

EA Sports Research

Football: An all consuming passion?



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Professor Tim Crabbe
Dr Adam Brown
Dr Gavin Mellor
Dr Kath O'Connor

SUBSTANCE

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The Research Team

Substance is a new, dynamic co-operative social research company with expertise in a range of areas linked to the fields of sport, young people and urban and popular cultures. The company both celebrates the possibilities presented by these fields, whilst also seeking to address the social problems associated with them.

Professor Tim Crabbe is a founder member and Director of Substance and Professor of the Sociology of Sport and Popular Culture at Sheffield Hallam University. He has a long history of association with football and has conducted extensive research into the game. He is co-author of *The Changing Face of Football: Racism, Identity and Multiculture in the English Game* (2001) and *Football and its Communities* (forthcoming) and was co-Director of the Football Foundation funded Football and its Communities research project. He is a lifelong Crystal Palace fan, now beyond disappointment.

Dr Adam Brown is a founder member of Substance and was formerly Deputy Director and Senior Research Fellow at the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University. He has extensive research and policy experience in the areas of sport and popular culture with particular expertise in football and its fans, sport and community. He was editor of *Fanatics: Identity and Fandom in Football* (1998) and co-author of *Not for Sale: Manchester United, Murdoch and the defeat of BskyB* (1999). Adam was a leading member of the Government's Football Task Force and led the Football Foundation funded Football and its Communities research project. He is also an elected member of the Board of Directors of FC United of Manchester.

Dr Gavin Mellor is a founder member of Substance, and formerly Research Fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University. His principal research interests are focused around sport and community, sport and social policy and young people and social exclusion. Gavin was the lead researcher on the Football and its Communities project, and was also a key member of the Positive Futures National Case Study Research team. He has published numerous articles on sport and community, and co-edited *Soccer and Disaster: International Perspectives*, (2005). His forthcoming publications include *English Football and its Communities* and *Football and Community in the Global Context: Studies in Theory and Practice* (both with Routledge).

Dr Kath O'Connor is a founder member and Director of Substance. Kath's main research interests include young people and social exclusion, the crime prevention agenda, multi-agency partnerships and qualitative evaluation methods. Kath is a football widow and a Roy Keane fan.

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Executive Summary

The national game

Football is very much the national game. Whilst around 1 million people actually attend live matches on a regular basis, up to 12 million people play the game and up to 39% of the adult population now follow it in some form. Indeed, football retains an almost unique capacity to capture the public's imagination.

The biggest ever TV audience in the UK was the 32.3 million who watched the 1966 World Cup final, more than that for the iconic funeral of Princess Diana.

The last decade has seen an enormous expansion of television coverage of football which has at once made it more available (it is now on TV in one form or other almost around the clock), whilst often restricting access to those who can afford to pay for subscription television. As such **an unintended consequence of the growth of televised football has been the creation of new communal forms of consumption in pubs and other locations.** During the 2006 World Cup in Germany, over one million Germany fans gathered in public places in Berlin to watch their team's matches, whilst in England over 50,000 watched the England v Paraguay match on the BBC's 'big screens'.

For some, the pub creates its own version of an 'authentic football experience' and it has been estimated that **over 75,000 Manchester United fans watch games from Manchester pubs,** some believing that the atmosphere is now better than being at the ground itself. This is a trend that BSkyB has been quick to exploit through the marketing of pub football. It has also encouraged pubs to market themselves as 'football pubs' (some erecting 'stands' in beer gardens during this summer's World Cup) and has even seen the emergence of 'corporate football pubs' which sell exclusive tickets to the 'match'.

In this report we have categorised the various ways in which supporters connect with the game through television:

Mode of watching	Rationale
Home viewing	For the couch potato it is all about ease of access and comfort, whilst for the 'connoisseur' it is the lack of interruption and clear view of the action that keeps them at home
Family viewing	Where more than one family member is 'into' football the TV provides a connection point and an excuse to get a few friends round
Pub viewing	For the 'non subscribers' the pub provides 'free' access to satellite games as well as the more 'authentic' sense of a 'crowd'
Holiday viewing	On holiday, watching the match in the bar provides a means to 'make friends' and find a 'home from home'
Mass viewing	Saved only for major tournaments and Cup finals the 'big screen' helps cities and nations to come together and imagine a sense of unity and community

Continuity and change

Beyond television many new technological developments are influencing the ways in which supporters connect with the game. **Interactive gaming technologies, SMS text messaging, online betting, internet messageboards, blogs and vlogs have become an increasingly routine part of football fans' rituals.** Gaming technology has provided supporters with new ways of learning about players, teams and aspects of supporter culture as well as enabling aspirational fantasies to be played out. From our analysis, we predict that new football-related games and technologies which encourage the creation of user-generated content are likely to be successful. This is in part because of many fans' sense of 'cultural ownership' over football.

In the betting world it is estimated that over **£1 billion was placed on football matches during the 2006 World Cup finals**. Messageboards and texts increasingly provide the channels through which supporters build and sustain unofficial, fan-to-fan communication networks.

The shifting styles of football support are matched by changes in the geographical and social make up of clubs' supporters, who increasingly tend to come from more affluent areas. **Groups from areas of high deprivation and black and minority ethnic populations tend to be excluded from full participation as match-day fans.**

Some fans, such as those of FC United of Manchester, have generated forms of support which are **resistant to contemporary trends in English football.** Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the paths taken by most people to the status of a fully fledged football fan are well trodden ones. **For the most part**

supporters continue to be introduced to the game by their fathers or other family members. For many the significance of their fathers' identities as football fans appears to have established a behavioural precedent for them. For others there is little choice. In one case we came across an embryo that had been enrolled in a membership scheme.

Football and everyday life

Football is no longer about watching the match on Saturday afternoons. It is an everyday matter. It infuses our work, our home and our play and has an **'everything and nothing'** quality whereby it appears to be everywhere but in largely un-dramatic and banal ways.

The game's tentacles pervade our workplaces in all kinds of ways since **football plays an increasing role in establishing positions within the informal hierarchy of the workplace but also in challenging traditional power relations**. For some football even provides a route into work. Football allegiances are increasingly performed at work and can be used as a negotiating tool by employers to gain the trust of a workforce. For others, football provides a means with which to play with colleagues' and workmates' emotions in the office or on the shopfloor.

There are also times when work and football cannot easily co-exist, but instead clash, often **resulting in fans tacking 'sickies'**. It was estimated that **13% of the population was expected to call in sick** in order to watch daytime matches during the 2006 World Cup, and that such absenteeism and other forms of 'slacking off' could cost the UK economy up to £1.83bn in lost productivity. Other reports disagreed, and claimed that English workers' desire to get home early for matches would ensure they would 'work smart' and boost productivity.

We have drawn together the various ways in which football impacts on the productivity and dynamic of the workplace:

Workers	Use of Football
Shirking	Whether listening to the boss' analysis of the match or cruising the club message boards, football provides an excuse to do anything but your job
Blagging	Organising a business meeting that coincides with an away match in London; 'working from home' on the day of a mid afternoon UEFA cup qualifier blaggers knows their priorities
Networking	Reading other people's interest in football to find a point of connection the networker 'uses' football to help manage staff, secure deals and address conflict
Part-timers' joining in	Don't really like football but feel they ought to because everyone else does. Ask questions as though football was the weather
Winding-up	Disrupt the workplace by knowing which buttons to press and how to get the rows going
Refusing	Hate the game and refuse to engage with it. Likely to be a source of rival attractions

As with the workplace, football has become increasingly ubiquitous in the street. **Where as once, football was a topic to be avoided in 'polite' company, today it is used to sell everything from crisps to celebrity magazines and political parties.** The media reputation of the game is such that those without a particular interest in it can still respond to 'football-related' advertising campaigns through the subconscious product penetration powers of football celebrity. For this summer's World Cup, it was estimated that **\$1bn would be spent on World Cup-related advertising**, and that more than half of marketing activity before and after the event would be spent on tournament-related advertising in countries as diverse as China, Bolivia, Chile, Hungary, Thailand and Venezuela.

The general **economic impact of football** and other sports are now frequently debated, especially in terms of retail and hospitality sectors which might benefit from the spending power of football fans. It was estimated that between **£900m and £1.25bn additional money would be pumped into the UK economy** during the 2006 World Cup, with the electrical, clothing and food and drink sectors the greatest beneficiaries.

The **ubiquitous nature of football** in many areas of English culture has caused resentment amongst some long-standing supporters who cherish what they perceive to be their distinctive relationship with and understanding of the game. If contact with these types of football fans is desired, it is vital that companies do not present a vision of the game which is likely to be perceived as 'inauthentic'.

The banal nature of many relations developed around football is reflected in the content of internet messageboards which were once the fountain of exclusive

football 'knowledge'. **Today football message boards are moving away from a focus on the game and have become arenas in which fans can discuss anything and everything in their lives.** Increasingly, it is the ability to think up weird and wonderful new topics, to 'wind up' fellow posters, 'take the piss' out of other fans' websites, crack jokes and generally disrupt the normal course of events which gains posters fame (or notoriety).

A bit on the side

Part of the game's appeal relates to its capacity to create transformative moments of freedom. For many, **football represents a legitimate means of escaping domestic responsibilities and restrictions.** For many, football provides opportunities for '**away days**' (or even weekends or entire holidays) during which they can express a hedonistic desire for partying and excess with friends and strangers alike. This use of football as an opportunity to 'get away' was evident during the 2006 World Cup when an estimated 170,000 England fans travelled to Germany, many without a hope or even an intention of getting match tickets.

We have classified the 'party people' at the 2006 World Cup:

Corporates	On a freebie, football is the latest 'event' to be wined and dined at. Strangely subdued, even disinterested, the trip is presented on a plate in a pre-packaged format
Barmy Army	Whether on a 'stag do' or filling in between cricket Test series, synchronised fancy dress and matching T-shirts define both their togetherness and separation from the 'crowd'
Survivalists	Ticketless and without accommodation they endure and survive the trip. Camping, sleeping rough and blagging they share a passion for football as a vestige of working-class cultural values
Grafters	Representing the chance of an 'earner', the touts, traders and dealers follow the party
Shirts	The loyal 'customer' with tickets and travel obtained through the orthodox channels. The trip is well planned in advance and passes off without trouble or incident
Internationalists	With a love of the beautiful game they are here for the football and don't mind which matches they see. Keeping well away from the mass of England fans the trip is an opportunity for staged cultural exchange

For many men who share close domestic relationships with wives or girlfriends, football can act as the one pastime which allows them to spend time with their 'mates' and continue the social routines which marked out their lives when they were younger. This appears to be especially true for 'new dads' who perhaps

more than any other group of men can be drawn to football as an 'escape' from new domestic realities. Football is the 'other' love in their lives which does not generally get them into trouble.

By contrast **for women whose partners are keen football fans the game places enormous pressures on their relationships due to the 'power of persuasion' that the game has within their family dynamic**. They often feel they have fewer grounds to object to football-related social events, due to the collective nature of the activity and the fact that other wives and girlfriends have sanctioned their partners' attendance. In this sense football emerges as one of the last vestiges of male solidarity which enables a paternalistic authority to be exerted over family relations.

Football also brings with it an alternative basis for connecting with domestic responsibilities and for easing the burden on non-football following partners. A child's love of football can be used as a means of gaining a degree of leverage through the provision or denial of access to the game. In addition the game also generates a basis for the provision of paternal childcare.

Whilst open homophobia in mainstream football is rife and deters many gay supporters from not only spectating but also playing, the establishment of new clubs with 'gay' identities has created contexts in which players feel comfortable being outwardly 'gay' which might be more difficult in the 'football mainstream'.

Conclusion

Our conception of a truly dedicated fan is easily associated with those who demonstrate an undeniable element of excess. What our research suggests though is that the passion for football in England is better understood in terms of its banality. Whilst periodically presenting spectacular displays of intense emotion, for the most part football has become a kind of backdrop to the world: not necessarily so fundamental to each individual's consciousness that they would be unable to function without it, but part of the tapestry that structures our day-to-day reality. At times it is 'in our face' and seems to be the most important thing in the world, but most of the time it is just 'there'; a kind of quasi-spiritual presence as well as a currency with which we trade. The value of that currency is not based on individual displays of commitment, but on a collective interest in the game which extends far beyond the performative arena of the stadium.

We cannot talk, therefore, of the 'wildest', 'maddest', 'daftest', 'most fanatical' football fan as fixed identity categories. All we can do is identify the ways in which many lives are touched by people's associations with the game which vary across time, place and context. As such it may be appropriate to think in terms of the various modes of consumption or *styles* of fandom, which people adopt depending upon the contexts in which they find themselves as illustrated in the table below.

Fanaticism	When football is...	Revealed by...
Stoicism	a matter of habit rather than motivation. They are always there but you probably wouldn't notice.	arrival of the season ticket renewal form. Wall to wall TV coverage
Partying	an opportunity to have a day out/ weekend away/overseas trip with like minded souls which will guarantee a good time regardless of what happens on the pitch.	publication of the fixture lists. Draws for the next round of the Cup. Major football events
Clowning	an opportunity to celebrate the self and perform an attachment to the game with enjoyment of the 'occasion' related to being 'noticed'.	the 'big' televised match. Major football events
Trainspotting	to know the most about	unnecessary sharing of knowledge
Connoisseurship	a deep, personal and serious love	a great knowledge and appreciation of the game that is not always for public consumption
Blagging	an excuse to re-engage with former identities and freedoms	the arrival of new family responsibilities
Nostalgia	in need of salvation	the search for less commercial ways to connect to the game
Pick 'n' mixing	to be consumed in all its forms	the arrival of new football 'products'
Out and proud	a space to share and celebrate a marginalised identity	formation of football 'interest' groups
Imprisonment	something which overrides commitments to family and domestic responsibilities.	being left holding the baby
Militancy	something to be politically defended against commercial exploitation and commodification	organised direct action against powerful football interests
Kicking for kicks	an excuse for a 'tear up' or somewhere to observe and enjoy the spectacle of violence	football hooliganism and the media interest in it

Section 1: Introduction and research methodology

As memories fade of the FIFA World Cup finals in Germany, English football fans are once again entering the new domestic football season with traditional optimism and passion. Indeed, the extent to which English fans invest their emotions in the game can sometimes appear quite remarkable. Back in December of last year research conducted for EA Sports gained some insight into how this passion influences the nation's priorities. Amongst other findings the survey suggested that almost a third of men and women in England would sacrifice a romantic date, one in twenty would be willing to miss the birth of their own child or even their own wedding and one in ten would end their relationship altogether in order to see their team play in the World Cup final.

Due to poor performances, whether people actually *would* do this of course remains to be seen. But the results prompted a desire to understand some of the questions behind the statistics such as where this lust for the game comes from and to gain a fuller picture of the passion for football in England. This further, more in-depth research was commissioned by EA Sports in the summer of 2006 in order to facilitate a better appreciation of the extent to which football has come to pervade English society in ways which extend far beyond the confines of the football stadium and images of the eccentric football fanatic.

The research findings are presented in this report via a number of themed sections which reveal the contemporary landscape of English football fandom. Specifically, the report addresses the contexts in which:

- patterns of English football consumption have changed
- computer gaming technology and EA Sports are connected to contemporary patterns of football support, consumption and understandings of the game
- fans become attached to football
- football is part of 'everyday life'
- people display their commitment to the game

In addition to drawing upon our extensive football research data archives¹ - which include interview testimony, participant observations, fan diaries, digital mapping and content analysis – for this project we have conducted a number of specific focus group enquiries amongst groups of people with a range of connections to the game. These have included:

¹ The various members of the team have previously conducted extensive research into football, with major funded projects including the ESRC-funded 'Cultures of Racism in Football' project; the ESRC-funded 'Sport, the City and Governance: Football, its Fans and Social Exclusion' project; and the Football Foundation funded 'Football and its Communities' project.

- Younger football fans aged 7-11 engaged in junior football
- Teenage boys involved in a football development programme
- Adult fans of Sheffield United FC
- Adult fans of the supporter-owned and run FC United of Manchester
- A group of football supporting 'new Dads'
- Elderly fans of football from Lancashire
- Active England fans
- Players from Manchester's Gay Village Football Club
- The partners of active fans, or 'football widows'

Beyond these focus groups we have conducted participant observation at a number of competitive football matches, in people's homes, in pubs home and abroad, at the 2006 FIFA World Cup, and other sites associated with the communal consumption of football. We have also conducted 'virtual' ethnographies, including the observation and monitoring of general and club specific official and unofficial websites, internet messageboards and fantasy football league sites. Other fan media such as fanzines, broadcast phone-ins and newspaper columns have also been utilised. On the basis of our wider explorations of 'football and the everyday', in order to assess the extent to which other locations have been 'saturated' by football we have also made use of ethnographic participant observations to examine the ways in which football features in and disrupts advertising, workplaces, the home and leisure spaces.

On the basis of these explorations, in this report we will consider a number of core themes beginning with a focus on the impact of new technology, the availability of the game and different modes of consuming it. We then explore how people develop an interest in football and learn about the game and its rituals. The following section of the report considers the pervasiveness of football in contemporary England and the ways in which it connects with our everyday lives outside of the spectacular displays of passion which surround major football events. We then consider the ways in which the acceptance of football's place in English society enables those that follow it to escape the responsibilities that figure in other aspects of their lives. Finally we look at the displays of passion which surround the game and the pain and sacrifice that go with them before providing a new typology for understanding English football fans.

Before we present these findings we will provide a brief review of the existing literature on English football fans.

Section 2: Studying football fans: A short review of literature

In this section we present a brief overview of literature on the behaviour, character and make-up of English football supporters written over the past 40 years. It is important to do this to demonstrate the various ways in which English fans have been discussed and debated by academics, journalists and social commentators, and to explain why it is important for us to now go beyond 'traditional' understandings of fans and to find new and creative ways of thinking about people's attachments to the game. The section considers three main trends in the existing literature: early debates around football hooliganism in England and how these have shifted; 'socio-economic' analyses of English fandom and its relationship to the game's political economy; and the contemporary 'fracturing' of English football support.

Going Beyond Fighting Fans

Academic interest in the nature of football fans' connections with the game is a relatively new development since the study of football was not taken very seriously until the game itself was perceived to be generating serious problems in the late 1960s and 1970s. At that time, the emergence of mass football spectator violence as a major source of public concern led to the birth of football as a realm of academic enquiry. First Ian Taylor² and then others³ sought to relate football hooliganism to changes occurring in the relationship between the (male) working class supporter and 'his' team. Social psychologists then focused on what they saw as relatively harmless ritualised violence and how it was governed by 'rules of disorder'⁴. Perhaps lacking sufficient empirical evidence for their assertions these writers were followed by the more detailed sociological enquiry of a team of researchers based at the Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research at the University of Leicester. In turn the products of their labours⁵, which appeared to suggest that 'football hooligans' had come predominantly from the lower working classes prompted an increasingly acrimonious debate within the field. The most hostile responses came from Richard Giulianotti and Gary Armstrong⁶

² Taylor, I. 'Hooligans: soccer's resistance movement', *New Society*, 7 August 1969; Taylor, I. 'Soccer Consciousness and Soccer Hooliganism', in Cohen, S. (ed.) *Images of Deviance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971)

³ See Clarke, J. *Football and the Skinheads*, Occasional Paper (Birmingham, CCCS, 1973); Ingham, R. (ed.) *Football Hooliganism: The wider context* (London: Inter-Action, 1978); Cohen, P. & Robins, D. *Knuckle Sandwich*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978)

⁴ Marsh, P., Rosser, E. & Harre, R. *The Rules of Disorder* (London: Routledge, 1978)

⁵ Williams, J., Dunning, E. & Murphy, P. *Hooligans Abroad* (London: Routledge 1984); Dunning, E., Murphy, P. & Williams, J. *The Roots of Football Hooliganism* (London: Routledge, 1988); Murphy, P., Williams, J. & Dunning, E. *Football on Trial*, (London: Routledge, 1990)

⁶ Giulianotti, R. 'Social identity and public order: political and academic discourses on football violence', in Giulianotti, R., Bonney, N. & Hepworth, M. (eds.) *Football, Violence and Social*

who provided a more sensitive account of the social contexts in which notions of the 'football hooligan' come to be constructed.

However, this singular focus on what has always been a marginal feature of football spectator cultures began to breakdown in the aftermath of the Hillsborough stadium tragedy in 1989 and the subsequent reports by Lord Justice Taylor which led to the introduction of all-seat stadia in the top two divisions of English football. This development is generally regarded as representing a 'watershed' for English football⁷ and led to widespread reconstruction of stadia and the relocation of a number of club grounds. The main implication of this for match-going supporters was the removal of large, cheap, terraced 'ends', traditionally the location of the most passionate, vociferous and potentially violent fans. The rebuilding also allowed clubs to develop further corporate facilities, family enclosures and to reconfigure the location of different social groups of fans. For example, at Old Trafford, terraced areas at United Road, the Stretford End and the Scoreboard Paddock were converted to seated areas. Anthony King has referred to this as removing the opportunities for the 'ecstatic celebration' of fans, by replacing 'an open space in which it was easy to create an ecstatic solidarity' with 'the panoptic isolation of the seat'⁸.

These changes have contributed to some writers' recent desires to reflect cultural changes amongst English football's fan base and move beyond analysing English supporters as 'hooligans'. This is especially true of the work of Crabbe, Poulton, Perryman and others on England fans who, probably more than any other constituency of supporters, have been presented regularly as violent, destructive, xenophobic and racist.⁹ Perryman in particular has been keen to reconfigure and reinterpret the basis of England fans' patriotism, and to capture what he sees to be the more 'positive' and inclusive culture of England's support both at home and abroad.

