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Introduction

Over the period of a few short weeks in 2010 Australian media coverage and public discussion was dominated by news of a 'sex scandal' involving two high-profile celebrities--Lara Bingle (model and then fiancee of the vice-captain of the Australian cricket team Michael Clarke), and the Australian rules football 'bad boy' Brendan Fevola. The scandal began with the publication of a pixelated photograph in the popular Australian women's magazine, Woman's Day, of a naked and apparently unconsenting Bingle in the shower, which was allegedly taken by Fevola during a brief affair years previously and distributed via his mobile phone. Fevola was married at the time of the affair and when the image subsequently went viral. As is the nature of celebrity scandal, this one held the public's interest for a short time before being superseded by another of its kind, yet the explosion of media commentary and debate it generated raises a number of persistent issues regarding gender, sexuality, celebrity and sport in Australia as they circulate around heterosexuality and white privilege.

This article examines the constructions of women's sexuality, gender and celebrity scandal in mainstream media coverage of this event. There is little doubt that the pervasive, instant and wide-reaching nature of digital communication technologies, coupled with the potent mixture of celebrity, nudity and infidelity, precipitated the mainstream media production of the Bingle-Fevola scandal. In turning our attention toward the Australian news media's discursive constructions of Bingle's sexual behaviour, we begin to map the ways in which celebrity scandals in the mainstream media provoke wider debate about 'gender appropriate' conduct (sexual and otherwise). What constitutes a 'legitimate' enactment of femininity or masculinity is contestable, as evidenced by the variety of responses to the scandal offered by media commentators, which ranged from demonising Bingle to promoting her as a feminist icon, as well as characterising her ex-fiance Clark as both effeminate and manly. This coexistence of feminist and anti-feminist themes in mainstream representational and discursive practice is indicative of a contemporary postfeminist media climate, as identified by Rosalind Gill (Gill 2007b: 149). It is against this backdrop that we situate our analysis, coming to an agreement with sociologist Joshua Gamson (2001, p. 158) that "contemporary sex scandals are shocking less for the sexual behaviours involved than for the ways they replay stock female roles that 'enlightened' societies often claim to have outgrown."

Scandal, Media and Celebrity

'Scandal' is a term that is often liberally used in media coverage--largely due to the fact that, in spite of the disapproval of "media scholars and columnists" (Bird 1997, p. 99) society likes scandal (sex scandals possess particular appeal) and enjoys being privy to the exposed disparities between the public and private lives of those involved (Thompson 1997, p. 55). By consequence, media organisations thrive off "selling scandal" and in many instances, fuel and shape the scandal story (Thompson 1997, p. 49). According to social theorist John Thompson, scandal involves the transgression of "certain values, norms or moral codes" (1997, p. 39). Such a transgression must be known to others, some of whom may believe it is "morally discreditable" (Thompson 1997, p. 43) and feel compelled to express these views publicly (through newspaper articles, for instance), and in the process espouse and reaffirm particular cultural values and socially prescribed norms. What is deemed to be scandalous, however, is not timeless--rather,
it is "deeply rooted in culturally and historically-specific ideas about how individuals are expected to behave" (Lumby 1999, p. 175).

Being in the public eye, celebrities are especially susceptible to being the subject of scandal (Thompson 1997, p. 40), with the pervasiveness of celebrity stories in the contemporary media increasing dramatically in recent years (Lumby 1999, p. 108; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, p. 2). Contemporary celebrities have been defined as "anyone the public is interested in" (Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, p. 9)--regardless of any particular skills or achievements (Evans 2005, p. 15)--and tend to have emerged from the "sports or entertainment industries" (Turner 2010, p. 310). Given the increasing commercialisation and globalisation of sport (Albury and Lumby 2010, p. 289), sportsmen are particularly popular subjects for media coverage, especially if it involves the exposure and discussion of "scandalous private behaviours" (Albury and Lumby 2010, p. 286). As cultural commentator David Rowe (2006, p. 18) states, "enormous cultural visibility, rich rewards, powerful fan passions and media hunger for copy inevitably bring the searchlight into sport's hidden places." Indeed, The Age sports journalist Jake Niall (cited in Albury and Lumby 2010, p. 288) argues that the biggest sport stories no longer even concern sport, but sex, drugs or gambling scandals.

