethnically a German, Podolski successfully evades the questions about his national affiliation by identifying as a native of Cologne, a unique trademark of “Germanness” and of German soccer. His nostalgic projection (which includes mining references) of a regional identity collides with his branding as an international entrepreneur. The image Podolski created early in his career of the “royal Poldi” from Cologne has slowly been replaced by the “entrepreneur Lukas Podolski” who has ties to various places in Europe. Regional identification both in the soccer sense and beyond serves as a bonding point for his fans who connect him on social media with 1. FC

⁴¹⁹ Podolski himself is aware of his privileged lifestyle and tries to give back through his foundation and various initiatives, such as his contributions to a community day care center for children in Warsaw, Poland in 2014.

⁴²⁰ Magee and Sugden, “The World at Their Feet,” 431–3.

Köln and depict him as an approachable representative of the city of Cologne. While his target audience in his earlier years were children and teenagers (as seen in the “Prinzen Rolle” ad, his autobiography, and his song “Liebe deine Stadt”), nowadays he markets to young adults with his streetwear and social media posts. His success outside of soccer lies in the way he combines his *Migrationshintergrund* with working-class (heterosexual, married family man, loyalty toward 1. FC Köln and the German national team, directness with media and fans, dedication to communities and businesses in Poland and Cologne, basic education) and modern values (metrosexuality, consumerism, civic engagement). Podolski’s Facebook page clearly demonstrates this shift of representation, building on various masculinities, working-class themes, and his Polish roots in order to appeal to female and male fans as well as people *mit Migrationshintergrund*. This change goes hand in hand with his move away from European soccer. Podolski has marketed himself as a family man, philanthropist, and entrepreneur through various channels.

His self-presentation contrasts sharply with his portrayal in the sports media. The television sports show *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* sensationalizes Podolski’s appearance and highlights the “*public private self*”⁴²¹ in a rather teenage-celebrity-like interview. Whereas German sports television exposes its dependence on celebrity culture, which will become more apparent in Boateng’s analysis, the sports print media reveals underlying issues with dual citizenship.

⁴²¹ Marshall, “The Promotion,” 44.

It seems that the media differentiate between national (German versus Polish) and regional forms of belonging (Cologne) and loyalties (national team versus club). Instead of telling his rags-to-riches story, the sports print media fits him into the coming-of-age storyline of a young soccer player with Polish roots. *Kicker* directly problematize his *Migrationshintergrund* after not passing the loyalty test and indirectly uses his body as a symbolic node for Germany's integration discourse in a picture after slapping Ballack. The media paints him as a second-class citizen who needs forgiveness from the German national coach and German society. Even though Podolski is ethnically German and therefore the principle of *ius sanguinis* applied to his situation, the German media only accepts him as such under certain circumstances (if he shows his loyalty and following mainstream German culture). Different notions of citizenship are at play here. Podolski faces similar problems as Özil and other people who formally or informally belong to different countries. On paper, Esser's notion of *multiple inclusion* in Germany and Poland seems to be fulfilled in Podolski's case. The media portrayal, however, shows that Germany's acceptance of Podolski as German is not certain. Schinkel's concept of moral citizenship plays a key role here. While Podolski has demonstrated his role as an "active citizen"⁴²² in the society (speaking German, playing soccer for and in Germany, adhering to practices of the dominant culture, befriending German celebrities), his loyalty to Germany, however, was under scrutiny after not scoring a goal against his country of birth. For Podolski, being accepted as German was meant to eliminate the image of a rebellious,

⁴²² Schinkel, "Moralisation," 19.

aggressive young “Poldi,” who fits into media’s negative portrayal of migrants, and instead, to replace it with the family-oriented, fun-loving soccer celebrity Podolski who has Polish roots.

Chapter 5: Jérôme Boateng

The term “Afro-German” refers to citizens or residents of Germany who have Sub-Saharan African roots.⁴²³ Jérôme Boateng is one popular representative of Afro-Germans, because his father, Prince Boateng, is originally from Ghana. Prince Boateng came to Berlin on a university scholarship in the early 1980s but ended up working construction and then DJ’ing to provide for his first wife, Christina, and their sons, George and Kevin-Prince. During Prince Boateng’s second marriage to Martina, Jérôme was born in West-Berlin in 1988 and grew up in Berlin’s middle-class district Charlottenburg. A few years later, Jérôme’s sister Avelina was born. Kevin-Prince, George, and Jérôme were great soccer talents, although George, did not play professionally. Kevin-Prince played for Ghana from 2010 until 2014 and is currently playing for his home team Hertha BSC, with whom Jérôme played in 2007. In the summer of the same year, Jérôme transferred to HSV. After three years, he tried his luck at Manchester City FC, but after one season, moved back to Germany and played for FC Bayern München for ten years. Since 2021, he has been playing for the French club Olympique Lyon. His club accomplishments include the “Triple:” winning the *Bundesliga*, the German Cup, and the CL with FC Bayern München

⁴²³ Writers May Ayim, Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schultz decided on the term “Afro-German” with the help of African American activist Audrey Lorde. Afro-German is a complex term relating to a variety of social constellations and has to be differentiated from the African American and Afro-Caribbean experience. Soccer players like Boateng represent a specific sub-set of that category. In the mid-1980s, texts by Black German writers such as May Ayim and Katharina Oguntoye, began to emerge in West Germany. Over the years, other network and job opportunities have been established, such as magazines like *X*, *Das Magazin für AfroKultur*, and filmmaker groups like *Schwarze Filmschaffende in Deutschland*. For more information on Afro-German see: May Ayim, Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schultz, ed., *Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1986).

Sara Lennox, ed., *Remapping Black Germany: New Perspectives on Afro-German History, Politics, and Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2016).

in 2013 and 2020.⁴²⁴ Jérôme could have played for Ghana, like his half-brother Kevin-Prince, but chose to play for Germany, winning the 2009 U-21 EURO with Özil as well as the 2014 World Cup. In March 2019, then-German national coach Joachim Löw announced that the national team needed a change, which meant Boateng's dismissal for upcoming international matches.

I will examine presentations of Boateng by Germany's leading sports TV show and sports magazine, a biographer, and his fans. These findings are then compared to Boateng's own narratives through a similar cultural discourse analysis and close readings of advertisement campaigns, a published song, and his social media page. Ultimately, the sources examined reveal the ways in which Boateng uses his *Migrationshintergrund* and class affiliation to further his celebrity status and his brand(s).

DEPICTION BY THE MEDIA AND FANS

Boateng, unlike the offensive talents Podolski and Özil, achieved his celebrity status rather late with his transfer to FC Bayern München. He first demonstrated his “performative excellence”⁴²⁵ with his club and later with the national team but he has mostly maintained celebrity status through his life outside of soccer. This, combined with the fact Boateng is a defender, is most likely the reason why the sports magazine *Kicker* depiction has paid less attention to Boateng than to Podolski or Özil. Nevertheless, the sports TV show *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* has capitalized on Boateng's interests outside of

⁴²⁴ For a complete list of his honors, see: “Jérôme Boateng,” Wikipedia, accessed May 25, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%A9r%C3%B4me_Boateng.

⁴²⁵ Andrews and Jackson, introduction to *Sport Stars*, 8.

soccer (music and fashion), inviting him to appear more frequently than Podolski and Özil. Boateng has so far appeared twice on *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*, in 2010 and 2016. Both episodes are hosted by Kathrin Müller-Hohenstein, who has presented *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* since January 28, 2006, alternating with Sven Voss and Jochen Breyer. In between those appearances, sports journalist Michael Horeni published his biography *Die Brüder Boateng: Eine deutsche Familiengeschichte* (The Brothers Boateng: A German Family History, 2012).⁴²⁶ While there are competing discourses surrounding Boateng among the sports media, Horeni's biography and *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* favor a narrative that emphasizes Boateng's class affiliation and *Migrationshintergrund* to underscore his rags-to-riches story.

Horeni conducted lengthy interviews with Jérôme, his father Prince, his mother Martina, his half-brother George, former youth coaches, professional soccer coaches, former teachers, and Christina, the mother of his half-brothers. Jérôme's half-brother and soccer player Kevin-Prince only consented to the publication of a limited amount of information about himself. While there is no academic scholarship on Horeni's biography about the Boateng brothers, reviews in Germany's leading national and regional newspapers mostly praise Horeni's work. The national newspaper *Die Welt* labels *Die Brüder Boateng* the best material for a novel that German sports has to offer.⁴²⁷ The

⁴²⁶ Horeni works for the German national newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Michael Horeni, *Die Brüder Boateng* (Stuttgart: Klett, 2012).

⁴²⁷ Richard Kämmerlings, "Die Brüder Boateng zwischen Weltruhm und Knast," *Die Welt*, June 3, 2012, <https://www.welt.de/kultur/literarischewelt/article106387098/Die-Brueder-Boateng-zwischen-Weltruhm-und-Knast.html>.

weakness of the biography is identified by journalist Alex Rühle who criticizes Horeni's unqualified psychological diagnosis of Kevin-Prince, with whom Horeni met only once for one hour.⁴²⁸ Therefore, the regional newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* rightly describes the work as a mix of psychological study, soccer biography, and social portrait.⁴²⁹

Horeni focuses on the diversity of Berlin society and two of its main districts: Wedding and Charlottenburg. He connects Kevin-Prince and George to the working-class district Wedding, a social hotspot with an above-average proportion of people *mit Migrationshintergrund*, and Jérôme to the middle-class locality Charlottenburg, a wealthier area in Berlin that is strongly family-oriented. This narrative of the working-class bad boys and the middle-class “good” boy seems to be a duality (working-class versus middle-class) that Jérôme also adapted early in his life. While Horeni associates George and Kevin-Prince with “Härte” (toughness),⁴³⁰ Jérôme is tied to more feminine characteristics, such as gentleness, quietness, and softness. According to Jérôme himself, he cried and went home if he encountered too much roughness in Wedding.⁴³¹ Horeni argues that middle-class, quiet, fragile Jérôme had to become more like his role model Kevin-Prince in order to be accepted by his half-brothers and the residents in Wedding.

⁴²⁸ Alex Rühle, “Spiel des Lebens Ghana, Deutschland, Wedding: Michael Horeni erzählt die Geschichte der drei ungleichen Boateng-Brüder,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 28, 2012.

⁴²⁹ Gerrit Bartels, “Die Boateng-Brüder: Vom Wedding in die Welt,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 1, 2012, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/sport/sport-literatur-die-boateng-brueder-vom-wedding-in-die-welt/6696204.html>.

⁴³⁰ Horeni, *Die Brüder Boateng*, 18.

⁴³¹ Horeni, *Die Brüder Boateng*, 18.

This decision made him the defensive player he is today and explains his marketing strategy later in his life (which emphasizes his working-class roots rather than middle-class upbringing).

Securing affirmation from his family proved easier than being accepted by German society because Kevin-Prince and Jérôme experienced discrimination based on their skin color, most notably during soccer matches in the former East Germany, including East Berlin and Leipzig.⁴³² Since the 1980s, xenophobic and racist slogans and symbols in soccer stadiums have been on the rise. After the reunification of West and East Germany in 1990, racially motivated violence against migrants increased dramatically, including discrimination among soccer fans. This negative attitude towards migrants and foreigners decreased between 2002 and 2012 in Western Germany but increased in Eastern Germany according to a study by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.⁴³³ The landscape has since changed after the establishment of antiracist fan initiatives such as Fans against Racism in Europe (FARE) and the introduction of the so-called “Ultras” in soccer culture.⁴³⁴ These fanatic supporters, who have a tendency to use flares, banners, and chants to create an intimidating

⁴³² Horeni, *Die Brüder Boateng*, 101–2.

⁴³³ Geißler, “Migration und Integration.”

⁴³⁴ The term and group movement originated in the 1960s in Italy, but it has been used worldwide to describe predominantly organized fans of association soccer teams. The first Ultra group, “Fortuna Eagles” was founded in 1986 and they have also been supporting the soccer team Fortuna Köln. While hooligans focus on violent confrontations with other groups, Ultras are about soccer. Despite this, violence is an accepted form of asserting one’s interest. Hooligans are a growing problem in stadiums, but it is particularly pronounced in former East Germany. Dynamo Dresden fans are notorious for their violent behavior and proclivity for pyrotechnics. Chemnitz’ soccer fans are closely affiliated with right-wing extremists who have influence within the soccer club Chemnitz FC and right-wing politics. Marcus Sommerey, *Die Jugendkultur der Ultras* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2010), 53, 61. See also: Peter Czoch, *Ultras in Deutschland* (Berlin: Hirnkost, 2016).

atmosphere for the opposing team in a stadium, distanced themselves from the violent and racist incidents in the 1990s. German Ultras nowadays show their support in the stadium (wearing the teams' colors, singing chants, perform choreography, etc.) but also criticize club leadership and engage in illegal pyrotechnics.

German society has had troubles considering players *mit Migrationshintergrund* as German as so-called “ethnic” Germans. In Horeni’s eyes, citizenship by descent qualifies players like Podolski (*Aussiedler* status) to be classified together with other “ethnic” German players like Franz Beckenbauer and Jürgen Klinsmann who were born in Germany.⁴³⁵ In contrast, society still struggles to accept players like Jérôme and Özil as part of the diverse national team. This is acknowledged by Jérôme himself: “When you play for Germany ... and everything goes perfectly, then people say: ‘Those are Germans. They have a lot of Germanness in them.’ But if something bad happens, ... [t]hen nothing is German anymore.”⁴³⁶ A similar accusation was made by Mesut Özil in his resignation statement from the German national team six years later, saying, “When we win, I am German. When we lose, I am an immigrant.”⁴³⁷ Ben Carrington sees this paradox also in

⁴³⁵ Horeni, *Die Brüder Boateng*, 58–9.

⁴³⁶ “Wenn du für Deutschland spielst ... und alles läuft positiv, dann sagt man: ‘Das sind Deutsche. Die haben viel Deutsches.’ Aber wenn etwas Schlechtes passiert ... [d]as ist dann alles nicht mehr deutsch.” Horeni, *Die Brüder Boateng*, 33.

⁴³⁷ Mark Jones, “Mesut Ozil Retires FULL TRANSCRIPT: The Explosive Words from Arsenal Star as He Sensationally Quits Germany,” *Mirror*, July 24, 2018, <https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/mesut-ozil-international-retirement-statement-12963681>.

Black British athletes who represent England and are at the same time victimized for it.⁴³⁸ These examples indicate citizenship cannot only be classified as formal (government-granted) or moral (societally-granted), but also circumstantial, shifting with the tides of the team's success. Horeni, though, makes it clear that he tells a German family story with his Boateng biography, clearly accepting Jérôme as such.

To adapt to the lack of full acceptance, people *mit Migrationshintergrund* identify in different ways. George, for example, sees himself neither as German nor Ghanaian, but rather as a *Berliner* (a person from Berlin). According to George, being a *Berliner* means doing the same thing every day without having a sense of direction in life: "Get up every morning, do the same thing every day – and walk around disoriented for a long time in life."⁴³⁹ The exclusionary effect of the statistical term "*Migrationshintergrund*" separates parts of Germany's population from the cultural mainstream. As a result, people *mit Migrationshintergrund* self-identify regionally (Podolski and George) or in Boateng's case as a transnational celebrity with ties to Berlin and Ghana.

Boateng's image change is visible in two episodes (airing in 2010 and 2016) of Germany's most prominent sports television show, *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*. In the 2010 episode, Boateng's persona can be understood as that of a naïve, young adult, who stands out due to his appreciation for music and fashion. The discourse surrounding this episode

⁴³⁸ Ben Carrington, "Postmodern Blackness and the Celebrity Sports Star: Ian Wright, "Race" and English identity," in *Sport Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity*, ed. David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson (London: Routledge, 2001), 108.

⁴³⁹ "Jeden Morgen aufstehen, jeden Tag das Gleiche machen – und lange Zeit im Leben orientierungslos herumlaufen." Horeni, *Die Brüder Boateng*, 98.

emphasizes conceptions of race, class, and style.⁴⁴⁰ I focus on three instances throughout the episode that highlight Boateng's working-class, fashion sense, and Ghanaian background.

During the 2010 episode a Boateng video is shown, in which Boateng is practicing soccer wearing a blue outfit, accompanied by the following commentator's remarks: "[Boateng] sometimes stands out from the crowd in terms of color" (00:34:53). One could say that the commentator makes a statement about his clothing style, since Boateng stands out from the other HSV players who all wear black during practice. However, the sentences could also hint at Boateng's Ghanaian roots and skin color. The commentator then uses the racial reference as a segue to discuss Boateng's internet presence, displaying scenes from Boateng's website accompanied by the American singer Pharrell Williams's debut solo single "Frontin.'" Pharrell, together with the American rapper Jay-Z, sings about putting up a façade to impress peers, similar to what Boateng is doing.

The clips shown in *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* emphasize two sides of Boateng: elegant celebrity and working-class athlete. In a tuxedo with an untie bow tie and a background consisting of the famous Berlin TV tower, a burning car, and a soccer ball, stands Boateng as the German version of James Bond, an action hero who tries to save

⁴⁴⁰ *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*, hosted by Kathrin Müller-Hohenstein, aired January 30, 2010, on ZDF.

Berlin (fig. 22).⁴⁴¹ The Boateng depicted here breaks free from Black stereotypes, transcending race.



Figure 22: Boateng as a James Bond character: Boateng’s website as shown in the *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* episode (Screenshot from *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*, hosted by Kathrin Müller-Hohenstein, aired January 30, 2010, 00:35:14, on ZDF.)

In the middle of the picture is the title “Danger Zone” with the tagline “Faster! More Dangerous! Braver! The toughest Boateng ever!”⁴⁴² The Boateng presented on the website is only marginally associated with soccer, whereas the James-Bond-like poster ties him to elegance, speed, glamour, danger, and his hometown Berlin.

In order to simultaneously gain the attention of the working-class target audience, Boateng presents himself in another film-poster-like-photo as a Muhammad Ali or Rocky

⁴⁴¹ James Bond is a fictional character created in 1953 by the British novelist Ian Fleming. Besides in novels and short stories, multiple films have been released over the years that revolve around the British secret agent from the MI6.

⁴⁴² “Schneller! Gefährlicher! Mutiger! Der härteste Boateng, den es je gab!”