Gazza, Sky and the Premier League: 'Commercialisation' and Socio-Economic Studies

Changes to English football stadiums since the early 1990s, and in particular the replacement of 'popular' standing areas with executive and family seating, have

Identity (London: Routledge, 1994); Armstrong, G. *Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score* (Oxford: Berg, 1998)

⁷ See Taylor, I. 'English football in the 1990s: Taking Hillsborough seriously?', in Williams, J. & Wagg, S. (eds.) *British Football and Social Change: Getting into Europe*, London: Leicester University Press, 1992)

⁸ King, A. *The End of the Terraces: the transformation of English football in the 1990s* (London: Leicester University Press, 1998, p.161)

⁹ See, for instance, Crabbe, T (2003) 'The Public Gets what the Public Wants': England Football Fans, 'Truth' Claims and Mediated Realities, in *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 413-425 (2003); Poulton, E. (2002) 'On the Press Pack Stereotype Hunt' in *Going Oriental: Football After World Cup 2002*. Perryman, M. Edinburgh: Mainstream; Perryman, M. Ingerland: Travels with a Football Nation (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

been portrayed by a range of writers as being symbolic of wider changes in football. Following the popularity of the 1990 World Cup in Italy, renewed pressure from the richest Football League clubs led eventually to the formation of the FA Premier League which was inaugurated in 1992. This was an historic FA-sanctioned breakaway from the Football League, the primary effect of which on the political economy of the sport was to break the solidarity between the bottom and the top of professional football and widen the division of wealth between the top division and the rest: a process which has since been repeated across Europe¹⁰. This latter change was made possible by the securing of an exclusive television deal between the new Premier League and BSkyB.

These shifts in the way top flight football is run and financed has brought about academic interest in other areas of the game. Studies on the governance of the 'industry'¹¹ have emphasised the 'free market' economic structures of many leading clubs and the laissez faire approach to regulation taken in the UK. This literature compares the UK unfavourably to continental models of club ownership (which tend to be mutual, or fan-owned) and to regulatory systems in many European countries which seek to protect football, and its fans, from market forces¹².

Furthermore, economists have debated the 'special' nature of the football industry and its 'unusual' forms of consumption where an 'inelastic brand loyalty' over-rides concerns of value for money or brand quality¹³. Such opinions about the 'exploitation' of fans' loyalty in the new economic era for the game have been shared by fans for many years. As Bill Borrows - journalist and former editor of the Manchester City fanzines *Blue Print* and *This Charming Fan* - has argued:

Football isn't a business in the normal sense for one very important reason, and that is that brand loyalty is far more important than brand quality. People go and see Rotherham not because of great football, but because of loyalty to the club, and that's why it's not the same as marketing chocolate bars or washing machines.¹⁴

These types of perceptions by committed fans were part of a general upturn in fan campaigns, both against their own club regimes and against the new political

¹⁰ See European Commission Com (1999)644)

¹¹ Hamil, S., Michie, J & Oughton, C (eds.) *A Game of Two Halves: The business of football* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1999) ; Hamil, S, Michie, J, Oughton, C & Warby, S (eds.) *Football in the Digital Age: Whose game is it anyway?* (Edinburgh, Mainstream, 2000)

¹² Michie, J., *Mutualism - The Golden Goal?* (London: Cooperative Party, 1999)

¹³ See Fynn, A., *Out of Time: Why Football Isn't Working* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Conn, D. *The Football Business: Fair game in the 90s?* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream, 1997)

¹⁴ Brown, A (1994) *Democratising Popular Culture*, PhD, (School of Law, Manchester Metropolitan University, 1994)

economy of football¹⁵. The explosion of football fanzines¹⁶, often highly critical of the way football is run and the increased cost of the game in the Premier League era, was accompanied by a proliferation of campaigning and resistant fan organisations which at times achieved notable successes¹⁷. These organisations have sought both to 'democratise' football (with little success) and seek regulation to protect the interests of fans.

Social Exclusion and the Fragmentation of the Fan Base

The changes in the game described here have themselves been accompanied by a shift in the focus of academic writing on football fandom. Through Steve Redhead's attempts to broaden understandings of fan culture¹⁸, Ian Taylor's assessment of the relationship to the advance of market relationships within the game¹⁹, Anthony King's thesis on the new consumption of football²⁰, Redhead and Giulianotti's²¹ concerns with 'post modernisation' and the emergence of the 'post fan', academic enquiries have proliferated.

A central source of interest within these studies has been the concern that working-class fans are being excluded economically from attendance at matches. This perspective has been accompanied by a critique of the 'bourgeoisification' of the game which has been associated with the emergence of a metropolitan journalistic 'Soccerati'. Many claims have been made that the introduction of all seater stadiums and commercial efforts to encourage a broader social base of supporters along with a rise in ticket prices has brought with it increasingly subdued and dispassionate forms of spectating.

In response to developing discourses of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' around English football, the author's research for the Football Foundation, conducted over the last 4 years, has reconfigured the debate to focus on the fragmented

¹⁵ See Brown, A. (ed.) *Fanatics! Power, identity and fandom in football* (London: Routledge, 1998); Nash, R. English Football fan Groups in the 1990s: Class, representation and fan power, *Soccer and Society* Vol. 1 No 2 Spring 2001

¹⁶ Redhead, S. An era of the end, or the end of an era: Football and youth culture in Britain, Williams, J & Wagg, S. (eds) *British Football and Social Change: Getting into Europe*, London: Leicester University Press, 1992); Haynes, R. *The Football Imagination: The rise of football fanzine culture*, (Aldershot: Arena, 1995)

¹⁷ See Brown, A. & Walsh, A.. *Not for Sale: Manchester United, Murdoch and the defeat of BskyB* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1999)

¹⁸ Redhead, S. *Football With Attitude*, Manchester: Wordsmith, 1991); Redhead, S. (ed.) *The Passion and the Fashion: Football fandom in the New Europe*, (Aldershot: Avebury, 1993)

¹⁹ Taylor, I. 'It's a Whole new ball game': Sports Television, the Cultural Industries and the Condition of Football in England, *Salford Papers in Sociology No. 17* (Salford: University of Salford, 1995)

²⁰ King, 1998, op. cit.

²¹ Redhead, S. Post-Fandom and the Millennial Blues (London: Routledge, 1997); Giulianotti, R. *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999); Giulianotti, R 'Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flaneurs': A Taxonomy of Spectator Identities' in *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Volume 26, No1, February, pp25-46 (London: Sage, 2002)

and changing nature of football's relationships with its multiple 'communities'.²² In this work, the effects of economic developments; changing urban demographics; political expectations on football clubs to engage with 'new social agendas'; and stadium redevelopments and relocations are considered to investigate the contemporary character of football's engagement with its various 'stakeholder' groups. One of the key messages to develop from this work is the changing nature of football's fan base. This is happening not only in terms of its increasingly affluent and geographically dispersed profile - which has seen working class fans, local residents and black and minority ethnic communities excluded - but also in relation to how it encounters and experiences the game. We conclude that fans increasingly have an 'individualised' rather than collective experience of football thanks mainly to clubs' unwillingness to recognise supporters as communities, and because of the atomising influence of new all-seater stadia.

With fans attending games less spontaneously, in smaller groups, restricted to pre-allocated seats, in environments which are increasingly sanitised and monitored by sophisticated surveillance equipment there is less space for the kind of collective forms of expression and physicality often associated with the game. As such within our research and elsewhere a series of dichotomies, or binary opposites, have been constructed around notions of the 'authentic' and the 'inauthentic' football fan which generally consist of the following types of distinction²³:

Table 1: Conventional classifications of football fan types

Authentic	Inauthentic
Loyal	Fickle
Long standing	New
Working class	Middle class
Local	Non local/global
Live match attender	TV viewer
Away match attender/traveller	Home matches only
Sits/stands at 'ends'	Sits in main/family stand/corporate box
Masculine	Gender blind
Passionate	Effete
Anti-commercial	Consumerist
Street wise	Gullible
Knowledgeable	Ignorant
Football centric	Ephemeral

²² See, for instance, Brown, A, Crabbe, T, Mellor, G, Blackshaw, T & Stone, C. *Football and its Communities: Final Report* (London and Manchester: Football Foundation and Manchester Metropolitan University, 2006)

²³ See Crabbe, T. & Brown, A. "You're not welcome anymore": The football crowd, class and social exclusion', in Wagg, S. (ed.) *British Football and Social Exclusion*, (London: Routledge 2004)

Whilst there are clear limitations to these classificatory regimes in terms of their generic validity they have a continuing resonance within a variety of football discourses which extends beyond academia into the very heart and soul of the game. Yet current concerns with supporter behaviour and the continuing desire to broaden the base of football support beyond its 'traditional' constituencies also points to the limitations of any gentrification of football and universal exclusion of working-class fans. Indeed it would be a mistake to regard the changes which undoubtedly occurred in the 1990s as necessarily permanent. In some respects it is remarkable what has *survived*, not least a unique, four-league professional structure of 92 clubs. Equally King is correct to argue that even historically *any* static reading of football is a mistake:

the different constituencies of the crowds in different decades really gave the game different meanings at different times, which reflected the state of the wider social formation.²⁴

The contemporary fragmentation of the supporter base has latterly been acknowledged in the academic literature, most prominently through Giulianotti's attempts to map the identities of different types of football support which updates the work of Taylor and Critcher²⁵ by providing a taxonomy of four idealised spectator types: supporters, followers, fans and *flaneurs*. These definitions are based upon the motivations for watching football and spatial relationships with the material environment of the sport whereby:

Traditional spectators will have a longer, more local and popular cultural identification with the club, whereas consumer fans will have a more market-centred relationship to the club as reflected in the centrality of consuming club products.²⁶

Of course, this scheme offers descriptions of 'ideal types' of football spectatorship. In reality, relationships between spectators and the game as well as with each other cut across these boundaries and this kind of typology lends itself to rather static interpretations of football support. Crucially for us, it also centres the match-day experience and the new forms of consumption which surround the match day 'event', rather than the multiplicity of ways in which football can influence people's lives in diverse settings and at different times.

In what follows we seek to present a new framework for understanding the multitude of ways in which people connect with the game today. We illustrate something of the scale of football's presence as well as considering how that

²⁴ King, 1998, op. cit. p.164

²⁵ Taylor, I. 'Soccer Consciousness and Soccer Hooliganism', in S. Cohen (ed.) *Images of Deviance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971); Critcher, C. 'Football Since the War', in J. Clarke, C. Critcher & R. Johnson (eds.), *Working Class Culture* (London: Hutchinson, 1979)

²⁶ Giulianotti, R. 2002, op. cit.

presence is manifest in people's public associations and their private lives. We show how it both enables and constrains; generates a wealth of experience and personal sacrifice; and shapes identities and processes of conflict. In this way we hope to re-shape the ways in which people think about 'the power of football' and what it means to the nation.

Section 3: A whole new ball game: The shifting patterns of football consumption

KEY FINDINGS

- Football and particularly the national team has the capacity to attract enormous television audiences
- Televised football has created new avenues for the collective consumption of the game in pubs and friends houses
- Many football fans are now seeking out more traditional ways to connect with the game in the face of growing commercialisation
- Football-related games and new technologies which encourage the creation of user-generated content are likely to continue to be successful
- Football has become a key growth area for the sports betting market
- Interactive gaming technologies, text messaging and internet message boards have created new means of connecting with, learning and sharing information about the game

KEY STATISTICS

- It is estimated that 39% of people in England now 'follow' football in some way
- 1 million people are thought to watch live games on a regular basis
- It was estimated that television coverage grew by a third between 1999 and 2003 to take its share of all sports output from 19% to 23%
- The biggest ever estimated TV audience in the UK was the 1966 World Cup final which attracted 32.3 million viewers
- Statistics suggest that the highest average domestic TV audience for an England match at this summer's World Cup was the 18.5 million that tuned in for the England v Sweden game
- At the 2006 World Cup, organisers claimed that more than 1 million people gathered in communal spaces in Berlin to watch Germany's matches
- The BBC said that 50,000 people watched the England v Paraguay match from the 2006 World Cup on their 'big screens' across the country
- It is estimated that 75,000 Manchester United supporters regularly watch the team's matches in pubs across the city
- The FA claim that 7 million people play the game with up to 5 million more playing at school
- It is estimated that over £1bn was bet on the 2006 World Cup in the UK

Sky's the limit: Football, television and new modes of communal consumption

Statistics suggest that football continues to strengthen its grip on the nation's sporting interest, with the proportion of the adult population following the game estimated to have increased from 35% in 1997 to 39% in 2003²⁷ with total attendances hitting an estimated 45 year high at 28.8 million in the 2003/04 season. However, these statistics suggest something of the shifting base of connections with the game. Whilst 39% of the population may follow football in one form or another, it is a far smaller proportion, around 1 million, who are thought to actually attend live matches on a regular basis. The reality for most football followers of course is that they connect with the game in a variety of ways outside of the confines of the stadium.

Perhaps the most significant development in this regard came after the creation of the FA Premier League in 1992 with the expansion in television coverage. Whereas once televised football was limited to show piece events such as the FA Cup Final, European matches, the World Cup and a limited number of weekend highlights packages today there is more televised football than ever before. The most recent business analysis suggests that television coverage of the game grew by a third between 1999 and 2003 to take its share of all sports output from 19% to 23%²⁸.

Indeed, our own review of the television schedules reveals that football is now available on an almost round the clock basis to those who can afford the subscription charges and the time to watch. Taking one week as an example the total amount of football-related programming broadcast on selected UK channels²⁹ during the week commencing 17th April 2006 was 202 hours and 30 minutes. This is the equivalent of 8 days and 10.5 hours of football-related broadcasting in a 7 day period and included 14 live full match broadcasts drawn from the following competitions:

- FA Premier League
- Coca Cola Football League
- Spanish Primera Liga
- Italian Serie A
- Italian Serie B
- UEFA Champions League
- UEFA Cup

²⁷ Mintel International, *The Football Business*, (London: Mintel International, 2004)

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ BBC1 North West; BBC2 North West; ITV1 Granada; Channel 4; Five; BBC3; BBC4; Bravo; British Eurosport 1; British Eurosport 2, E4; ITV2; ITV3; ITV4; PremPlus; Sky Sports 1; Sky Sports 2; Sky Sports 3; Sky Sports Xtra

- FA Cup
- FA Youth Cup

Table 2: Minutes of televised football coverage 17th-23rd April 2006

Day	Terrestrial	Freeview	Satellite	PremPlus	Total
Monday	310	0	1485	135	1930
Tuesday	135	120	1065	0	1230
Wednesday	120	90	1320	0	1530
Thursday	270	0	1020	0	1290
Friday	300	45	1265	0	1610
Saturday	370	0	2250	0	2620
Sunday	200	0	1650	0	1850

In the week that we analysed TV coverage of football, the vast majority of football-related broadcasting was found on Satellite/cable subscription channels (Sky Sports 1, 2, 3 and Xtra; British Eurosport 1 and 2; and Bravo) which accounted for 82.76% of football broadcasting. Terrestrial channels (BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel 4 and Five) accounted for 14.03% of football-related broadcasts whilst channels available on the Freeview platform (ITV 2, 3 and 4; BBC 3 and BBC 4; and E4) accounted for 2.1%. During the week analysed, there was only one match broadcast on the pay TV channel PremPlus, accounting for 1.11% of total football-related broadcasts.

For the most part it remains the 'big' event matches such as Cup Finals and international tournaments which are screened on free-to-air terrestrial channels that attract the largest audiences. It is claimed that the biggest ever TV audience in the UK was for the 1966 World Cup final which attracted 32.3 million viewers, an audience even higher than that for the iconic funeral of Princess Diana estimated at 32.1 million³⁰. More recently the peak audience for a football match this century is thought to be the average 20.7 million (excluding those viewing in pubs and clubs) who watched the Portugal v England quarter final at the Euro 2004 Championships, whilst the World Cup match between England and Sweden in 2002, screened early on a Sunday morning, is estimated to have attracted ITV1's highest ever average share (84%) of the total viewing public.

With reference to this summer's World Cup in Germany, early reports suggest that across the globe TV audiences were up by over 20% from the 2002 tournament in Japan and Korea, and it has been estimated that more than 150 million viewers world-wide tuned into the opening match between Germany and Costa Rica.³¹ The domestic viewing figures for England's matches in the UK, whilst not necessarily as high as for some iconic matches at previous tournaments, were still very impressive, particularly in terms of audience share.

³⁰ British Film Institute: www.bfi.org.uk/features/mostwatched.html

³¹ www.news.scotsman.com, 14 June 2006

The highest average audience for an England match was recorded during the final group game against Sweden when nearly 18.5 million viewers tuned in, whilst the highest average audience share was enjoyed by BBC1 which received nearly 84% of the total TV audience for its coverage of England's opening match against Paraguay (see table below)³². It is also worth mentioning that a combined average audience (between BBC1 and ITV1) of over 16.5 million watched the final match between Italy and France, purportedly accounting for nearly 68% of the average audience share.

Table 3: TV viewing statistics for England's matches during 2006 FIFA World Cup³³

Match	Estimated Average Audience	Average % share of TV Audience
England v Paraguay	11,997,000	83.9%
England v Trinidad and Tobago	13,671,000	72.7%
England v Sweden	18,464,000	67.8%
England v Ecuador	16,290,000	79.9%
England v Portugal	16,205,000	82.2%

Domestic *league* matches, which are typically screened on satellite and cable channels, generally attract far smaller audiences than international tournament matches. According to figures collected by the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board, the average audience for 10 matches screened on the main BSkyB channels between the start of the season 2005/06 and Christmas was just 1.1m whilst last season's top audience for a league match was only just over 3m for the Manchester United v Arsenal fixture in October 2004, suggesting that claims of football being the national obsession need to be seen in a context where most people, most of the time do not watch it.

As such it is clear that the ways in which television coverage is currently organised makes football at once both more available, whilst continuing to restrict access to those who can afford to pay for subscription television. The BARB say that as of January 2006 the number of homes with a Sky satellite dish had reached 7,932,000 whilst the number with access to cable TV was 3,297,000. This means that the total number of households with potential access to Sky Sports and the other main 'football channels' currently stands at 11,229,000. As the total number of private households with a TV is now 25.8 million, this means that access to all football on TV is restricted to a maximum of 43.52% of households, depending on whether they are subscribed to the appropriate

³² Whilst the overall viewing figures here appear to be lower than for previous tournaments this may well reflect the growing preference for watching matches in communal spaces which we discuss in more detail below. These elements of the total TV 'audience' are not currently captured by the official statistics which are based on a sample of 'households' rather than 'viewers'.

³³ Source: Broadcasters Audience Research Board

channels. A further 6,363,000 (24.66%) have access to terrestrial digital TV and can access matches on channels such as ITV 2, 3 and 4³⁴.

It is clear though that football viewers access the televised game in a variety of ways which typically include:

- private home viewing
- communal home viewing
- pub viewing
- holiday viewing
- big screen viewing

From our observations 'home viewing' can involve different types of connection at different times. Sometimes the home viewer is merely 'sitting in' and 'filling time', particularly midweek or when a match does not involve a personal connection with either of the sides playing. In other contexts home viewing involves 'connoisseurs' who typically have a preference for the comfort and uninterrupted security of their own home, sometimes in the company of a select few friends. Helen, a 24 year old football supporter who lives with her partner describes his 'home' consumption:

He doesn't go to the pub to watch it because he prefers to stay at home [to watch it with] Liam who is always at our house... they will watch any football and I mean anything. Saturday he'll watch Real Madrid, Barcelona. If it's their derby he'll watch that. I think the other week there was one on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and he watched them all.

Although Helen's partner Rob ultimately prefers the match-day atmosphere and experience, he has recently given up his season ticket at Manchester United as a result of the increased cost. But whilst he socialises with the partners of some of our other respondents in their local pub he would prefer not to watch a match there as he feels he would miss important technical aspects of the game. As Helen reveals, 'he'd rather watch it at home. He says he can't watch it properly in the pub. He'd rather watch it at home, but he still has a beer'.

The dedicated 'home viewer's' house can also provide a space for 'communal viewing'. Rob's house is itself viewed by his close circle of friends as the '*football house*'. This is largely due to the fact that Helen and Rob have no children and Helen is also a football fan and therefore does not mind their home being invaded by friends to watch football. She watches games with them and joins in with the banter and discussion. During the 2002 World Cup Rob and his friends regularly booked days off work to watch matches at his home as Helen recalls:

³⁴ Broadcasters' Audience Research Board: www.barb.co.uk

Rob booked all those days off work and his friends did. So I was leaving the house to go to work and they were coming in to my house. They were always drinking even at eight in the morning, just whenever they watch football they have a drink. So his friends show up with a crate of beer. Ours' is the football house but I don't mind 'cos he's at home but it's Sarah I feel sorry for because Liam's never home.

Increasingly this desire to watch televised football in the company of others has been reflected in the mass gathering of football fans at dedicated public screenings. At the 2006 World Cup in Germany, the host cities organised a number of 'fan fests' where supporters without tickets to the matches were encouraged to come and watch on giant screens. For the matches involving the host nation, organisers claimed that up to 1 million supporters gathered in Berlin, whilst police estimated that 35,000 England fans watched the country's game against Sweden in a new public viewing arena, hastily set up on a fairground near the Rhine after the city authorities realised they had underestimated the size of the England travelling contingent³⁵. Even back 'home' the BBC took screens 'on tour' (although two of these were shut after the opening England match) and they claimed that more than 50,000 people watched the England v Paraguay match on big screens around the country which were introduced in an effort to emphasise the BBC's ability to bring people together for big sporting events.

In the context of the association between the game and social drinking, 'pub viewing' provides another point of access to the game with its own added attractions. For whilst ostensibly representing a form of 'privatisation', for many, an unintentional consequence of the growth of televised football has been the creation of new communal forms of consumption. Furthermore, this has in many cases been prompted precisely by the economic considerations previously understood to have undermined the 'traditional' mode of consuming the game, at the match, due to the comparative cheapness of watching on a large screen at a pub rather than paying the cost of satellite and cable subscriptions.

