A tragic hero? An exploration of Diego Maradona’s stardom through national and local patriotism

Conference or Workshop Item

How to cite:

© 2022 The Author

[Creative Commons License]

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Version: Version of Record

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online’s data policy on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.
A tragic hero? An exploration of Diego Maradona’s stardom through national and local patriotism

Steph Doehler
Open University
@StephDoehler_OU
Introduction

- Frequently hailed as the greatest footballer of all time
- The heroic narrative is articulated around the individual who stands above others based on their own merits (Alabarces and Rodríguez, 2007).
- A life was tainted with scandal through volatile actions and statements.
- This paper will explore the hero perspective through national and local patriotism, considering the inter(national) rivalries.
Karpman drama triangle

- Social model of human interaction – highlights type of destructive interaction that can occur among people in conflict.
- Never previously been applied to an individual.
- Models the connection between personal responsibility and the power in conflicts, and the destructive and shifting roles people play.
- Three faces of drama.
# The Hero

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Napoli</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Argentina’s best and most emblematic ambassador.  
- Grew up in a violent slum on the outskirts of Buenos Aires.  
- Imagery – the *pibe* and *potrero* are powerful concepts and symbols of Argentinian football. Added legitimizing value to Argentinian soccer itself.  
- Both the product and producer of national ideology.  
- Epitomised by 1986 World Cup victory. | - Reproduced the social phenomenon that had made him a hero in Argentina.  
- Long seen as the Cinderella of a so-called unified Italy.  
- The stigmatization presented an ideal opportunity for the staging of Maradona’s exclusionary/inclusionary politics.  
- The transfer of regional struggles onto a football pitch creates a dimension where territory, identity, physical belonging and violence are represented along clear ideological lines. |
## The Villain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>England</th>
<th>Northern Italy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sport as a surrogate for warfare.</td>
<td>• North-south divide represented across the Italian football landscape with the northern powerhouses of Milan, Juventus, Roma and Inter having a stranglehold on the Scudetto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasised by England vs Argentina in 1986.</td>
<td>• Footage/photos of with mafia, Camorra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clash of styles – British against Criollo</td>
<td>• Emphasised by Italia ‘90.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Moral stance against Argentina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Victim

• Most contentious aspect of the drama triangle.
• Fame came young and with it a adoration that set in motion a range of consequences.
• Unequivocally ‘Argentinian’, emphasising the emotional influence he experienced in Argentina.
• Stopped having restrictions imposed upon him from adolescence.
• Self-assurance and dominance became part of his mentality - the personality became bigger than the person.
• “His celebrity was not separate from his private self – he was achingly human in every way, yet a superstar at all times,” (Mora y Araujo, 2020).
Conclusion

- “Maradona was worshiped not only for his prodigious juggling but also because he was a dirty, sinful god, the most human of gods,” Galeano (2017)
- The real Maradona proves to be a complex backdrop to the struggle over his meaning.
- Hero or anti-hero? Positive or negative energy?
Thank you

✉️ Steph.Doehler@open.ac.uk

🔗 @StephDoehler_OU