Balboa type, overcoming the hard life in Berlin to become an international soccer player.⁴⁴³ In this poster, Boateng wears a blue hoodie and black beanie (fig. 23).

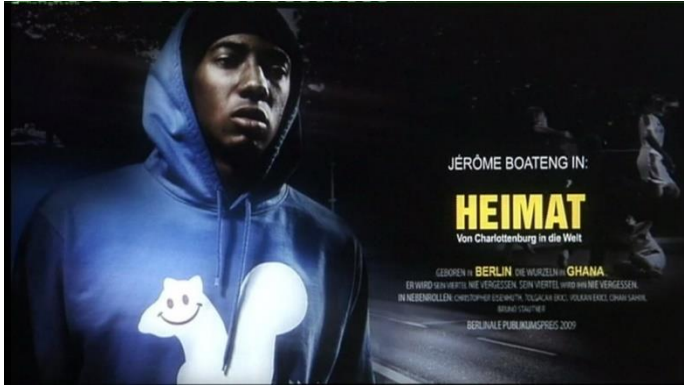


Figure 23: Boateng as a Rocky Balboa character: Boateng’s website as shown in the *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* episode (Screenshot from *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*, hosted by Kathrin Müller-Hohenstein, aired January 30, 2010, 00:35:15, on ZDF.)

The title of the film is: “Homeland – from Charlottenburg into the World” with the tagline “Born in Berlin. Roots in Ghana.”⁴⁴⁴ Berlin and Ghana are written in bold yellow, just like the title of the film “Heimat.” The tagline continues with “He will never forget his neighborhood.”⁴⁴⁵ After the supporting role credits, the pseudo-film poster ends with “Berlinale Publikumspreis 2009.” The *Publikumspreis* is an audience award, thereby displaying Boateng’s popularity among the German audience. This clash between elegant, yet aggressive, James Bond and the working-class Rocky Balboa exemplifies the

⁴⁴³ Muhammad Ali is the greatest heavyweight boxer of all time. Rocky Balboa is a fictional character, portrayed by Sylvester Stallone in the Rocky film series. Rocky Balboa comes from a working class Italian American family in Philadelphia. Starting out as a club fighter for a local loan shark, Balboa became a professional boxer.

⁴⁴⁴ “Jérôme Boateng in: Heimat – Von Charlottenburg in die Welt.” “Geboren in Berlin. Die Wurzeln in Ghana.”

⁴⁴⁵ “Er wird sein Viertel nie vergessen.”

two sides of Boateng that appear to constantly be in conflict (from childhood until his adult life). Both Daniel Craig's James Bond and Rocky Balboa have working-class roots.⁴⁴⁶ In contrast, Boateng comes from a middle-class family, but grew up with half-brothers from a working-class district in Berlin.

Despite his attempt to reposition himself as working-class, Boateng continues to embody middle-class characteristics including his above-average personal income, cosmopolitan attitude, and multiple career prospects. Müller-Hohenstein addresses Boateng about his image change seemingly stemming from the German media. When asked about it, Boateng admits that he wanted to move away from the “bad boy” image because the media had supposedly labeled him a “ghetto kid” (00:40:00).

In 2016, Müller-Hohenstein again invited Boateng to *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*.⁴⁴⁷ During that time span, he signed with US rapper Jay-Z's Roc Nation Sports, started his own magazine, worked as an eyewear designer, and attended numerous high society events such as the Berlinale.⁴⁴⁸ This 2016 version of Boateng compared to that of six years ago is confident, more outgoing, funny, and conversational (00:00:40-00:02:15). While he still mumbles, his voice is no longer monotone, suggesting he had received media training. An intro video shows the soccer player's path to success from Jérôme to Boateng, reminiscent of the transition from “Poldi” to Podolski (00:34:05-00:36:27).

⁴⁴⁶ Daniel Craig portrayed the James Bond character on screen during that time.

⁴⁴⁷ *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*, hosted by Kathrin Müller-Hohenstein, aired March 19, 2016, on ZDF.

⁴⁴⁸ The Berlinale is one of the biggest European film festivals, together with the Venice Film Festival and Cannes Film Festival.

This episode implies that Boateng’s sporting performance is not contingent on maintaining his celebrity status anymore, as required by sports scholars David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson.⁴⁴⁹ A video introducing Boateng as “a soccer player with style or a well-dressed man who can play soccer”⁴⁵⁰ (00:55:25-00:57:03) questions Boateng’s status as a sports celebrity and offers the possibility of his having become a celebrity who designs eyewear, plays soccer, and has an own magazine. *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* ties his activities outside soccer with his celebrity status, as the New York City footage shows. The camera shows Boateng in a white tank top, sunglasses, white and black baseball cap, gold necklace, watch, Army shorts, and white sneakers in Times Square (fig. 24).



Figure 24: Boateng in New York City (Screenshot from *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*, hosted by Kathrin Müller-Hohenstein, aired March 19, 2016, 00:55:33, on ZDF.)

The reason for Boateng’s visit to New York City is to meet the agency of US rapper Jay-Z, making Boateng the first soccer player ever to promote Jay-Z’s agency

⁴⁴⁹ Andrews and Jackson, introduction to *Sport Stars*, 8.

⁴⁵⁰ “Ein Fußballer mit Style oder ein Styler, der auch Fußballspielen kann.”

internationally. The clip ends with black and white footage of a Boateng photo shoot by Berlin star designer Patrick Hellmann. The medium shot is accompanied by the commentator's words "from a shy Berlin boy to an internationally operating brand" (fig. 25).⁴⁵¹



Figure 25: Boateng at a designer photo shoot (Screenshot from *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*, hosted by Kathrin Müller-Hohenstein, aired March 19, 2016, 00:56:55, on ZDF.)

This black and white footage paints Boateng as a global soccer celebrity who engages in both dominant male stereotypes and alternative forms of masculinity. The black and white footage looks elegant and can also be interpreted through various binary oppositions: Black/white, masculine/feminine, and German/foreigner. The photo shoot affirms the possibility of being a Black soccer player who is German and loves fashion. The traditional masculine characteristics (toughness, soccer talent, powerful celebrity) are contrasted with his more traditionally feminine qualities, such as dressing well and serving as a styling expert during the show. Müller-Hohenstein notices Boateng's talent

⁴⁵¹ "Vom schüchternen Berliner Jungen zur international agierenden Marke."

for style and asks him to guess the name of famous athletes only by looking at their clothes and to evaluate their outfit (00:58:00-01:02:40).⁴⁵² *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* seems like the perfect medium to promote Boateng not as a soccer player but as a celebrity brand who plans for his time after soccer, when he transitions to being a designer, fashion model, and style expert.

The above representations as (sports) celebrity with agency stand in stark contrast to Boateng's depiction in the sports magazine *Kicker*. I examined the discourse surrounding Boateng's dismissal from the national team in 2019 and the Gauland incident in 2016. Both feed into the media's depiction of mostly female migrants as people without agency. Boateng seems like a passive bystander, a recipient of action by politician Alexander Gauland and coach Joachim Löw.

In 2016, Boateng fell victim to a right-wing attack when Alexander Gauland, the then co-leader of the right-wing populist party AfD, remarked that Germans do not want someone like Boateng as a neighbor. Whether Gauland was referring to his skin color or his *Migrationshintergrund* (or both) is not clear. In the aftermath of this comment, Gauland attacked reporters for quoting him without his approval and accused them of publishing information from an off-the-record conversation. The reporters denied this charge. Gauland's remark earned him criticism, not just from politicians from the left,

⁴⁵² Among those celebrities who Boateng evaluated are former Borussia Dortmund player Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, former basketball player Dirk Nowitzki, former Formula One driver Sebastian Vettel, then-teammates David Alaba and Thomas Müller, and soccer icon David Beckham.

sports officials, and other players, but also from his colleagues in the AfD.⁴⁵³ The irrelevance of the incident for the sports media becomes apparent when Sebastian Wolff trivializes Gauland’s remark as an “Entgleisung” (literally “derailment”) and mistakenly attributes the neighbor quote to Andreas instead of Alexander Gauland.⁴⁵⁴ *Kicker* indirectly supports Boateng by putting him on the June second cover with a German flag in the background, despite the edition only containing one interview with Boateng paying minimal attention to the Gauland statement. On the cover, there are three Boateng quotations with one indirectly addressing Gauland saying, “I treat every neighbor the same” (fig. 27).⁴⁵⁵



Figure 26: Boateng on June 2016 *Kicker* cover (Illustration from “Boateng: Der Weltmeister im Interview,” *Kicker*, June 2, 2016.)

⁴⁵³ The Gauland statement received considerable mass media attention and served as a point of departure for various debates surrounding right-wing criticism of German players *mit Migrationshintergrund*. German fans protested Gauland’s remarks online as well as in the stadium by holding up signs with messages such as “We want Boateng as a neighbor” throughout Germany’s game against Georgia a few days later.

⁴⁵⁴ Sebastian Wolff, “Kicker-Kulisse.” *Kicker*, May 30, 2016, 37.

⁴⁵⁵ “Ich behandle jeden Nachbarn gleich.” “Boateng: Der Weltmeister im Interview,” *Kicker*, June 2, 2016.

In the beginning of the interview, Hartmann states that Boateng asked him to keep any discussion of the Gauland quote to a minimum, since at that point it had been subject of discussion for four days. Hartmann only inquired about Gauland in his last question when he asks Boateng if he would rather have Alexander Gauland or his national teammate Antonio Rüdiger as a neighbor.⁴⁵⁶ Like Boateng, Rüdiger was born in Berlin and has a German father of African descent. He tells the reporter that he treats every neighbor the same, whether it is Rüdiger or Gauland. The incongruence of *Kicker* having Boateng on its cover but only briefly mention the Gauland incident shows that people dealing with soccer, as opposed to the mass media, pay very little attention to political scandals. The *Kicker* editors only indirectly voice their opinions by having Boateng on the cover with a German flag in the background. Such publications profit on the audience's assumptions that Boateng will for the first time publicly respond to Gauland's remarks.

As was the case with the Gauland incident, Boateng is painted as a person without agency in the discourse surrounding his dismissal from the national team. Then-German national coach, Joachim Löw, decided not to nominate 2014 World Cup winners Thomas Müller, Mats Hummels, and Boateng for the national team in March 2019. This decision was influenced by the poor performance of the German national team during the 2018 World Cup. According to Löw, 2019 should mark a new beginning for Germany with

⁴⁵⁶ Jérôme Boateng, “Ich weiß schon, was auf uns zukommt,” interview by Oliver Hartmann, *Kicker*, June 2, 2016, 4–5.

young players.⁴⁵⁷ Boateng is portrayed in *Kicker* as an “old-timer,” whose time to retire has come.⁴⁵⁸ While the readers’ section as well as *Kicker* journalists agree with Boateng’s dismissal, they criticize the timing, manner, and finality of Löw’s decision, calling it a “Zwangsverabschiedung” (forced goodbye) and “Ausmusterung” (release from service).⁴⁵⁹ The militaristic language goes hand-in-hand with the reputation of sporting events in the twentieth century as being “a preparation for military combat and war.”⁴⁶⁰ Soccer players were “symbols and agents of a hegemonic military masculinity.”⁴⁶¹ In German soccer, hegemonic masculinity is tied to heterosexuality and nationalism. Boateng, Hummels, and Müller are painted as forced retirees whose masculinities are indirectly called into question by not being considered as the top German players anymore.⁴⁶² No reactions from Hummels or Boateng are cited in any *Kicker* issue. On May 19, 2021, Löw invited Hummels and Müller for the EURO 2020, which took place in 2021 because of COVID-19. Boateng, however, was never invited back.

⁴⁵⁷ Manuel Veth, “End of an Era: Müller, Boateng and Hummels No Longer Part of Löw's Plans,” *Forbes*, March 5, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/manuelveth/2019/03/05/end-of-an-era-muller-boateng-and-hummels-no-longer-part-of-lows-plans/?sh=64d1e8a2697f>.

⁴⁵⁸ Reporter Hartmann summarizes his performance as only sporadically world champion-like, even though he helped to shape a decade of international matches. Oliver Hartmann, “Joachim Löws radikaler Schnitt ist ein Signal nach allen Seiten,” *Kicker*, March 7, 2019, 2.

See also: “Reaktionen,” *Kicker*, March 7, 2019, 3.

Rainer Holzschuh, “Gebt den Weltmeistern ein Abschiedsspiel!” *Kicker*, March 11, 2019, 51.

⁴⁵⁹ Matthias Dersch, Oliver Hartmann, and Karlheinz Wild, “Müller sauer auf DFB ‘Kein guter Stil!’” *Kicker*, March 7, 2019, 2.

⁴⁶⁰ Schiller, “Social Climbing,” 217

⁴⁶¹ Schiller, “Social Climbing,” 217.

⁴⁶² “Der Rauswurf und die Reaktionen,” *Kicker*, March 11, 2019, 30–1.

In both incidents, Boateng disengaged from the dialogues and lets the media paint him as a victim. This may be due to the nature of the incident. Özil and Podolski made headlines in the soccer world (retiring and transferring in Özil's case and not scoring against Poland and slapping Ballack in Podolski's case), while Boateng has mostly attracted attention in gossip magazines. Both Özil and Podolski were expected by their team, officials, and fans to explain their actions. In contrast, Boateng was not required to react to his dismissal from the national team or to Gauland's remarks, even though the media and Boateng's fans would have welcomed a comment.

Boateng's fans seem to engage with Boateng's celebrity side more than with his occupation as a soccer player. On the one hand, they celebrate him as a Black, working-class celebrity, on the other hand, they indirectly associate Boateng with recklessness and violence. Boateng has multiple fan pages on Facebook in Vietnam as well as in Germany. The German Facebook fan page was created in April 2016, and currently has 2.9 million followers.⁴⁶³ The profile picture shows Boateng wearing golden glasses featuring someone's hand touching him, almost as if the hand is trying to readjust his glasses. As it turns out, the selected photo is an advertisement campaign for his eyewear collection. This, along with the fact that his company's Berlin address is listed under the page's information, makes it possible to assume that the page was not created by fans but rather by his team. Even though the page was created in Germany, the posts are in English to

⁴⁶³ Boateng Jérôme, Facebook, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/JB17Fan>.

target a global audience. The Boateng featured by the Facebook fans offers different narratives, focusing on his appearance, background, and relationships.

Like the media, Boateng’s fans celebrate his working-class background and social advancement by pointing out that he “started from the bottom” (fig. 26).⁴⁶⁴



Figure 27: Boateng and his brothers on a wall in Berlin (Screenshot from Boateng Jérôme, “Started from the bottom,” Facebook, image, March 19, 2017, [https://www.facebook.com/803863366414987/photos/a.803922459742411/1000543386746983/.](https://www.facebook.com/803863366414987/photos/a.803922459742411/1000543386746983/))

The 2017 post suggests that Boateng became successful despite his poor upbringing, an assertion that is not true. All three brothers pictured in the post grew up in Berlin, but his half-brothers George (middle) and Kevin-Prince (right) lived in working-class Wedding, while Jérôme grew up in a middle-class neighborhood. It seems that the post tries to elevate Boateng to a role model for people from lower-class families.

⁴⁶⁴ Boateng Jérôme, “Started from the bottom. Now: Jérôme is World Cup Winner, DFB-Pokal Winner, best Player in the Bundesliga 15/16, German Championship Winner and and and... ❤️ #GewachsenAufBeton #BTNG,” Facebook, image, March 19, 2017, [https://www.facebook.com/803863366414987/photos/a.803922459742411/1000543386746983/.](https://www.facebook.com/803863366414987/photos/a.803922459742411/1000543386746983/)

A soccer player, however, can go from being a role model one minute to being a bad boy the next. Two posts that further support this claim stand out. Dressed more casually (in a black t-shirt, a cap, and golden jewelry) Boateng earns compliments from fans in French and English that elevate him to “a style idol.”⁴⁶⁵ The post gives a voyeuristic view into his lifestyle, filled with expensive cars and jewelry. Even though the intent was to highlight his style, it also shows his recklessness in terms of taking a picture while driving. In fact, a car accident in March 2020 hints at just how reckless Boateng can be. After a sudden hailstorm one day, Boateng’s car went off the *Autobahn* while he was changing lanes. He was driving with summer tires during winter weather, which usually results in a fine and a penalty point in Germany.⁴⁶⁶

Despite the fans’ attempts to portray Boateng in a positive light, his various encounters with the police and his failure in the national team are exposed by “fans” who are most likely “Facebook trolls.” After Boateng was dismissed from the national team, the Facebook fans asked their followers what they thought about his dismissal.⁴⁶⁷ The commentary is filled with mixed feelings regarding Löw’s decision not to nominate Boateng anymore. While a few do not understand the decision, others gravitate towards the

⁴⁶⁵ Boateng Jérôme, “As always a style Icon!!! [sic],” Facebook, image, July 30, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/803863366414987/photos/a.1022087317925923/1334936296641022/>.

⁴⁶⁶ The Federal Motor Transport Authority (*Kraftfahrt-Bundesamt*) in Flensburg operates on an 8-point penalty system for traffic offenses, hence the expression “Punkte in Flensburg.” Based on the points collected, a driver’s license can be cancelled or suspended.

⁴⁶⁷ Boateng Jérôme, “Why did they throw him out? Can you understand this decision???” 🙌 or 🙏 #JeromeBoateng #DFB #GERMANY,” Facebook, image, March 19, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/803863366414987/photos/a.1022087317925923/1514165868718063/>.

extreme end and insult Boateng (using expressions like the n-word, “grandpa,” “bitch”)⁴⁶⁸ and his performance. The darker side of social media, which involves cyberbullying, trolling, and abuses of privacy, comes to light. Two years after the original post, a “fan” not only insulted Boateng as a “grandpa” but also called for a jail sentence, claiming Boateng “ruined Kasia’s life.”⁴⁶⁹ This tabloid press comment is very unusual for the otherwise positive Facebook page. For background, the Polish-born model Kasia Lenhardt began dating Boateng in 2019.⁴⁷⁰ In a relationship that lasted fifteen months, there was a violent incident in October 2019, with Boateng as the aggressor and Kasia as the victim.⁴⁷¹ After crashing Boateng’s Mini Cooper, Lenhardt was charged with driving under the influence and Boateng announced their separation in February 2021. A week after the announcement, Lenhardt was found dead in her apartment in Berlin, with the police believing it was suicide. This is not the first violent incident in Boateng’s life. Munich authorities investigated and charged him in another case, namely for aggravated battery against the mother of his twin daughters, Sherin Senler.⁴⁷² The positive, “fan-constructed”

⁴⁶⁸ Boateng Jérôme, “Why did they throw him out?.”