For some, the pub creates its own version of 'authentic experience' whether that is the fan who reported that 'you get a better match atmosphere down our local in Salford... you even see kids being passed over heads to the front', or business recognising the market potential of such gatherings ('well over 75,000 hardcore Manchester United fans watch games from Manchester pubs... some believe that the atmosphere... is now better than being at the ground itself. BSkyB has already started exploiting the trend.'³⁶). Pubs have been quick to identify their potential as alternative locations for 'traditional' forms of expressive football support. This is demonstrated by the example of a Warwickshire pub which during this summer's World Cup turned its beer garden into a 'stand' for football fans. The Tilted Wig pub built a 100 seat capacity stand in front of a giant plasma

³⁵ *The Guardian*, 21 June 2006

³⁶ Rubython, T., 'How Manchester United Was Sold Out So Cheaply' *Business Age*, October 1998, p. 70.

screen TV which, it was reported, 'gave customers a taste of what it might be like to be lucky enough to be in Germany'.³⁷

Figure 1: The World Cup 'Stand' at the Tilted Wig Pub in Warwickshire.³⁸



However it has to be recognised that whilst the pub provides a viable means of consuming football in a space with a 'good atmosphere', for many it remains second best to 'being there'. For others, it does not represent an alternative due to the cost of buying drinks, licensing restrictions on under 18s, or domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, many people do not like the ubiquitous presence of football on television in pubs at all, and especially when it is crowded, and the atmosphere is smoky, noisy and rowdy: precisely the conditions which are attractive to others. Even for some football aficionados, the idea of squeezing into a crowded pub with a limited view of a poor picture is anathema. As such the appeal of this 'new' communal space for the consumption of football is contested.

It has long been the case though that the largest congregations are generated during international tournaments when pubs and clubs increasingly prepare themselves to stage matches. During the last 2002 World Cup perhaps the best example was provided by the first round England v Argentina match which, unusually for the tournament, had a Friday lunchtime kick-off. The rivalry between these two teams is mutual and longstanding, going back to a notoriously ill tempered quarter final during the 1966 World Cup and fuelled by a series of classic encounters equally characterised by scandal and brilliance in the period since. On this occasion both sides' need for a positive result and the favourable kick-off time combined to ensure the collective consciousness that defines nationhood would be fixed on the game.

Driving from Manchester city centre to nearby Chorlton, half an hour before kick off, the streets were empty and all the pubs full. Hundreds of Crosses of St

³⁷ *The Morning Star Advertiser*, 16 June 2006

³⁸ www.bbc.co.uk

George and the occasional Irish tricolour were hanging from windows as markers of support for national teams, whilst pubs were decked in flags advertising the match and beer promotions on chalk boards outside. This was a game which 'brought people together' in the sense that even those with a passing interest in football wanted a piece of the action. Just before kick-off in the Horse and Jockey on Chorlton Green, it was cheek by jowl, people awkwardly lifting pints and stools over heads, squeezing into the few remaining spaces with any reasonable view of the big screen. You couldn't stand still, constantly shifting your eye line to be able to see anything much at all. A couple who live nearby who had come out to join us lasted about five minutes before declaring they were off and not bothering with it. Neither could understand why anyone would want to subject themselves to such conditions to watch a match – especially when you could easily watch it at home on terrestrial television.

For others the space provided an introduction or fleeting experience of the intensity of collective emotion associated with support for a football team. For more established fans also it also generated a sense of authenticity - the ecstatic solidarity of days gone by, with the pub as packed as any pre-Hillsborough terrace, with wooden beams obstructing in the manner of stadium roof stanchions. The crowd of around 200 was predominantly in its 20s and 30s but in contrast to the traditional image of football as a 'male' space, gender distinctions were far less clear, with a group of young women having occupied around a dozen of the 50 odd seats placed before the screen and another gathering stood at the back alongside us. Far from 'softening-up' the atmosphere, this 'feminisation' was subsumed within the captivating collective atmosphere of football rivalry as evidenced by expletives screamed from two young women in response to Gabrielle Batistuta's foul on Ashley Cole.

As David Beckham struck home a penalty for England the whole pub seems to explode almost simultaneously with dynamic bodily movements, mostly in an upward direction as arms were raised, fists punched the air and faces roared. In between collective renditions of England songs from years gone by people screamed at the television and the referee, players and managers inside it. Here, in the pub, they could unconsciously imagine they were 'at the match'.

During the 2006 FIFA World Cup it became clear that this trend had extended itself to foreign resorts populated by English holidaymakers. We observed this in a number of locations, including San Stephanos, a small harbour town on the north east coast of the Greek island of Corfu. Populated almost entirely by English holiday makers for much of the summer season, it was a perfect venue for watching England's World Cup matches with other English people whilst also enjoying the traditional trappings of a European beach holiday. As a result of the volume of English visitors in the resort, the World Cup (rather ironically) did not have a particularly international feel here. In fact, it only appeared to be 'happening to England'. The Greek national team did not qualify for the tournament, and match days involving 'other' nations passed off without much

excitement or any particular sense of occasion. This was far from the case when England were playing. The local 'Greek night' was even rearranged on the night of the England v Ecuador Round of 16 match in recognition of where most holiday makers' attention would be on that particular evening. In this context, the national interests of English holiday makers overrode any concern with consuming 'authentic' local culture.

Figure 2: Re-arranged 'Greek night'



Walking down to the Wave Bar to watch the match, the restaurants of San Stephanos were empty. Some seemed to have closed altogether, whilst others were populated only by disappointed looking waiters who stood folding napkins without any particular purpose. The streets were also jarringly quiet to the point that one would have been forgiven for thinking that the resort was out of season. The only obvious sign of what was causing this disruption to the traditional routines were the St. George's flags flying from the villas around the bay and hanging from the odd hire car.

As for previous England matches, the Wave Bar had been cleared of its usual furniture and the remaining chairs had been organised into rows that allowed the maximum number of people to have a comfortable view of the two big screens. Even so, the number of people in the bar far exceeded the number of chairs and people found themselves stood awkwardly amongst, on top of and behind the furniture trying to get a half decent view of the screens. The crowd continued to build as kick off approached, and by mid-way through the first half the street outside the open front of the bar was blocked by people craning their necks to see the action inside. Even the waiters from the empty restaurants had given up and had come along to see what was happening.

The crowd in the bar was a peculiar mix of families; groups of 'lads' and 'girls'; and young and elderly couples. Accents from across England could be heard shouting out encouragement for or discontent with England's performance. Some

present were 'regular' football supporters, or at least presented themselves as such. These were the most vocal, the most boisterous, and the most inebriated. Others were simply there to take part in and enjoy the communal drama and spectacle of England's World Cup campaign, and were much quieter and less sure of their approach to supporting the team as a result.

Whilst these fault-lines in the make up of the crowd were most obvious at the start of the game, as the drama progressed the unease and self awareness of different groups began to melt away as more beer and quick friendly exchanges between people brought the crowd together. The scene was reminiscent of being 'at the match' as people with nothing in common and no particular shared biographies began to find a common voice and purpose. The young and the elderly, the families and the couples, and the lads and the girls forgot who they were for a short period of time, except for the fact that they were England fans.

This merging reached its pinnacle as David Beckham curled home a free kick for England in the second half. The bar erupted as hitherto strangers fell across rows of chairs to hug one another. Others burst forward towards the big screen and started conducting the crowd in chants of 'Ingerland, Ingerland, Ingerland'. One woman at the front of the bar held her two year old son, dressed in an England t-shirt, in the air and screamed back with joy at the cheering crowd. Her son screamed and waved his arms too. The chaotic, beer-soaked, euphoric atmosphere had in some ways seemed entirely unlikely only an hour-or-so earlier as 200 relative strangers filed into the bar. But in the unique atmosphere of that moment, 'fans' and 'non-fans' alike came together to experience, albeit fleetingly, the intensity of collective emotion associated with support for a football team.

This is not the case everywhere or in every holiday destination. In the remote, far North West of Scotland a mere handful of English people collected in the 'Wayfarers Bar', at the harbour of the small port of Lochinver, to watch England's second match. They were joined by fishermen from Russia and France. Apart from the oddity of seeing people in hiking boots cutting short their walk or fishing trip to enter the pub in the middle of the day, it was difficult to find any visual reference that there was a World Cup taking place at all. One small A4 sheet of typed paper on the inside door announced that the game would be shown; but nothing else. A slightly drunk French trawler-man wandered around, amusing himself by asking who people were supporting and inexplicably chuckling at the responses.

In part this is due to the fact that this was in Scotland, who were not competing and whose people tend to have an unsympathetic attitude to the English national team. However, it also reflects that, unlike the Greek holiday destination, this is a fairly non-footballing environment, where football culture is much less pronounced, and where visitors do not tend to go in order to access hedonistic consumption of the English national team. That is not to say that football is absent here. Walking out of the Wayfarers' you go past the Lochinver football

pitch, perched at the edge of the harbour, the grass tended by local sheep and the goalposts supplemented with trawler nets. The local paper reported the Lochinver FC's recent Mackay Cup win and further up the coast in Scourie another pitch nestles on an angle of about 1 in 3, between the coast and the hills. This is football in the margins where the penetration of the game and events like the 2006 World Cup is far less pronounced than in the other contexts we highlight.

Nevertheless, developments such as those we witnessed in the Greek holiday destination may provide a context for the practice of cultural forms increasingly excluded from football stadiums, the game's appeal and attendant commodification has also led to further forms of pacification and distinction making through the emergence of the 'corporate football pub'. During the 2006 World Cup finals the Ping Pong pub in Notting Hill, London illustrated the trend for taking pre-match bookings for access to a 'private room', which guaranteed a seat and table to sit at for England's games as long as a meal was ordered as part of the package. Casual supporters who had no table bookings were turned away. Other pubs and clubs have sold tickets with a guaranteed seat for big match viewings whilst the dressing of 'match venues' with flags and match schedules has increasingly become ubiquitous. As the 2006 World Cup finals demonstrated, the pubs and clubs of England now routinely expect football events to provide them with exceptional levels of business.

Figure 3: The Ping Pong pub



In the table which follows we have attempted to categorise the various ways in which supporters connect with the game through television. However, in reading this table it should be recognised that these styles of watching cannot be related to particular individual football supporters. Rather, what we have witnessed is the ways in which people choose to watch the game in different ways at different times.

Table 4: Re-thinking football fanaticism

Mode of watching	Rationale
Home viewing	For the couch potato it is all about ease of access and comfort, whilst for the 'connoisseur' it is the lack of interruption and clear view of the action that keeps them at home
Family viewing	Where more than one family member is 'into' football the TV provides a connection point and an excuse to get a few friends round
Pub viewing	For the 'non subscribers' the pub provides 'free' access to satellite games as well as the more 'authentic' sense of a 'crowd'
Holiday viewing	On holiday, watching the match in the bar provides a means to 'make friends' and find a 'home from home'
Mass viewing	Saved only for major tournaments and Cup finals the 'big screen' helps cities and nations to come together and imagine a sense of unity and community

Going on the pitch: Playing commitments

Whilst it is the professional game which captures the headlines and generates these kinds of performance, football fans do not only watch the game. Many also share a passion for playing it and football continues to have one of the highest numbers of participants of all sports in this country. According to official English Football Association statistics there are now:

- 7 million participants with an additional 5 million in schools
- 500,000 volunteers
- 37,500 clubs including 9,000 youth clubs
- 2000 competitions
- 30,000 FA qualified coaches
- 27,000 FA qualified referees

However, over recent years 'small-sided football' has taken over from the 11-a-side game to become the most commonly played form of football in England. According to the most recent estimates in 2002, 4.4 million adults played small-sided football, with over 1 million involved in competitive league or cup five-a-side competitions. A number of major corporate ventures have responded to this shift and numbers are continuing to rise with the growth of purpose built commercial facilities such as those provided by JJB Soccer Domes, Goals Soccer Centres and Powerleague.

As such the passion for football is rarely confined to merely watching the game with participation in matches providing an added layer of involvement which has its own negative consequences which are principally felt by significant others. For

one of our respondents this is reflected in a lack of quality time spent with her partner and the need to make her own personal sacrifices as a result of an excessive football-training regime:

Rob plays on a Sunday, a Wednesday night and Monday and Tuesdays and I've managed to make him give up Thursdays. So it was five days a week. I used to go horse riding on a Wednesday but I thought we needed a day when we spent time together so I gave [that] up...but then he started playing football [on a Wednesday]!

As a result the couple rarely eat meals together at home and are a prime example of the new 'married single' phenomena³⁹: 'We don't eat together or anything like that, maybe we will twice a week'.

It is not only the time spent training which presents problems though. Injuries and the socialising which surrounds clubs can also take its toll. The partner of another of our respondents is a keen football player who plays for a local Saturday-league team. He previously played for Trafford and Flixton and prides himself in being a skilled player but as a result of the intensity and extent of his involvement he occasionally suffers football related injuries. When his injuries become so bad that he is prevented from working he goes into work and pretends to 'go over on his foot' to ensure that he will be eligible for sick pay. Another of our respondents reflected on one occasion when her husband turned up in the pub where she worked with a football injury which was so serious that it required medical attention but despite the hospital being across the road he stayed in the pub all afternoon drinking and watching the afternoon's televised match:

He came in about 1pm and his hand was out like this (signing a swollen hand) and he was in there til half-nine and he was leathered but I'd had a few and everyone we were with had, had a few and I was like '*Lee mate what's wrong with your hand?*' He said, '*Ah I did it at football, I can't move it it's really sore.*' And he was leathered and he just couldn't move his arm. He'd broken his wrist and he wouldn't go to the hospital because the match was on that night and cos he wanted to get pissed as well. The next morning he had to go to the hospital and they put it in a sling. He didn't go to work.

Gr8 match. C U L8r 4 beer? : Text messaging, Mobile Technology and football

The technological revolution of the past twenty years now enables fans to communicate football-related information, views and emotions over wider distances and with greater immediacy than ever before. For instance, contact between fans on mobile phones - and especially via SMS 'text messaging' services - has become an essential part of the social fabric of the game. This is

³⁹ Couples who live together but lead almost entirely separate lives

evident in the large numbers of supporters who now choose regularly to text their friends, families and fellow fans during matches, thereby finding new ways to share the excitement, boredom, disappointment and anxiety of being a fan. Perusing a stadium at half or full-time it is easy to locate supporters with fingers and eyes trained on mobile phones as messages are compiled in order to seek connections outside of their immediate surroundings or simply to make arrangements for meeting up after a game. It is also apparent in the speed with which supporters text one another when a piece of significant news breaks about their club or the England national team. For some fans, the instinct to share football-based news or emotions via text messages has developed into an almost Pavlovian response. It is another way in which they can build and sustain unofficial, 'democratic' fan-to-fan communication networks, and debate football without any spatial or temporal barriers.

Hard evidence is difficult to come by but the inability to send messages from within football stadiums has become a phenomenon at significant moments during matches and at the final whistle when there is too much 'traffic' for the networks to handle. Indeed during Portugal's matches at the Euro 2004 championships, the average traffic on the Vodafone network in the stadium area tripled, while the average number of text messages was around 6 times higher than on a normal day (although it was unclear whether this was in comparison to other match days, or non-match days in the stadium area). Vodafone Portugal also reported that visitors from countries participating in Euro 2004 made around 2 million phone calls and sent 5.9 million text messages⁴⁰ during their stay whilst on the final day of the Premier League season in 2003, 65 million texts were sent 'as football fans relied on friends or football alert services to receive up to the minute news from Premier League grounds'.⁴¹ At the time, this was the fourth most text messages sent on any day in the UK (bettered only by New Year's Day, Valentine's Day and St Patrick's Day) and even rivals the average rate of around 100 million messages sent today.

In most media comment on the impact of the 2006 FIFA World Cup on the mobile industry, it was 'traditional' services – such as voice calls and text messages - which were predicted to perform well during the tournament, rather than new technologies associated with 3G phones. On the eve of the tournament, the *Guardian* reported that a number of mobile operators were due to use 3G content associated with the World Cup – such as streaming video and highlights packages – to try to entice customers to start using the new technology.⁴² The use of sport in general, and football in particular, to break new broadcasting markets is nothing new (a recent example is satellite television in the UK), but in this context it seems doomed to failure, at least for now. In the *Guardian* report, 3G is described as a 'disaster' for mobile operators, mainly because of the poor quality pictures which are broadcast on to phones and because of customers'

⁴⁰ http://www.cellular.co.za/news_2004/july/072204-vodafone_soccer_roamers.htm

⁴¹ <http://www.mda-mobiledata.org/mda/resource/hottopics/sms/may03.asp>

⁴² The *Guardian*, 8 June 2006 'Mobiles Await a Kick Start'

worries over how much they are being charged for using such services. With reference to the former point in the context of the World Cup Rob Bamforth, an analyst at Quocirca, is quoted as saying 'why would you want to squint at a credit card-sized screen when the game will be on giant screens everywhere?'

In the current context, it appears that voice calls and text messages remain mobile operators' only reliable sources of revenue. With this in mind, Anil Malhotra, vice-president of alliances at Bango, a mobile billing specialist predicted that on England match days during the 2006 World Cup mobile phone revenues would treble from additional voice calls and text messages, thereby generating £6m in extra revenue on each occasion.⁴³ It is possible, of course, that further technological advances will improve the future take up of football-based mobile TV and other 3G services. However, in advance of the 2006 FIFA World Cup Visiongain⁴⁴ reported that, in addition to established services, 'user-generated' content such as mobile blogging and 'vlogging' (video blogging) were the only 'new' services which were anticipated to perform well during the tournament.⁴⁵ This was because, the report argued, 'the social nature of the World Cup lends itself well to user-generated content'. It also suggested that income could be generated from the promotion of 'user communities' which could be tied, for instance, to competing national teams.

The fact that football 'user communities' and blogging are seen as potential growth areas and revenue generators for mobile companies underlines the continuing demand for a social and communal relationship around the game. Whilst 'impersonal' content such as goal updates, team news etc. can be useful, given the wide availability of information of this type supporters appear to be more interested in generating their own content which they can share with friends, relatives, fellow supporters or wider 'communities' whether through individual text messages or blogs.

In the face of tension between 'new' and 'old' technology and 'provided' versus 'user-generated' content it appears that the short-term future for mobile phone companies lies in encouraging fans to communicate *with each other* about football. In the simplest of terms, telephones are communicative devices which allow for two way dialogue. As such mobile blogging and vlogging and the establishment of mobile 'chat boards' around major football events and tournaments may be the next 'big thing' in football's relationship with the technological revolution. Developments such as these would effectively bring the culture of football-related internet messageboards to mobile phones, thereby providing yet another set of electronic forums in which fans can express communally their attachments to the game and one another.

⁴³ *The Guardian*, 8 June 2006, 'Mobiles Await a Kick Start'

⁴⁴ 14 March 2006

⁴⁵ <http://www.tekrati.com/research/News.asp?id=6648>

From terraces to joysticks: Gaming developments

The influence of new technology on football is not restricted to mobile phones. Indeed, the growing interest in the game alongside the exclusionary pressures which come with high ticket pricing and more restrained atmospheres inside stadiums have contributed to a proliferation of football-related computer games. As a result, the key players in the market now have plans to develop this connection in new ways which extend beyond traditional gaming formats. The recent extension of Electronic Arts' (EA) licensing deal with FIFA to 2014 is designed to allow EA to build football offerings in mobile technology and online spaces. The appetite for online football gaming was certainly evident during the 2006 FIFA World Cup when Soccer Gaming Forum saw its highest on-line figures in the run up to the tournament. The forum has 33,898 members and currently has over one million posts on its site.⁴⁶

There is an increasing awareness of the ways in which gaming technologies are becoming 'part of the game'. According to Clive Downie, EA Sports' head of marketing for Europe:

As we move into the area of mainstream entertainment, the world of interactive football which EA has pioneered has really started spilling over into the world of 'real football,' if you like...it's starting to be perceived as a bone-fide part of that football universe that fans from all over the world participate in at varying levels.

For children and young people in particular this has transformed the ways in which they are introduced to and learn about the game. Indeed Giullianotti (1999) suggests that children today are more likely to 'play' football on a computer, than in the streets or in a park. Despite only being two years old, one of our respondent's children, Danny, is in his mothers words, 'obsessed with *the game, the game*' (mimicking a baby voice). He watches his older brother Dean, for whom football computer games can obliterate a wider consciousness of his surroundings and the priorities of others as he demands recognition of his gaming successes. His mother often thinks there has been a major accident in the front room due to the screaming and excitement which emerges when he is playing:

So even if I'm really busy washing up or whatever, Dean screams. So I think 'Jesus'. So I run in thinking something is wrong with him and he'll go 'watch this goal' and I'll go 'no I'm not interested'. But he pauses it so it's on freeze frame.

Like many other children of his age Dean is fully conversant with the range of electronic football games and he is as contented using the extended features of the game that allow him to change his team kits, hairstyles and squad as he is

⁴⁶ www.socergaming.com

playing matches. The centrality of the games to his sense of self is also reflected when there are changes to the Manchester United kit or squad numbers and he, 'spends hours on the computer game changing the shirts with the names on, then he makes one up with Dean on'.

Officially licensed replica and football management games have in particular provided young supporters with new ways of learning about different players, teams and related aspects of supporter culture beyond their 'home' team. Football management games and, to a lesser extent, match-play games enable gamers to search through hundreds of leagues and thousands of players, coaches, managers, physios and scouts to build their perfect team. They are presented with a whole range of statistics relating to their skills in passing, shooting, creating goals and even an ability to be 'up for a big game'. These statistics are compiled by experts and football supporters around the world, with the intention of matching the player profiles as closely as possible to the strengths and weaknesses of each and every player in real life. Players and team performance are analysed to a level far exceeding even that we are accustomed to receiving with modern television analysis. As such, gamers are able to develop a greater appreciation of club names, strips and players than if their connections with the game were limited to attendance at live matches or watching Premiership highlights packages on terrestrial television.

It is evident from this analysis that the popularity of football games depends in the main on players' ability to *engage* with the product. In other words, gamers do not encounter football computer products 'at a distance', but rather become enveloped in the 'world' of the games whilst investing in, and developing through, them, their own desires and understandings of football. This latter point is vital. In our discussion of mobile technology above we concluded that new services which allow for the creation and consumption of user-generated content are the most likely to succeed in the current market place. This, it would appear, is also true of other new technologies, including gaming. Just as user-content websites such as My Space and You Tube are currently amongst the popular and fastest growing on the internet, so it is likely that games which allow players to customise and develop new content will flourish in the future. This would appear to be true especially of football games.