In recent years, a proliferation in the number of sexual misdemeanours (including allegations of gang rape and sexual assault) committed by international and domestic sportsmen have been the subject of considerable media speculation and interest (Benedict 1997; Coad 2008; Rowe 2006; Waterhouse-Watson 2011 & 2012), tarnishing the reputations of individuals and sporting codes and damaging the traditional public image of male athletes as idealised role models (Messner and Sabo 1994, p. 33; Rowe 2006, p. 16). What distinguishes the Bingle-Fevola incident from other sport sex scandals is that consent in sexual relations is not the primary issue, but rather the unconsensual capturing and distribution of a nude photograph. As one half of Australia's answer to "Posh 'n' Becks" (Maley 2010, np)--as internationally famous soccer star, David Beckham and his wife, former 'Spice Girl' Victoria are widely known--the publication of a nude, albeit pixellated, photograph of Lara Bingle was bound to be scandalous.

The photograph, published in the March 2010 edition of Woman's Day, shows Bingle naked in the shower, trying to cover herself with her hand (Byrne 2010, np) and wearing an expression that indicates that the photograph was taken against her wishes. The scandal "divided the nation" according to the Herald Sun (Langmaid 2010, np). However, following a paid interview with Woman's Day to discuss her plight, public support for Bingle eroded (Penberthy 2010, np). The interview also, apparently, lost her the support of her fiance, Michael Clarke, who flew back from New Zealand (where he was on tour with the Australian cricket team) and incited criticism from cricket commentators in the process. Ultimately, the media "whirlwind" ended with the announcement that Clarke and Bingle had ended their engagement (Benns & Marcus 2010, np).

Method

This paper employs discourse analysis to explore articles generated in response to the scandal by the Australia's major, mainstream newspapers that are either owned by the traditionally conservative News Limited or its liberal rival, Fairfax. The coverage afforded to this scandal by both tabloid and broadsheet publications can be seen as further evidence of the media's obsession with "fame, celebrity, public confession and scandal" (Lumby 1999, p. xi) and is indicative of the transformation of traditional news formats (including sports news) to encompass gossip, celebrity and lifestyle entertainment genres (Rowe 2004, Wenner 1998). The articles selected for analysis date from March 2, 2010 until March 23, 2010--a period that spans the appearance of the compromising photograph of Bingle in Woman's Day and the subsequent media coverage of the scandal. Nineteen articles published by mainstream Australian newspapers were deemed relevant for this paper. In order for an article to be considered relevant, the Bingle-Fevola scandal had to inform the main focus of the article. For this reason stories concerning the performance of Bingle's cricketer fiance were included but articles in which the scandal was mentioned.
only in passing were excluded. The news stories for analysis were obtained from the Factiva database or the publications' websites. Eighteen articles were analysed, with the vast majority of the articles being sourced from Fairfax's The Sydney Morning Herald and its Melbourne counterpart The Age, in addition to material from News Limited's tabloids The Daily Telegraph and Herald Sun (from Sydney and Melbourne respectively, Australia's two largest cities) and the national broadsheet, The Australian. In addition, two Herald Sun articles were utilised to provide additional background information on the scandal.

Media coverage of this scandal was chosen as the primary site of analysis because the "media has become the key site for defining codes of sexual conduct" (McRobbie 2004, p. 258), hence can illuminate broader public perceptions of the kinds of gender enactments that are culturally endorsed and/or demonised in specific socio-cultural contexts. Written content of the articles forms the focus of this critique and we employ academic John E. Richardson's approach to discourse analysis—the "functionalist approach to discourse" (2007, p. 24), which makes the assumption that language is active. In order to properly interpret an article that, for instance, makes disparaging comments about Lara Bingle's private life, it is necessary to work out what the writer is "doing through discourse" (Richardson 2007, p. 24) and therefore, "how this 'doing' is linked to wider inter-personal, institutional, socio-cultural and material contexts" (Richardson 2007, p. 24).