⁴⁶⁹ Andrzej Kowalski, February 16, 2021, comment on Boateng Jérôme, “Why did they throw him out? Can you understand this decision???” 👍 or 🙄 #JeromeBoateng #DFB #GERMANY”.

⁴⁷⁰ Steven Sowa, “Was steckt hinter den Ermittlungen gegen Jérôme Boateng?” T-Online, February 26, 2021, https://www.t-online.de/unterhaltung/stars/id_89545808/kasia-lenhardt-25-was-steckt-hinter-den-ermittlungen-gegen-jerome-boateng-.html.

⁴⁷¹ A criminal investigation was started on December 20, 2019, and it was temporarily suspended around six months later.

⁴⁷² Boateng is not the first athlete to be connected with violence off-the-field. Other prominent examples include former boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr. (pleaded guilty to a domestic violence charge in 2010), former NBA player Dennis Rodman (pleaded no contest to domestic violence in 2008), and former NFL player

picture of Boateng is shattered by comments that tie him to recklessness, violence, and death. This fits into the greater media picture of associating Black men with violence, aggression, and crimes.⁴⁷³ These stereotypes reach as far back as slavery in the United States (1526-1776), depicting African Americans as hypersexual. Art, media, music, and video games have emphasized and introduced new beliefs about Black people (such as drug dealers, promiscuous Black women, and gangsters).

While social media expose an association between race and crime, fans like YouTuber Hayat&Matondo praise Boateng for his masculine traits. Hayat&Matondo's YouTube video has 125,418 views and is titled "Matondo - Jérôme Boateng [Official Video] prod. by UNIKA."⁴⁷⁴ Boateng is regarded as the epitome of masculinity: he is strong, handsome, wealthy, and successful. While the camera displays two Black men holding up Boateng's German national jersey, a TV commentary can be heard. Video footage of Boateng making a save follows. The save and commentary is from the German national team game against Ukraine during the EURO 2016. Boateng deflected the ball towards his own goal and recovered it inches from Germany's goal line. Numerous memes

O.J. Simpson (acquitted of the murders of his ex-wife and her friend, despite widespread belief that he had committed the murders).

⁴⁷³ Here are some studies about Black stereotypes:

Valerie N. Adams-Bass, Howard C. Stevenson, and Diana Slaughter Kotzin, "Measuring the Meaning of Black Media Stereotypes and Their Relationship to the Racial Identity, Black History Knowledge, and Racial Socialization of African American Youth," *Journal of black studies* 45, no. 5 (2014).
Dennis Rome, *Black Demons Media's Depiction of the African American Male Criminal Stereotype* (Westport: Praeger, 2004).

⁴⁷⁴ Hayat&Matondo, "Matondo - Jérôme Boateng [Official Video] prod. by UNIKA •," YouTube, Jan 10, 2017, video, 2:54, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9jgXhXoEck>.

followed his brilliant and acrobatic goal line save.⁴⁷⁵ Throughout the video, the camera shows footage of his saves and plays, while it cuts back to Matondo on the rooftop who raps about him over a fast beat. The game footage incorporated gives the impression of a tribute and a sincere fan adoration. Matondo tells the tale of a fighter who fought his way up from the concrete streets of Berlin all the way to the top, a narrative that the Facebook page creators follow, as well. The chorus of the rap song further emphasizes this: “Jérôme Boateng. Jérôme Boateng. This man never gives up because he fights to the end. Jérôme Boateng. Jérôme Boateng. Jérôme Boateng. From the streets of Berlin to becoming a legend.”⁴⁷⁶ The rise of the lower-class Boateng from the big city seems to be a better narrative for the fans and Boateng himself than the rags-to-riches story of a Catholic, naïve, young adult who grew up in a middle-class neighborhood.

SELF-PRESENTATION

Boateng’s marketing has changed over the years from challenging negative stereotypes associated with Black men (in music and fashion) to embracing them for comedic purposes. In 2013, Boateng became ambassador for the Tiempo shoe collection of the American sportswear company Nike.⁴⁷⁷ The twenty-two-second black-and-white Nike commercial I found on YouTube opens with the question “WHO YOU CALLING

⁴⁷⁵ Michael Werndorff, “So feiert das Netz die EM-Heldentat,“ *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, June 13, 2016, <https://www.stuttgarter-nachrichten.de/inhalt.die-besten-boateng-memes-auf-twitter-so-feiert-das-netz-die-em-heldentat.c0f8f680-7861-4824-9d96-09624bb713a4.html>.

⁴⁷⁶ “Jérôme Boateng. Jérôme Boateng. Dieser Mann gibt nie auf, denn er kämpft bis zum Ende. Jérôme Boateng. Jérôme Boateng. Jérôme Boateng. Von den Straßen Berlins bis zur Legende.”

⁴⁷⁷ In 2015, Nike rewarded him for his efforts and released their Tiempo Legend 6 Jérôme Boateng boot that features a white and red design.

GENTLE?” followed by a medium shot of Boateng in low-key lighting.⁴⁷⁸ Boateng looks into the camera and tells the audience in German (with English subtitles) that maybe people are right to call him gentle, all the while close-ups of his face, arm tattoo, and haircut are shown. This is followed by close-ups and medium shots of him as he lists all of his accomplishments: triple winner and starter for FC Bayern München and the German national team. The commercial closes with the words “I AM TIEMPO.” The trendy haircut, tattoos, black ear-piercing, and selection of clothes (full-zip jacket and t-shirt) complement his stylish masculinity as a “street-wise, pretty, hard boy.”⁴⁷⁹ His hard facial features are accentuated by the low-key lighting, making him appear tough and sinister. The commercial feeds into the stereotype of Black players being more athletic and superior at sports than others as well as links Blackness to hypermasculinity. In 2021, a study by RunRepeat, together with the Professional Footballers’ Association, analyzed over two thousand statements from commentators in eighty soccer matches from the 2019/20 Italian *Serie A*, Spanish *La Liga*, French *Ligue 1*, and English *Premier League* season. Researchers found that commentators were more like to praise white players for their intelligence and Black players for their physical qualities (for example strength and speed).⁴⁸⁰ Nike tries to intervene in these discussions by putting Boateng’s visual, hypermasculine representation

⁴⁷⁸ TeamNikeFootball, “Nike Football: Jérôme Boateng ist Tiempo,” YouTube, December 20, 2013, video, 00:22, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siXRDRocAPk>.

⁴⁷⁹ Nixon, Sean, “Exhibiting Masculinity,” in *Representation*, 2nd ed., ed. Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon (Milton Keynes: SAGE, 2013), 304.

⁴⁸⁰ Danny McLoughlin, “Racial Bias in Football Commentary (Study): The Pace and Power Effect,” RunRepeat, August 6, 2021, <https://runrepeat.com/racial-bias-study-soccer>.

in stark contrast to his words. The soft and hard features bring together sensuality and hypermasculinity, which “has been the site historically of pronounced fantasies about Black men’s sexuality and physical prowess.”⁴⁸¹ It seems that Nike wants to affirm the possibility of being a Black, German soccer player while embracing more stereotypically feminine traits such as gentleness, quietness, and humility. It is a way for Boateng to distance himself from the media’s portrayal of him as a “ghetto kid.” The commercial illustrates Boateng’s inner and outer struggle: on the one hand, he looks like a tough, stylish man from Berlin; on the other hand, he positions himself as a gentle soul who just wants to play soccer. This campaign highlighted the complexity of what it means to be Black soccer player in Germany, thus challenging negative stereotypes.

Five years later, Boateng embraces negative stereotypes about Black men for comedic purposes in his video “Mannschaft” (team).⁴⁸² Together with the English actor and comedian Jack Whitehall, Boateng gives free space to his creativity in a parody video.⁴⁸³ The 2018 YouTube clip is part of the show “Jack Whitehall: Training Days,” an unscripted comedy series that sees Whitehall take some of the biggest names in soccer out of their comfort zones.⁴⁸⁴ In the beginning of the video, Whitehall makes fun of “typical German” customs and practices, while it quickly transforms into a ridiculous but funny rap

⁴⁸¹ Nixon, “Exhibiting Masculinity,” 305.

⁴⁸² Die Mannschaft is the name for the German national team since 2015.

⁴⁸³ Jack Whitehall, “‘Mannschaft’ Music Video ft. Jérôme Boateng | Jack Whitehall: Training Days,” YouTube, May 25, 2018, video, 2:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFHloGyLjYQ>.

⁴⁸⁴ In addition to Boateng, German national teammate Mario Götze as well as Thomas Müller appeared in the episode.

battle between Whitehall and Boateng, alias “Notorious JB” (a reference to the late rapper “The Notorious B.I.G”).

Hip hop music has contributed to negative stereotypes about Black men being gang-affiliated, violent, misogynistic, and hypersexualized.⁴⁸⁵ The Notorious B.I.G himself, whose real name is Christopher Wallace, was affiliated with gang activity and supposedly paid a gang \$1 million for the killing of rival rapper Tupac Shakur in 1996.⁴⁸⁶ Boateng, dressed in a black jacket, hat, white shirt, and golden necklace, watch, and glasses, presents himself unfazed, arrogant, and serious. His arms are crossed in contrast to Whitehall, alias “MC Scratchy,” performing in a red, white, and red tracksuit. Boateng raps about Germany team’s 2014 World Cup success, making a friendly jab towards Brazil: “I keep it real when my cleats hit the field. I beat up the track like we beat Brazil.”⁴⁸⁷ The goal for the 2018 World Cup is clear: “We are about to win another Cup.”⁴⁸⁸ His arrogance grows throughout the video, culminating in his threat to slap Whitehall “with the hand of god-like Maradona.” This is a reference to Diego Maradona who became famous for his 1986 World Cup “Hand

⁴⁸⁵ For more information, see, e.g.:

Matthew Oware, “Brotherly Love: Homosexuality and Black Masculinity in Gangsta Rap Music,” *Journal of African American studies* 15, no. 1 (2011).

Dionne P. Stephens and April L. Few, “Hip Hop Honey or Video Ho: African American Preadolescents’ Understanding of Female Sexual Scripts in Hip Hop Culture,” *Sexuality & Culture* 11, no. 4 (2007).

⁴⁸⁶ Notorious B.I.G was murdered himself in 1997. Oliver Burkeman, “Notorious B.I.G. paid LA gang \$1m to Have Rival Rapper Killed, Says Report,” *The Guardian*, September 6, 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/07/arts.usa>.

⁴⁸⁷ Whitehall, “Mannschaft.”

⁴⁸⁸ Whitehall, “Mannschaft.”

of God” goal against England.⁴⁸⁹ Boateng not only talks about slapping Whitehall, he also physically hits the camera, fitting into the narrative of the violent rapper. His connection to US rapper Jay-Z, which Whitehall also mentions, underscores and authenticates his rapper image.

The rap battle is accentuated by background changes from a recording studio, a club, a photo shoot, and a bus. The changing locations, extravagant outfits of everyone besides Boateng, as well as distorting camera techniques (fisheye camera and background lighting) feed into the absurdity of the performance. The switch from color to black-and-white and retro makes the video seem like a drug-induced episode but also connects rap, and by extension, Black people, with drugs.

It seems that Boateng found a middle ground between embracing and challenging negative stereotypes about Black men when he became a brand ambassador for the American audio electronics company Harman and one of its brands JBL.⁴⁹⁰ With its celebrity endorsement, JBL targets the German-speaking, urban community that loves music, and hip hop in particular. The JBL website features a picture of Boateng in a red and black shirt, golden glasses, and white JBL headphones (fig. 28).⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁹ Maradona scored a goal with his hand, which is under FIFA regulations illegal, but the referees did not have a clear view of the play and no video assistant existed at that time. Argentina led the match with 1-0 and later on won the World Cup with 2-1.

⁴⁹⁰ “Jerome Boateng x Team JBL,” JBL, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://www.jbl.com>. JBL updated their website with Boateng, but I use the older website (as seen in fig. 28) for my analysis: “Jérôme Boateng: ‘Champion Meet Champion,’” JBL, accessed January 31, 2023, <https://in.jbl.com/artists-and-partners-boateng.html>.

⁴⁹¹ The glasses are the same pair as appears in the profile picture of his Facebook fan page.

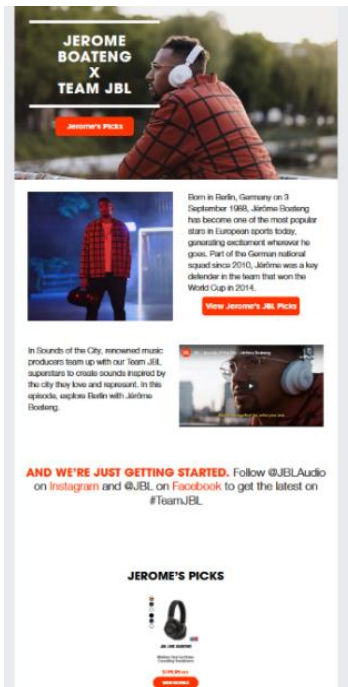


Figure 28: JBL’s website with Boateng (Screenshot from “Jerome Boateng x Team JBL,” JBL, accessed May 20, 2021.)

Below the picture is a short biography with another photo of Boateng, standing with a JBL stereo and neon lighting. He wears the same outfit but with no glasses. Completing the website is a link to “Jerome’s Picks,” his favorite JBL products, and a video of Boateng and German rapper Eunique, who creates an anthem for the city they both love and represent, Berlin.

The video starts with an extreme long shot of Berlin, followed by the “JBL” logo and then the words “Sound of the City.”⁴⁹² Boateng professes his love for his home in German with English subtitles. The German rapper Eunique, who has Trinidadian,

⁴⁹² Even though the website in this form does not exist anymore, a similar video of Boateng and Eunique is available on YouTube. JBL, “JBL | Sounds of the City | Jérôme Boateng,” YouTube, July 17, 2019, video, 1:40, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PRv-1kAmbw>.

American, and Ghananian roots, is introduced before the focus shifts to the collaboration of Boateng and Eunique. The last shot displays Eunique standing in front of Boateng, who holds a JBL stereo in his left hand.

In contrast to the international Nike campaign, JBL ties Boateng explicitly to Germany's capital. Boateng engages in place branding, promoting Berlin as an international, diverse city that is the fashion capital and a rap center of Germany. Similar to Podolski, Boateng praises Berlin and gives the city credit for his personality and playing style. His narrative is clear: Berlin made him the person he is today, a fighter who loves rap music and wears streetwear. His advertisement campaign with American brand JBL reflects the cosmopolitan attitude of Boateng who "develop[s] and maintain[s] multiple relations – organizational, religious, and political – that span borders."⁴⁹³ Though the campaign is officially a JBL advertisement, Boateng also uses the opportunity to promote his self-designed golden glasses internationally without explicitly indicating that he created them. Boateng's local identification with Berlin, coupled with his urban look, love for hip hop, and international marketing strategy, make him appear more as a transnational than a regional celebrity.

His transnational celebrity side plays an important role in Boateng's social media marketing.⁴⁹⁴ Boateng made his first post in December 2010, when he played for Premier League club Manchester City. The address of his company is listed under the publishing

⁴⁹³ Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, "Transnationalism," 1–2.

⁴⁹⁴ Jérôme Boateng, Facebook, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/>.

information, details no other player has released.⁴⁹⁵ Despite openly identifying with his minority status as a Black German *mit Migrationshintergrund*, it nevertheless seems important to Boateng to repeatedly denote his appeal to German mainstream culture.

Boateng likes to present himself as a philanthropist and activist who supports various projects such as the Red Cross, pediatric cancer clinics, and the international non-profit program “Right to Play Deutschland.”⁴⁹⁶ Over the years, Boateng has used his celebrity status to call upon his followers to donate blood and make them aware of social issues, such as slavery in Libya and racism in soccer (“SayNoToRacism” and “weareallmonkeys”).⁴⁹⁷ After FC Barcelona defender and Brazilian national team player Dani Alves was struck by a banana thrown by a Villarreal supporter in 2014, Boateng uses this incident to intervene in discussions of Black stereotypes with a parody (fig. 29).

⁴⁹⁵ JB 17 GmbH. Duisburger Straße 12, 10707 Berlin.

⁴⁹⁶ Right to Play is an organization which was founded by speed skater Johann Olav Koss and uses play-based learning to empower children.

⁴⁹⁷ E.g., Jérôme Boateng, “SAY NO TO RACISM! RESPECT Dani Alves ! #SayNoToRacism #weareallmonkeys,” Facebook, image, May 1, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/photos/695390433841226/>.



Figure 29: Boateng on Facebook (Screenshot from Jérôme Boateng, “SAY NO TO RACISM! RESPECT Dani Alves ! #SayNoToRacism #weareallmonkeys,” Facebook, image, May 1, 2014, [https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/photos/695390433841226/.](https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/photos/695390433841226/))

Boateng responded with a picture of himself and his fellow FC Bayern München teammates Dante and David Alaba eating bananas. This is a reference to Alves, who picked up the banana the fan threw at him, peeled it, and took a bite.⁴⁹⁸ Boateng tags Alves and congratulates him for his public stand against racism. All three players intervene in the practice of using simianization as a racist slur against Black people, thereby calling attention to racist behavior.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁸ Villarreal had to pay €12,000 for the incident. A month later, a similar incident happened in Italy, where Atalanta Bergamo fans threw banana peels on Black Milan player Kévin Constant.

⁴⁹⁹ This is unfortunately not an isolated incident; the former NBA player Quinn Buckner from the Boston Celtics experienced something similar in the 1980s. Buckner’s teammate Larry Bird and the team’s director of travel Wayne Lebaux supposedly arranged a stop during one of the team’s road trips in Los Angeles, where a giant plastic ape was wearing a Celtics jersey with Buckner’s number on it. Jack McCallum, *Unfinished Business* (New York: Summit Books, 1992), 152. Whereas McCallum makes the incident seem like a funny joke that everyone laughed about, Dan Shaughnessy notes that Bucker was upset in 1984 and is still upset today. Dan Shaughnessy, *Wish It Lasted Forever: Life with the Larry Bird Celtics* (New York City: Scribner, 2021), 108.