For much of English football's history, many supporters' engagement with the game has been defined by a sense of 'cultural ownership': a belief that football 'belongs' to them and is shaped by their beliefs, styles of support and wider actions. As a result of this heritage and wider developments around new technologies it would appear apposite for gaming companies such as EA to embrace the use of greater levels of user-generated content in future designs of football-related products. This could include further developments relating to players existing control over matches, creation of players and development of teams. More interestingly it might involve new means of helping to shape

atmospheres at matches, crowd displays and other 'off-field' actions such as protests against club directors and managers.

Raising the stakes: Football betting

Just prior to this summer's World Cup, it was estimated that over £1bn would be bet on the tournament in the UK alone: five times higher than the estimated £200m bet on the 2002 tournament in Japan and Korea.⁴⁷ As the event came to a close, it was claimed that over 6 million UK residents had visited gambling websites during the World Cup, which represents one in four of all UK internet users.⁴⁸ In a year when a host of Premiership footballers have been linked with gambling, this demonstrates the latest surge in sports betting which, in just five years, has seen the amount staked in the UK rise from about £7bn per year to around £40bn. This increase reflects a shift away from more traditional betting on horse races at bookmakers and at track side towards betting on sports such as football through the internet, mobile phones and interactive television. These developments have of course gone hand in hand with the expansion in satellite and cable television coverage so that, without leaving home, it is now possible to place an online bet on a football match - predicting the score, the time of the first goal, the goalscorer or the number of corners - and then to watch the match live.

The betting companies have been quick to recognise the link and have been keen to sponsor Premiership football clubs. Fulham were first into the market with their now expired sponsorship by the betting exchange Betfair, whilst Middlesbrough have been sponsored by the Gibraltar-based company 888.com, Britain's biggest online casino operator, since the start of the 2004 season. This season Aston Villa announced it had secured a two-year deal with the online casino and poker operator 32Red, and Mansion, the online gambling company that came close to agreeing a deal to sponsor Manchester United has now agreed a shirt sponsorship deal with Tottenham Hotspur. For these operators, a link with football has been identified as guaranteed to attract the interest of men aged between 18 and 44 who are regarded as the most likely to gamble online.

Matt Robinson, the head of marketing at 888.com, which has 23 million players worldwide, illustrates the point:

It has led to a massive brand expansion - the Premier League attracts a global audience of 570 million people across 162 countries, including the rest of Europe and Asia, two of our main target markets for expansion. Middlesbrough's incredible run in the Uefa Cup has helped mass awareness of our name and we are in front of the eyeballs of the key target demographic.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ www.bbc.co.uk, 8 June 2006

⁴⁸ www.bbc.co.uk, 4 July 2006

⁴⁹ *The Guardian*, 13 April 2006

FCUM: Resistance and rediscovery

The idea that, with the advent of satellite television, computer games, mobile and information communication technology football fans suddenly shunned the match day, or sat in their plastic seats passively playing with their gadgets, would of course be far from the full truth. Certainly, these new forms of consumption have become prominent in a way which has changed football fandom as this report illustrates. However, it is not hard to find what might be termed 'older' or more 'traditional' modes of support in contemporary football; and attendance at the match remains absolutely central to the culture of English football and indeed its economic survival⁵⁰.

Indeed some fans actively campaign for the maintenance/return of 'older' modes of support. The Safe Standing organisation and the Stand Up Sit Down initiative started at West Ham United, both campaign for a return of standing areas in grounds in the two top divisions. Part of their argument is about economics – terracing is cheaper and this is seen as one way of combating the soaring cost of attending football matches since the early 1990s. However, much of the drive comes from a desire to participate in a mode of consumption of football outlawed following the publications of the *Taylor Report* in 1990. Increasingly fans across the country bemoan the individualising restrictions of seats; the oppressive presence of stewards to control their celebrations; the fact that they cannot move around during the game, cannot jump up and down or even stand passively to sing; cannot congregate in groups with friends and family; and have to pay ever rising prices for the 'privilege'.

One group of fans who have 'rediscovered' the pleasures of old modes of match day consumption, and even standing at matches, are the supporters of FC United of Manchester. Many of FC United's most passionate fans had taken an involuntary redundancy from attending Manchester United matches after American tycoons, the Glazer family, took over at Old Trafford in May 2005. They felt disenfranchised, alienated from and disillusioned with modern, corporate, commodified football, and implemented a boycott of the Glazer regime. Many leading members had been involved in campaigns for cheaper prices and standing at Manchester United to little avail and it was they who formed FC United of Manchester, a fan-owned democratic and not-for-profit football club, under the motto of 'our club, our rules'.

The club has been formed as an Industrial and Provident Society which means that the members own the club, each with a nominal share which they cannot sell and which will never pay dividends. This entitles members to one vote at club General Meetings, to which they can instigate policy and rule changes. At the formation of

⁵⁰ Manchester United, the most televised English team of the last decade, still relies heavily on match day income. Indeed, far from the game being reliant only on TV money, match day income is the largest single revenue stream in the club (around 36%).)

the club the members adopted a 'Manifesto' which includes seven core principles by which they wished the club to be run:

- The Board will be democratically elected by its members.
- Decisions taken by the membership will be decided on a one member, one vote basis.
- The club will develop strong links with the local community and strive to be accessible to all, discriminating against none.
- The club will endeavour to make admission prices as affordable as possible, to as wide a constituency as possible.
- The club will encourage young, local participation - playing and supporting - whenever possible.
- The Board will strive wherever possible to avoid outright commercialism.
- The club will remain a non-profit organisation.

FCUM entered the Moore and Company Construction Solicitors North West Counties League Division Two, ten divisions below the Premier League. Yet the club has achieved astonishing success in its first year attracting average crowds of 3,000 (the average in the league is less than 100) and a largest of 6,023. They won the division easily. But far more important than the footballing success was that, at *their* club, they could celebrate football support on match days according to their own wishes. For many, Old Trafford has not been missed.

Most supporters pay the £7 entrance fee, £2 for under 18s or £5 for OAPs, on the gate and stand in the seated but unreserved Manchester Road End, or the end of the Main Stand. How loud, how funny and how much fans support the team is a badge of honour. A healthy rivalry has developed between the two stands with the Main Standers claiming 'we are the main stand, we're louder than you' (or, for one tea-loving fan 'we are the Main Stand, we're having a brew') in response to taunts from the MRE. When a goal is scored, fans leap up and down circling their 'old skool' bar scarves in the air to 'Ohhh FC United, Oh!'

Some fans move around during the course of the match, others find by now familiar spots where new and old friends meet up. Banners – 'FCUM: Punk Football', 'FC United: True Faith', 'MUFCUM: one soul' – adorn the ground. There is an almost incessant din of singing and stewards laugh at the fans' invention. Although predominantly 25-50 year old males, there is a healthy mix of women, boys and girls and even the odd baby (the club claim that 28% of the crowd has been under 18). The youngest fans spend half the game playing a mass game of football across the gap at the front of the MRE – this is physical activity, participation and support rolled into one.

All are united through singing which is hugely enhanced by the fact that fans can stand up. However, it is more than that – the singing is about where they have come from, who they are and that this is their club. Indeed it is 'theirs' not just in a football fan vernacular, but because the fans actually do own the club. Yet this

ownership extends far beyond an important, but institutional, arrangement. The board are genuine fans and most prefer to stand with the fans than undertake match day duties. The manager has a face to face, personal, rapport with the fans that is rare in modern football. He leads the players to the pub after the match so that they, many of whom will never have played in front of such a crowd, mix with supporters. They freely sign programmes and t-shirts though this 'celebrity status' is as far from *Heat* magazine as you could get. They also give time freely for interviews for the fanzine (*Under the Boardwalk*), without the need for payments, agents and public relations personnel.

However, to say that this is some 'return to the past' would be mistaken. The club owes its existence to the convenience of the internet, and a basic website where members initially pledged enough money to get it started. Fans make arrangements to meet by mobile phone, which they also use to take photographs, video and record the singing. They 'talk' through the week on the fans own unofficial message board where they also raise money for charity, organise branches and travel and debate the future of the club. They read the club newsletter via email and establish their own websites. Yet none of this would be viable if the ability of fans to create their own match day was not there, if stewards constantly told them to sit down, or if the only realistic option of seeing the game was to watch it on television.

The match day, and the 'old' or 'traditional' modes of football consumption are simply vital to the club's identity and future. However, this is not backward looking: part of the club's ethos and *raison d'être* is to, as one director put it, 'revolutionise how football is run in this country'.

Section 4: Choosing sides: Football allegiances and rites of passage

KEY FINDINGS

- Football fans are drawn increasingly from more affluent areas away from club grounds
- Groups from areas of high deprivation and black and minority ethnic populations tend to be excluded from full participation as match day fans
- Match day rituals enable older fans to 're-connect' with former neighbourhoods
- Supporters are typically introduced to the game by fathers or other family members
- Fans loyalty to their club is generally seen as having a 'natural', 'always has been' quality
- The creative capacities of interactive gaming technologies have broadened gamers knowledge of the game and loosened allegiances to club players
- Fans pass through different stages of their fan 'career'
- A number of older fans retain 'hooligan' identities in the context of football, and some younger fans want to 'learn the ropes' of football-related violence
- In the 2003/04 season, the number of prosecutions for football-related disorder was, whilst in the following season it was 1,194

Do we support our local team?: Re-locating English football fans

Football has come a long way since the days when English clubs were first being established through community organisations such as churches, social clubs and work's teams. The vast majority of football clubs emerged from their formative years with names that they shared with towns, cities or areas of cities. Indeed, as the number of spectators rose at English football matches in the first half of the twentieth century, large numbers of people embraced clubs as representations of their home towns and cities. The eminent sports historian Richard Holt has written that football clubs are historically one of the principal agents through which social identities are created and reinforced (1996; 1997). He claims that football clubs are sites of representation through which people (specifically men) are taught norms of behaviour, and that football teams and football 'heroes' have historically acted as exemplars of spirit and behaviour for the communities they represent. He suggests that football clubs have historically enabled communities to 'know themselves', and in doing so help signify what differentiates one town, city, region, county, or nation from another.

However more recent academic work has questioned the extent to which professional football clubs currently represent their local communities. A number of writers have identified the increasingly problematic relationship between football clubs and their immediate neighbours and have questioned whether football clubs today are little more than an occasional nuisance to the people who live in their immediate locale. Indeed, some commentators have claimed that a serious split occurred between English football clubs and local communities from the 1960s because of a combination of the following reasons:

- i. The relocation of many 'traditional' English urban communities during post-war 'slum' clearance programmes
- ii. Large-scale immigration into many English cities from the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean during the 1950s and 1960s
- iii. Football clubs being increasingly regarded as 'nuisances' from the 1960s because of hooliganism and associated problems
- iv. The growth of 'out of town' supporters at successful football clubs who do not live in the immediate locale of clubs that they support

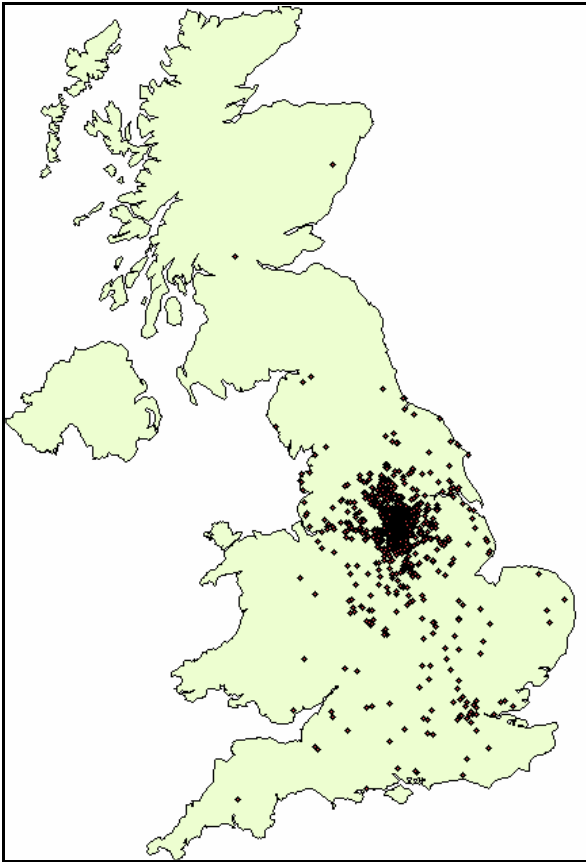
This view that football clubs did not 'automatically' represent their local communities was reflected in Government and industry reports from the late 1960s onwards. In Sir Norman Chester's report on the football industry for the Department of Education and Science in 1968, it was reported that a 'standardisation of national life' had occurred in England that had seen local identities, and institutions that are associated with the expression of local identity (such as football clubs), fall into decline (DES, 1968). In this sense there has been growing recognition of a break in the historic link between football supporters and their 'local' clubs.

The research work that we have conducted for the Football Foundation, published in a Final Report in August 2006⁵¹, in part sought to map the residential locations of English football fans at our three case study clubs - Leeds United, Manchester City and Sheffield United. This has provided additional evidence of the shifting basis for club support. Consideration of the most 'rooted' of these clubs, Sheffield United, which has been located at its Bramall Lane home since the club was founded in 1889, is illuminating. At the time of our analysis of the club's datasets it had 7,269 season ticket holders. From the mapping analysis, it is notable that these supporters were living in a variety of locations across England, Scotland and Wales. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of the club's season ticket holders were located in South Yorkshire but there were also significant concentrations of season ticket holders around north Derbyshire and the Midlands, with further concentrations throughout West Yorkshire and the Greater London area as revealed by the map below⁵².

⁵¹ See Brown et al. *Football and its Communities: Final Report*

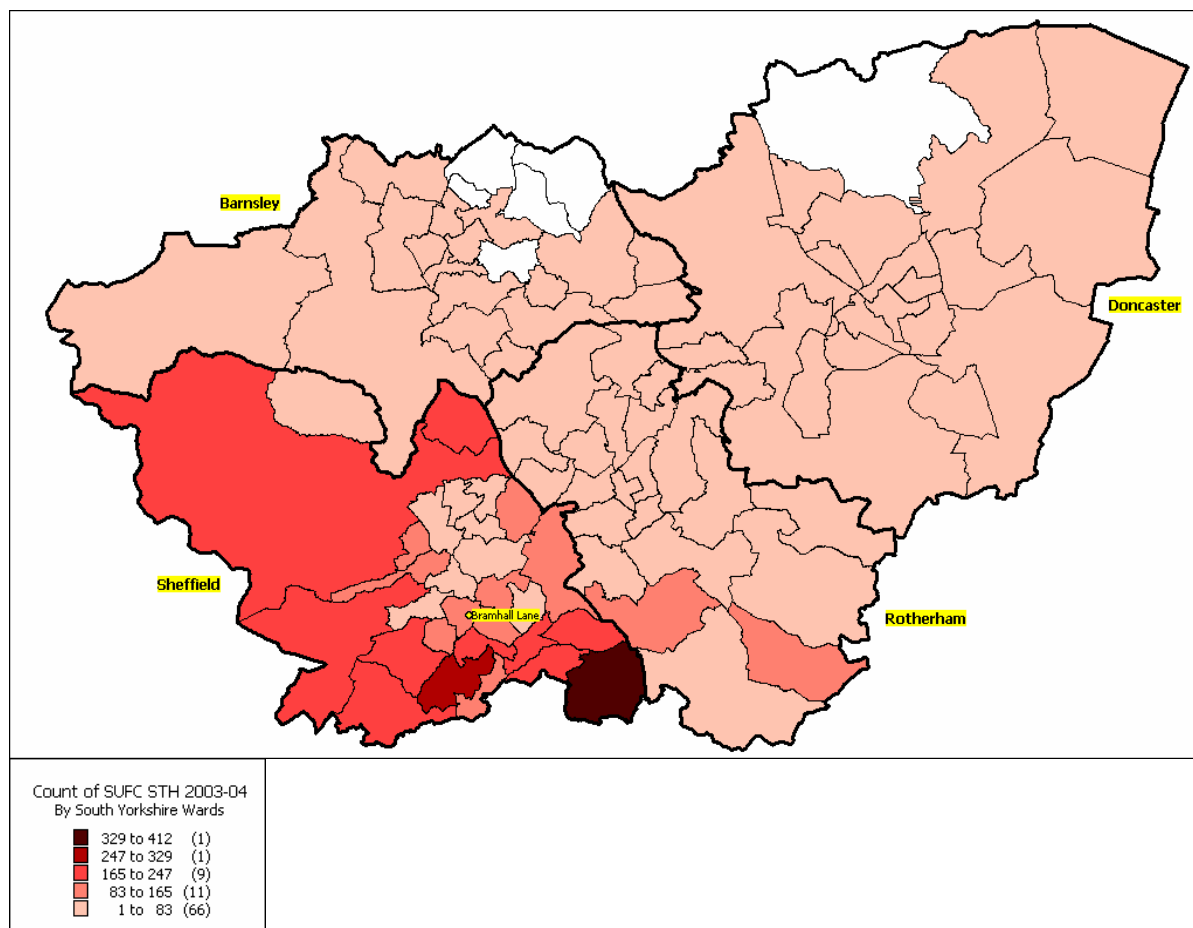
⁵² Data and maps are from Brown, A, Crabbe, T and Mellor, G (2004) *Football and its Communities Interim Report 2: Mapping Case Study Clubs' Communities*, Manchester: MMU.

Figure 4: National location of Sheffield United season ticket holders 2003/04



Focusing on the South Yorkshire district alone, it is clear that the concentrations of club support are no longer centred in the streets and neighbourhoods which surround the club's stadium. Rather they tend to be concentrated in more outlying affluent districts.

Figure 5: Location of Sheffield United season ticket holders in South Yorkshire 2003/04



Indeed, the data from all three clubs from the mapping exercise conducted for our Football and Its Communities study has emphasised the extent to which clubs are *not* drawing significant numbers of season ticket holders, members or junior members from geographical areas of high multiple deprivation, or with large minority ethnic/religious populations: characteristics which often typify the inner city areas in which English football grounds have historically been located. For a game which increasingly seeks to portray itself as ‘accessible’ and ‘inclusive’ this raises very serious concerns because it appears that, in terms of match attendance and formal relationships with clubs, ‘marginal’ communities in terms of ethnicity, and low socio-economic status, are excluded from the game and from full participation as fans on match day. The following maps of the Greater Manchester area reveal the contrast between those areas with high concentrations of Manchester City fans (the higher the concentration the darker the shading) and those areas of the conurbation with high rankings on the Government’s Index of Multiple Deprivation (the higher the concentration the darker the shading).

Figure 6: Location of Manchester City season ticket holders in Greater Manchester for season 2003/04