Object-ions in the Press

Coverage of the scandal pivoted on whether the publication of a questionably obtained, unconsensual nude photograph is justifiable. According to Woman's Day editor, Fiona Connolly (cited in Hunter 2010, np), the photograph had been "doing the rounds" among cricketers and footballers "for a long time." Connolly (cited in Hunter 2010, np) states that the photograph "was just about to be published by newspapers" and subsequently appeared on "many a website." These comments suggest that Connolly is unfazed by Bingle's inevitable humiliation and embarrassment and that it is perfectly acceptable to objectify a public figure. As commentator Sally Robbins (2010, np) of The Sydney Morning Herald states, one "would have thought that Woman's Day and Fiona Connolly would have been looking out for the interests of the woman rather than the man in the Bingle/Fevola dynamic." Instead, she suggests that Connolly's decision to publish the photograph was motivated by the fact that "Lara Bingle is beautiful and in the public interest so she sells magazines" (Robbins 2010, np).

Such commentary not only upholds a narrow, conservative notion of what is considered beautiful, but also suggests that Bingle's white, hetero-appealing beauty provides her with the privileged access to publicity that makes her scandal newsworthy within the media. What these narratives imply is that the ongoing benefits Bingle receives from celebrity-hood, along with the immediate boost to her media profile as a result of the incident, nullify any rights she might have to privacy or consent, lending further credence to the argument for publication. Furthermore, Connolly's comments and Woman's Day's decision to publish the photograph (originally captured on Fevola's mobile phone) supports the notion that it is commonly women who bear the social stigma in the phenomenon of 'sexting', which involves the distribution of sexually explicit photos of oneself or others via text message (Toffoletti 2010, np). Often with little control over the production, dissemination and publication of compromising photos taken by mobile cameras, women (like Bingle) are not only objectified as a result of the circulation of such images but also 'pay the price' for their unwitting involvement through the judgement and condemnation that ensues from the scandal.

Amidst claims that the circulation of a nude image of Bingle is justifiable due to her female celebrity 'object-status' emerged critiques of this position in several newspaper articles. Robbins, for example, is critical of the notion that, because Bingle had previously posed in "semi-nude photos as a bikini model" (Robbins 2010, np), she is fair game. The photograph of Bingle in the shower, Robbins notes, "was taken and distributed without her consent, which is one of the worst forms of harassment and bullying, and an
unforgivable breach of privacy." Herald Sun social commentator Susie O'Brien (2010, np) also supports this view, stating that "like her or not, Bingle has a right to choose how we see her." Journalist Jacqueline Maley (2010, np) of The Sydney Morning Herald constructs the crime that has been committed against Bingle almost as if she has been raped, stating that "the argument that because she consented once, she loses all right to refuse in the future, well, nobody still thinks like that, do they?" Given the actions of Woman's Day, it is possible that such theorising still stands. Whilst the unauthorised publication of photographs by newspapers is nothing new, these journalists appear to be particularly concerned with the implication that Bingle's career choice somehow renders her need to consent to such photographs, their distribution and her right to privacy obsolete.

It may seem reassuring that some media commentators condemn the insinuation that Bingle's career as a bikini model makes the digital distribution, and eventual publication, of such an intimate photograph justifiable. Nonetheless, the publication of the photograph in Woman's Day exists as a poignant reminder of just how unremarkable the objectification and "sexualisation of women's bodies in public space" (Gill 2007a, p. 1) by a range of media outlets has become in a postfeminist age (Gill 2009). The condemnation of the objectification and sexualisation of women in popular culture has not resulted in the diminishment of such imagery, or the persistent gender ideologies that sustain them. Fuelled, in part, by a cultural obsession with celebrity, gender articulations that emphasise the sexualisation of women's bodies and sexual difference appear to circulate with as much, if not more, vigour that ever before in the western mediasphere (Gill 2007b, 149).