Despite Boateng's activism, it is central to his marketing strategy to position himself as a heterosexual, Catholic celebrity in order to prove his adherence to dominant, German values. In 2014, he posted a picture of himself shaking then-Pope Francis's hand.⁵⁰⁰ This was taken during Germany's national team's visit to the Pope in Vatican City and connects him with the largest religious group in Germany.

Boateng not only emphasizes his Catholic upbringing but also his role as family man. With his posts in English and German, Boateng offers glimpses into his every day and family life to a global audience, thereby showing his "*public private self*."⁵⁰¹ He presents himself in the beginning of his social media activities as a family man who posts pictures and videos of his twin daughters, Lamia and Soley, and his son Jermar.⁵⁰²

Boateng further expands his German mainstream cultural appeal by publicly associating himself with famous celebrities and African American athletes such as NFL player Deshaun Watson.⁵⁰³ In 2021, twenty-two women accused the Houston Texans quarterback Watson of sexual assault and misconduct and filed civil lawsuits against

⁵⁰⁰ Jérôme Boateng, Facebook, image, October 24, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/photos/778867148826887/>.

⁵⁰¹ Marshall, "The Promotion," 44.

⁵⁰² E.g., Jérôme Boateng, "Birthday mood with my kids 🎂🎉😂😂❤️." Facebook, video, September 3, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/videos/421394895148977>.

Jérôme Boateng, "Training session with Jermar 🏈🏈 Future 🔥😊." Facebook, video, May 3, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/videos/670908153367992>.

⁵⁰³ Jérôme Boateng, "Working on my throwing skills with Deshaun Watson 🏈🏈 NFL get ready 😂," February 25, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/posts/1643522175694709>.

him.⁵⁰⁴ Boateng still has the 2018 post on his Facebook timeline as of February 2023. Even though the Watson post only indirectly links Boateng to assault charges, it is reminiscent of his own courtroom proceedings.

Social media expose Boateng's affinity to American culture which he expresses through his language choice on social media (English), clothes (Nike shoes), sports fandom (NFL fan), music taste (hip hop and rap), marketing team (rapper Jay-Z), and vacation preferences (Miami). Boateng is a consumer and producer of American culture, which has international appeal. He associates himself on social media with luxurious brands and engages in product placement for his sponsors, such as JBL and McDonald's.⁵⁰⁵ He has "paid partnerships," among others, with the American action film *Men in Black: International* (2019).⁵⁰⁶ Whereas Boateng has visited Miami multiple times over the years, it took him till 2018 to visit his father's country of birth. Even though Boateng congratulated Ghana after qualifying for the 2022 World Cup, it seems that his connection to it is superficial. In contrast, Boateng's half-brother Kevin-Prince chose to play for Ghana after playing all German youth levels. It seems that Boateng's affinity with American

⁵⁰⁴ A grand jury declined to indict Deshaun Watson, but he still has to face separate civil proceedings for lawsuits filed by the women. Ben Shpigel, "What to Know about the Assault Lawsuits against Deshaun Watson," *New York Times*, September 14, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/deshaun-watson-sexual-assault-lawsuit.html>.

⁵⁰⁵ E.g., Jérôme Boateng. "Cruisen... #lunchtime 🍷." Facebook, image, August 19, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/page/149547611758847/search/?q=cruisen>.

⁵⁰⁶ Jérôme Boateng. "Bad Boys Bad Boys whatcha gonna do ... 🤪 still buzzed to have met the legend!" Facebook, image, May 14, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/photos/2235041769876077/>.

culture is not only a genuine interest but also a marketing tool, targeting followers with product advertisement.

Boateng updates his fans mostly in English nowadays. In the beginning, Boateng posted in German and then switched to German with English translations early on due to his occupation as a Manchester City player.⁵⁰⁷ In a similar vein, Boateng has started to offer French translations for his posts since his move to Lyon in 2021.⁵⁰⁸ While he mainly has been posting in English to attract his international youth audience, he sometimes posts in German or offers a German translation.⁵⁰⁹ He likes to address his fans with, for example, “Good morning” or “Happy Easter.”⁵¹⁰ Boateng inquires about his follower’s opinions regarding his new hair style or likes to inquire about caption ideas for his upcoming posts. His interactions with his followers create an intimacy that lets fans identify with Boateng

⁵⁰⁷ E.g., Jérôme Boateng. “Wish all of you a good start in the new Year... Ich wünsch Euch allen einen guten Rutsch ins neue Jahr... BOA.” Facebook, image, December 31, 2010. <https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/posts/pfbid02Rc4vecA8F6epEbpQ5ngXb6TeYm6NxgyCVe9E2g9cY3t6ryubxnKfsK5d3a4DFVMDI>.

⁵⁰⁸ E.g., Jérôme Boateng. “Good W at home! Whole team stood strong tonight. Thanks to our fans for the support! 🏆@OL Bonne performance de toute l’équipe! Merci à nos fans pour le soutien! 🍌.” Facebook, image, October 30, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/page/149547611758847/search/?q=lyon>.

⁵⁰⁹ E.g., Jérôme Boateng. “Stille Treppe // Silent stairs 🤔🤔🤔 Great team performance 🇩🇪🇫🇷 FC Bayern München #miasanmia.” Facebook, image, August 29, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/photos/921259134587687/>.

⁵¹⁰ E.g., Jérôme Boateng. “Happy Easter 🐰 // Frohe Ostern 🐰 #EasterBunny 🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔.” Facebook, image, April 5, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/photos/855344037845864/>.

and make them more susceptible to buying his brands.⁵¹¹ His fans seem to be gullible onlookers to his world.

To appease his actual soccer fans, Boateng gives glimpses behind the scenes of, for example, soccer club FC Bayern München. He posts pictures and videos not intended for the public, ranging from party scenes in the locker room to a comical video of Bayern players singing after their first game for their soccer club.⁵¹² Boateng blurs the lines between public and private to satisfy his fans.

CONCLUSION

Boateng's media and fan portrayal seems to fit into the bigger picture of celebrities like David Beckham. People can connect with the multifaceted Beckham due to his family, soccer, fashion, and financial achievements. Boateng seems to attain similar fame through relationships with models (e.g., Kasia Lenhardt, Gina-Lisa Lohfink), associations with prestigious soccer clubs (e.g., Manchester City, FC Bayern München), and deals with multinational sponsors (Nike, JBL). Boateng used to promote his rags-to-riches story from the perspective of a working-class man *mit Migrationshintergrund*. Both his rejection by

⁵¹¹ E.g., Jérôme Boateng. "Best caption wins 💎💎." Facebook, image, February 1, 2019.

<https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/photos/a.154280884618853/2083243175055938/>.

Jérôme Boateng. "Gefällt euch meine neue Frisur? // Some of you asked about my new haircut ✂️👤✂️ Do you like it? 🤔👍 #jb17." Facebook, image, May 11, 2017.

<https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/photos/a.154280884618853/1375169239196672/>.

⁵¹² E.g., Jérôme Boateng. "It's about time to bring back our dancing video... 🤣👉 Happy birthday bro Rafinha Official! 🍷🍷." Facebook, video Sep 7, 2017.

<https://www.facebook.com/JeromeBoateng17/videos/1486446621402266>.

Jérôme Boateng. "Whitney Houston aka Alphonso Davies 🤣🤣🤣." Facebook, video, August 9, 2019.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=653496185171935>.

his brothers and later by German society and media (racism) made him into the transnational celebrity that he is today.

While all three soccer players investigated in this dissertation exemplify this transnational form of belonging, Boateng's case seems unique. Whereas Podolski and Özil have struggled with their dual citizenship (and loyalties) and forms of belonging for the country of their parents and grandparents, Boateng, it seems, has tied himself to Berlin and the United States despite currently living in France. His father's country of birth, Ghana, does not seem to play a significant role in his branding or life. Boateng is in Esser's sense more "assimilated" than Özil and Podolski, who both are examples of Esser's "*multiple inclusion*" (speaking Turkish and Polish, living and playing soccer in Turkey and Poland, maintaining their connection to Turkey and Poland while living in Germany, etc.).⁵¹³ Boateng continues to market his connection with Berlin and hip hop but without the emphasis on working-classness.

Both the media and the fans emphasize his working-class upbringing. It is by way of these representations that Boateng has made the journey from the "ghetto kid" to the working-class trendsetter. As a result, he can engage with the clothing of working-class men from an entirely different position. It is Boateng's ability to utilize his class affiliation and his attempts to turn it into cultural capital that arguably renders his working-classness desirable. Boateng as a brand sells because he is constructed and represented with traditional (toughness, working-class) and non-traditional (fashion sense, quietness)

⁵¹³ Esser, "Ist das Konzept," 7–8.

elements of masculinity. Social media seem to help him establish a more private side of himself that validates his dominant German values. Boateng uses social media and online platforms like YouTube to intervene in racist stereotypes that are prevalent in the online community and German society. However, his criminal past does not go unnoticed by fans, who attack him for that. As John M. Hoberman wrote, in recent years the “athlete, the gangster rapper, and the criminal [were merged] into a single black male persona that the sports industry, the music industry, and the advertising industry have made into the predominant image of black masculinity.”⁵¹⁴ In Boateng’s case, he markets himself as a hip hop-loving transnational celebrity athlete with ties to the cosmopolitan city Berlin and the United States. His collaboration with Jay-Z and his American sponsors Nike and Harman support that idea. Unlike Podolski, who connected his brand closely with his hometown Cologne, Boateng uses Berlin as a way to promote internationalism.

⁵¹⁴ Hoberman, *Darwin’s Athletes*, xviii.

Chapter 6: Mesut Özil

The first Turks came to West Germany as labor migrants in 1961 after Turkey signed a labor recruitment agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany. Initially, workers could not bring their families and they could only stay to a maximum of two years. However, German companies pressured West Germany to remove the two-year-rule, which occurred in 1964, the year family unification was also legalized. After the guest work program stopped in 1973, many of the Turkish workers returned to their homeland, but plenty of others stayed and brought the rest of their family. According to a Germany's Federal Office for Statistics report from 2021, around 2.7 out of 82 million people living in Germany have Turkish roots.⁵¹⁵

Duran Uzunur, Mesut Özil's grandfather, came to West Germany as a guest worker.⁵¹⁶ Mesut Özil was born in Gelsenkirchen in 1988. He joined the *Bundesliga* local team, FC Schalke 04, in 2005 and transferred to SV Werder Bremen in 2008, where he helped them winning the German Cup and Supercup in 2009. His international career began with the transfer to Real Madrid in 2010, winning the league title and the Spanish Cup and Supercup. Three years later, he transferred to Arsenal and won three FA Cups.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁵ "Pressemitteilung Nr. 162 vom 12. April 2022," Destatis, accessed November 20, 2022, https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2022/04/PD22_162_125.html.

⁵¹⁶ Kate Connolly, "Immigration: The Rare Success Story of Mesut Ozil," *The Guardian*, November 15, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/15/mesut-ozil-turkish-german-football>.

⁵¹⁷ For a complete list of honors, see: "Mesut Özil," Wikipedia, accessed May 25, 2021. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesut_%C3%96zil.

In 2021, Özil joined Turkish club Fenerbahçe SK on a free transfer before transferring again to İstanbul Başakşehir F.K. a year later.

Özil became a member of the German youth national team in 2006. His grandfather's Turkish roots would have made him eligible to play for Turkey, but he decided to play for Germany instead. In order to become a German citizen, he had to renounce his Turkish passport, which, "can be considered as an ultimate act of formally distancing himself from Turkey and, simultaneously, expressing his formal – and arguably moral – belonging to the state of Germany."⁵¹⁸ Renunciation also shows that citizenship is only a weak form of belonging that can be changed for financial and career related reasons. Özil starred for Germany during the 2009 U-21 EURO and helped them win the 2014 World Cup but retired from the team in 2018. A few months before the 2018 World Cup, Özil faced a critical turning point when he took a picture with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, his teammate İlkay Gündoğan, and Turkish player Cenk Tosun. The German media framed this meeting as an endorsement for Erdoğan in the upcoming Turkish election.⁵¹⁹ Gündoğan and Özil's loyalty to Germany and its values came under scrutiny and eventually led to Özil's resignation.⁵²⁰ Özil posted his resignation in English via Twitter, criticizing the media and German society as well as

⁵¹⁸ Campenhout and Houtum, "I Am German when We Win, but I Am an Immigrant when We Lose," 1.

⁵¹⁹ Philip Oltermann, "Özil and Gündoğan's Erdoğan Picture Causes Anger in Germany," *The Guardian*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/16/mesut-ozil-ilkay-gundogan-recep-tayyip-erdogan-picture>.

⁵²⁰ As opposed to Özil, Gündoğan apologized afterwards and insisted that it was not a political statement.

declaring “racism and disrespect”⁵²¹ as the main reasons for quitting.⁵²² In response to this, activist Ali Can coined the hashtag #MeTwo to show how widespread experiences of discrimination in Germany are.

I will examine how Germany’s leading sports magazine and fans characterize Özil. These representations are then compared to the player’s own narratives through a similar analysis of his autobiography, advertisements, a published song, and his social media page. I will analyze the various sources through close readings and a cultural discourse analysis to reveal how Özil furthers his celebrity status and his brand(s).

DEPICTION BY THE MEDIA AND FANS

Unlike the respective cases of Boateng and Podolski, there are not only competing discourses between the Özil’s fans and the sports media, but also among his supporters themselves, underscoring his polarizing nature and difficult relationship with German society. For the sports media discourse, I examined *Kicker* articles discussing Özil’s resignation as well as his transfer to Turkey in 2021.

Kicker’s resignation coverage draws attention away from inequality and discrimination and instead normalizes or denies racism in order to retain Germany’s status as a role model for diversity and tolerance. Journalists diminish Özil’s claims of racism in

⁵²¹ Jones, “Mesut Ozil Retires.” This unfair treatment of players *mit Migrationshintergrund* is similar to claims of the former African American Boston Celtics basketball player Dennis Johnson. If his team won, white players like Larry Bird would be on the front page of newspapers. However, if the Celtics lost, local papers would print a photo of Black players like Johnson. McCallum, *Unfinished Business*, 41.

⁵²² #MeTwo is a play on the #MeToo movement which is a movement against sexual abuse and harassment.

two ways: ignoring and deflecting. The sports magazine exaggerates the incident as something more far-reaching than sports when they release a defeated looking Özil and the words “[t]here are only losers” on their July cover (fig. 30).⁵²³



Figure 30: Özil on the July 2018 *Kicker* cover (Illustration from “Öz!L Es gibt nur Verlierer: Eine außer Kontrolle geratene Debatte überlagert viele weitere Probleme. Die Fragen und Antworten dazu,” *Kicker*, July 26, 2018.)

The magnitude of Özil’s resignation is implied by fans with German flags in the picture’s shallow background. This suggests that Özil is not the only loser in this debate; the German nation or at least German soccer also lose. One article featured in this edition goes as far as implying that the claims of racism reduce Germany’s chances of hosting the EURO 2024. *Kicker* editor Rainer Holzschuh accused Özil of acting on behalf of Turkey, the other contender for the EURO 2024.⁵²⁴

⁵²³ “Öz!L Es gibt nur Verlierer: Eine außer Kontrolle geratene Debatte überlagert viele weitere Probleme. Die Fragen und Antworten dazu,” *Kicker*, July 26, 2018.

⁵²⁴ A few months later, Germany won the bid for the EURO 2024. Rainer Holzschuh, “Özil und seine fehlgeleiteten Vorwürfe,” *Kicker*, July 30, 2018, 35.

Kicker also amplifies the voices of politicians, such as the then-Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas who argued that Özil’s situation is not representative for migrants in Germany since Özil only grew up in Germany but became a star in Spain and England.⁵²⁵ *Kicker* editor Holzschuh echoes Mass’ deflection. Thiemo Müller puts forward a similar argument in “Kicker-Kulisse,” where he implies that a multimillionaire who plays in England cannot pass judgement on racism in Germany.⁵²⁶

Another way for *Kicker* and its readers to deflect from the claims is to blame Özil’s manager.⁵²⁷ Wolff implies that not Özil but his advisor Dr. Erkut Sögüt is responsible for the public resignation.⁵²⁸ Wolff calls Özil’s tweets a “production” that has the potential for comedy if the story itself were not so tragic. He uses theater terms to show the absurd staging of the resignation and describes Özil as “stubborn,” “externally controlled,” and “pathetic.”⁵²⁹ The German media as well as its readers seem to close their eyes to the reality for people *mit Migrationshintergrund* and only acknowledge explicit racist behavior. This is problematic considering that Özil was celebrated as the “2010 Bambi award recipient

⁵²⁵ “Glaube nicht, dass der Fall Auskunft gibt über Integrationsfähigkeit,” *Die Welt*, July 23, 2018, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article179862076/Maas-ueber-Oezil-Glaube-nicht-dass-der-Fall-Auskunft-gibt-ueber-Integrationsfaehigkeit.html>.

⁵²⁶ Thiemo Müller, “Kicker-Kulisse,” *Kicker*, July 30, 2018, 35.

⁵²⁷ E.g., Anna Hedemann, “Lieber Mesut Özil, trennen Sie sich schnell von Ihrem Berater!” *Kicker*, July 30, 2018.

Robin Köppel, “Lieber Mesut Özil, trennen Sie sich schnell von Ihrem Berater!” *Kicker*, July 30, 2018, 67.

⁵²⁸ Sebastian Wolff, “Özil und das unwürdige, aber logische Ende,” *Kicker*, July 23, 2018, 38.

⁵²⁹ “bockig,” “fremdgesteuerten Text,” “bedauernswerten Menschen.” Holzschuh, “Özil und seine fehlgeleiteten Vorwürfe,” 35.

for integration.”⁵³⁰ It shows that there exists a myth of integration, of an equal society free of racism to, which people still cling to.