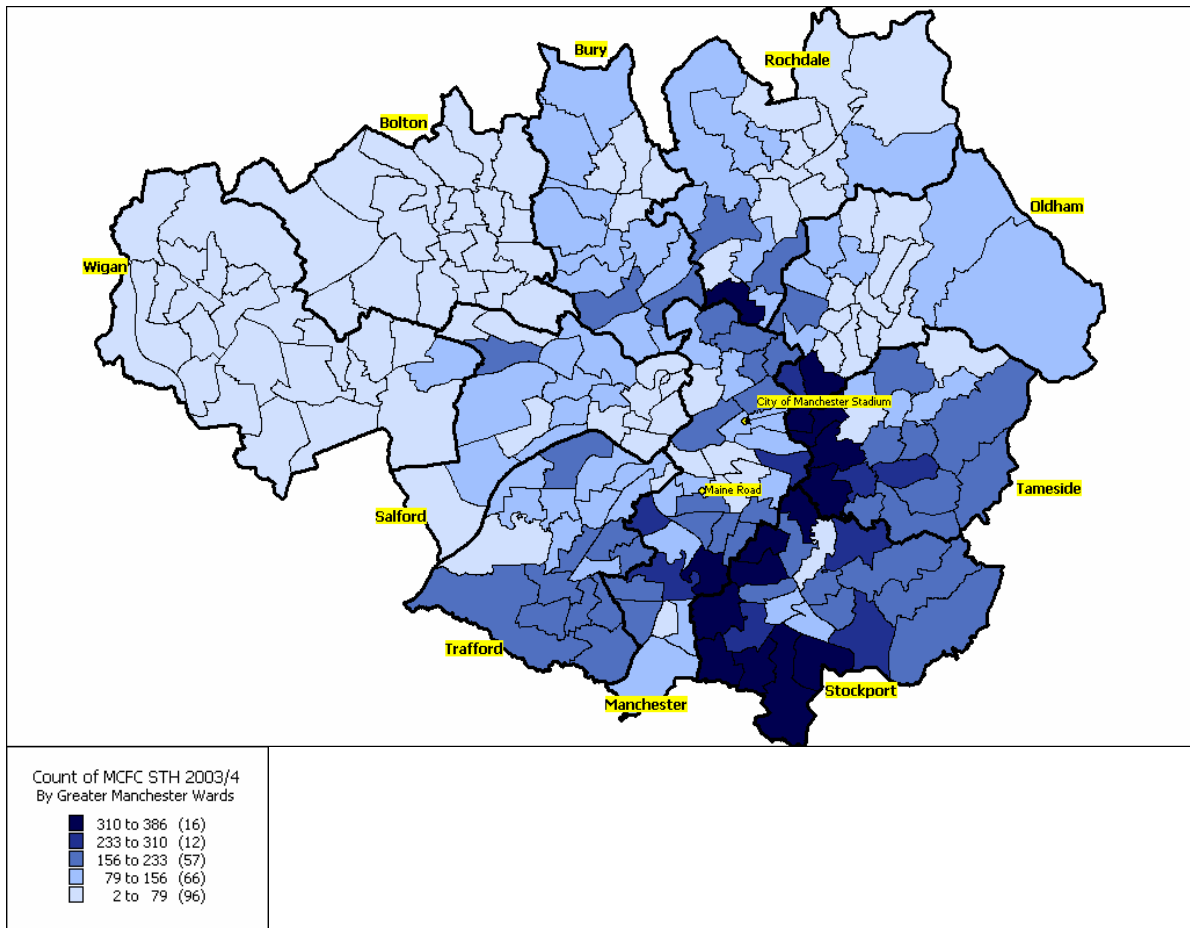
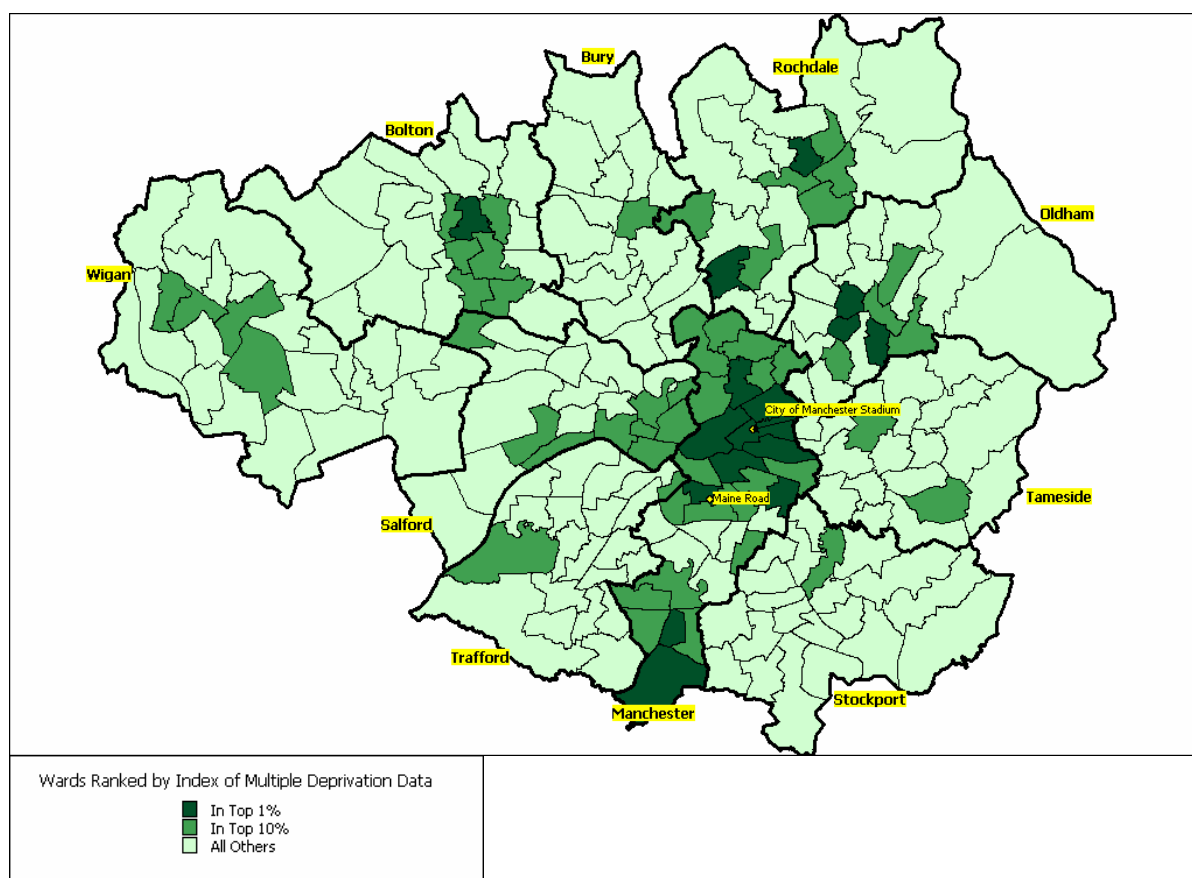


Figure 7: Rankings on the IMD for Greater Manchester in 2000



This evidence suggests that traditional assumptions about clubs drawing fans from their local neighbourhoods might now be misplaced. Given the evidence, above, part of the reason for this must be that football grounds tend to be located in poorer areas of cities, reflecting their urban industrial heritage, whilst fans increasingly tend to come from more affluent areas. However, this is also partly about demographic changes in contemporary cities – the flight to the suburbs of the wealthier working classes and the introduction of ethnic minority communities into city centre locations. The spread of fans across the country (despite concentrations around the host cities) also suggests that social mobility has affected the location of fans who maintain strong links with their ‘home town’ club.

Indeed, from what we have observed very few of the supporters coming into the areas surrounding stadiums on match days pay much attention to the changing nature of these localities. It is almost as though an alternative and sometimes nostalgic kind of existence is established in these locales which arrives from outside the local context only to be swept away again with the crowds and litter. This was evidenced in the match-day routine of one Leeds United supporter to whom we spoke who was brought up in the Beeston area (the area in which

Leeds United's Elland Road stadium is located), but no longer lives there. He explained that when Leeds play on a Saturday, he always returns 'home' for something to eat and a drink in the pubs in Beeston. As he stated:

It's the only time I come back really, on a match day. Most of my family has left the area and so have most of my friends. I always get down there at about 12ish, have a pint and bite to eat in the club, and then go for a few in the White Hart. If nobody's in there I'll go for one at the Whistlestop. I never arrange to meet up with anyone, but you always meet up with somebody. Some weeks I'll get talking to someone I've never met before, but its nearly always familiar faces. I see people I grew up with, old friends of mine because I'm from Beeston, people who know my sister and brother, and my mam and dad. There's also all the faces; there are people who drink in the White Hart on a match day who I have never even spoken to, but whose faces I know from years of going to matches.

This supporter's match-day routine enables him to return 'home' to Beeston to identify with his roots and display a ritualised communal identity with LUFC which might otherwise be lacking. It also provides him with the opportunity to share a sense of community that comes from being a LUFC supporter and which is rooted in the knowledge that he can share a time and a place with the familiar faces of fellow supporters.

At the same time as enabling a kind of nostalgic communion, what this evidence also points to is that football (considered in terms of live match attendance), far from being *the* peoples' game, is in fact really only *some* peoples' game. Significant populations continue to be excluded from regular match attendance with those who do attend increasingly being drawn from more affluent and less ethnically diverse areas.

Dad's club: Introductions to the game and the fight for allegiance

The path that most people take to the status of a fully fledged football fan is a well trodden one. Overwhelmingly, our interviewees and the participants in our focus group discussions, as well as the hundreds of supporters we have interviewed in relation to our other football enquiries, revealed that it was their 'Dad' or another close family member who introduced them to the game.

We interviewed a number of elderly football supporters in Lancashire about how they had started attending football matches and with whom they attended matches at different stages of their lives. In terms of their introduction to football they all stressed the importance of family members in their formative years as regular supporters. Of the twenty supporters interviewed, twelve started attending matches with their fathers, two with their older brothers, one with his mother, and one with his uncle. The other four respondents started attending with friends or work colleagues. A typical example of how supporters were introduced

to football by their fathers in the immediate post-war period is provided in the following quote from a Manchester City supporter:

Well I started attending with my father of course. My father and my uncles were very keen supporters and had followed City since the early days in Hyde Road before they even went to Maine Road ... Their enthusiasm rubbed off on me I suppose and it gave us something in common. I liked going with my father in the early days, but after the War I was old enough to go on my own or with friends.

Another supporter explained in similar terms:

My father always used to go and watch [Manchester] City, and I'd go along with him. It was great and really exciting for a lad of my age, as I was then. But all my school friends were United, so after a while I started watching United games with them as well. I have a soft spot for City because of my father, but I suppose I became a United fan first and foremost.

This fan was typical of a number of supporters we interviewed who started attending matches with their Dads, but later went on to attend matches with friends. For many supporters, then, it is clear that in the first instance football is influenced by and acts as an extension of the strength of the family unit. However, after leaving school many fans start attending games with people from outside the family unit and, as can be seen above, in rare cases actually start supporting teams that are not followed by family members. This move to football supporting independence is often seen as a significant moment in the life history of fans as it usually coincided with their first full-time employment and the construction of associated new friendship groups.

For Sheffield United fan Will his support is regarded as a straightforward continuation of a family tradition which 'goes back generations ... almost to the conception of the club,' on his father's side. His mother's side of the family are 'Wednesdayites' and have in the past tried to convert him to their way of thinking by leaving Wednesday programmes lying around but it was always United games that his father took him to, enrolling him in the Junior Blades when he was six years old. As he says, 'for me it was just always there. I was born and the next thing I can remember is my dad going off to matches, coming back with programmes and such like.'

This straightforwardness is commonplace, with many of the people we have spoken to finding the question as to how they came to support their club a little puzzling, because for them this was something they understood as 'natural'; something that 'always has been' part of their lives. And if the majority of supporters to whom we spoke told us that they attended their first match with

friends or a member of the family – usually but not exclusively their father – their introduction to the club in some way or another always tended to reflect this ‘always has been’ experience. One 42-year-old supporter described his relationship with Leeds United in the following terms:

Leeds United has always been there in my life. No beginning – just there. I was brought up about a mile from the ground and the football club was just part of everything else really, like football itself. Football was the only sport we played as kids even when the council took the goal posts down in the park during the summer months. My dad used to take me to matches only very occasionally, but I used to go down every match day. As kids we wouldn’t waste what little money we had to pay in; so we would usually just wait until three quarter time until the gates opened and watch the last bit of the match. You always knew what score it was by the noise of the crowd. But going back to your question, there was no beginning as such. No.

This viewpoint is not exclusive to older supporters. One 19-year-old fan told us that all his spare time and money goes towards supporting Leeds and that he has supported the club all his life. He told us that ‘it has always felt the natural thing to do’. He explained that his father has never been a ‘full on’ supporter like him, but he had taken him to his first game and that now he has a season ticket and follows the team all over the country.

For many the significance of their fathers’ identities as football fans appears to have established a kind of aspirational precedent of behaviour for them. One of our respondents telling of how they watched the 1979 FA Cup Final on television whilst looking for their Dad in the stands, another on a trip to London to a Cup Final thinking that her father was going to be one of the players! From the other end of this equation the Mums to whom we spoke talked of how their partners ‘laid claim’ to their children in terms of their football club allegiances. Although the women experienced slightly different forms of this behaviour they agreed that their partners were adamant that their children were going to support their own beloved team. Katie’s fiancé bought both their girls (aged seven and three) full football kits and still occasionally takes them to the pub with him to watch the match. Despite both the girls at one stage being very ‘into’ Manchester United this has not been sustained as they have more recently sought to distance themselves from football as they explore less ‘boyish’ activities. However, Andy still encourages the girls to acknowledge their support of Manchester United. When asked why this was so important Katie revealed the traditional pattern which had been passed down through generations, ‘He’s supported them from the day he was born because his Dad does and his Granddad did and everyone he knows did... apart from the odd City fan.’

The most extreme case of this behaviour was provided by Nicola, a 27 year old married mother with two sons aged six and two. Nicola described the powerful affect her husband has upon their older son’s football consumption and makes

note of the influence of the wider family tradition, 'He's a proper, proper Red so he's got a season ticket, his Dad works at United. He's got all the tattoos, he's brainwashed Dean so much that it is untrue.' For Nicola the way in which her husband has shaped their son's fanatical football support or 'brainwashing' is viewed as a natural and expected progression of his role as father. Nicola's husband's fierce support of Manchester United is itself reflective of and similar to that of his own father's support for the club. In this sense Lee has learnt this form of parental role from his own experience. Indeed Nicola views her children's love of football as an involuntary emotion conditioned by their upbringing:

I don't think [kids] have much choice if their Dad supports football. I remember Lee couldn't wait until Dean's feet were big enough for football boots. He had no choice about it. Dean had a 'Fred the Red' baby-grow when he was two days old then he had the ball...I've got pictures in the 'big red folder' with the baby pictures and even in hospital they had the scarf draped around him and all the nurses were like saying 'oh he's a red then'... He was in hospital about four days and I've got pictures of Lee watching the match at home with Dean on his knee. But he hasn't got any choice and he got his first kit when he was five months old.

Indeed this kind of performance of identity is reflected in more formal associations with clubs through the picturing of babies in full replica kit in match day programmes and the registering of babies into junior membership schemes. In one case we even came across a scan of an embryo that had been enrolled in a membership scheme!

This type of indoctrination into a world of football support is not necessarily problematic though where children are willing participants. Indeed the fight for children's allegiance can become an important source of family bonding. Nicola's son Dean's first major rite of passage came on his 6th birthday when his Dad, Granddad and Uncle took him to the FA Cup Final in Cardiff. For Dean this 'away' match was something very special and he knew he was entering a 'different' type of football experience. Nicola reflects upon the day with fond memories of how excited he was on the morning of the match, 'Dean loved it to death and it was his birthday so that was his present. He had his hat and he is so into it it's untrue, just like Lee is.'

The power of such occasions is reflected in the testimony from adult fans who spoke of their own vivid memories of going to their first match with their Dad or the match that 'grabbed them' and made them 'fall in love' with their club. This was often a Cup final, a big match or first away game with the added intensity that goes with such occasions but, ultimately, fandom is not established in moments or single matches but through repeated rituals.

Whilst Will regrets not really remembering his first ever match he easily recalls his early days in the South Stand and his introduction at the age of eight or nine to the Kop and 'what it was like to be a real football fan'. The regular routine

involved getting to the ground early, about two o'clock, standing in exactly the same place behind a crush barrier in the corner of the terrace. Whilst his Dad stopped going in the mid nineties Will continued going with his brother with the routine only changing when he was old enough to start drinking and they moved to the John Street stand which also had a bar that was open at half time. These days it is the social side of going to football which has become more important and which has seen the establishment of new but equally comforting and rigid match day rituals. Will now sits at exactly the same table in the Golden Lion pub before the game and heads off to the ground at the same time, remarking that, 'the same people sit here and I feel like I can come in on a Saturday ... and sit here and there would be someone I know.'

The new chameleons: New technology, fluid allegiances and changing clubs

The world of the 7 year old football fan is far more flexible than Final Score on a Saturday afternoon. For whilst the harsh certainty of James Alexander Gordon's monotone announcements '...Birmingham City nil...Newcastle United, nil. Liverpool three, Aston Villa, one. Manchester City one Fulham, two...' are reflected in the league tables and provide the fuel for evening conversation, the 7 year old soon finds another reality. Since in addition to the pressures applied on youngsters to confirm their allegiance to a particular club, the continuing capacity for less successful teams to recruit new generations of supporters relates partly to their broader range of connections to the game. A loyalty to Manchester City and capacity to challenge the local domination of Manchester United can be played out in playground re-enactments, interactive game contests and an innocent ignorance of historical records.

Interactive gaming developments have provided gamers with a Pandora's Box of possibilities for enhancing and customising their chosen team. As such the club badge merely provides a canvas upon which to paint an assemblage of possibilities and fantasies. All of the young supporters we spoke to have made use of the 'creation central' facility within the FIFA 06 format which allows you to create your own players or make transfers between different clubs. One Manchester City fan had changed entirely the team line up to include eleven members of his own family to whom he had assigned maximum skill levels. The remainder of the squad was made up of a galaxy of world stars including Ronaldinho, Rooney, and Buffon. Only the former England players Andy Cole and Darius Vassell made the cut from the current City squad.

Such developments suggest both an extension of notions of allegiance whilst also undermining the historic fabric of those allegiances. The selection of renowned football stars for a financially limited football club reflects both an aspirational attitude and a desire to ensure victory against all comers. At the same time it also reveals that in a heavily mediated world the bond between supporters and players can no longer be guaranteed merely through their

wearing of the shirt. Where once the identities of players were defined through their appearances for clubs and images on cigarette cards and in sticker books, today players can be visually transported into another club's shirt. Equally it is interesting that this lack of loyalty to club players is in some ways substituted through a loyalty to family members which compensates for a lack of clarity about this young supporter's own allegiances. Whilst stating his allegiance to his 'local' team, Manchester City, he also declares his support for the remainder of his migrant family's own teams. The conundrum is more easily resolved in the world of EA's range of football games.

The stories of established adult fans also reveal something of the complex paths and their relationship to family ties that football supporters sometimes follow. Danny was born and bred in Doncaster, a few miles away from Sheffield and although his Dad took him to a few Doncaster Rovers matches when he was about nine or ten, when he was younger he was more interested in Liverpool. This was mostly as an 'armchair fan' but as he got older his Dad started taking him to Anfield until it became more difficult to just turn up and get into the ground because of reduced capacities. At this point he began going to Doncaster Rovers again, attending with school mates until they were relegated to the Conference and he started playing Saturday football himself. Eight or nine years ago his Dad started going to watch Sheffield United with a workmate and Danny was dragged along to a Sheffield United v Manchester United match. It was a defining moment and by the next season they all had season tickets. His fatal attraction was ultimately unrelated to performances on the pitch and was put down to the quality of the atmosphere:

'I think where we were sat, there were a good group of people around us in the John Street Stand ... who we had a really good laugh with that just made it a whole lot better if we didn't enjoy the game. We'd have a good laugh between us and obviously it were nice to start going to football with me Dad again 'cause I'd not done it for a number of years.'

Football fight club: Fan careers and pathways

For older fans there are new and different kinds of knowledge to be learned as they move through the stages of their 'fan career'. For some this includes the passage into more 'deviant' aspects of football supporter culture including spectator violence and what is popularly termed 'football hooliganism'. Through the extensive academic studies conducted around fan disorder it is clear that varying forms of supporter violence are as old as the game itself.⁵³ Indeed, contrary to some of the initial sociological studies of the 1970s which treated fan disorder as a distinctly contemporary phenomenon, it is now largely accepted that supporters have engaged in violent and destructive behaviour in and around football since the late Victorian period. Definitive explanations for why certain

⁵³ See, for instance, Dunning, E., Murphy P. & Williams, J. *The Roots of Football Hooliganism* (London: Routledge, 1988)

fans have chosen historically to engage in football-related violence have been notoriously difficult to come by (see Section 2). What is clear, however, is that football has long been a significant enough element of various fans' identities and sense of 'self' that they have been willing to risk injury (and the consequences of injuring others) because of their attachment to it. It is also clear that football has long provided an opportunity for people to transgress established social 'norms', and to seek out exciting, confrontational situations which they might more usually avoid.

Forms, 'styles' and levels of football-related violence have changed with relative frequency during the game's history. In the early years of the game's development, it is largely acknowledged that crowd violence was most often inspired by on-field controversies, and was usually directed at players and match-officials. In the post-war period, however, after a period of relative quiet during the 1930s and 1940s, the culture of 'hooliganism' which we now recognise was born as groups of fans began to fight with one another, invade pitches and engage in other organised activities such as 'train wrecking' on match days. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the media profile of 'the hooligan' grew as the number of incidents increased and 'the English disease' started to be encountered abroad in association with English clubs' matches in Europe. The culmination of this, of course, was the watershed season of 1985 and in particular the Heysel Stadium disaster which resulted in the deaths of 39 supporters at the European Cup final between Juventus and Liverpool. The sobering scale of this incident, coupled with the devastating non-hooligan-related Hillsborough Stadium disaster of 1989, ensured that a number of changes began to emerge in English fan culture, one of which was a general perception that supporter violence was in decline.

Since the early 1990s, in association with the dramatic developments which have accompanied the creation of 'the new football' at the top level in England, there has been a general perception in certain sections of the media and amongst some academics that spectator violence is now passé and not in keeping with the styles of support desired by most football supporters. Premier League matches in particular are rarely presented as being tainted by the scourge of 'old fashioned' or '1980s style' fan violence, and even in the lower leagues 'hooliganism' is generally thought to be in decline. The certainty with which these images are presented, however, belie the experiences of some long-standing supporters who still enjoy the violence which has traditionally been part of their match-day experience⁵⁴, and the keen willingness with which some younger fans embrace and continue to develop 'hooligan' identities and styles of support. The continuing pertinence of fan violence for English football is demonstrated by the number of football-related convictions which are recorded by the police year-on-year. In the 2003/04 season, the number stood at 1,646 (a figure undoubtedly inflated by the official desire to prosecute suspected 'hooligans' in the run up to

⁵⁴ Slaughter, P. 'A day out with the 'old boys'', in Wagg, S. (ed.) *British Football and Social Exclusion* (London: Routledge, 2004)

Euro 2004), whilst in the following season it was 1,194.⁵⁵ It is also interesting to note that on the opening weekend of the recent World Cup tournament in Germany police forces across England reported 'huge' rises in crime; much of it associated with behaviour usually defined as football-related disorder.⁵⁶

The continuing relevance of football-related violence was revealed to us by some of our interviewees. In terms of younger fans who are just beginning their 'hooligan careers', four teenage Everton fans to whom we spoke explained how football-related violent clashes had emerged as a new and exciting activity in the context of the recent Everton v Millwall FA Cup third round replay at Goodison Park on Wednesday 18 January 2006. Following a stand off after the match, with Millwall and Everton fans taunting one another, tension had increased and the police had rushed in using aggressive crowd control techniques. Despite the obvious danger the lads had revelled in the clashes and revealed their awareness and the excitement associated with entering this 'grown up' world occupied by 'men' who were willing to 'show them the ropes':

They [the Millwall fans] were proper men. They ran away and then me and the others went down to Lime Street [train station] and we was with these hooligans and they were from Manchester and wanted to fight the Millwall fans. They were psychos. They were like with their Stone Island coats on, Burberry hats and a pair of Rockport's and they walked past the Millwall fans and started spitting at them. They had a name like a hooligan name...At first they were trying to get us to do stuff like saying run this way, they were trying to organise us because they knew how to get through the police. It was a buzz we were a bit scared.

Ultimately the lads had run away and headed back to Everton. However the excitement of the evening remained with them. Whether this incident was an introduction or 'taster' to a more prolonged involvement in such activity remains to be seen but for others we spoke to football violence did become a more regular part of their experience of the game during their late teens and early twenties. One of the 'football widows' we spoke to revealed how her husband:

used to hang around after the match and beat up random other supporters from the other team. It was like an organised thing that they would do. There were other ones. It wasn't like the big ones it was them and the ones about their age, scraps on street corners but you know that escalates.