Sexual Reputations

Bingle is commonly constructed as a sexually active subject in media reports of the scandal. Caroline Marcus (2010, np) of The Sydney Morning Herald lists several of Bingle's alleged suitors such as "Kings Cross identity John Ibrahim," "former fling Craig Wing" as well as her "many [emphasis added] friends in the surfing world," having been romantically "linked to at least two--Taj Burrow and Kai Otton." By focusing on Bingle's relationship history, Marcus discursively constructs Bingle as promiscuous and therefore salaciously newsworthy. It is also implied that she is a woman who fails to meet the standards and expectations for female behaviour appropriate to her class and race. In scrutinising Bingle's behaviour and sexual past, such articles can be seen to perpetuate what social commentator Emily Maguire identifies as society's "hatred and disgust for the promiscuous woman" (Maguire 2008, p. 24). This is despite the popular belief that young, western women are sexually liberated, empowered and autonomous (Gill 2007b, Walter 2010). From the accounts offered here, it would appear that women continue to be judged according to sexual standards in a way that men are not.

Another article builds on this condemnation by constructing Bingle as sexually forward. It states that:

Former Hawthorn legend Dermott Brereton said he told [Bingle] that Fevola was married before they embarked on their affair. Rumours have swirled around Bingle all week. Her friendship with British DJ and neighbour Carl Kennedy was thrust into the spotlight after she kicked in his door a week ago (Benns & Marcus 2010, np).

This article presents Bingle as being aggressive in her pursuit of sexual conquests by allegedly pursuing the married Fevola and even kicking down a door to get to a man that she desires. Bingle's behaviour can be seen as subverting a sexual script in which women are expected to play the role of passive object to the active, male, sexual agent (Travis, McGinnis & Bardari 2007, p. 297-298, Messner and Sabo 1994, p. 38). Hence women like Lara Bingle, according to academics Shari L. Dworkin and Faye Linda Wachs (cited in Toffoletti 2007, p. 433), are seen as being "responsible for tempting male sports stars into promiscuity." Furthermore, given the key role that heterosexuality plays in the definition and performance of sporting masculinity, it would be considered abnormal for AFL footballer Fevola to refuse Bingle's advances (Mewett & Toffoletti 2008, p. 174). In contrast, the sexually aggressive female is regarded as a dangerous
figure, due to the fact that she transgresses the boundaries of what is deemed appropriate sexual conduct for white, middle-class women, which academics Lisa Disch and Mary Jo Kane define as being "receptive and deferential to male power" (cited in Mewett & Toffoletti 2008, p. 170).

Coverage of the scandal precipitated dialogue and debate about the problematic nature of the gender myths and stereotypes about female sexuality circulating in media accounts. A number of reports emerged that questioned the characterization of Bingle's sexual demeanour as exceeding the limits of what might be considered acceptable for women of her class and race background. The Daily Telegraph journalist Claire Harvey (2010, np) asks, "Ever heard anyone whispering about how ... footballers are total man-whores, shagging their way around Bondi? No, because nobody talks about male sexuality like that." Other commentators condemn the blame afforded to Bingle for Fevola's adultery. As The Age's chief football writer Caroline Wilson (2010, np) points out, "in 2006, [Fevola] certainly didn't act like his marriage meant very much," a view supported by The Age commentator Miranda Devine (2010, np) who reminds readers that it was Fevola "with the wife and kids," not single Bingle. As author and The Age commentator John Birmingham (2010, np) comments, "why didn't someone tell Brendan Fevola that Brendan Fevola was married?" but then reminds readers that as Fevola is a sportsman then "he gets a free pass" (Birmingham 2010, np). The Daily Telegraph's Sarrah Le Marquand (2010, np) takes a similar moral position arguing that, "while Bingle was guilty of being young and foolish, it was Fevola alone who reneged on his wedding vows" (2010, np). These articles ignore the issues surrounding the publication of the photograph and instead draw attention to the personal circumstances of those primarily involved--Bingle and Fevola. While articles that focus on Bingle's alleged promiscuity and lack of sexual passivity allude to the sexual double standard that still exists in contemporary Australian society, other articles have criticised this state of affairs condemning the notion that women are responsible for male promiscuity and more specifically, that Bingle is to blame for Fevola's adultery. In the debate emerging from the reporting of the scandal, we identify the potential of public discourse to challenge long-held social ideals whereby women are stigmatised "for any hint of their sexuality" (Wolf 1998, p. 240).