According to a German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency report, the number of cases of racial discrimination reported in Germany rose from 545 in 2015 to 1,176 incidents in 2019.⁵³¹ A study by the Deutsche Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung (German Center for Integration and Migration Research; DeZIM) conducted the first representative analysis of racial awareness and racism in Germany.⁵³² While approximately eighty percent of the 5,000 participants perceive various hypothetical situations as racist against Jewish people and people of color, only seventy percent perceive the same scenarios as racist as against Muslims and East Europeans. This suggests that racism against Muslims has become normalized in German society.⁵³³

The aftermath following the resignation reinforced Özil’s opinion about discrimination in Germany. He left not only the German national team but also his British club Arsenal FC and joined Fenerbahçe in January 2021 without a transfer fee, which means the main expense for Fenerbahçe was his \$3.75 million salary.⁵³⁴ Fenerbahçe could

⁵³⁰ “Bambi-Preisträger für Integration von 2010.” Wolff, “Die falschen Worte,” 39.

⁵³¹ *Annual Report 2019* (Berlin: Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, 2020), 12.

⁵³² 5,000 people were questioned about racism in Germany in a phone survey from April to August 2021.

⁵³³ *Rassistische Realitäten: Wie setzt sich Deutschland mit Rassismus auseinander?* (Berlin: DeZIM-Institut, 2022), 8.

⁵³⁴ Zak Garner-Purkis, “Why Mesut Ozil’s Arsenal-to-Fenerbahçe Transfer Is Unique,” *Forbes*, February 21, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zakgarnerpurkis/2021/02/21/why-mesut-zils-arsenal-to-fenerbahce-transfer-is-unique/?sh=7d89e8c62596>.

afford this transfer due to the help of fans who donated money with the text ““Mesut Ol,””⁵³⁵ thereby drawing on fan support for Özil in Turkey.

Kicker frames Özil’s transfer as the return of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 11-32) who comes home after his failure in Germany and who will bring fame and glory to Turkish soccer.⁵³⁶ The January edition of *Kicker* highlights his transfer with the headline “Vorfrende” (anticipation) and a color picture of a smiling Özil, holding up a Fenerbahçe scarf.⁵³⁷ The *Kicker* article “Zwischen Schein und Sein” (between appearance and being) indirectly defends Özil’s decision to transfer to Turkey since he is not treated like a second-class citizen there. In Turkey, he is a celebrity playing for the country’s most popular club and associated with beautiful and rich people.⁵³⁸ Uzun promotes Özil as the savior of Fenerbahçe, the most successful and best supported soccer team in Turkey.⁵³⁹ Özil seems to fit on the surface with Fenerbahçe, but this is not reflected in the adjectives Uzun uses to characterize Özil: sensitive and unsuccessful in recent years.⁵⁴⁰ Özil’s performance before his transfer to Fenerbahçe had deteriorated considerably, eventually ended with him sitting on Arsenal’s bench from March 2020 onwards. Despite being positioned as the savior of Fenerbahçe, Özil retired from soccer two years after playing in Turkey.

⁵³⁵ Garner-Purkis. “Why Mesut.”

⁵³⁶ Uzun, “Vorfrende,” 30.


⁵³⁷ Hakan Uzun, “Vorfrende,” *Kicker*, January 21, 2021, 30.

⁵³⁸ “Zwischen Schein und Sein,” *Kicker*, January 25, 2021, 81.

⁵³⁹ “Özil soll Fener neues Leben einhauchen.” “Zwischen,” 81.

⁵⁴⁰ “sensible Spieler”, “in den letzten Jahren bei den Gunners aufs Abstellgleis geratene Spielmacher.” Uzun, “Vorfrende,” 30.

Despite the media's negative portrayal of Özil and his transfer, Özil's Facebook fans celebrate their hero on and off the field.⁵⁴¹ On top of having fan pages and groups about his time with Real Madrid, Arsenal, and Fenerbahçe, Özil has Facebook fan groups in Thailand and Vietnam. Even though "Mesut Özil Fans Club" has the most followers (343,113),⁵⁴² I chose to look at "• Mesut Özil Lovers,•"⁵⁴³ which is more up-to-date and has the second most followers (211,359). This page contains posts from its creation, in 2013, until October 2016.⁵⁴⁴

Facebook analysis shows how fans repeatedly depict traditional masculine traits (muscular, talented, heterosexual), but also highlight Özil's religious faith and fashion sense. The first few posts of the Özil fan page are all made by one person who identifies herself as Anastasia. She posts a photo of him in his Arsenal uniform, kicking the ball with his heel, adding the caption "Maestro  - Anastasia" (fig. 31).⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴¹ Heitmeyer and Peter, *Jugendliche Fußballfans*, 32.

⁵⁴² Mesut Özil Fans Club, Facebook, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/MesutOzilFansClub.Official/>.

⁵⁴³ • Mesut Özil Lovers •, Facebook, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/>.

⁵⁴⁴ After a three-and-a-half-year pause, new posts were published in April 2020 before stopping again. During the gap, Özil was still playing for Arsenal, but was sitting on the bench from March 2020 till his transfer to Turkey.

⁵⁴⁵ • Mesut Özil Lovers •. "Maestro  - Anastasia," Facebook, image, November 24, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/260996607380887/>.

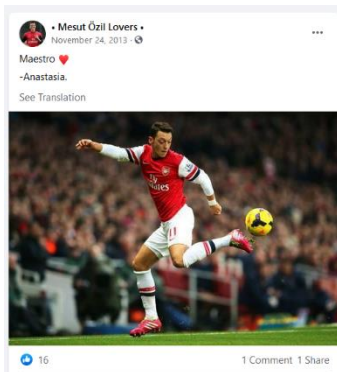


Figure 31: Özil picture done by a Facebook fan (Screenshot from • Mesut Özil Lovers •. “Maestro ❤️ - Anastasia,” Facebook, image, November 24, 2013, [https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/260996607380887/.](https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/260996607380887/))

The Facebook fan discourse is characterized by female fan contributions as styling ratings, naked upper body picture posts, and the name “Anastasia” all imply. While male soccer fans dominate the stadium audience, social media offer a way for female fans to express not only their attraction to a club but also to a soccer player. Female fandom is still vastly underrepresented, but the focus on the celebrity side of soccer players could be a domain for female fans since they usually have problems gaining acceptance as traditional soccer fans as the result of sexist attitudes.⁵⁴⁶

Özil’s fans follow the new definition of masculinity and invert the common praxis of female sexual objectification by posting an enlarged photo of Özil naked from the waist up (fig. 32).⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁶ Alex Fenton, Leah Gillooly, and Cristina Mihaela Vasilica, “Female Fans and Social Media: Micro-Communities and the Formation of Social Capital,” *European Sport Management Quarterly* (2021): 15.

⁵⁴⁷ • Mesut Özil Lovers •. “Amazing Body ❤️! 500 LIKES ❤️.” Facebook, image, December 21, 2013. [https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/268851816595366/.](https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/268851816595366/)



Figure 32: Fans post picture of Özil shirtless (Screenshot from • Mesut Özil Lovers •. “Amazing Body ❤️! 500 LIKES ❤️.” Facebook, image, December 21, 2013. [https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/268851816595366/.](https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/268851816595366/))

The caption of the mirror picture reads: “Amazing Body ❤️! 500 LIKES ❤️.” This post promotes expectations for the male body, such as appearing groomed, muscled, and tanned. Metrosexuality is no longer seen as something “new” but rather as an idealized norm in dominant sports celebrity discourse. The objectification of Özil could be in part due to Europe’s fascination with and sexualized curiosity about the Middle East and North Africa.⁵⁴⁸ On the one hand, sexuality within immigration and integration debates have become a controversial focal point in the media coverage, as discussions of arranged marriages, rape and sexual violence attacks, homophobia, and patriarchy show. On the other hand, society exotifies and fetishizes “often-denounced figures such as the Arab

⁵⁴⁸ Mehammed Amadeus Mack, *Sexagon: Muslims, France, and the Sexualization of National Culture* (New York: Fordham University, 2017), 12.


macho and the veiled Muslim woman in cinema, sports, music (especially hip-hop), or pornography (both heterosexual and homosexual).”⁵⁴⁹ Özil’s metrosexuality combined with his Turkish roots, humility, shyness, and Muslim faith makes him into an object of fascination for fans.

The “new” characteristic in Özil’s case, rendering him uniquely engaging in the eyes of fans, is religion. Özil is a practicing Muslim, a fact that the fans emphasize and celebrate.⁵⁵⁰ Even though Islam is the second largest religion in Germany due to immigration, politicians and German society continue to view Islam with suspicion. The phrase “Islam does not belong to Germany” was an integral slogan to the AfD’s right-wing election platform in 2017. Özil’s fans, however, function as ambassadors for Muslim soccer players.


The fans not only promote their hero’s faith and soccer skills, but also focus on his activities off the field: receiving his Bambi award for integration,⁵⁵¹ doing charity work,⁵⁵² and taking pictures with fans.⁵⁵³ Unlike Boateng’s Facebook page, Özil’s fans add a more

⁵⁴⁹ Mack, *Sexagon*, 12.

⁵⁵⁰ • Mesut Özil Lovers • “ Respect .https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/279113098902571/.

⁵⁵¹ • Mesut Özil Lovers • “ -Anastasia.” Facebook, image, November 30, 2013. <https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/262541933893021/>.

⁵⁵² • Mesut Özil Lovers • Facebook, image, December 2, 2013. <https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/ms.c.eJwzMjM2tDA0tjA3NDMyMbDUM4LyjS2MLA3MzWB8S4i8BQDktwmK.bps.a.263181350495746/263181387162409/>.

⁵⁵³ • Mesut Özil Lovers • “With a fan  -Anastasia.” Facebook, image, November 29, 2013. <https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/262239370589944/>.

personal touch with childhood pictures,⁵⁵⁴ family photographs,⁵⁵⁵ posts with his then girlfriend Mandy Capristo,⁵⁵⁶ and photos with his wife Amine Gülşe.⁵⁵⁷ The fans' eagerness to learn more about their soccer player's private life goes as far as evaluating, among other things, Özil's clothing, usually seen in gossip magazines like *People*, or its German equivalent *Bunte*.⁵⁵⁸ Moreover, his fans present Özil's sponsors, such as Adidas⁵⁵⁹ and the Swiss watchmaker Cyrus,⁵⁶⁰ on various occasions. Fans promote Özil's personal endorsement deals on social media as a way to connect to their idol, thereby encapsulating celebrity-driven consumer culture.

In contrast to the overwhelmingly positive depiction of Özil on social media, songs such as "Mesut Özil Arsenal Song (Official Music Video)" on YouTube express the fans'

⁵⁵⁴ • Mesut Özil Lovers • "Mesut when he was baby. Too cuuuute *-* -Anastasia." Facebook, image, December 7, 2013.
<https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/264590183688196/>.

⁵⁵⁵ • Mesut Özil Lovers • "Rich but Normal Life ❤️." Facebook, image, January 18, 2014.
<https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/278964508917430/>.

⁵⁵⁶ • Mesut Özil Lovers • "Mesut Ozil and his GirlFriend ❤️! Maximum Likes ❤️." Facebook, image, December 25, 2013.
<https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/270121969801684/>.

⁵⁵⁷ • Mesut Özil Lovers • "Mesut with his wife 🤪 Likes? 🌟🌟🌟." Facebook, image, April 15, 2020.
<https://www.facebook.com/page/260996137380934/search/?q=mesut%20with%20wife>.

⁵⁵⁸ • Mesut Özil Lovers • "DAMN That Style ❤️❤️." Facebook, image, July 25, 2014.
<https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/345596995587514/>.

⁵⁵⁹ • Mesut Özil Lovers • "i ❤️ Adidas." Facebook, image, December 21, 2013.
<https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/a.260996604047554/268873119926569/>.

⁵⁶⁰ • Mesut Özil Lovers • "#möll". Facebook, image, January 26, 2014.
<https://www.facebook.com/Hojfeldt.Ozil/photos/282116555268892>.

ambivalent attitudes towards him, similar to those of the sports media.⁵⁶¹ The 2013 video has 4,728,306 views and was published by the British YouTuber Joe Weller, who currently has 5.38 million subscribers. As his job as YouTuber entails, Weller edited Kanye West’s song “Gold Digger,” a song about being tricked by a woman. The rap song starts with Joe Weller standing in front of a brick house, raising his middle fingers to the camera.⁵⁶² The retro filter that is used gives the video a more professional appearance instead of a parody of an adolescent.

Weller mocks Özil throughout the video for his appearance and character. The YouTuber focuses, in particular, on Özil’s eyes by wearing a mask with two huge eyes painted on it (fig. 33).



Figure 33: YouTuber Weller making fun of Özil (Screenshot from Weller, Joe, “Mesut Özil Arsenal Song (Official Music Video),” YouTube. Sep 2, 2013. Video, 1:52, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDZNxO1NrF4>.)

It is not the first time that someone has made fun of Özil’s appearance. His Real Madrid teammates supposedly gave Özil the nickname “Besugo,” the Spanish name for

⁵⁶¹ Joe Weller, “Mesut Özil Arsenal Song (Official Music Video),” YouTube, Sep 2, 2013, video, 1:52, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDZNxO1NrF4>.

⁵⁶² The whole video is shot outside in front of this house and in a backyard.

sea bream, due to its characteristic protruding eyes.⁵⁶³ German comedian Oliver Pocher disguised himself as Özil with oversized googly eyes in 2018.⁵⁶⁴

Besides the visual mockery, Weller depicts Özil as arrogant, greedy (“oh yeah I’m getting paid shitloads a year”), overconfident (“cuz I’m here to save ya”), and superior to other players in the Premier League.⁵⁶⁵ The catchy beats and funny reenactments almost overshadow his harsh views. Weller accuses Özil of smoking marijuana with long-time Arsenal soccer coach Arsène Wenger and gives him the nickname “Big O,” possibly alluding to Özil being a gangster.⁵⁶⁶ It seems that Weller’s problem mostly reflects his attitudes towards money as the song title suggests. Weller takes a jab at the infamous French club Paris Saint-Germain and the Premier League club Manchester United. Both are closely associated with wealth and success; two things Weller apparently despises despite being Chelsea FC fan.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶³ “Wie Özil von seinen Kollegen genannt wird,” *TZ*, May 1, 2012, <https://www.tz.de/sport/fussball/mesut-oezil-seinen-teamkollegen-real-madrid-genannt-wird-zr-2299247.html>.

Stephen J. Gould claims that even derogatory nicknames in sports reflect bonding between players. Stephen J. Gould, *Triumph and Tragedy in Mudville: A Lifelong Passion for Baseball* (New York City: W. W. Norton, 2003), 112.

⁵⁶⁴ Pocher is known for going too far for comedic purposes and also this time his fans were divided between laughter and criticism. Marc Thomé, “Oliver Pocher macht den Özil: Fans reagieren gespalten,” *TAG24*, July 1, 2018, <https://www.tag24.de/nachrichten/oliver-pocher-macht-den-oezil-fans-reagieren-gespalten-66276>.

⁵⁶⁵ Better than players like Juan Mata, David Silva, Phillipe Coutinho.

⁵⁶⁶ Even though there was a famous basketball player with the nickname “Big O” (Oscar Robertson), it seems unlikely Weller knew or referred to one of the best NBA players considering Weller’s claims regarding Özil: “I ain’t saying that I’m here for the dollar. I rape teams cuz I am a baller; I smoke dope with MC Arsene.” Weller, “Mesut Özil.”

⁵⁶⁷ Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich sold Chelsea FC to American billionaire Todd Boehly for \$5.4 billion in 2022.

SELF-PRESENTATION

Over the years, Özil's celebrity persona has become a marketable object which companies like Adidas, Nike, and Mercedes used for their advantage. He has always been very selective regarding his personal endorsement deals, giving Özil's promotions a more authentic character than most other advertising campaigns. His marketing has changed from 2010 to 2017, first telling the story of a young soccer player who likes to wear Nike shoes in his free time then portraying a sports celebrity who is associated with luxury and masculine traits such as strength and speed.

In 2010, the American sportswear company Nike sponsored Özil's meeting with rapper and Werder Bremen fan Jan Delay who recorded a song with Özil for the 2010 South African World Cup.⁵⁶⁸ The two celebrities meet on the training grounds of his then-club Werder Bremen and recorded a revised version of Delay's song "Large" from the album "Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Soul."⁵⁶⁹ The video is part of the three-commercial-Nike-campaign titled, "Durch das Jahr 201Ö," in reference to his name.⁵⁷⁰ After playing soccer on Werder Bremen's training grounds, Özil spends time together with Delay in the recording studio. He proudly raps about his U-21 EURO championship and his status as a newcomer in the 2010 South African World Cup squad: "My captain says to me, you coward. I say in contrast do you, I am European champion."⁵⁷¹ According to him, the

⁵⁶⁸ TeamNikeFootball, "Mesut Özil und Jan Delay - Durch das Jahr 201Ö – Episode [sic] 2 Fußball hat Söul," YouTube, June 10, 2010, video, 05:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POVvRhFTID8&t=68s>.

⁵⁶⁹ The album title is a pun on Kai Hermann and Horst Rieck's *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (*Zoo Station: The Story of Christiane F.*, 1978), a book about drug-addicted children between the ages of twelve and fifteen in Berlin.

⁵⁷⁰ Nike produced three commercials with Özil: The first is a fan homage to him. In the second film, Özil is in the recording studio with Jan Delay, and in the third commercial, the 21-year-old is traveling forty years into the future.

⁵⁷¹ "Mein Kapitän sagt zu mir ey du Hosenscheißer. Ich sag im Gegensatz zu dir bin ich Europameister" ("Hosenscheißer" literally means "pants shitter").

German team will win the World Cup. Özil compares himself to one of the best soccer players in history, Diego Maradona.⁵⁷² At the end of the clip, Özil autographs one of his jerseys and gives it to Delay, underscoring his celebrity status.

Nike uses Özil's followers, Delay's popularity in Germany, and the World Cup as ways to promote their brand and tie it to soccer and German hip hop. Delay is portrayed as a true Werder Bremen fan, who is excited to collaborate with a player like Özil. The latter's identification with Werder has probably more to do with loyalty than identification. Werder signed him on the last transfer day and thereby enabled him to leave his estranged hometown club Schalke 04 that did not let him play anymore. The conflict with Schalke is probably the reason why Özil has never been associated with his hometown (Gelsenkirchen), unlike Podolski and Boateng.