Whilst they had concerns about their partners' involvement in such activity Wendy reflected on how it had declined as they had become older and taken on parental responsibilities:

⁵⁵ Source: Football Banning Authority

⁵⁶ Tonight with Trevor McDonald, ITV 19 June 2006

When he was younger and going to matches he'd end up in a big fight and that is part of why and what he would go for as well as watching the football... But now because he is older and a bit more wiser he doesn't.

In this sense what came out of our focus group discussions was a kind of career path through which supporters pass at different stages of their lives, including:

- 'The youth team' - where supporters 'learned the ropes' and gained in interest in violence from older fans, the media and other technologies
- 'Practice matches' including occasional small scale fighting
- 'Team games' involving purposeful violent engagement
- 'First team' involving organised fighting
- 'Retirement' when supporters may retain an interest but move back from first hand involvement

While we are not suggesting that this career is illustrative of all football supporters involved in violence it does fit with the experience of the young men and their partners that we spoke to for this study.

Section 5: Everything and nothing: Football and everyday life

KEY FINDINGS

- Football is a key feature of the workplace and provides the means to connect with colleagues, an opportunity to avoid or ease the alienation of work, an opportunity to forge an identity and a means with which to manipulate a workforce
- There are times when work and football cannot easily co-exist and fans might be tempted to take 'sickies' to watch matches
- Football has become an everyday feature of advertising campaigns and popular culture which is more likely to be embraced by those with a casual connection to the game whilst being resisted by more committed supporters
- The key sectors to benefit from the World Cup were the electrical sector, clothing and food and drink
- The football has now become almost ubiquitous in England: a phenomenon which causes resent amongst some supporters
- Football based internet messageboards have become a means with which to connect with the likeminded about 'everyday matters' rather than 'football'

KEY STATISTICS

- It was estimated that 13% of the population would call in sick to watch matches during the 2006 World Cup
- Experts disagreed about the impact of the 2006 World Cup on productivity. The most optimistic report claimed 'smart' working during the tournament would boost productivity by £1.83bn, whilst a more negative report claimed the tournament could cost the UK economy almost £4bn.
- It was estimated that \$1bn would be spent on World Cup advertising in 2006
- FIFA declared that the 2006 World Cup would be the 'biggest ever' in terms of commercial revenue. It estimated it would generate £1.3bn from the tournament, with £800m coming from TV rights
- It was predicted that increased retail generated because of the tournament would see between £900m and £1.25bn pumped into the UK economy

Back to work on Monday

For some supporters work appears merely as a necessary evil which gets in the way of their passion for football, a means of income to fund next week's trip to Torquay or next year's season ticket as well as a restraint on the free use of time. The game's tentacles reach far beyond the true obsessive though, and pervade workplaces in all kinds of ways. Whether in an office, a factory or a supermarket, football makes its presence felt and, for many, appears as a welcome interruption or unwanted irritation during the working day. Reading the sports pages, checking football websites and exchanging banter with colleagues, customers, friends on the phone or distant supporters on the internet is a part of many people's day-to-day working life at work.

Part of this presence is related to the role that football can have in establishing a position within the informal hierarchy of a workplace, but also its role in challenging traditional power relations based on gender, age and management structure. In some work places, and particularly male dominated industries, football often leaves a heavy mark. In such environments it can provide a means with which to disrupt the authority of colleagues and work mates through jocular reference to individual knowledge, interest or allegiance.

For some football can even provide a route into work. One of our respondents claims that being a 'Blade' helped to get him his first ever job as his prospective boss was a Sheffield United season ticket holder and the question of what team he supported was raised in the interview when he said he liked football. He went on to reveal that working with, 'a massive, massive Blade', meant that whilst getting on with whatever work had to be done, throughout the day they would be chatting about football, with Fridays spent discussing the weekend's team selection and formation. The fondness that this generated for the job is reflected in the fact that he still retains the notepad that they used to aid their discussions.

In a less personal way football also makes its presence felt in the workplace as a negotiating tool, used instrumentally by employers to gain the trust of a workforce. However, this can also lead to alienation on the part of avid football fans where this *use* of football is regarded as 'inauthentic'. For example, a line manager who has a similar interest in football to their staff may be able to gain their respect as much because of this as through their wider management abilities. However, if such an interest is perceived to be false, due to a lack of commitment to a team, inadequate knowledge of the game or misrepresentation of their football identity, their authority might also be put into question, despite any other managerial attributes. One of our FC United of Manchester respondents who 'lives for football' actually hides this interest at work for fear of getting caught up in conversations with people who are introduced as being 'into football', a sentiment which was captured perfectly in an email (from his workplace) which read in sarcastic terms:

Subject "3 mins 46 seconds..."

....was the time it took from me walking in the office 'til some numpty muttered the immortal line: "bet you're gutted about Rooney hey? 'We've got no chance now have we, hey?" etc. Football mad in this office.

This cynicism relates to the ways in which overt football allegiances are increasingly performed at work for various purposes. Where once upon a time working identities were governed by the position held within a company structure and the job involved, today identities are more likely to be framed by what we are 'in-to'. In some places of work, football is not a particularly dominant subject. In such cases football identities still emerge as someone with a little more knowledge than anybody else can be appointed as the 'football expert'. Whether it is because their son goes to the game every week, their partner is always watching Sky sports at home or they themselves have a latent interest that has never developed as fully as it might have, any question from the starting formation of the national team to current stadium developments of the local club are then directed towards these 'experts'.

For others football provides a means with which to play with colleagues' and workmates' emotions on the office or shop floor. For those who enjoy winding people up, the morning after a match provides welcome ammunition. They instinctively know what to say and how to say it in order to deliberately annoy, frustrate and distract other football supporters during the working day.

There are also times when work and football cannot easily co-exist, but instead clash, creating a range of logistical and emotional tensions in those who are committed to the game. This is especially true when important matches take place during 'normal' working hours or coincide with the shift patterns of those who are required to work on evenings and weekends. On such occasions, employees usually have a relatively simple yet potentially dangerous choice to make: turn up to work and miss the match; or 'throw a 'sickie' if the boss won't let you take the time off legitimately.

Football supporters have been wrestling with this particular conundrum for as long as the game has existed. In the period when League matches were frequently played during weekday afternoons (owing to the absence of floodlight facilities), local newspapers frequently reported the increases in 'industrial absenteeism' which occurred on match days. Not every supporter, however, always decided to miss work when matches were on as evidenced by the elderly fan to whom we spoke who missed the 1966 World Cup final between England and Germany due to his need to work on Saturday afternoon. He told us that it was one of the great regrets of his life.

During the 2006 FIFA World Cup, the potential for mass absenteeism from work places across England once again came to national attention, especially in

relation to England's second group match against Trinidad and Tobago which kicked off at 5pm BST. According to a report in Retail Week, 13% of the population expected to call in sick in order to watch daytime matches during the World Cup⁵⁷, and in a move which produced a great deal of disquiet in various sections of the British media, the union Amicus published advice in advance of the game entitled 'World Cup Fever' which was interpreted by many as a guide on 'how to take a sickie'. In reality, the article had a number of sections, firstly advising staff to ask bosses to let them take time off and make up hours later, and secondly recommending that union negotiators could approach management and 'persuade [them] what a good investment it could be to find ways to let people watch the World Cup' as it would be 'great for team building' and it would be 'a lot cheaper than an away day'.⁵⁸ However, it was the section entitled 'Just take a Sickie?' which created most media interest, principally because it appeared to offer a range of hints of how to minimise the chances of being caught.

Beyond the issue of absenteeism the World Cup had a far wider impact on football fans' working environments. In launching a competition to find the office best decorated with World Cup paraphernalia, the *Guardian* website wrote:

Nothing beats a World Cup during office hours. The late, long lunches. The oddly-timed tea breaks. The callous abuse of internet policies. The sly booking of urgent off-site meetings while your nation is playing. The boss handing down rules and attempting "team gatherings" during particularly vital fixtures.⁵⁹

In anticipation of these changing habits, different businesses employed a range of tactics. The Asda range of supermarkets announced employees were free to take time off to watch matches if they wished, but stated that any time away would be treated as unpaid holiday. Other employers tried to ensure people would turn up for work as normal by allowing them to watch matches at their desks or in other locations in the work place. An official at a London investment bank adopting such a scheme explained 'I guess the view is that we might as well let people watch it. Keeping people at their desks is better than letting them watch it elsewhere'.⁶⁰ There were, however, warnings about such approaches, especially because of the proliferation of internet related content connected with the World Cup since the last tournament in 2002, and the fact that the BBC was streaming matches live on the internet for the first time. Joe Shelston, an employment law expert with Brabners Chaffe Street, was quoted as saying 'The danger for employers is that they assume that so long as their workers are at their desk, there is no problem... with much more entertaining Web sites and

⁵⁷ *The Guardian*, 5 June 2006 'Playing Away'

⁵⁸ *Outlaw News*, 14 June 2006 'Union reveals best way to take a 'sickie' for England'

⁵⁹ *Guardian* website, 16 June 2006

⁶⁰ *Reuters*, 5 June 2006 'Traders Encouraged to Enjoy World Cup from Desks'.

chatrooms than there were four years ago, football fans are going to find themselves spending more and more time online when they should be working'.⁶¹

Debates over the positive or negative influence of the 2006 World Cup on workplace productivity were common throughout the tournament. A report by Vodafone UK took the optimistic view that workers' desire to 'work smart' and get away early on the day of the Trinidad and Tobago match would boost gross domestic product by £1.83bn.⁶² Others were not so confident. The CBI chose the run up to the tournament to launch its latest CBI/AXA Absence Survey and to express its concerns about the amount of money lost through workplace absenteeism more generally.⁶³ Brabners Chaffe Street tried to put a figure on the money lost during the World Cup, estimating that hours spent by workers following the tournament would cost the British economy almost £4 billion.⁶⁴ In some respects this divergence reflects the difficulties involved in even attempting to measure the economic impact of football events, which we reflect on further below, as well as the problematic use made of statistics more generally.

What is clear though is that football is not just a topic of conversation at work. It provides a whole range of influences which have a direct impact on the productivity and dynamic of the workplace as illustrated in the Table below.

Table 5: Football in the workplace

Workers' Activity	Use of Football
Shirking	Whether listening to the boss' analysis of the match or cruising the club message boards, football provides an excuse to do anything but your job
Blagging	Organising a business meeting that coincides with an away match in London; 'working from home' on the day of a mid afternoon UEFA cup qualifier blaggers knows their priorities
Networking	Reading other people's interest in football to find a point of connection the networker 'uses' football to help manage staff, secure deals and address conflict
Part-timers' joining in	Don't really like football but feel they ought to because everyone else does. Ask questions as though football was the weather
Winding-up	Disrupt the workplace by knowing which buttons to press and how to get the rows going
Refusing	Hate the game and refuse to engage with it. Likely to be a source of rival attractions

⁶¹ Reuters, 5 June 2006 'Traders Encouraged to Enjoy World Cup from Desks'.

⁶² Outlaw News, 14 June 2006 'Union reveals best way to take a 'sickie' for England'

⁶³ Outlaw News, 15 June 2006 'Workplace Absence Costs £13billion, says CBI'

⁶⁴ Reuters, 5 June 2006 'Traders Encouraged to Enjoy World Cup from Desks'.

Football, advertising and popular culture

As with football in the workplace, whilst there is a general perception that you do not see football being played in the street as much these days, in another sense the game has become ubiquitous. The dominance of the motor car and fears over public safety may have lessened the numbers of children kicking a ball from one kerb to another, but in other ways cultural shifts have magnified its presence. Where as once, during the game's nadir in the mid 1980s, football was a topic to be avoided in 'polite' company today it is used to sell everything from crisps to celebrity magazines and political parties.

To underline this point, in the run up to the 2006 FIFA World Cup, it was estimated that \$1bn would be spent on World Cup-related advertising, boosting annual advertising revenues by a full percentage point.⁶⁵ Fifteen companies, including Coca-Cola, Gillette, Mastercard and McDonald's, paid \$28m each to become official partners 'in anticipation of huge returns on their investment due to increased 'brand awareness' and worldwide sales of products'.⁶⁶ The desire to connect consumer products with the World Cup was not confined to the 'big' football markets. It was estimated that more than half of marketing activity before and after the event would be spent on tournament-related advertising in countries as diverse as China, Bolivia, Chile, Hungary, Thailand and Venezuela.⁶⁷

Indeed despite his decline as a playing force former England captain David Beckham's marketable face regularly surveys the urban landscape promoting his own 'brand' as much as the latest product with which he is associated. Further illustrating the degree to which football has become 'part of the furniture', TV pundits Alan Hansen, Jamie Redknapp and Ian Wright all played their part in the resurrection of Marks and Spencer's fortunes as they smiled out from advertising hoardings up and down the country in the run up to the World Cup finals.

Figure 8: Marks & Spencer advertisement



The media reputation of such figures is such that those without a particular interest in football can still respond to these 'football related' advertising

⁶⁵ *The Guardian*, 30 May 2006 'World Cup New Order'

⁶⁶ *The Telegraph*, 11 June 2006

⁶⁷ *The Guardian*, 30 May 2006 'World Cup New Order'

campaigns through a reliance on the subconscious product penetration powers of football celebrity.

For many this increasingly ubiquitous football presence is missed as they pass by on their daily commute to work or the shops. On the streets of Sheffield a passer-by echoes the views of others as he tries to recall the advert for a leading sports company that he has just walked past: 'I look at it everyday... I've no idea, I can't think what it is...' Another could simply point out that it had changed recently and that he was sure the previous advert had something to do with mobile phones. There are some, however, that do notice, especially when an advert is a new addition to the seemingly unchanging environment or footballing loyalties are offended. One large billboard emblazoned with the logo of a particularly disliked team's sponsors forces a daily drive into work to be completely rerouted because the driver, 'didn't want to have it rubbed in [his] face every morning.' Elsewhere the defacing of a pig captured on an advert for Holsten Pils outside Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough stadium marks the reclamation of advertising space by playing to the local vernacular descriptions of the city's rival clubs⁶⁸.

Figure 9: Advertising hoarding in Hillsborough, Sheffield



There are other provocations to football supporting motorists relating to the panoply of club merchandise that now adorns cars and trucks. Traffic jams become more menacing if the back window of the car in front displays a rival

⁶⁸ Both of the Sheffield clubs supporters are known as 'pigs' to supporters of their city rivals

club's stickers. 'I wouldn't mind but I've got to stare at THAT...' is the bilious response to a particularly slow crawl out of the city centre as the driver indicates a pennant hanging in the rear of the car in front. Here the clear annoyance at being gridlocked is focused on the distaste at being stuck behind a rival supporter, rather than the cause of the queue.

Beyond the car, football shirts and other paraphernalia have become such a common feature of contemporary leisure wear that they are rarely noticed by the majority. However, for football supporters themselves they offer a conspicuous means of displaying some form of belonging within the fluidity of consumer society. Whether waiting at the bus stop in the latest away shirt or noticing a subtle pin badge on a jumper in the street, the usual civil inattention maintained by urban dwellers occasionally breaks down with the recognition of some common bond. The exchange may be a subtle nod of the head or a prolonged conversation depending on the situation. It may also be a despairing acceptance by someone who chooses not to display their allegiance in such a prominent manner or a look of disgust from a supporter of a different side.

Inspired by the popularity of these sports styles the racks of clothes in Next, Top Man and Burton and also now women's clothes shops such as Top Shop, increasingly make their own clear reference to football, drawing on historical kit designs, generic imagery on t-shirts and expressions of patriotism. Such attire enables the wearer to slide between multiple identities embracing 'football supporter in pub', 'devoted husband in restaurant' and 'lads/girls night out in town' without having to change outfits.

This sense of 'football fashion' also acts in countervailing ways though and Anthony King⁶⁹ describes how 'the lads', a group of young, fashion conscious Mancunian Manchester United fans, shunned the club's official merchandise because it was both seen as 'naff' or lacking credibility and because by buying it they felt it was economically and symbolically supporting the Plc regime that owned the club. This reflects a much broader tendency in English which has existed since the late 1970s or early 1980s (depending on accounts) within what has been termed 'casual' football culture⁷⁰.

For 'casuals', how distinctive you looked – especially with rare or very new designer items – was as important as how you supported your team and, indeed, how well you fought. Indeed, by the turn of the century the lads, and more generally Manchester United's away following, were noted for their lack of colour or visible attachment to the team (many would wear nothing more than a small pin badge, if that).

The complex associations between these popular cultural preferences and the ways in which the campaign is organised and packaged is further revealed by the

⁶⁹ King, 1998, op. cit.

⁷⁰ See Redhead, S., 1992, op. cit.

fact that many of 'the lads' now follow FC United of Manchester whether or not they still attend matches at Old Trafford. In stark contrast to the stoicism of casual culture one of the striking features of FCUM games is the colour and the sheer number of scarves, banners and replica shirts on display. As one FC fan put it:

I would never in a million years have been seen dead in a scarf at Big United, yet here I am with my red FC bar scarf, my replica top is at home, and I can't wait for the black bar scarves to come out. I suppose it's cos this club is ours and we know the money isn't going to shareholders but will stay in the club. It's different now anyway – there isn't really an opposition at any away game and what drove us back then [at Manchester United] doesn't seem right here.

Where there's muck, there's brass: Football's influence on the economy

As football's links with popular culture are so strong, it is little surprise to find that the game's impact on commerce (both intended and unintended) and the economy in general are frequently debated. There is now a relatively long history of socio-economic impact studies being conducted around football clubs⁷¹, stadia⁷² and 'major events'⁷³ (such as the World Cup and the Olympic Games). These frequently disagree about the scale of the impact of football-related occasions, places and events, but all agree that some level of economic impact can usually be identified. This is usually based on the presumption that football encourages consumption; both directly in terms of the actual game and indirectly in terms of the types of things/activities which people might do because of or around football. These include travel to and from games, food and drink on match days, general 'hospitality', football-related clothing and the consumption of various types of media.

These debates were rehearsed again around the 2006 FIFA World Cup. In the run up to the tournament, notwithstanding the difficulty of measuring such things, FIFA declared that 'commercially, this World Cup will be the biggest ever - and bigger than the Olympic Games'. It claimed that it expected to generate £1.3bn from the tournament, with over £800 million coming from television rights alone.⁷⁴ In the UK, large numbers of expert reports, company press releases and media articles appeared before and during the tournament, all confidently predicting or asserting the effect of the World Cup on the UK economy as a whole, certain

⁷¹ See, for instance, Johnstone, S, Southern, A and Taylor, R *The Economic Impact of Football on the City of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Mersey Partnership and Liverpool City Council, 1999)

⁷² See, for instance, Cardiff Research Centre *The Economic Impact of the Millennium Stadium* (Cardiff: Cardiff City Council, 1998)

⁷³ See, for instance, Dobson N, Gratton C, and Holliday S *Football Came Home: The Economic Impact of Euro 96* (Sheffield: Leisure Industries Research Centre, 1997); Baade, R. and Matheson, V. 'The Quest for the Cup: Assessing the Economic Impact of the World Cup', *Regional Studies*, 38, 4, 2004 pp. 343-354

⁷⁴ *The Telegraph*, 11 June 2006

retail sectors or individual companies. The Centre for Economics and Business Research claimed that as a result of the tournament an additional £ 1.25bn could be pumped into the UK economy, whilst *The Telegraph* newspaper predicted a more conservative though still significant figure of £900 million.⁷⁵

Two sectors which reported actual positive impacts in the early weeks of the tournament were the electrical and clothing retail sectors, driven by sales of flat screen televisions and World Cup-related clothing (replica kit etc.).⁷⁶ With reference to sales of flat screen TV's, retailers across the country were said to have reported 'huge jumps' in purchases in the months running up to the tournament, whilst the Office of National Statistics showed for April 2006 a 23% rise on the previous year in the sale of electrical goods, and a 19% rise for May.⁷⁷ In relation to the clothing sector, Adidas, one of the 'official partners' of the World Cup, announced that it expected to sell 1.5 million football jerseys, one million pairs of Predator football boots and 15 million 'Teamgeist' official World Cup matchballs (at £70 each) as a result of the tournament.⁷⁸

Another retail sector which was reported to have benefited from the interest in the tournament was food and drink. The major supermarkets were said to have seen considerable upturns in trade in the early weeks of the tournament, with Tesco claiming it had a 'humungous' weekend on the opening couple of days of the World Cup when the England team played its first group game versus Paraguay.⁷⁹ A representative of Waitrose stated that the World Cup has contributed to 'strong uplifts in trade across the barbeque ranges, salads and ice creams, combined with large volumes in beer sales'.⁸⁰ Some Morrison's stores reported selling out of Fosters' lager ahead of the England v Paraguay match, whilst more generally 400 million cans and bottles of beer, lager and cider were expected to be drunk during the tournament - 25 per cent more than in an average month.⁸¹ Supermarkets were also reported to be expecting to do well out of special ranges associated with the tournament. Sainsbury's were hoping to sell more than 750,000 England flags throughout the tournament, whilst Tesco estimated selling 500,000.⁸²

In other areas of the high street, retailers also tailored ranges to meet the anticipated desire of consumers to purchase World Cup related merchandise. Woolworths was reported to have launched 300 World Cup products from balloons to bottle openers, whilst the British Retail Consortium said sales of

⁷⁵ *The Guardian*, 30 May 2006 'New World Cup Order'; *The Telegraph*, 11 June 2006

⁷⁶ *Reuters*, 15 June 2006 'World Cup Kicks Retail Sales Higher'

⁷⁷ *Reuters*, 15 June 2006 'World Cup Kicks Retail Sales Higher'

⁷⁸ *The Telegraph*, 11 June 2006

⁷⁹ *The Guardian*, 17 June 2006 'Why the England v Sweden result will be crucial for John Lewis'

⁸⁰ *The Guardian* 16 June 2006

⁸¹ *The Telegraph*, 11 June 2006

⁸² *The Telegraph*, 11 June 2006

'everything from garden goals and England toilet seats to inflatable referees and T-shirts for dogs were selling well'.⁸³

Whilst it is difficult to substantiate such claims, the all-encompassing nature of the economic reach of the World Cup was summed up in a *Times* article written in anticipation of England's quarterfinal match against Portugal. In the piece, the newspaper attempted to predict the wide-ranging economic impact of the match in England.⁸⁴ To do this, it focused on the key 'markets' and activities associated with football and reported that on match day it was anticipated that:

- one television would be sold every 40 seconds in John Lewis.
- one flat-screen TV would be sold every 15 seconds in Curry's.
- 15 million extra pints would be sold in English pubs.
- 5 million cases of beer and around 10 million sausages would be consumed.
- 5 million disposable barbecues would be in action.
- 6200 cash withdrawals per minute would occur at half time.
- more than 30 million viewers would be watching the match on TV.