Femininity and Masculinity on Trial

Michael Clarke's decision to return to Australia following his fiancee's paid magazine interview--despite being on tour in New Zealand--attracted the criticism of Australian cricket commentators who, through various articles, upheld hegemonic ideals of what it means to be a man and a woman in contemporary Australian society. The Age's cricket commentator at the time of the scandal, Peter Roebuck, in his article 'Time for Clarke to decide on his career path,' casts Clark as an emasculated figure. Roebuck (2010, np) compares Clarke to Mark Antony--the Roman warlord whose romantic and political alliance with Cleopatra ended in his downfall--stating that "obsession can be a man's undoing." In this scenario Bingle is Cleopatra, the beautiful, albeit ultimately dangerous, woman who matched (if not superseded) Antony in terms of power and influence. Narratives of the sportman's potential demise at the hands of an attractive woman are nothing new, as demonstrated in analyses of media accounts of male sporting celebrities like golfer Tiger Woods, footballer David Beckham and cricketer Brian Lara (Rowe 2010, Whannel 2001). Rowe argues that unless women conform to the nurturing role of compliant wife and mother, they are cast within media discourse as seducers and distracters who threaten to jeopardise the sportsman's on-field performance (Rowe 2010, p.69). Bingle, as a celebrity competitor to Clark for the media spotlight, presents a particular threat to a gender order predicated on masculine authority. Like Cleopatra and Victoria Beckham, Bingle's fame rivals that of her ex-partner. Such a union, as Rowe explains,

... disturbs the conventional conjugal order wherein the riches garnered by the male sports star (the vast gender majority of highly renumerated athletes) reproduces the traditionalist male breadwinner/female homemaker structure that has been significantly eroded in the wider world. The question of 'who rules the hearth and home?' is raised where superior male earning power and prestige cannot be easily established (Rowe 2010, pp.71-2).
In partnering with a woman whose celebrity status threatens to undermine the primacy of male sporting endeavours, Clarke's commitment to the Australian cricket team is questioned. As Roebuck (2010, np) states, "it is no small thing for a vice-captain to walk out on a team at any stage." In his opinion, returning home is only considered appropriate when a player hears some "dreadful news of a family loss, impending or completed" (Roebuck 2010, np). Bingle's situation, in Roebuck's (2010, np) view, was "bad news," yet "pertained to disarray as opposed to crisis." Clarke is constructed as having over-reacted by returning home and abandoning his responsibilities--compromising his position as a traditional exemplar of hegemonic masculinity in the process. Hence, Roebuck (2010, np) concludes that Cricket Australia will now be "reluctant to put the national team completely in his hands." Clarke is perceived as being "a little off track" (Roebuck 2010, np) and as a result, is constructed as failing to embody the single-mindedness valorised in the male sporting star, hence failing to carry out his 'proper' duties as the vice-captain of the Australian cricket team.