Three years later, Özil made a switch from Nike to the German competitor Adidas. Özil's 25-million-euro-Adidas-deal ended in 2020 due to the Erdoğan controversy as well as the global COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁷³ Adidas released a video in 2013 in which the brand's biggest athlete endorsers welcome Özil into the Adidas family.⁵⁷⁴ The 2013 clip starts with a close-up of Özil's face, from the nose to the forehead, accompanied by a version of pop singer Robin Thicke's song "Blurred Lines." The camera then zooms out while different faces of other soccer players who greet Özil are shown. German players Philipp Lahm, Manuel Neuer, Thomas Müller, Bastian Schweinsteiger as well as the Brazilian soccer stars Kaká and Marcelo, and French-Algerian Zinedine Zidane are revealed (fig. 34).

⁵⁷² "Ich bin angetreten für Diegos Erbe."

⁵⁷³ As of 2023, Özil does not have a sneaker deal. "Mesut Özil verliert nächsten Privatsponsor," *Die Welt*, June 3, 2020, <https://www.welt.de/sport/fussball/article208826021/Mesut-Oezil-Ex-Nationalspieler-verliert-naechsten-Privatsponsor.html>.

⁵⁷⁴ Football Boots, "Mesut Özil Joins Adidas Family & Shows off New Blue Predator LZ 2," YouTube, Aug 29, 2013, video, 00:39, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1DTBG6qls8>.



Figure 34: Özil’s Adidas ad (Screenshot from Football Boots, “Mesut Özil Joins Adidas Family,” YouTube, Aug 29, 2013, video, 00:39, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1DTBG6qls8>.)

The video ends with “welcome to the family mesut,” followed by the new Adidas Predator LZ II boot in blue. Adidas uses the coming-of-age narrative to tell the story of a the “little, shy brother” (young, well-defined features, pierced ears) Özil who slowly evolves into the successor of soccer legend Zidane as brand ambassador of the predator shoe collection.⁵⁷⁵ To replace Zidane with Özil seems like a logical move for Adidas, because Özil and Zidane have a lot in common: immigrant family background, shy personality, and extraordinary soccer skills (and a year later, world championships). Adidas and Özil present themselves as international brands for the younger generation. The choice of the models (French, Brazilian, and German) and numerous Adidas shirts, sweatshirts, and hoodies are targeted towards men. Those men visually include now Germans *mit*

⁵⁷⁵ Like Germany, it took France a long while to acknowledge immigrants and people *mit Migrationshintergrund*, in society and in the national soccer team. Zidane’s World Cup win in 1998 started to change the French people’s views on foreigners and immigrants in France, opening the doors for players with foreign roots. France’s World Cup win is the reason the German national team became more inclusive and enabled players like Özil to become an international celebrity.

Migrationshintergrund. Neuer, Müller, Lahm, and Schweinsteiger, who all have been endorsing Adidas before Özil, do not have a *Migrationshintergrund*.

Despite the positive message of this campaign, Özil is indirectly associated with negative stereotypes of Muslims by promoting a shoe collection with the name “predator” for an advertisement campaign that uses the controversial pop song “Blurred Lines.” This song has widely been denounced as promoting sexual violence and rape.⁵⁷⁶ Özil seems to be hero (successor of Zidane) and villain (sexual predator) at the same time, which is a typical treatment of athletes *mit Migrationshintergrund*.

Adidas was not the only sponsor that stopped working with Özil. In 2018, Mercedes-Benz did not extend the contract with Özil after his resignation, although he paints a different picture. In his resignation from the German national team, Özil claims that Mercedes-Benz stopped any campaigns with him because he took a picture with Turkey’s President before the World Cup in 2018. In the same paragraph, he accuses the German car company of installing unauthorized software devices in cars.⁵⁷⁷ One month after his harsh critique, he posted a picture of his new Mercedes AMG GT R. The car is supposed to be a partial payment from Mercedes-Benz for Özil’s yearslong advertisement.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁶ Sandra Gonzalez, “Pharell Explains how ‘Blurred Line’ Controversy Helped Him Realize ‘We Live in a Chauvinist Culture,’” CNN, October 14, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/14/entertainment/pharrell-blurred-lines/index.html>.

⁵⁷⁷ Alex Brownsell, “Mercedes-Benz to Investigate Mesut Özil Claims He Was Airbrushed out of World Cup Campaign,” PRWeek, July 24, 2018, <https://www.prweek.com/article/1488710/mercedes-benz-investigate-mesut-ozil-claims-airbrushed-world-cup-campaign>.

⁵⁷⁸ “Trotz Kritik: Özil holt neuen Mercedes ab,” *AutoBild*, August 27, 2018, <https://www.autobild.de/artikel/mesut-oezil-neuer-mercedes-13851635.html>.

In 2016, Özil became the brand ambassador of Mercedes-Benz and starred in a 2017 campaign for them titled, “What drives Mesut?”⁵⁷⁹ The 30-second clip opens with Özil sitting on a bench, the camera slowly moving up from his feet to head, while fans can be heard shouting in the background. A cut reveals Özil in a parking garage entrance with a soccer ball before another cut shows him exercising. What follows is a montage of his own personal Mercedes-AMG S 63 4MATIC Coupé, a London chef cooking meat, and Özil playing with a ball. The London chef is no other than Hasan Dolanbay, the co-owner of Özil’s favorite restaurant. It is a family-run Turkish restaurant Likya in London. The screen fades into black with a hashtag “WhatDrivesMesut” in white. It is followed by an engine sound and the words “Coming Soon.”

The clip highlights the commonalities of Mercedes-Benz and Mesut Özil: efficiency, luxury, strength, speed, and elegance. The brand relationship between Mercedes-Benz and Özil seems unique in the marketing world nowadays. Mercedes-Benz uses Özil’s own car in the clip, underscoring his identification with the brand prior to the advertisement campaign. The Özil shown in the clip is characterized as a soccer celebrity who is adored by fans, connected to his grandfather’s country, and immersed in a luxurious lifestyle.

A different side of Özil is revealed in his autobiography *Die Magie des Spiels*. Özil portrays himself in *Magie des Spiels* as a rebel, foreigner, and victim. The 2017 autobiography was written by Özil and journalist Kai Psotta in German and published in

⁵⁷⁹ Touchofozil, “Mesut Özil & Mercedes-Benz #WhatDrivesMesut,” YouTube, Jan 24, 2017, video, 00:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSj7x_7ZYEY.

English one year later. The cover shows a smiling Özil in a blue Adidas shirt and crossed arms. His tattooed upper arm and pierced ears make him appear more rugged. The subtitle “And what you need to make your dreams come true”⁵⁸⁰ gives the impression that the autobiography is a handbook for aspiring soccer players. In reality, it reveals Özil’s “*transgressive intimate self*”⁵⁸¹ (vengeful and ambitious) but also the problems that come with being a third-generation migrant family member. No major newspaper or news magazine has commented on his autobiography.⁵⁸²

In sixteen chapters, each beginning with a color photo of himself, Özil tells his story chronologically for the most part while disclosing an event prematurely to the readers in select instances. While Podolski’s autobiography begins with his country of birth, Poland, Özil starts with a prologue about a brutal locker room speech by his beloved Real Madrid coach José Mourinho, who wrote the foreword. The grabs the reader’s attention, especially considering that locker room speeches are considered a taboo topic.

The autobiography tells the story of a young man who found a way out of his patriarchal family with the help of soccer. *Die Magie des Spiels* perpetuates Muslim stereotypes about patriarchy through the introduction of Özil’s father. Özil dedicates the

⁵⁸⁰ “Und was du brauchst, um deine Träume zu verwirklichen.”

⁵⁸¹ Marshall, “The Promotion,” 45.

⁵⁸² *Deutschlandfunk* journalist Stephan Detjen summarizes *Die Magie des Spiels* as an identity search between family traditions, different cultures, and the contradicting expectations of powerful actors in politics, sports associations, and the media. Stephan Detjen, “Die Magie des Spiels,” *Deutschlandfunk*, July 16, 2018, https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/mesut-oezil-die-magie-des-spiels.1310.de.html?dram:article_id=423050.

autobiography to his parents.⁵⁸³ Özil's father is one of his biggest critics who helped him to be a better soccer player. His father as well as other male relatives and his advisors influenced Özil's decisions until his transfer to Arsenal. Özil rebelled against his father and even fired him after his father could not negotiate a new contract with his dream club Real Madrid.⁵⁸⁴

Özil's desire to break free is also reflected in the way Özil talks about soccer. He calls both the locker room and his childhood soccer field a cage that he wants to break out of.⁵⁸⁵ The cage could be read as a symbol for Özil's desire to rebel against authority (in his earlier years, it was his father). His rebellious nature could also be one of the reasons why Özil raises awareness for refugee camps in for example Zaatari, Jordan,⁵⁸⁶ as well as foundations such as Big Shoe, which help disadvantaged children with life-changing medical operations.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸³ "Für meine Eltern, ohne die ich nicht der wäre, der ich heute bin. Ohne die ich nicht dort stünde, wo ich heute stehe. Ohne die ich die Welt mit anderen Augen sehen würde. Für meine Eltern, die mich immer darin bestärkt haben, meinen Weg zu gehen. Ich habe auch lieb." Mesut Özil, foreword to *Die Magie des Spiels*, by Mesut Özil and Kai Psotta (Köln: Bastei Lübbe, 2017). "For my parents, without whom I would not be who I am today. Without whom I would not stand where I stand today. Without whom I would see the world through different eyes. For my parents, who always strengthened my ambition to go me. I love you."

⁵⁸⁴ "Mein Papa hat mich als großer Kritiker über Jahre angetrieben und zu besseren Leistungen gekitzelt." Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 258.

⁵⁸⁵ "In der Halbzeitpause oder kurz vor dem Spiel sind Kabinen für mich vor allem wie ein Käfig." Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 15.

"[D]er Affenkäfig, so hieß der Fußballplatz in Gelsenkirchen." Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 44.

⁵⁸⁶ The Asian Football Development Project has been organizing soccer events and tournaments in and around the camp in Zaatari Refugee Camp since 2012.

⁵⁸⁷ Özil became the ambassador of the foundation in 2014. The Big Shoe Initiative was founded in 2006 and relies on donations and doctors to provide vital operation for children in poverty.

Despite being born in West Germany, Özil identifies his family as “foreigners,” just like Podolski.⁵⁸⁸ His advice for fellow second or third generation migrants is to learn the language, to integrate into rather than to isolate from German society, and to read.⁵⁸⁹ His appeal not to live in parallel societies resonates well with the CDU’s goal to end those developments.⁵⁹⁰ Özil cautions against Esser’s notion of *marginality* (no social integration) and *individual segmentation* (inclusion in the ethnic group only).⁵⁹¹ It seems that Özil’s family was mostly integrated in their ethnic group, thereby fitting into Esser’s *individual segmentation*.⁵⁹² Soccer, just like with Podolski, became a vehicle for social inclusion for Özil. He advocates for Esser’s *multiple inclusion*,⁵⁹³ integrating people *mit Migrationshintergrund* in German society and in Turkish ethnic groups. He asks German society to respect people’s individual roots and to accept his declaration that he thinks German but feels Turkish.⁵⁹⁴ His plea resonates with Schinkel’s notion of moral citizenship. German society’s inability to accept the ethnic roots of people with a Turkish

⁵⁸⁸ “Ausländer.” Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 31.

⁵⁸⁹ “Lebt nicht isoliert und aneinander vorbei. Und vor allem: lest.” Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 36.

⁵⁹⁰ “Wir wollen keine Parallelgesellschaft verfestigen, sondern Integration in eine Gesamtgesellschaft fördern,” CDUCSU, accessed October 20, 2021, <https://www.cducusu.de/themen/recht/wir-wollen-keine-parallelgesellschaft-verfestigen-sondern-integration-eine-gesamtgesellschaft-foerdern>.

⁵⁹¹ Esser, “Ist das Konzept,” 7–8.

⁵⁹² Esser, “Ist das Konzept,” 7–8.

⁵⁹³ Esser, “Ist das Konzept,” 7–8.

⁵⁹⁴ “Ich denke deutsch, aber ich fühle türkisch.” Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 36.

background seems to part of larger problems in German society, such as Islamophobia and racism.

Özil recognizes his position as a person with Turkish roots and depicts himself as a victim. He calls himself a “publicly declared German-Turkish subject in dispute,” a claim that has some truth to it.⁵⁹⁵ The media and other soccer figures such as Franz Beckenbauer repeatedly criticized him for not singing the German national anthem, a fact Özil excuses with reference to his religious rituals.⁵⁹⁶ Özil maintained his practice of praying in Turkish and Arabic before every warm-up and kick-off despite continuing complaints from the media, fans, and soccer functionaries. This national anthem debate emerged after the people *mit Migrationshintergrund* played a more prominent role in the national team.

Özil’s relationship with the media is a difficult one. He sees himself as a victim of the media. Already early on in his career it was the media, influenced by Schalke 04 coach Mirko Slomka, that made his Werder Bremen transfer almost impossible, painting him as a greedy, young player. Özil accuses, for instance, Germany’s most widely-circulated news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, of waging a campaign against him.⁵⁹⁷ Criticizing the nationwide newspaper *Bild* of being biased and against him does not come as a surprise, as the media

⁵⁹⁵ “Ohne ein Verschulden wurde ich öffentlich zum deutsch-türkischen Streitobjekt erklärt.” Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 74.

⁵⁹⁶ Beckenbauer is a notorious supporter of singing the national anthem. A few players, such as Özil, Boateng, Podolski, and Sami Khedira, did not sing the national anthem and were criticized for it by some politicians, sports figures, and media outlets, like the *Bild*.

⁵⁹⁷ Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 263.

outlet is notorious for its tabloid journalistic style.⁵⁹⁸ Özil's "*transgressive intimate self*"⁵⁹⁹ comes to light, when he writes about various newspapers and magazines that have reported on him. He offers multiple direct citations from the German (*Kicker, Bild, Frankfurter Allgemeine, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Spiegel*), English (*Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, Independent*), Italian (*Gazzetta dello Sport*), and Spanish (*Marca, As*) media. It seems Özil has never learned how to play the game between managers, coaches, media, and sponsors.⁶⁰⁰

Despite his insistence that the soccer field is his stage,⁶⁰¹ Özil blames soccer for his inability to leave his apartment due to being recognized by fans and supporters.⁶⁰² Soccer made him a multimillionaire, but it also took away life experiences.⁶⁰³ As the autobiography shows, fame comes with a growing sense of isolation, mistrust, and lack of privacy.⁶⁰⁴ Özil compensates for those feelings through his love for documentaries and

⁵⁹⁸ Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 108.

⁵⁹⁹ Marshall, "The Promotion," 45.

⁶⁰⁰ "Mit nur neunzehn Jahren musste ich erfahren, dass man als Fußballer bloß eine Ware ist und urplötzlich zum Spielball zwischen Trainern und Managern werden kann." Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 109.

⁶⁰¹ "Der Platz, der Rasen ist meine Bühne." Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 15.

⁶⁰² "Denn streng genommen führe ich ein Leben in einem goldenen Käfig." Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 293.

⁶⁰³ "Der Fußball hat mich reich gemacht. Aber gleichzeitig bin ich auch verdammt arm. Arm an Lebenserfahrung." Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 294.

⁶⁰⁴ Donna Rockwell and David C. Giles analyzed the experiences of fifteen well-known American celebrities through interviews and discovered that celebrities experience "a loss of privacy, unrealistic expectations, temptations, mistrust toward others, a falsely inflated self, and impact on the celebrity's family." Donna Rockwell and David C. Giles, "Being a Celebrity: A Phenomenology of Fame," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 40, no. 2 (2009): 193.

lions. He discovers the world through the eyes of television, and in particular, documentaries. It is not a surprise that lions are his favorite animals: they are proud, fearless, and would do anything to protect their family.⁶⁰⁵ Similar to Özil, lions live a group. He depends on different members of his “pride” to be successful. Lions symbolize nobility, defend their territory, and do not like to be caged.⁶⁰⁶

Özil’s conflicting self-representations as rebel, foreigner, and victim are reflective of his inner struggle. On the one hand, he wants to be independent. On the other hand, Özil prefers it when people make decisions for him, as can be seen in his team selection picture at the end of *Die Magie des Spiels*. Özil picked two teams, eleven individuals per team, that he thinks are important in his life. Among them are mostly family members but also his advisor Dr. Erkut Sögüt and five other promotional team members, two former teammates (Sami Khedira and Sergio Samos), three former coaches (Joachim Löw, Norbert Elgert, and José Mourinho), two people from his first club Rot-Weiß Essen, and a teacher. Özil seem to surround himself with people who can help him in his private life (family), soccer career (coaches), and celebrity lifestyle (promotional team).

⁶⁰⁵ “Ich mag Löwen, weil ich finde, dass sie mir sehr ähnlich sind. Wir sind stolz, haben vor nichts Angst und würden unsere Familie gegen jede Gefahr verteidigen.” Özil and Psotta, *Die Magie des Spiels*, 300. According to the Smithsonian’s National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute, lions “are the world’s most social felines” and live in groups, called prides. Whereas female lions stay in the pride forever, young male lions have to leave their prides and search for a new home. To establish themselves, those males “kill all cubs that cannot run from them.” “Lion,” Smithsonian’s National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute, accessed on March 31, 2023, <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/lion>. Similar to male lions, Özil left his home in order to establish themselves.

⁶⁰⁶ In Rockwell and Giles’s study one celebrity makes a similar cage reference as Özil: ““You are an animal in a cage.”” Rockwell and Giles, “Being a Celebrity,” 194.

It comes as no surprise that Özil was one of the first German athletes to use social media to tell his side of the story and engage with his fans more closely. His followers thank him for his close engagement and react to every post of his, not only liking it but also commenting on various pictures.⁶⁰⁷ Özil's engagement with his followers goes as far as organizing fan contests in which followers can win one of his 1-MIÖ-Mercurials Nike shoes and signed t-shirts.⁶⁰⁸

Özil's fan loyalty as well as his international career and media presence make him an attractive advertiser for companies. He currently has thirty-eight million followers on Facebook and is therefore on par with Swedish superstar Zlatan Ibrahimović. Özil presents himself as a brand ambassador, family man, and activist.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁷ E.g., Mesut Özil. "Hey Leute, schaut was mir ein Fan zugeschickt hat, das nenne ich Superfly 😊 Hy guys, look what i received [sic] by a fan, now thats what i call Superfly 😊 Cheers, Mesut." Facebook, image, May 6, 2011. <https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/552876471457596/>.