From the reports above, it would be easy to conclude that football in general - and the World Cup in particular - has an overwhelming and uncomplicated positive impact economically. However, the news from some companies in the retail sector during the 2006 World Cup was not particularly positive. The department store chain John Lewis reported that sales were down in all but one of its 27 outlets on the opening Saturday of the tournament as potential customers stayed away to watch the England v Paraguay match (the only store to maintain its usual level of trade was in Scotland).⁸⁵ The men's outfitters Moss Brothers also partially blamed the World Cup for absent customers which caused it to experience a £1.1million loss in sales.⁸⁶ This indicates the partial nature of positive economic effects associated with football. As we have demonstrated in our other research,⁸⁷ not all retail sectors do well out of the game. Indeed, the *Times* newspaper reported before the tournament that 'sales strength [would be] skewed towards specific sectors'.⁸⁸ It appears that some businesses are simply not related enough to football to benefit from the game economically, and find it difficult to associate themselves with it even during 'big' events such as the World Cup.

The other point to note is that the positive economic influence of football is frequently short lived. In the reporting on the impact of the 2006 World Cup, the

⁸³ *The Telegraph*, 11 June 2006

⁸⁴ *The Times*, 30 June 2006

⁸⁵ *The Guardian* 17 June 2006 'Why the England v Sweden result will be crucial for John Lewis'

⁸⁶ *Manchester Evening News*, 09 August 2006

⁸⁷ Brown, A, Crabbe, T, Mellor, G, Blackshaw, T and Stone, C *Football and its Communities: Interim Report 2: Mapping Case Study Clubs' Communities* (Manchester: MIPC, 2004)

⁸⁸ *The Times*, 01 June 2006 'World Cup gives 'short-lived' kick to retail sales'

upturn in retail trade associated with the tournament was often set against a more general background of 'dip[ping] consumer confidence, rising job cuts amongst retailers and concerns that sales may drop back after the effect of the football tournament on sales ... has passed'.⁸⁹ Reuters reported during the tournament that policymakers would be 'wary of reading too much into the [recent positive economic] data until the World Cup effect passes, particularly as soaring household bills are eating into disposable incomes'.⁹⁰ This indicates that whilst it may be clear that positive economic effects can be accrued from football, these tend to be temporary, unpredictable and difficult to measure: a point which is frequently missing in economic impact studies of football and sport more generally.

Sick of the Sight of It – The 'Footballisation' of English Culture

In this section we have already identified the ways in which football is increasingly encountered in numerous and often disparate elements of English culture. We have hinted at the relatively recent nature of this phenomenon (in its present guise at least), and the resistance it has caused amongst some supporters. However, it is worth exploring this in more detail, not least because of the extraordinary ubiquity of football in English culture in recent years which may have reached a peak (or a nadir depending on your point of view) this summer.

It is almost axiomatic to note the growing profile of football in English culture in recent years. However, it is not merely the profile of the game which is notable, it is also the overbearing self-conscious ways in which people are required to display connections with football. Everybody must now 'follow' a team; everybody must know a transfer rumour about which player is going where; and everybody must have a biography which includes hours spent on a legendary away trip to continental Europe or Grimsby (depending on the size of your club). This compulsion with associating oneself with the game came to comic attention in the 1990s when the BBC sketch programme, *The Fast Show* invented the Roger Nouveau character: a yuppie of the 1980s/1990s who jumped on the suddenly up-market football bandwagon. However, this ridicule has not seen a reduction in people's almost obsessive desire to associate themselves with the 'national game'. On the contrary, it has continued apace into the new millennium.

The longing to be associated with English football has been thrown into the sharpest relief during international football tournaments. Since England hosted the European Championships in 1996, it is probably not too strong to suggest that each subsequent international tournament has been met with increasing fundamentalism and even hysteria in terms of one's supposed engagement with the event. The media and broader commercial attention turned on the tournaments have made them simply impossible to escape. One is allowed to have a range of feelings towards the events and England's performances within

⁸⁹ *The Times*, 01 June 2006 'World Cup gives 'short-lived' kick to retail sales'

⁹⁰ *Reuters*, 15 June 2006 'World Cup Kicks Retail Sales Higher'

them, but indifference is now simply 'not allowed'. Everyone is expected to have an opinion and a level of engagement, and these must be displayed and 'performed' at every available moment. This is not confined to the 'general public'. During the 2006 World Cup, the British people were treated to days of unedifying coverage of politicians claiming the football fanatic/patriotic high ground by flying St George's flags from their vehicles.

Figure 10: Culture Minister Tessa Jowell posing with a St George's flag during the 2006 World Cup.⁹¹



The more general explosion in the desire to display the Cross of St George in the run up to and during football tournaments is the most visible sign of the increasing requirement of people to perform their attachment to the England team at these times. This was again very prominent during the 2006 World Cup as neighbours dressing their houses with flags seemingly entered into the same competitive spirit which now accompanies the display of Christmas decorations. Indeed, it is estimated that in excess of 10.5m St George's flags were bought in England during June, with 27% of English adults purchasing at least one.⁹² This contrasts with some of our observations, which suggested that the display of the St George's flag was not as prominent throughout the 2006 World Cup as it had been during Euro 2004 in the same locations, perhaps a result of such displays being derogatorily associated in the media with 'chav' culture and 'the white van man'.

Pubs also entered the competition with similar enthusiasm, with the Derby Arms in Whitefield, Manchester deciding that a completely new St George's themed paint job was more appropriate for the occasion than a simple flag. The wearing of England-related clothing also appeared to be more conspicuous than during previous tournaments. Surveying the everyday dress of people in a holiday resort

⁹¹ *The Guardian*, 6 June 2006 'Flying the flag is a matter of choice'

⁹² *The Guardian*, 12 June 2006

in Corfu during the tournament, it was easy to conclude that red and white were the only colours currently available on the English high street.

Figure 11: The Derby Arms Pub in Whitefield, Manchester



The commercial exploitation of football tournaments such as the 2006 World Cup, which has been touched upon earlier, ensured that even if people want to disassociate themselves from the game, special products and marketing ploys are now devised to remind them of what they were getting away from. Tesco supermarkets launched special scratch-cards with separate 'Love Football?', 'Hate Football?' sections for this summer's tournament which promised football-related and non-football-related prizes respectively. Elsewhere, an excursion company in Corfu devised special shopping trips to Corfu town on match days for 'Ladies' who wanted to 'escape the football and shop till you drop'. 'Men who don't like football' were also invited along.

Figure 12: 'Escape the football...'



The gendered nature of many new 'football avoidance' products and services was clear during the 2006 World Cup. It was reported in the *Times* that spas and other venues offering beauty treatments and pamper days were marketing them specifically to 'football widows' and their guilty partners, particularly on England match days.⁹³ Indeed, it appears that the whole industry of football-related gendered apologies and bribes had the potential to emerge during the tournament. A Virgin Money report predicted that Britons would spend £635 million taking their wives and girlfriends out to dinner to compensate them for long hours being ignored during the World Cup.⁹⁴

As explained elsewhere in this report, it is in line with the usual trends of English football culture that a gendered divide emerged in response to the omnipresence of the World Cup in 2006. Indeed, some women clearly revelled in it. One woman who went to the gym on the day of the England v Paraguay match remarked positively 'this is what it would be like if all the men were abducted by aliens!' Elsewhere, there were reports that women in particular, but also significant numbers of men, were determinedly going about their usual business of shopping, eating out, and going to the cinema in defiant resistance to the orthodoxy of obedience that the World Cup supposedly demanded. Mintel reported that, in all, a third of Britons planned to miss the England v Trinidad and Tobago game,⁹⁵ a figure at odds with the common perception that 'the country comes to a standstill' at the time of big England games at international tournaments.

It is not, of course, particularly startling news to discover that some people are not interested in football and would rather avoid watching matches. It is more interesting to note, however, the ways in which the frenzied attention given over to football is proving increasingly alienating to certain sections of football's traditional constituencies. In the early part of the 2005/06 domestic football season, the English media was filled with stories of how fans were abandoning their clubs because of a variety of recent developments. One of these was the 'hype' associated with especially top-level English football and the rupture this had caused in some fans' feelings of psychological 'ownership' of the game. The *Observer* newspaper launched a campaign around this issue entitled 'The Game that Ate Itself', and the *Guardian* website launched a special section called 'Blueprint for a Better Football' which aimed to turn around the increasing malaise around English football.

In the context of the World Cup, stories about fans being 'sick' of the hype surrounding the World Cup abound. On the *Guardian* blogging site on the day after England's second round match, one fan wrote:

⁹³ *The Times*, 30 June 2006

⁹⁴ *The Telegraph*, 11 June 2006

⁹⁵ *The Guardian*, 17 June 2006 'World Cup? We'd rather go shopping'

Don't get me wrong, I love the game...but anyone else had enough of the incessant World Cup hype? Listening to the radio this morning was something else. Weather reports from Germany, presenters moaning about last night's sauerkraut and tedious interviews with hung-over fans at campsites were only the start. You'd think England were playing Brazil in the final rather than Trinidad and bloody Tobago in the group stages such was the hysterical coverage.⁹⁶

Similarly, on the *Weekly Gripe* website a supporter summed up his/her feelings by stating: 'it's not the sport I'm complaining about, it's the hype that surrounds the World Cup and in particular the commercial gimmicks and rubbish that of course people 'must have''.⁹⁷

The roots of these opinions are not difficult to discern. There are feelings amongst some English football fans that the game is no longer 'theirs' and that it has been trampled upon, misrepresented and fundamentally changed by the incessant attention now turned upon it by constant media and commercial attention/exploitation. There is also a sense that all the 'muppets', 'numpties', 'johnny come latelays', 'day trippers' and 'wannabees' that surround the game are making it less authentic and contributing more generally to a continuing process of making football nothing more than a bland, 'tacky' product for mass consumption. This precious, exclusionary attitude towards the cultural ownership of football is clearly controversial. However, it is present in the discourse of many football fans and is therefore important for companies such as EA Games who are seeking to understand contemporary English football culture. In particular, it is important for companies who wish to market to or communicate with established or long-standing sections of football's support who do not take kindly to the perception that commercial organisations are exploiting 'their' game for their own purposes. If contact with these kinds of football fans is desired, it is vital that companies do not present a vision or understanding of the game which is likely to be perceived as 'inauthentic'.

Searching for football: New technology and the navigation of the everyday

As we have already described, the 'technology revolution' of the past 20 years has had an inevitable impact on the ways in which people encounter and interact with football and communicate around the game. In the mid-to-late 1980s, football supporters began to communicate in large numbers with one another in the 'fanzines' which cheap personal computers and word processors helped to produce. In the 1990s, this new type of unofficial, 'democratic' fan-to-fan communication moved gradually towards internet technology as fans began to establish 'messageboards' and other virtual 'chat' forums which allowed them to debate issues and gather news around their clubs 24 hours a day. Whether at

⁹⁶ *The Guardian* website, 15 June 2006:

http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/games/archives/2006/06/15/sex_brains_and_footy.html

⁹⁷ *The Weekly Gripe*, 06 June 2006: <http://www.weeklygripe.co.uk/arc245.asp?cID=79129>

work, in school, on holiday or at home, fans could keep in touch with their clubs and other fans so long as they had access to an on-line computer. Every professional club in England (and many non-league clubs) now has at least one messageboard, and some have large numbers of competing boards. The amount of 'traffic' is also remarkable, with even relatively small clubs' boards regularly receiving around 1,000 messages per day.

In their early days, messageboards were largely sources of news and gossip. From our analysis, the vast majority of early posts were concerned with transfer speculation; club news; alternative match reports; opinions about players, managers and directors; and other everyday football-related matters. This rather dry and prosaic content preceded a fuller understanding of the possibilities of internet 'chat' technology. Routine use of messageboards and 'chatrooms' was for most people limited until the mid-to-late 1990s, and the 'norms' of messageboard chat were yet to emerge. Posters did not have a clear template to follow as few had developed 'personalities' as posters before. This meant that boards were much 'colder' and more instrumental spaces in their early years. Relationships were light and fleeting and posters were only really known by the quality of the football-related information and gossip they posted. There was no real attempt to create an 'atmosphere' and no great desire amongst posters to develop committed relationships to boards or other contributors.

However over the past few years, a number of messageboards have undergone radical transformations and have assumed increasing importance in shaping as well as reflecting football fan culture. Many have developed away from being football-specific chat facilities and are now arenas in which fans can discuss anything and everything in their lives. In the period when boards were centrally focused on football-related chat, posters gained 'respect' with one another on account of the quality of gossip they posted, longevity of support and being generally 'in the know'. However, in line with the increasing drift of posters into discussions of non-football-related topics, a detailed knowledge of football is now often no longer enough to guarantee esteem amongst fellow posters. Increasingly, it is the ability to think up weird and wonderful new topics, to 'wind up' fellow posters, 'take the piss' out of other fans' websites, crack jokes and generally disrupt the normal course of events which gains posters fame (or notoriety).

The non-football discussions which now take place on messageboards are too numerous to list in full, but include:

- Other sports
- Stag weekend recommendations
- Travel advice
- How to get World Cup tickets
- Local area gossip
- Television programmes
- State of the local economy

- Job redundancies
- Job advice
- College/university advice
- National political debates
- Immigration
- Computer games (especially football games)
- Best restaurants/favourite beer, etc.
- Women ('fit' celebrities)
- Top 10s (best films, albums, singles, women)
- Domestic advice (plumbers, electricians, builders, etc)
- Irreverent questions (what type of underwear do you wear, favourite fish, etc.)
- Other posters ('who's the biggest twat on here')

It is interesting to note that on some boards it is now much easier to debate issues such as these, rather than traditional football-related topics. Posters who delve into transfer gossip or rumours around clubs are frequently told to 'fuck off' by established posters who treat all such messages with complete contempt. On one club website, the messageboard has actually been split into a General Forum and a Football Forum, with the former being much busier. The Football Forum carries the sub-heading 'The Forum for those boring types who want to talk football'. In this context, it is increasingly easier for fans to start debates on the 'fittest bird on TV' than it is on who should start up front next weekend.

However the significance of messageboards to football culture should not be underplayed. Indeed as they have drifted into hosting debates on non-football-related topics, so the number of issues on which posters can potentially disagree has increased. This has resulted in, at times, personal and combative exchanges between some posters and the fracturing of a number of boards along football and non-football lines. For many posters – even those who have been subject to the most serious abuse and character assassination - it is notable that they still come back for more. They cannot withdraw from boards (even though sometimes 'resign' publicly) because of their place in their lives. In this sense, boards are not 'virtual', non-real parts of being a football supporter. They are central to such an existence and as such are very difficult to ignore. They exist alongside (or for some even instead of) match days as a crucial part of being a fan. Indeed, for some they are one of the new 'sites' in which supporters learn 'the rules of the game' in terms of being fans.

Section 6: Football: England's bit on the side

KEY FINDINGS

- Football provides opportunities to escape domestic responsibilities and to enter a world of hedonistic possibility
- It was estimated that 170,000 England fans travelled to Germany in the summer to follow the national team in the World Cup
- For 'new dads' the game provides a legitimate basis for re-connecting with a former 'child free' life and identity
- For the partners of keen football fans the game places enormous pressures on their relationships due to its 'power of persuasion'
- Football can generate forms of childcare which free up carers time
- The 'availability' of football in the workplace can lead to tensions relating to the neglect of responsibilities
- New clubs with 'gay' identities have created contexts in which players feel comfortable being outwardly 'gay' which might be more difficult in the 'football mainstream'

Playing away

FC United fans who were used to travelling home and abroad with Manchester United, not only missed their social networks at Old Trafford, but they missed those opportunities for bonding, singing, discussion, drinking, piss taking, ecstatic celebration and excess that the 'away day' or (even better) the 'Euro Away' represented. At the formation of FC United, many talked of the 'need to keep the community together' and that a new football club - with associated match day rituals and a fan culture which leant heavily on 'United traditions', was one way of doing this. The capacity of the new club to provide the same kind of match day opportunities would be an important test. The fans' own production of the 'match day' and the 'away day' in this context would also say important things about the place of football itself in the lives and priorities of those supporters.

The prospect of blazing a trail through the lower echelons of English league football was all well and good but it didn't provide the one-off, the big trip, the something more, these fans had become accustomed to. They were now bereft of their usual European away days. It wasn't the glamour, the skill or the corporate sponsors of the Champions League that they missed. Nor the police's batons and tear gas, oppressive stewarding and perpetual struggle for over priced tickets. It was the out-of-town-out-of-time disruption to the norm that was lacking, since the 'away day' is all about transgressing the norms of everyday life.

It was in this context that when the fixture list for FCUMs inaugural season was published one game leapt out. As supporters readjusted their focus from Rooney toward Joz Mitten, plumber and part-time centre forward: Blackpool Mechanics. Away had an added value. With an obvious reputation as a holiday destination, its place in North West hearts secure, the thrill of the sea side, stag do's, hen nights all mixed up with chip fat, beer and FC United beckoned. The fixture on February 18th 2006 was quickly established as FC's first 'Euro Away'.

Hotels booked 3 months in advance and bags dumped, the journey round the town's bars got underway in an Irish bar - the McDonalds of European away games (not much good but you know what you're getting). Moving on, the gathering grew with ever more Reds and familiar faces beaming beery smiles. A rolling (drunken) collection of small social networks, coming together, singing, celebrating and marvelling at the fact that they've actually made it this far.

After Friday night the next day fans watched the 'Big United' V Liverpool game before heading to Blackpool FC's Bloomfield Road, a ground steeped in the traditions of Matthews and Mortensen, but now looking much like any other modern stadium - although missing two sides. The match itself was won easily by FC, 3-1, but it seemed almost incidental to the celebration that took place in the stands and bars of the ground. The official attendance of 4,300 was met with scepticism by everyone and more recent claims have put the attendance nearer 6,000.

Some didn't even bother entering the seated areas, preferring to carry on drinking. Some fans left early to hit the pubs before the rush. Others would condemn them as not being 'real supporters' but that would miss the point. The match is merely a catalyst, an excuse, a reason for a weekend long celebration; a means of justifying days away from the family, spending large amounts of money, mainly on beer and forgetting what the rest went on.

After the match a congregation builds in the Ardwick Green. Beyond the geographical connection to a part of East Manchester, the attraction - the ONLY attraction - is that it sells draught beer at £1.20 a pint. It's the kind of pub you could get lung cancer from just by walking in. Where keys have scratched graffiti messages into the nicotine residue. Where beer mats have welded themselves into the table. Where collective humour can be enjoyed in the efforts of an ageing and haggard woman clumsily trying to having a bit of fun with one forty something fan sat with his girlfriend. The type of pub that will surely just exhale, sigh and collapse like a deflated balloon once the public place smoking ban is introduced, starved of its own air supply. From there FC song after song filled the rooms as the hoards 'took over' another Irish pub, drowning out the 'traditional' Irish music.

Then it was onto the Soul Suite club described memorably by author, Robert Brady:

'It was dancing of a North West Counties standard. With some pub team standard. Some danced as if they were putting out a fire. Some could have got a grant from the land mine charity. The FC United women danced as dancing should be with heat and sweat and balance and sexual rhythm. The blokes were just blokes.'⁹⁸

With the numbers involved it is clear that somewhere amidst the blur of the evening there is a complex social network. People dipped in and out of this group to some extent throughout the weekend, paths crossing both by design and at random, but they 'had all managed to stay together from the first beer to the very last'⁹⁹. They all had their own motivations for being there and all made their way through the weekend according to their own designs but ultimately it was a collective experience underpinned and made possible, by this football match more before.

When it was time to go home the next day, there was still room for one more pub, and one more after that and then before you knew it, it was 7 in the evening. At the close of a perfect 'away day' nobody wants it to come to an end for such occasions are an out of the ordinary experience, normal life on hold, normal rules and behaviour left at home, all made possible by a shared love of everything that English football makes possible. The next day will be work, family and 'reality'.

The passage above provides an illustration of the multiple types of unrestrained, indulgent and hedonistic social contexts which can be delivered by football to its fans. It is by no means unique to FC United which, after all, is a relatively untypical club in terms of its longevity (or lack of), constitution and level of support. It also does not necessarily represent a contemporary phenomenon as our conversations with elderly football supporters in Lancashire revealed that fans have been enjoying 'away days', especially around big FA Cup matches, since the late 1930s and almost certainly earlier. One supporter recounted to us how he and his friends enjoyed memorable weekends in sea-side resorts around England in the 1950s whenever their team was playing near the coast. In particular he told us how they had all 'got up to all sorts of no good' in Western-Super-Mare when his team played an away tie in the FA Cup in the 1950s at Bristol City.

Having acknowledged the long-standing nature of 'extended' trips to football matches, it is clearly evident that the numbers of people using the game to 'get away' and have 'mad ones' has increased as the popularity and profile of the football has developed. This was certainly the case during this summer's World Cup when an estimated record 170,000 England fans travelled to Germany to

⁹⁸ Brady, R (2006) *An Undividable Glow: The first ever book on the formation and first season of FC United of Manchester*, Manchester: Robert Brady: p263.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*: 263

follow the national team.¹⁰⁰ For many of these, it simply did not matter whether they had tickets to attend matches or any chance of getting them: they were there for the atmosphere, the ‘piss up’ and the laugh. Overcoming traditional concerns over ‘ticketless fans’ travelling to tournaments and the disorder which, it is often claimed, emanates from such groups, German organisers welcomed English and other fans who simply wanted to be in the country for the duration of the tournament. In this regard, large-scale ‘Fan Fests’ were organised in host cities which enabled fans to watch matches together and enjoy a drink. These contributed enormously to the generation of a ‘party’ atmosphere during the tournament which was in keeping with the desires of England fans who were at the tournament as much for a ‘good holiday’ as they were to watch football.