An article by The Age journalist Will Swanton heavily employs the views of respected Australian cricket icons--former Test captain, Ian Chappell and former Test player, Mark Waugh--and in doing so, Clarke's 'difference' to past occupants of the captaincy is unfavourably emphasised. Chappell supports the view that Clarke will have duties to team and country--"to be there all the time" (cited in Swanton 2010, np) as the future captain of the Australian cricket team. Chappell states that there have "always [been] very durable guys as captains, [who are there] all the time" (cited in Swanton 2010, np). By returning home, Clarke is constructed as not robust, or masculine, enough to be a suitable candidate for the captaincy of the team--a role that is considered by some to be "the most important job [in Australia] after the prime ministership" (Smith 2009, np). Waugh is critical of the undesirable fact that Clarke's "personal life has encroached on his cricket" (cited in Swanton 2010, np). As a result, Clarke, who, as the Australian Cricket Captain, can be regarded as an "exemplar of masculinity" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p. 846), is seen as failing to uphold what is deemed to be a key feature of traditional masculinity--to be a "Sturdy Oak" (Kimmel 2004, np). According to sociologist Michael Kimmel (2004, np), what has "traditionally made men reliable in a crisis" has also, by consequence, made them emotionally unavailable to others, such as a partner like Bingle. Waugh also comments that hopefully this dereliction of duty is a "oneoff" (cited in Swanton 2010, np). He also states that "Michael would like to lead a much quieter life" (cited in Swanton 2010, np), implying that Clarke is also of the opinion that Bingle is failing to embody the model of "emphasised femininity" (1) (Connell, 1987, p. 187) expected of the partner (and future wife) of an Australian cricketer. Academics Ben Clayton and John Harris (2004, p. 332), in relation to English soccer players, argue that "a wife's role ... is established as being entirely functional--domestic, supportive and calming." When this is not the case, "media discourse tends to degrade and emasculate the player" (Clayton & Harris 2004, p. 332). Such a trend is clearly evident in the views of Roebuck, Chappell and Waugh, who construct Clarke as an emasculated and irresponsible figure, who, by returning to Australia for the sake of his fiancee, has not only failed as a cricketer, but as a man.

Roebuck's article upholds the expectation that the wives and girlfriends of sportsmen, or WAGS as they are popularly known, ideally should be "passive, supportive [and] decorative" (Wedgwood 2008, p.5). This is achieved through the sports writer's characterization of Bingle as "a beautiful young woman ... [However] restaurateurs complain about her manners and the poor company she keeps. Fashionistas talk of her headstrong ways and dubious customs ... She craves attention and courts controversy" (Roebuck 2010, np). By casting Bingle as a beautiful but dangerous and deviant figure, he implies that her behaviour is at odds with the expectations of what a celebrity sportsman's partner should be. While Roebuck attributes to Bingle a key aspect of emphasised femininity--beauty-he simultaneously portrays her as a rude, attention-seeking and classless figure through, for instance, the trivial attention afforded to her alleged behaviour in restaurants. As a result, it is suggested that Bingle is clearly unsuited for the role of cricketer's wife, let alone the wife of the future captain of Australia.

Roebuck (2010, np) goes on to state that:
By and large top-class sportsmen marry young ... [their wives] understood their role [and] did not make any extra demands. Accordingly their partners were able to focus on their cricket.

In contrast to the ideal of a cricketer's wife, this perception of Bingle can be seen as echoing academic Pamela Morokoff's research on American views of female sexual assertiveness; being constructed as "ruinous to men because she leads them away from their self-interests and social obligations" (Morokoff, 2000, p. 302-303). Roebuck's moralising and criticism of Bingle is evidence of what Maguire (2008, p. 40) deems society's "harsh view of women who don't work to obtain the feminine norm." Whilst Bingle is beautiful, she is not regarded as fulfilling the other desirable characteristics of the 'ideal' cricket WAG--to be compliant, dutiful, deferential and supportive.

As identified throughout this article, there is evidence that hegemonic gender ideals are contested through the mechanics of this media scandal. This challenge extends to conceptualisations of sporting masculinity. Far from regarding him as an emasculated figure, for some Clarke is celebrated for his dedication to Bingle: he is "thoughtful, supportive, dedicated and brave"; "just the man" (Seear 2010, np) for the Australian captaincy; a "gentleman, who did the right thing by his fiancee" (Devine 2010, np). These views add weight to the notion that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is in need of revision. As Connell observes, many of these "hegemonic ideals" do not correspond to the "actual personalities of the majority of men" (Connell, 1987, p. 184). Several articles are similarly critical of the notions of "emphasised femininity" (Connell, 1987, p. 187) put forward by the comments of Roebuck, Chappell and Waugh. Writing in The Age, Gideon Haigh (2010, np) condemns Roebuck's endorsement of "the model of a cricket wife [as] a kind of doting but distant pastoral carer who refrained from making any extra demands" and his "dubious and dated moralising." Likewise, Bella Counihan's (2010, np) commentary in The Age, is condemnatory of the "Yokolike blame" afforded to Bingle--that is, the implication that she is "breaking up" the Australian Cricket Team, just as Yoko Ono is popularly blamed for driving apart The Beatles. In addition, The Australian journalist David Penberthy suggests that Bingle now has the potential to be seen as a "new feminist symbol" (2010, np).