⁶⁰⁸ Mesut Özil. "Hallo Leute, danke euch allen für die vielen Kommentare zu meinen neuen „1-MIÖ-Mercurials“. Viele haben gefragt, ob sie den Schuh haben können. Deshalb habe ich mir überlegt, dass sie einer von euch gewinnen kann. Zusätzlich werden noch 50 von mir unterschriebene 201Ö T-Shirts verlost. Klickt einfach hier: http://on.fb.me/WIN_1MIO Viel Glück. Thanks for the tons of comments on my new '1-MIÖ-Mercurials'. Many have asked if they could have the boots. For this reason, I decided that one of you can win them. In addition, I've also signed 50 201Ö T-Shirts, that you also can win. Click here: http://on.fb.me/WIN_1MIO Good luck! Gruß Mesut." Facebook, image, November 16, 2010. <https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/552855401459703/>. Mesut Özil. "Sonntagabend Barcelona, in der Nacht zurück nach Madrid und am montag Abend schon wieder auf dem Flughafen Madrid unterwegs nach Frankfurt. Domingo por la noche en Barcelona, en la misma noche regresando a Madrid y ahora estoy de nuevo en el aeropuerto de Madrid para irme a Frankfurt. Pazar günü Barcelona macindan sonra gece Madrid e döndük ve suan da Frankfurt a ucuyorum. Sunday evening in Barcelona , the night back to Madrid and now on my way to Frankfurt." Facebook, image, October 9, 2012. <https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/552966378115272/>.

⁶⁰⁹ His Facebook page was created in November 2013, but the first post was already made in April 2010. Mesut Özil, Facebook, accessed October 20, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/mesutoezil>.

In the beginning of his career, Özil mostly focused on his sponsors, such as Nike, Adidas, and Mercedes-Benz. He promoted his own fashion collection in 2017.⁶¹⁰ In 2020, he created his own fashion label, “M10Streetwear,” promoting an urban, street style look. The 2020 post depicts Özil in a black oversized hoodie and purple/white pants, displaying a “relaxed & stylish clothing designed for everyday wear” (fig. 35).⁶¹¹

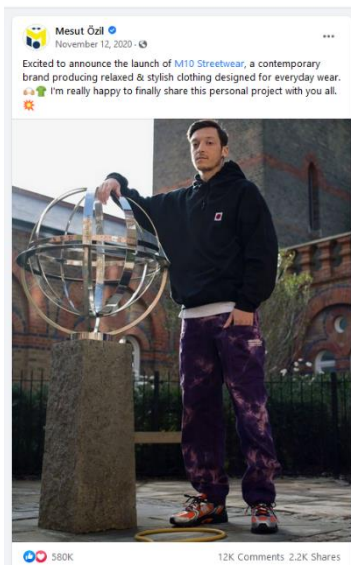


Figure 35: Özil advertises M10 Streetwear on Facebook (Screenshot from Mesut Özil, “Excited to announce the launch of M10 Streetwear,” Facebook, image, Nov 12, 2020, [https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/3880703892008154/.](https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/3880703892008154/))

⁶¹⁰ Mesut Özil. “May I introduce: My 1st #M10fashion edition 🤘👍🤘 Limited to 250 caps and 250 shirts - go & and get it! 📄 <http://shop.mesutoezil.com>.” Facebook, image, April 21, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/1726257300786168>.

⁶¹¹ Mesut Özil, “Excited to announce the launch of M10 Streetwear, a contemporary brand producing relaxed & stylish clothing designed for everyday wear. 🍷🍷 I'm really happy to finally share this personal project with you all. 🌟,” Facebook, image, November 12, 2020, [https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/3880703892008154/.](https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/3880703892008154/)

Özil has one hand on the top of a metal globe, signaling that his clothes appeal to fans around the world. Both Podolski and Özil target the younger generation who like to wear casual streetwear clothes, as indicated by the urban background. Özil tries to target the international community, which is also reflected in his language use. This post, like the majority of posts since 2015, is in English. While Özil kept his fans updated in German early on in his career, he switched to German and English translations a few months after creating his Facebook page.⁶¹² The move can be explained with his occupation as an Arsenal player at that time. In a similar vein, Özil included Spanish and Arabic translations from 2012 till 2015 to address his Real Madrid fans and broaden his appeal in the Arabic community.⁶¹³ In contrast to Podolski, Özil has posted in Turkish only or English with Turkish and German translations from the beginning of this social media career.⁶¹⁴ This gives Özil a certain authenticity with his Turkish fans that Podolski lacks with his Polish fans on social media. Since Özil's move to Turkey, he has mainly posted in Turkish and English (only sometimes in German).⁶¹⁵

⁶¹² Mesut Özil. "Hy guys, yesterday i scored my first CL-goal at Bernabeu. It was such an incredible feeling to do this in front of all our amazing fans. Greets from Madrid. Mesut." Facebook, image, October 20, 2010. <https://www.facebook.com/mesutoezil/photos/a.552832191462024/552853698126540/>.

⁶¹³ Mesut Özil. "dear friends, today I visited a project of the Arsenal Foundation together with Per Mertesacker. i was really impressed. every monday, children who have been victims of violence are training here with Arsenal coaches. The Arsenal Foundation has several projects that really need our support." Facebook, image, December 2, 2013. <https://www.facebook.com/mesutoezil/photos/a.559669234111653/559669560778287/>.

⁶¹⁴ Mesut Özil. "Merhaba, bu sayfanın 100.000'i aşkın taraftar sahibi olmasından ve bu kadar çok „Ö resimleri“ yüklemiş olmanızdan son derece memnun kaldım. Bu mükemmel destekleriniz için hepinize binlerce teşekkürler. Durmayın, devam edin. Dostunuz Mesut." Facebook, image, July 1, 2010. <https://www.facebook.com/mesutoezil/photos/a.552832191462024/552853698126540/>.

⁶¹⁵ Mesut Özil. "Yeni Görev   Yeni Hedefler, Tam Motivasyon.  Fenerbahçe

This streetwear promotion exposes Özil's international marketing strategy and stands in stark contrast to Özil's posts that expose his celebrity lifestyle and celebrity friends, such as Barbadian singer Rihanna and the American actor Samuel L. Jackson.⁶¹⁶ These competing representations expose Özil's calculated marketing strategy that shows him, on the one hand, as a streetwear designer, and on the other, as an international celebrity.

Özil uses his fan's curiosity and gives intimate glimpses into his private family life in order to expose his "*public private self*"⁶¹⁷ by posting pictures with his family members and his English Bulldogs.⁶¹⁸ While Özil overwhelmingly posted about his family in the early stage of his career, he has shifted his focus on activism and celebrity lifestyle in recent years. He started to post more private photos, including pictures of his daughters Eda and

New job. 🧡💙 New challenges. Full motivation. 🚀💯." Facebook, image, January 15, 2021.
<https://www.facebook.com/mesutoezil/posts/pfbid02yEUFcpSY4qB8eDxf7FEZgitb14FiVSYLabnsX228gpeAvK5x9iuxJe8gqgUJvEoXl>.

⁶¹⁶ E.g., Mesut Özil. "Rihanna and the DFB-Team shined bright like a diamond! 🥰🏆🏆 #WorldCup #happy #Rio #M1Ö." Facebook, image, July 14, 2014.
<https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/679208068824435/>.
Mesut Özil, "Samuel L. Jackson & I after the #AFCvMCFC match @Emirates Stadium ... #bpl." Facebook, image, September 14, 2014.
<https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/711088862303022/>.

⁶¹⁷ Marshall, "The Promotion," 44.

⁶¹⁸ E.g., Mesut Özil. "Family – where life begins & love never ends ❤️ #Mira #niece." Facebook, video, December 11, 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=755249877886920>.
Mesut Özil. "Heute will ich euch Rocky vorstellen." Facebook, image, October 22, 2012.
<https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/552970974781479/>.
Mesut Özil. "Mrs. & Mr. Özil 🧑❤️🧑." Facebook, image, June 7, 2019.
<https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.571592439585999/2655953511149871/>.

Ela without blurring their faces,⁶¹⁹ after meeting his wife Amine Gülşe. The couple follows in the footsteps of other athlete-model celebrity couples such as Georgina Rodriguez and Cristiano Ronaldo and Antonella Rocuzzo and Lionel Messi. Amine was crowned “Miss Turkey” in 2014 and began dating Özil in 2017. The couple married two years later with Turkish President Erdoğan as a witness. Given his close relationship with a figure who is so emblematic of the Turkish state, it is surprising that Özil has no Erdoğan picture on his Facebook page. It appears that Özil does not want to make a public announcement about his friendship with the controversial politician who has prompted much debate about Germany’s relationship with Turkey.

Despite Özil’s resistance to voicing his political opinion about Erdoğan, he posted a picture with former Christian Democratic Union Party member, Jürgen Todenhöfer, who founded his own party, “Team Todenhöfer” in 2021.⁶²⁰ The party’s aim is to end all foreign deployments of the *Bundeswehr*, to stop exports to crisis regions, to combat racism, and to reduce taxes for the middle class. Sports is an attractive sphere for politicians to gain international support through celebrities, as seen by the 2016 US Presidential elections and the fact that the former boxer Mike Tyson and the former NBA player Dennis Rodman both supported Donald Trump. Özil’s sudden interest in election campaigns seems

⁶¹⁹ E.g., Mesut Özil. “Happy new year to all of you! ❤️.” Facebook, image, December 31, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=4009704425774766&id=552825254796051.

Mesut Özil. “Allah’a şükürler olsun sağ sağlım dünyaya geldin güzel kızımız Ela ❤️👶🏻👀 Welcome to the world our little princess Ela ❤️👶🏻 Amine Gülşe.” Facebook, image, September 26, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=672518277567862&set=a.296436901842670>.

⁶²⁰ Mesut Özil, “Mein Treffen mit Deutschlands mutigstem Politiker, Jürgen Todenhöfer,” Facebook, image, September 17, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=423465102473182&set=a.296436901842670>.

surprising and inauthentic, especially considering that Todenhöfer, later on, reveals his upcoming book project with Özil.

Even though Özil uses his status as a celebrity to raise awareness for social commitments and calls attention to humanitarian issues, he has never criticized Turkish President Erdoğan for the persecution of journalists or waging a war against the Kurds in Turkey. Özil posts, for example, about initiatives such as “schools with no racism”⁶²¹ and his Laureus sports award received for his foundation.⁶²²

Close to Özil’s heart is his religious faith, that has always been part of his marketing strategy. The most famous post is from 2016, when he went to the holy city of Mecca for the first time; he took a picture in front of the Black Stone in the Grand Mosque and posted it on social media (fig. 36).⁶²³

⁶²¹ Mesut Özil. Facebook, image, April 17, 2014.
<https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/630503480361561/>.

⁶²² Mesut Özil. “Thank you very much for honouring me with this Laureus award.” Facebook, image, November 11, 2014.
<https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/741476012597640>.


⁶²³ Özil posted pictures about praying and his visit to the holy city Mecca: Mesut Özil, “ #Mecca #HolyCity #SaudiArabia #Islam #Pray,” Facebook, image, May 22, 2016,
<https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/1430547847023783/>.



Figure 36: Özil in the holy city Mecca (Screenshot from Mesut Özil, “[#Mecca #HolyCity #SaudiArabia #Islam #Pray](https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/1430547847023783/),” Facebook, image, May 22, 2016, [https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/1430547847023783/.](https://www.facebook.com/552825254796051/photos/a.552832191462024/1430547847023783/))

It earned him 2.6 million likes. His trip was part of a brief tour of the Middle East where he also visited Dubai and participated in a charity soccer match in Jordan to benefit Syrian refugees. In this image, the body of the Muslim male represents tradition, an image Özil has embraced more since his transfer to the Turkish *Süper Lig* in 2021.⁶²⁴ Özil promotes masculinity as being a religious, demure Muslim, while also exploiting his faith for a photo opportunity at a holy place. One year after his post, the Saudi Arabian government banned pilgrims from taking photos and videos at the Great Mosque of Mecca.

CONCLUSION

Özil’s case has demonstrated how easily it is to get branded by media and German society as a scapegoat and a “publicly declared German-Turkish subject in dispute.” Even

⁶²⁴ E.g., Mesut Özil. “Alhamdulillah 🇹🇷.” Facebook, image, May 27, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=587803132706044&set=a.296436901842670>.

though Podolski and Özil have a lot in common (identifying themselves and their family as foreigners, growing up in working-class districts, not singing the national anthem, and expressing their conflicting feelings for two countries), these similarities do not result in the same acceptance.

Özil's polarization is rooted in three main factors: German society's ambivalent attitude towards Islam, Özil's open admiration for Turkish President Erdoğan, and his lack of regional identification. In times of rising anti-immigrant sentiment⁶²⁵ and Islamophobia,⁶²⁶ Özil's friendship with Turkey's authoritarian head of state has jeopardized his acceptance by German society. The 2018 photo-op with Erdoğan was not the first time that Özil met with the Turkish President. Erdoğan and Özil at least met four times prior to 2018: in 2011, 2012, 2016, and 2017. The reason why the 2018 meeting became a PR disaster was the deteriorating relationship between Germany and Turkey. This tense relationship was already tested in 2016, when German satirist Jan Böhmermann deliberately insulted Erdoğan using profane language in a poem on his satire show *Neo Magazine Royale*. The Turkish government demanded criminal persecution of

⁶²⁵ Anti-immigrant sentiment has risen to a new record in 2019. "Germans increasingly hostile towards asylum-seekers," DW, April 25, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/germans-increasingly-hostile-towards-asylum-seekers/a-48478777>.

⁶²⁶ There had been over 900 attacks against Muslims and Islamic organizations in Germany in 2020, which is an almost two percent increase. "Mehr als 900 Angriffe auf Muslime und Moscheen im Jahr 2020," *Der Spiegel*, February 8, 2021, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/islam-in-deutschland-mehr-als-900-angriffe-auf-muslime-2020-a-5542fed3-dee0-4878-979b-150582b474b8>.

One of the deadliest attacks occurred on February 19, 2020, when a 43-year-old German shot nine people who themselves or their families had migrated to Germany. Lisa Hänel, "Mass shooting in Hanau: Grief and Rage Persist One Year on," DW, February 19, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/mass-shooting-in-hanau-grief-and-rage-persist-one-year-on/a-56612160>.

Böhmermann, which was granted by Merkel's government. The case was, however, dropped in October 2016.

German sports media fuel this anti-Turkish narrative by painting Özil as the prodigal son, an outsider in the German society but a savior for the Turkish soccer league. Both Özil and Boateng voice their grievances regarding racism, discrimination, and being accepted by German people in their autobiography and biography, respectively. While those claims were not commented on or addressed by anybody after the books were released, Özil's claims of discrimination and mistreatment in his resignation tweets were ignored or deflected by the sports print media. However, *Kicker* indirectly supported Boateng (by putting him on the cover with a German flag in the background) during the Gauland incident.

Özil utilizes social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, two spaces where the promotional team can take over, to voice his grievances. He surrounded himself with a team that can run his life, intertwining family and business. As opposed to Podolski, Özil quickly detached himself from his working-class background, associating himself with luxurious brands such as Mercedes-Benz and Cyrus.

It seems Özil has changed from an obedient son of a proud, Turkish father to a rebellious soccer player who wants to break free of the childhood patriarchy through soccer and his religious faith. In order to get independence, Özil quickly detaches himself from his hometown Gelsenkirchen and its local soccer club Schalke. Soccer, though, is first and foremost a sport that is characterized by regional feelings of belonging and local, regional, and national rivalries. While all three soccer players, Podolski, Boateng, and Özil, are no

longer working-class individuals, Podolski and Boateng emphasize their upbringing and regional feelings of belonging. In contrast, Özil's commodification combined with his lack of regional affiliation to a city or a soccer club in Germany adds to his polarization in Germany. Özil's earlier, unfiltered glimpses into his family life are replaced by staged photos of his own family. Unlike Boateng and Podolski, Özil has openly celebrated his religious faith and has mainly depicted himself as a Muslim activist with Turkish roots who enjoys his celebrity lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

Soccer is no longer just a spectator sport. It has transitioned to a form of entertainment and its culture is governed by political, commercial, and social values. The case studies analyzed in this dissertation follow three soccer celebrities, Lukas Podolski, Jérôme Boateng, and Mesut Özil from their early career stages to after their World Cup victories. Podolski, Boateng, and Özil retired from the national team (of their own free will or lack of nomination) and have started to focus on their post-soccer careers. As of March 22, 2023, Özil retired from soccer altogether. The discussed German soccer players use their *Migrationshintergrund* to further their celebrity status and thereby their brand(s). Their branding is governed by fan expectations, masculinity norms, entrepreneurialism, and migration discourses.

Podolski presents himself as a rags-to-riches Eastern-European integration success story from Cologne who combines working-class traits and regional identity, which resonates well with soccer fans, with modern values (such as civic engagement, commercialization, entrepreneurialism, displaying various forms of masculinity) to broaden his range of followers, including the LGBTQIA+ community.⁶²⁷

Similar to Podolski, Boateng uses his alleged working-class roots to further his socio-economic status. Ever since his 2015 collaboration with Jay-Z, Boateng has devoted his time to make himself an international brand, embracing and challenging common

⁶²⁷ Many celebrities use their publicity to support charities, increase awareness of social wrongs, diseases, or instances of discrimination. Sports celebrities like Podolski, Özil, and Boateng try to give insight into their experiences with crime, discrimination, and racism.

negative stereotypes about Black men through music, fashion, and social media. Gone is the middle-class Christian boy from Berlin; instead, Boateng makes headlines as a soccer celebrity with a criminal record. His fans, as well as the media, pay more attention to Boateng as a celebrity rather than a soccer player.