It is perhaps unsurprising that the views of some members of the Australian cricket fraternity--whether commentators or past icons--uphold notions of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. Clarke's decision to return to Australia means that his commitment and masculinity is called into question, as is Bingle's suitability to be the 'proper' partner to the future Australian Cricket Captain. What seems more notable, and encouraging, is the presence of articles contesting these narrow gender ideals. Far from being an emasculated figure, Clarke is represented as embodying qualities to which men should aspire. Similarly, some commentators are critical of what they perceive as the dated and unjustified criticism that has been afforded to Bingle and even entertain the prospect of her potential as a new feminist icon.

Conclusion

Scandals, particularly sex scandals, provide a timely reminder of the disparities that continue to exist in wider societal views of gender relations, with the "outbreak" of scandal leading to the espousal and reaffirmation of "certain values, norms or moral codes" (Thompson 1997, p. 39). Analysing media scandal through a gender lens necessarily involves interrogating not only the stereotypes associated with female sexuality in the media, but the contestations of such stereotypes. In mapping the discursive construction of gender in media coverage of the Bingle-Fevola scandal, we acknowledge that a range of complex and contradictory discourses emerge around what constitutes 'acceptable' articulations of femininity and masculinity. Nonetheless, it is possible to put forth some general observations about gender attitudes as they appear in mainstream media accounts of the Bingle-Fevola scandal. Firstly, coverage of this scandal demonstrates that within in increasingly hypersexualised and celebrity-oriented media environment, it is considered appropriate to publish nude photographs of women in the public eye without seeking consent. Secondly, it suggests that sexual double standards remain active in Australian
society, even though they are questioned by some sections of the media. Thirdly, it appears that ideals of emphasised femininity, as well as hegemonic masculinity, remain pervasive, despite challenges to prescriptive gender roles in popular cultural imagery and discourse. Coverage of this scandal also upholds a conservative notion of desirable femininity as white, affluent, glamorous and successful, suggesting those public figures who conform to this 'celebrified' version of femininity in contemporary Australian society are likely to attract media coverage. It could be viewed as encouraging, however, that media accounts, to varying degrees, contest the sexual rhetoric that contributes to the production and maintenance of gender inequality.

In hindsight, the Bingle-Fevola scandal may represent the beginning of a range of scandals of this type, whereby technology, celebrity, sport and sex intersect. In late 2010, a similar scandal erupted (dubbed 'Dikileaks') involving the unconsensual distribution of nude photographs of footballers from the St Kilda Football Club by a seventeen-year-old girl alleging mistreatment (Kissane 2010, np). In regards to the scandal that formed the basis for this article, we identify the media as a potential site for the contestation of longheld gender myths, which include the notion of women as objects, that it is socially unacceptable for women to be sexually active, and that emphasised femininity demands a woman be (amongst other things) passive and undemanding of her male partner. Additionally, as a result of the criticism of some of the coverage, a social re-assessment of what it means to be a man may also take place so that the loyalty of a man such as Michael Clarke towards his fiancee is seen as a desirable trait, rather than a flaw. However, given how deeply ingrained such notions are within society, such a re-assessment could be difficult to achieve.

Endnotes

(1.) R.W. Connell argues that there is no model of femininity that is directly equivalent to hegemonic masculinity (1987, p. 187). This is due to the fact that "all forms of femininity in this society are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men" (p. 186-187). As a result, Connell classifies the femininity that possesses the "dominant cultural and ideological support" (1987, p. 187) of a particular period as "emphasised femininity" (p. 187).

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