Özil returned home to the country of his parents for his last year(s) as a soccer player. He cut ties with the majority of his sponsors and left Europe for Turkey. Despite much commonality between Podolski and Özil (similar upbringing, education, soccer skills, etc.), Özil reproduces a paradox in his depiction as a victim (of soccer, society, and the media) and his occupation as a rich, famous, heterosexual, Muslim activist with Turkish roots. As opposed to Podolski, Özil quickly detached himself from his working-class background and his hometown Gelsenkirchen, which makes it harder for soccer fans to identify with him.

The introduction of the term “*mit Migrationshintergrund*” has fueled the constructed social distinction between “real citizens” (who enjoy higher social standing) and people whose loyalty is questioned due to their “foreignness.” This is not just a reference to someone’s ethnic background but can also be a marker for race (Boateng) and religion (Özil). Racism and anti-Muslim attitudes seem to be on the rise once again, creating division among the German population regarding integration. Whereas integration processes were already established on the local level in the 1970s, it took Germany longer to address integration issues on the federal level. It is important to (re)consider integration approaches at city as well as federal levels. Such categories like “*mit Migrationshintergrund*” shape discourses about ethno-national “others” and the native

population. Only people *mit Migrationshintergrund* appear in media and political discourses because people without *Migrationshintergrund* are equated with the category “Germans” and are therefore unmarked in the discourse.

While the government defines the law, the media and society define Schinkel’s moral conception of belonging (adherence to dominant culture and loyalty). To represent the national soccer team seems to depend on the relentless demonstrations of the player’s loyalty. Being born in Germany or having German ancestors does not automatically mean that they are acknowledged as such. “Germanness” has to be earned and loyalty proven to Germany. The player’s national belonging is a temporary form of belonging, lasting as long as the society grants his moral citizenship. Therefore, integration and acceptance have to be viewed as a three-way process between the country of origin, the host country, and the society.

This dissertation shows that it is time to conceptualize the integration process outside of a national paradigm and recognize transnational connections, and dual loyalties. The concept of integration by Esser views the process of integration as a two-way street in which both the migrants as well as the host society must adapt. Esser sees assimilation as part of one path for migrants to integrate into the host society.⁶²⁸ During the guest worker period, migrants were expected to adapt to West Germany’s norms and values and could only obtain permanent residence starting in 2005.

⁶²⁸ The other integration constellations are: *multiple inclusion*, integration within the ethnic group, and non-integration.

For a long time, the national soccer team strongly reflected (West) Germany's ethnic concept of citizenship. After nationality laws were revised in 2000, Germany's status as an immigration country has been increasingly reflected in a diverse national German soccer team. Media, politicians, and society urge people *mit Migrationshintergrund* to express their attachments and loyalty to one nation. These actors interpret national belonging as a "all-or-nothing" attitude. Legally, the German government used to ask people with dual citizenship to renounce their original citizenship in order to be considered "German." For Özil, who renounced his Turkish citizenship when he was eighteen, his dual citizenship complicated the acceptance process in German society. Since 2014, it is possible for people like Özil to keep both their German citizenship and that of their parents. In 2020, FIFA finally recognized a need for change and now allows players to switch national teams, even after having played up to three official matches in a senior national team, if they were eligible to represent another country at the time they first played for their first country. According to German director Sönke Wortmann, "Germanness" encompasses regionality (*Das Wunder von Bern*) as well as German patriotism that is awakened in every German through the success of the national team (*Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen*). Whereas he sees "Germanness" in the 1950s as connected to the National Socialist past and split between East and West Germany, "Germanness" in 2006 is only indirectly related to the past. Nowadays, it seems that the German national team has lost its role model function for what it means to be German.

The regional identification in Germany (soccer and society), as well as the fan-orientated soccer clubs, are different from any other soccer nation such as former colonial

empires France and the UK. While German regulations limit the acquisition of shares of soccer clubs in Germany, the legal framework is more flexible in the English Premier League, resulting in clubs like Manchester City FC being owned by Arab oil sheiks. A similar example can be found in France, where Qatar Sports Investments, a subsidiary of Qatar Investment Authority, bought French club Paris Saint-Germain in 2011. In contrast to England and France, the clubs and by extension the fans in Germany hold a majority of their own voting rights. Furthermore, Germany's unique history as a nation consisting of a dozen small states that were united into one nation has influenced people's feelings of belonging (more regional than national), especially in the realm of soccer. Podolski and Boateng's regional identifications, with Cologne and Berlin respectively, surpasses their feelings of national belonging, reflecting the German tradition of identifying with a certain region rather the federal state. They use this identification as a means to brand their respective hometowns as international, inclusive cities.

Moreover, the current national players do not possess the same cultural importance as soccer celebrities like *Schweini* and *Poldi* who had significance for the cultural mainstream in 2006. The advertising strategists in the DFB have tried to counteract the increasing disinterest in the national team by renaming the team "Die Mannschaft" (the team) in 2015. The name was registered with the German Patent and Trademark Office in that same year. It is not unusual to have a nickname for a team, such as the "The Three Lions" for the English team or "Seleção" for Brazil. The German nickname emphasizes Germany's sense of unity, a utopian ideal that the national team still tries to uphold. The

name change was supposed to reactivate the cheerful national pride that became visible on the *Fanmeilen* and even in everyday life during the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

The fans and supporters of the German national team, though, appear to be tired of German soccer scandals, bribes, and tax incidents that have come to light in recent years. In 2015, the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* reported that the 2006 World Cup was presumably bought with the help of then-Adidas CEO Robert Louis-Dreyfus.⁶²⁹ Four years later, it was discovered that DFB President Reinhard Grindel, accepted a watch as a gift from a Ukrainian official, which ended his reign as president. In 2020, German prosecutors searched DFB offices in five states due to tax fraud investigations. The most recent scandal involves DFB president Fritz Keller, who had to resign in 2021 after comparing DFB vice president Rainer Koch to former Nazi judge Roland Freisler at a presidium meeting.

The 2006 World Cup brought not only the *Sommermärchen* scandal to light but exposed other problem areas, such as infrastructure, accommodations, and restaurants in former East Germany. Despite the DFB's attempt to balance the number of 2006 World Cup match venues between Eastern and Western Germany, Leipzig was the only former GDR city in the 2006 World Cup tournament, as opposed to eleven cities in former West Germany (Hamburg, Berlin, Hanover, Nuremberg, Munich, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Kaiserslautern, Cologne, Dortmund, and Gelsenkirchen). These issues fit into the broader problems of German reunification and resentment that many East Germans have.

⁶²⁹ The DFB denies the allegations but in November 2015, then DFB president Wolfgang Niersbach resigned due to questions regarding the controversial payment to the FIFA in 2005. FIFA's ethics judges as well as the Swiss federal criminal court closed a bribery investigation against Franz Beckenbauer, the 2006 committee chair, and other committee members because the statute of limitations expired.

Leipzig and its famous club, RB Leipzig, has made headlines in the last few years. The controversial East German club gained fast promotion to the *Bundesliga* in 2016. This was possible due to the involvement of the Austrian energy drink company Red Bull. Clubs like RB Leipzig⁶³⁰ and TSG 1899 Hoffenheim represent the ongoing battle between fan-controlled clubs and global, commercialized teams. RB Leipzig as well as the TSG exploited a loophole in the DFL's 50+1 rule. Unlike other soccer leagues (e.g., Premier League) or sports leagues (e.g., NFL), in Germany, the majority of every soccer club must be owned by the club itself. This rule is colloquially known as 50+1 (for 50 percent plus 1 share).⁶³¹ Thereby, the clubs create an environment of fan engagement and participation. TSG Hoffenheim investor Dietmar Hopp exploited a loophole in the DFL by-laws when he invested millions of Euros for decades into the team, allowing him to take full control of the TSG Hoffenheim. Red Bull also pumped millions into RB Leipzig since its establishment in 2009, however, they control the club by limiting the membership to just twenty-one members. Those people, whose identities are unknown but are thought to have links to Red Bull, shape RB Leipzig. Clubs created by investors are rejected by most German fans.

The commercialization of soccer is the number one cause for Germany's indifference toward to the national team, according to a representative survey conducted

⁶³⁰ The team was not permitted to call itself "Red Bull" and is therefore named "RasenBallSport" instead.

⁶³¹ Two exceptions to this rule are Bayer Leverkusen and VfL Wolfsburg. The former was founded by employees of the German pharmaceutical company Bayer in 1904. VfL Wolfsburg was founded as the team of the German car company Volkswagen. Both companies invested for more than twenty years in those clubs and therefore could apply for an exemption from the 50+1 rule.

by the German news portal *T-Online*. Other reasons include unsympathetic DFB leadership and an unattractive style of play.⁶³² The DFB has lost contact with its fans, creating a distance between the national team and their supporters. Debates about excesses in professional soccer, which are expressed not least in exorbitant transfer fees, increased ticket prices, and player salaries, worry fans. For many, the association's purpose of supporting soccer at the grassroots level and thus promoting social cohesion is in doubt. This became particularly visible during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adolescents and children were not allowed to train, while the professionals played in empty stadiums. The *Bundesliga* was the first major sports league in the world to resume play in May 2020. The players were told to play in an empty stadium when the rest of the world still struggled with the effects of COVID-19.⁶³³ The media criticized the *Bundesliga* and the national team for their participation in various soccer tournaments in 2020 and 2021. Soccer has become a commercial spectacle rather than a place of meaning for the fans.

Those fans or “consumers” are now not only found in the stadiums but also online. Soccer players nowadays primarily connect with their fans through social media, sharing frequent updates about their inner lives. To target as many fans as possible, the soccer celebrities communicate with their fans in English. Whereas Özil fully embraces his native languages (Turkish and German) from the beginning of his social media career, Podolski

⁶³² Noah Platschko, “Das Nationalmannschafts-Dilemma,” *T-Online*, November 12, 2020, https://www.t-online.de/sport/fussball/id_88916932/nationalmannschaft-in-der-image-krise-drei-gruende-fuer-das-dfb-dilemma-.html.

⁶³³ Some soccer clubs such as FC Bayern München donated the money to amateur soccer clubs in Bavaria as way to support them during the pandemic.

and Boateng seem to post in different languages for mostly marketing reasons.⁶³⁴ Fans replicate and circulate soccer celebrity discourse by posting pictures of the athletes or commenting on social media. Online platforms open up new spaces for female participation in soccer culture. While the majority of stadium fans are still male, Facebook and other social media platforms create opportunities for women to express their player/team support. In 2022, the Dutch brewing company Heineken started a new campaign, which celebrated female soccer fans enjoying soccer in bars with a glass of Heineken, or even during physical intimacy.⁶³⁵ The internet has the possibility of supporting women and girls around the world in their soccer fandom. However, this new online environment also gives room to Facebook trolls. The latter use social media to attack celebrities, provoke discussion, and discriminate.

Internet culture has blurred the lines between fan-consumers and celebrity-producers, leading to increased online abuse and fan expectations regarding bi-directional communication and authenticity. Players cater to the expectations of male and female fans but also must comply with the expectations of sponsors (team and personal). Özil experienced first-hand the repercussion players have to face if they do not comply with team sponsors. In 2019, Özil, then playing for Arsenal, publicly criticized China for the

⁶³⁴ Even though there are no public commentaries about Podolski, Boateng, and Özil's German language mastery in the materials that were available to me, learning a German dialect, as both Podolski and Boateng did, rather than or in addition to Standard German, earns one a higher recognition. In times of globalization, when English is the common denominator for communication, dialects and regionality can offer a much-needed reprieve. Language can express a form of loyalty for a region or a club that contributes to the acceptance of people *mit Migrationshintergrund*.

⁶³⁵ Heineken became a partner of both the UEFA Women's Champions League and the UEFA Women's EURO in 2021. Heineken, "Heineken | Cheers to All Fans," YouTube, May 2, 2022, video, 01:24, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0m85z3mzVxQ>.

persecution of the ethnic Uyghur Turkophone, a Muslim minority which has been kept segregated in concentration camps since 2009. The Chinese channels CCTV and PP Sports, which broadcast the Premier League, refused to air an Arsenal match after Özil's tweet. When the matches were broadcast again, the commentators did not mention Özil's name during the entire match. His actions also had personal repercussions, namely the cancellation of Özil from the Pro Evolution Soccer (PES) 2020 game in the Chinese market.

Social, commercial, and technological changes contribute to a new definition of what it means to be an athlete in the twenty-first century. Founding businesses, creating foundations, and writing books seems to be the normal instead of the exception nowadays. While (hyper)masculine traits are still regarded as the epitome of athleticism, discussions of gender and sexuality in society have changed the landscape of soccer celebrity marketing, making it acceptable to engage in activities considered more feminine (e.g., following fashion trends). Soccer celebrities like David Beckham became fashion icons and role models for consumers around the world, giving rise to metrosexual and spornosexual men.

Athletes are now expected to express their opinions about political, social, and humanitarian issues. For decades, celebrities have endorsed political candidates, and now this phenomenon can also be seen in the German soccer culture, as seen with Özil's most recent endorsement of German politician Todenhöfer and Özil's involvement with Erdoğan. Even though the former Chancellor Angela Merkel's appearance in the documentary *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* (2006) makes it seem like politics and

sports are separate, soccer has also been used for fake political debates, as the Gauland and Boateng incident and the Qatar World Cup in 2022 show. Qatar's controversial hosting sparked scrutiny of its treatment of women, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and low-paid migrant workers, who helped to build the million-dollar buildings and stadiums. FIFA asked the national teams ahead of the 2022 World Cup to focus on soccer and not politics, cautioning countries against serving as moral role models.

Today, it seems that discussions of inclusivity, diversity, and belonging have become normalized in German soccer. Under coach Joachim Löw, who took over from Jürgen Klinsmann in 2006, the national soccer team has become even more diverse, nominating players such as Özil and Boateng for the World Cup in 2010. Löw's efforts for integration, on and off the pitch, led him to be honored with the 2016 Bambi award for integration, thereby following in Özil's footsteps. The former national head coach has demonstrated with the German national soccer team what successful integration looks like. While media coverage surrounding the 2010 World Cup emphasized the multiethnic character of the German team, the most recent major soccer tournament, the 2022 World Cup in Qatar,⁶³⁶ did not focus on the diversity of Germany's national soccer team or blame individual players for not advancing to the knockout stage, as it happened in 2018.

The aim of this dissertation was to connect the emergence of celebrity culture and soccer players *mit Migrationshintergrund*, in order to demonstrate that "Germanness," besides formal citizenship, is not only tied to loyalty and adherence to the expectations of

⁶³⁶ The German squad included nine players *mit Migrationshintergrund*: Youssoufa Moukoko, Karim Adeyemi, Jamal Musiala, Leroy Sané, İlkay Gündoğan, Serge Gnabry, Antonio Rüdiger, Thilo Kehrer, and Armel Bella Kotchap.

the dominant culture but also contingent upon the person's own self-identification. By studying the cinematic portrayal of soccer in German films, tracing the history of migration in German soccer and society, and analyzing the depiction of soccer players *mit Migrationshintergrund* in social media, sports media, fan forums, and (auto)biographies through a class, race, and masculinity lens, I have demonstrated the significance of belonging and ethnicity in German soccer and culture in the twentieth and twenty-first century. It seems that if a person does not meet the expectations of the dominant culture (masculinity, race, religion) and/or passes the loyalty test, one can either retreat to their ethnic roots (Özil) or adapt a different belonging that can express itself in a regional (Podolski) or transnational form of belonging (Boateng). In the end, soccer has become irrelevant to the maintenance of the players' celebrity status. As soon as the players' brands were established, the athlete's celebrity status was no longer dependent on soccer; however, to achieve this, excellent performance on the soccer field as well as a good marketing strategy off the pitch were both necessary. Questions of belonging should be analyzed on all levels of society (individual, collective, and institutions) as well as include not only an outsider but also an insider perspective.

Glossary

Ausländergesetz: a law first introduced in 1965, ten years after the beginning of the guest worker program. The law defines who is not considered German. It was revised in 1990 and replaced by the *Aufenthaltsgesetz* in 2005.

Bundesliga: the top professional association football league in Germany, founded in 1963.

Deutsche Islam Konferenz: Since 2006, federal, state, and local authorities have engaged in dialogues with the Muslim population to improve the participation and recognition of Muslims in Germany.

Gastarbeiterprogramm: a program in West Germany between 1955 and 1973, seeking temporary migrants to work. West Germany signed bilateral recruitment agreements with Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, South Korea, Portugal, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia. And East Germany signed them with other countries, such as Mozambique and Vietnam.

individual assimilation: According to Hartmut Esser, *individual assimilation* is integration in the host society.

individual segmentation: According to Hartmut Esser, *individual segmentation* is integration within the ethnic group.

Integrationsgipfel: Since 2006, representatives from migrant associations, politics, trade unions, sports associations, and media meet at a conference to discuss problems of migrant integration in Germany.

ius sanguinis: a principle of nationality law which determines citizenship based on the nationality or ethnicity of one or both parents. In the German case, the 1913 concept ties the German Volk together by blood descent.

ius soli: also referred to as birthright citizenship since anyone born in the territory has the right to that nationality.

Leitkultur: a German concept (leading or guiding culture), which goes back to the idea that a homogenous, territorial bound entity exists that has certain characteristics, values and practices.

marginality: According to Hartmut Esser, *marginality* means no integration.

microcensus: an annual population survey of 1 percent of German households conducted since 1957.

mit Migrationshintergrund: A statistical category for all people who do not have German citizenship by birth or who have at least one parent to whom this applies.

moral citizenship: Willem Schinkel's notion of moral citizenship addresses the citizens' expectation to adhere to practices from the dominant culture and show their loyalty to the host country.

multiple inclusion: According to sociologist Hartmut Esser, *inclusion* means integration in the host country and country of origin.

Optionspflicht: It used to be a law, making immigrant children born in 2000 or after to choose between their second and German citizenship. They had to renounce their second citizenship by the age of twenty-three or lose their German citizenship. Since 2014, dual citizenships for the second generation has been possible without renouncing any citizenships.

transmigrants: The concept of transmigrants goes back to Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, who define them as individuals who “develop and maintain multiple

relations – organizational, religious, and political – that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously.”

Zuwanderungsgesetz: a law with which the immigration law in reunified Germany was redesigned in 2005, which made it possible for highly skilled workers to permanently stay in Germany.

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