Table 6: World Cup party people

Corporates	On a freebie, football is the latest ‘event’ to be wined and dined at. Strangely subdued, even disinterested, the trip is presented on a plate in a pre-packaged format
Barmy Army	Whether on a ‘stag do’ or filling in between cricket Test series, synchronised fancy dress and matching T-shirts define both their togetherness and separation from the ‘crowd’
Survivalists	Ticketless and without accommodation they endure and survive the trip. Camping, sleeping rough and blagging they share a passion for football as a vestige of working-class cultural values
Grafters	Representing the chance of an ‘earner’, the touts, traders and dealers follow the party
Shirts	The loyal ‘customer’ with tickets and travel obtained through the orthodox channels. The trip is well planned in advance and passes off without trouble or incident
Internationalists	With a love of the beautiful game they are here for the football and don’t mind which matches they see. Keeping well away from the mass of England fans the trip is an opportunity for staged cultural exchange

The New Dads

The national popularity of football clearly depends on its ability to appeal to a variety of social groups. It is undoubtedly the case, however, that there is a ‘gendered’ aspect to the game which in some circumstances allows men to claim football as ‘theirs’ and to use it to distance themselves from the women in their lives. For instance, for men who share close domestic relationships with wives or girlfriends, football can act as the one pastime which allows them to spend time with their ‘mates’ and continue the social routines which marked out their lives

¹⁰⁰ www.bbc.co.uk 01 August 2006

when they were younger. This appears to be especially true for 'new dads' who perhaps more than any other group of men can be drawn to football as an 'escape' from new domestic realities. For new dads, football can act as *the* site for the maintenance of friendships and an escape from home. It performs this role in ways that almost nothing else can. This is because new dads can interpret football, and more importantly present it to their wives and girlfriends, as a totally legitimate, *unthreatening* obsession. It's the 'other' love in the men's lives which (most of the time at least) doesn't get them into trouble.

For the new dads to whom we spoke, football is something that is non-negotiable – it is part of their identities as 'daft blokes' and so therefore has to be negotiated into their lives. In many senses, however, the new dads' 'obsession' with football is not about football at all. It is about the opportunities that it allows them to spend time with their mates and 'get pissed' and mess around on Saturdays. If the dads said to their wives and girlfriends 'I'm going down the pub with my mates on an all dayer', they would anticipate arguments and, in some cases, their clothes would be thrown out on to the front garden in bin bags. But when such a proposition is presented in the context of football, it does not seem so threatening because the dads' wives and girlfriends understand that 'football is not open to debate'.

The 'duel purpose' of football for the new dads is marked by the seriousness with which they now plan their attendance at matches. Where once they would have simply turned up to home games at ten-to-three and gone home when they felt like it, match days have increasingly become much better planned and more formalised. For some of the dads, match days now start regularly at 1.00pm in the club bar and do not end until late evening in 'the local'. This means that they get the maximum amount of time (and drink) out of the day and regularly get time to spend together. This practice of making match days 'proper days out' means that home games for the dads now function in the way that 'aways' used to when they were younger.

New dads who have not traditionally attended with groups of mates can still use football as an escape from home after the birth of their children. Andy is such an example. For him, football has never been a particularly communal experience, at least in the sense that it has not been about building or sustaining close friendships. For the last few years he has attended matches on his own but does not extend match days into drinking sessions.

Since the birth of his children, football has continued to be a personal experience for Andy. As with the other new dads, the game for Andy is a non-negotiable part of his life and he presents it to his wife as such. She does not interfere in his football attendance, and he is unquestionably 'allowed' to attend matches in a way in which he might not be 'allowed' to indulge in other pursuits. For Andy, football now seems to be a vital way to hold on to his former 'child free' life and identity when so much is changing around his circumstances at home. The time

he spends at the match and doing other football-related things is *his* time: a period which keeps him grounded and centred as an 'individual'. While his life has been transformed radically in recent years through taking on the responsibilities that come along with two children, his trips to football matches have remained constant: a link to his former, freer life. In this sense, Andy has much in common with the other new dads. But while their lust for a freer past is expressed dramatically through extending match days into full days out, for Andy it is much more about psychologically defending his sense of 'self'.

We encountered another aspect of football's role for new dads (and their partners) during the World Cup in summer 2006. Rather than necessarily enabling them to get away from their wives and girlfriends (although the tournament certainly allowed them to do that), it appears that match days could be used as special occasions when couples, nominally at least, could 'roll back the years' and 'get together' whilst watching England games. This appeared to be because of a more 'inclusive' understanding of watching England, resulting in women and children being more welcome than they often are on other occasions.

On the day of England's opening group game against Paraguay, a number of the new dads got together around Colin's house to watch the game. Rather than doing so on their own, however, their wives and children were invited. A barbecue was arranged, and a new paddling pool and climbing frame were erected in the garden to entertain 'the kids'. As one of the wives arrived before kick off, clearly already inebriated, she exclaimed 'fuckin' hell, it's like old days. We ain't done this for ages', reflecting her delight at having the 'old gang' back together in a social situation similar to those experienced regularly before everyone had started having children.

To get into the spirit, many of the kids at the party were dressed in England related clothing, and some of the mums had painted faces to go with their newly purchased England replica tops. Whilst on the surface this demonstrated the 'fun' and inclusive nature of the day, a number of the dads were taking things a little more seriously. At the start of the match, everybody was watching the match together in the large kitchen at Colin's house, but after twenty minutes or so more and more of the dads moved slowly towards the living room, colonising it as a male only zone. By the end of the first half, a form of gender apartheid had developed with all of the mums and kids in the kitchen and the men drinking together in the lounge.

After the match, the new dads continued drinking together, largely ignoring their wives and children. Whilst the day had begun as an opportunity for couples to spend time together in the company of friends, it quickly descended into two quick distinct parties. This was made even more apparent in the early evening when Dave suggested that the dads get 'off down the pub' where, it was rumoured, a karaoke night was taking place. A couple of the mums seemed a

little angered at this suggestion, but in general they were enjoying each other's company too much to really care. Yet again, football had provided an occasion for the dad's to spend time with their mates and ignore their domestic responsibilities/realities.

All of this suggests that for these new dads, football is an obsession in two ways. They do truly love the game, and more to the point the clubs they support. But they are also 'in love' with it for the opportunities it gives them to do things that may not be legitimate for men of their age and responsibilities. They love it because it allows them to be younger and freer than they are in other aspects of their lives or because it allows them to drink and be with their mates. They love it because it allows them to 'have a laugh' and 'be themselves'. Above all, they love it because it does not, in their eyes, get them in trouble with 'the wife'.

Trouble and strife: Football and domestic tensions

The women who participated in our 'football widows' focus group all agreed that football placed enormous pressures on their relationships due to the 'power of persuasion' that the game has within their family dynamic. Rather than being innocent dopes the women are fully aware of the ways in which their partners' use football to sanction an array of otherwise unacceptable behaviours. However they often feel that they have less grounds to object to 'football' related social events, due to the collective nature of the activity and the fact that other wives and girlfriends have sanctioned their partners' attendance. They did not wish to be viewed as the one who keeps their partner 'under the thumb' and therefore generally succumb to this feeling of pressure and 'put up with it'. In this sense some conventional readings of gender relations which establish distinctions between the collective will and use of public space by men and the more individual and privatised position of women may be pertinent. Football emerges as one of the last vestiges of male solidarity which enables a paternalistic authority to be exerted over family relations.

For the women we spoke to the consequences of this were that they felt their partners were missing out on vital aspects of normal family life. For those with young children this was much more of a contentious issue. Katie a mother of two young girls noted how her youngest daughter was growing distant from her father:

'He is out and we don't really see him and he wonders why Suzie cries and won't let him put her to bed because she doesn't know him to put her to bed...[she] is not used to Andy putting her to bed. But then he gets dead hurt by it. She used to be a daddy's girl but then the more he has switched back into his old ways again she has changed.'

In other contexts pressure is felt when these private troubles are given a public face such as the embarrassment that Nicola felt when her husband failed to turn up to her mother's house for an arranged family meal:

'He'd say *'I'll be back at four'* and we were having tea at my mums and I'd ask him to make sure he's there. He'll say *'yeah, yeah I'll be there'*. So nine o'clock comes by and my Mums' going *'what should I do with his dinner love?'* and I'm like *'give it the dog'*.

For these women part of the problem is that whilst they all have subscriptions to Sky Sports and the PremPlus football packages in their houses the accessibility of football in the home has little effect upon the ways in which the game is consumed in the face of a preference for watching matches at the local pub. For them, whilst this behaviour is largely tolerated, on occasion the excessive alcohol consumption associated with 'watching a match' can create intolerable tension and conflict within the house. Nicola recalled one extreme example during which she became increasingly angry and agitated:

I was pregnant. Oh no, I just remembered and it gets me really angry. He'd been to watch United and then he went back to the pub and he stayed in (after licensed hours). It was when he had his longer hair and I remember he had a pale zip up jacket. He said he'd be back at four and it was probably about three in the morning and he came back in with wet ringlets cos it was raining and he was soaking and he had fallen and was black with mud everywhere. I was pregnant with Danny and I was ringing everyone, I rang the pub, I rang [friends]. I thought he was taking drugs or off with a woman or something and I heard him at the door and I was like that *'oh fucking hell'* all my worry went immediately but my heart was pounding. He couldn't get the key in the door and it wasn't even locked. I was at the top of the stairs watching and thinking *'just open the fucking door'*. I opened the door and he just fell in the door, crawled in like on his knees. I'm looking at him thinking *'why has he got really curly hair, you are absolutely filthy'*. So I didn't know if he had been in a fight and his foot was already bad from the injury from football and then he just crawled in and he was on his back and he was absolutely leathered, never seen anyone that bad. He moved up the stairs and he was going back and holding on and I thought *'shit if he falls it will look like I've pushed him'* but I would really have pushed him from the top. And then he spent about an hour in the bathroom being sick and I was shouting *'you better not come in our bed. I'm pregnant and if I have this child tonight'*. But he just said *'oh fuck off'*.

Although this was an extreme example of the way in which football days become football nights, all of the women we spoke to could sympathise and had experienced similar scenarios. It is in this context that Helen is particularly open to her home being used as a 'football house' since it ensures that her husband is 'at home' and that she can spend time with him and, more importantly, know

where he is. But for her football also acts as a mechanism for them to spend time together. She enjoys watching football at home and noted that she likes most matches especially '*Spanish games*'. For Katie, who herself used to be a Manchester United season ticket holder but who has sacrificed her love of football as her parental duties have increased, this arrangement would be preferable to the frustration she feels with her partner '*going missing*' after watching matches in the pub. She went on to acknowledge the ways in which this behaviour has become normalised and accepted.

On Saturday 01 July 2006 the temperature soared and at Katie's house the four football widows planned an afternoon of BBQ, beer and boy-free gossip. The lads gathered in the kitchen and after a few hushed conversations announced that they were about to leave for the local pub, noting the importance of getting there early to ensure a 'good seat in the vault'. Katie asked Andy to be back at a reasonable hour as it would be nice to have a drink together in the garden. The men promised to be back early evening for food and drink and headed out of the door grinning about their collective freedom.

After they left the girls set out their places in the garden and began soaking up the sun and entertaining the children with a water pistol fight. Daisy was the first to contemplate the fate of the men, 'so what time do we reckon we'll see that lot then, seven, eight?' Rose replied, 'no way, much later. I suppose it depends upon which way the footie goes?' The girls had no interest whatsoever in the score of the football and it was only when Katie's oldest daughter ran outside screaming 'it's gone to penalties' that the girls retreated indoors to watch. The excitement was building, largely generated by the children jumping and screeching. Rose noted, 'I only like penalty shoot-outs, the rest of the match is well boring'. When England were finally defeated the girls looked at one another and began laughing and Daisy announced, 'Well that's all that over, back to normal now. Do you think that means the lads will be home earlier or later?'

For the girls the defeat had very little effect on the mood or nature of their afternoon and once back outside in the sun the comparative quietness was broken only by police sirens in the distance. At around nine o'clock Katie put her daughters to bed and as she returned she told the others, 'that's really bad, she was upset because he told her that he'd be back to put her to bed.' As the evening turned into night the remaining two friends were now drunk and their jokes about their partners had now become more serious. Ultimately, they did not return until gone twelve and were completely 'out-of-it' on their arrival. Rose's husband returned home without his mobile phone and, more curiously, his shoes. While this laddish behaviour was scoffed at by the football widows and ultimately brushed aside as being 'just what they do' sometimes arguments seem unavoidable:

They don't realise it until you absolutely have to fly off the handle. They don't know that they are doing anything wrong. They don't think that it's having any

form of an impact until it's got to that stage where you may have said it nicely quite a couple of times, then you've gone in a mood (I don't know if it's like this for you lot) but then you just have to go off like psycho and flip. But then they realise but if they'd just realise when you were being nice and saying *'look do you have to go because you've been Monday, Tuesday, then you've played, then you've watched it and we've not really seen you'*. Sometimes I'm lucky if I see him before ten or eleven o'clock, now whether that's work or football?

Indeed for some women the drunkenness that goes with football 'days out' can be a source of fear. The police estimated that ten women would be killed during the World Cup and many forces set up specialist World Cup Domestic Violence squads. During the first weekend of the tournament domestic violence calls to the police doubled in Lancashire alone compared to the same weekend in 2005.

Office liaisons

Perhaps more than any other environment new technology has transformed the workplace over the last decade or so as the computer has emerged as the defining feature of any individual workspace. As such it is increasingly the rhythms of communication technology rather than the clock which drive the productivity of the workplace and which have also become the principal means of workforce disruption, informal resistance and illicit communication.

After the weekend, office email inboxes are generally full of unopened mail. For many football fans, however, in amongst the details about Martin's leaving 'do' and forthcoming intranet disruption on Tuesday morning are more 'important' messages from likeminded supporters about the weekend's performance. For many, the first 'worktask' of the day is to check their club website, favourite football discussion board or fantasy football league homepage. Whilst, as we have suggested previously the content of such sites is largely banal they often have an addictive quality which compels their readers to continue trawling. As Will suggested 'these message boards and Forums are so addictive [that] it takes up a fair bit of time when [you] should be working'. When there is a 'hot' topic whether related to a football news story such as the dismissal or appointment of a new manager, a major signing or an injury to a star player or a vicious spat between two posters this compulsion can become all consuming. Inevitably conflict occurs when there are high priority work demands.

As such new work etiquette's have been established and a change of job now requires a patient settling in period whilst staff establish what they can and cannot 'get away with'. In an information driven age it is the availability of material which makes it hard to avoid. Whilst some workplaces block access to sites that may be of personal interest, many people's work now requires them to surf the web. As such it is harder for employers to discern when their staff are

working for them and when they are servicing their own private consumptive desires.

For others such as a Manchester and FC United supporter who has been attending football matches regularly for almost 40 years his commitment not 'to miss' a match involves him having to play down his football interest in order that employers do not question his sickness record on account of them making associations with his football interest. He has learned through experience that once suspicion is cast, it is sometimes hard to shake off.

Coming 'out' on the pitch

The Football Associations anti-homophobia campaign in 2003 was the first real attempt to make football a more inclusive and gay-friendly environment. The debate has continued since with the press frequently pointing to the high level of homophobia in British football with one reporter noting that 'Football is, of course, in denial of its gay side.'¹⁰¹ However, the need for this campaign remains strong and the half-heartedness of the campaign to date makes many gay supporters question its impetus especially when officials including Gordon Taylor, Professional Footballers' Association General Secretary, brand football homophobia as almost a tradition:

We fully support the FA, but homophobia has always been a difficult one, particularly when certain players have been accused of not being macho enough. That's when they can be open to abuse from players from the opposition and maybe even the same team, and certainly from the crowd, So it's no use saying this is an easy path to walk down, There are in-built prejudices which come from a very early age and going back generations. In football, we have set a very good example with anti-racism, but whether we have the same success with homophobia is another matter. It's down to education.¹⁰²

Our research with players of Manchester's gay football team, 'Village Manchester FC' (VMFC) suggests that open homophobia in mainstream football is rife and that this deters many gay supporters from not only spectating but playing for mainstream clubs. The team was formed in 1996 and their mission statement reads, 'we are a Gay Men's football club with the ambition and commitment towards providing all players and supporters with a competitive, yet fun approach to the beautiful game.'¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ *The Guardian*, 06 March 2006

¹⁰² *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 June 2003

¹⁰³ www.vmfc.co.uk

Figure 13: 'Who says poofs don't do sport?': Poster in a bar in Manchester's Gay Village



During the initial meeting with the team discussing what it meant to play for VMFC one of the players 'Will' aged 35 noted that, 'It's like representing our race. We could play for higher league teams but that doesn't interest us.' For him joining VMFC was his first step to becoming an outwardly open gay man. He had been straight all his life and involved in a long-term relationship with a woman until his early 30s but began to have increasing homosexual preferences. He explained that he doesn't consider himself a 'Gay' gay guy and that he still loves all the things he used to. An avid Manchester City supporter and season ticket holder he was keen to meet other men who were gay but who also love football and drinking and found VMFC as one of the best arenas to achieve this.

Whilst Will is an extremely confident 'laddish' character who is untroubled by homophobic comments, Luke, a Newcastle supporter and season-ticket holder, feels more comfortable 'masking' his sexual identity on match day, commenting, 'if any of this lot saw me at the match they would think I was a typical hetro, I sing all the fan songs'. For Luke, VMFC provides a context in which he feels comfortable being outwardly 'gay' which, for him, would not be possible in his other 'football world' at Newcastle United.

For all of the gay football players we spoke to, VMFC provides them with a social network and access into the lives of like-minded football supporters. As soon as Luke arrived in Manchester he contacted the VMFC and got involved. For Luke this was an important arena to make new friends in a new town:

The social aspect of it is great as I have found it difficult to make friends in the past. Two years ago I moved to Manchester and it opened up a social life for me...I can't think of life without football. I'd have very few mates in Manchester. It means a lot to me.

Yet for all this, the gay football players we spoke to shared very similar behaviour and routines to the other male supporters in our study. All of the players we spoke to either attended regular live matches or went to the 'pub' to watch football. Indeed drinking and socialising with the team is seen as central to being a VMFC player. Many were also keen home football viewers and played for hours on football computer games. Indeed, in a further twist of gender identities one player explained how being gay was a benefit to the football supporter in that unlike some girlfriends his partner does not challenge his behaviour, 'I'm addicted to the game. There are no soap operas in our house it's Sky Sports News all day and night.'

Can the girls go out to play?

As well as a means to 'escape' domesticity and to enter a fantasy world lacking responsibility and restraint, football also brings with it an alternative basis for connecting with those responsibilities and for easing the domestic burden on non-football following partners. A child's love of football can be used as a means of gaining a degree of leverage through the provision or denial of access to the game. In addition to its use as a behavioural tool, the game also generates a basis for the provision of childcare. Whilst Nicola's husband spends a considerable amount of his spare time playing and watching football, leaving Nicola to take care of the domestic roles, as her eldest son grows he spends more time out of the house with his Dad playing and watching football which provides Nicola with valuable quality time with her youngest son. At times though, this use of football to strengthen a fatherly bond with his son can lead to frustration as it can be exclusionary and disruptive. Nicola's husband Lee often allows Dean to stay up past his bedtime to watch football and this leaves Nicola having to cope with a very sleepy boy in the morning:

So if [Dean] asks me to watch I might say *'no mate it's too late'* but then Lee will whisper to me *'let him stay up until half time'* and winks at him and then I look bad. But he doesn't have to get him up at seven in the morning. A lot of it has to do with football.

Furthermore the time that football might free up through the involvement of children in football activities is also restrained by the timing of these activities.

The women we spoke to attempt to socialise with each other on a weekly basis. However they are forced to juggle the night out around their partners' football routines. Currently they girls meet for drinks in their local pub on Wednesday evenings. The evening in itself appears to be relatively unproblematic as the girls all live within walking distance of the pub and those with children arrange for their partners to be home to baby-sit. The simple arrangement is complicated by the fact that three of their partners play football on Wednesday evenings and do not arrive home until 7.30 pm. With Wednesday being a prime night for the televising of high profile live football matches which kick off at 7.45 there is high pressure generated by their 'need' to be showered and in front of the TV just as the women are preparing to go out as one of the mums explained:

He used to do training on Wednesday at JJB and it finishes at 7pm. So if he's not getting back in time it makes it hard for me to go out. I said to him, '*this is my night, it's the only night I go out*' so he said '*alright love*' and say on a Thursday I started going out because I thought I need to do more because I don't do anything.

As such for the women it can feel like a 'military exercise' just to get to the pub for a few hours on a Wednesday evening in contrast to their husbands regular and unplanned pub visits. To rub salt into the wounds they also increasingly find that once they arrive at the pub the match is on the big screen and there are lads sitting at 'their' table. Eventually their preferred local pub became too crowded and loud as a result of the football and they now occasionally opt for a quieter but less desirable pub, which benefits from not having large-screen TV. There is a sense in which at every turn they play second fiddle to football. As Katie lamented 'so everything has to be done around it, and if it coincides, then football comes first.'

Section 7: Contemporary passions: A new typology of football fanaticism

There is a tendency within commentaries about football fans to want to seek out the extreme and bizarre. The very term 'fan' derives from the word 'fanatic' which literally means a person whose enthusiasm or zeal for something is extreme or beyond normal limits. As such our conception of a truly dedicated fan is easily associated with those who paint their faces; attend matches with bare chests in the freezing cold of winter; bang oversized drums incessantly during matches; wear clothes tailored in the colours of their team; collect every one of their club's match programmes; cover their bodies in club tattoos: in short, those who demonstrate an undeniable element of excess.

On the basis of our research this is a misconstruction of the notion of the passion that goes with football fandom. This is because such constructions are actually the product of individuals and their search for attention, rather than a product of their passion for the game. What our research suggests is that the passion for football in England is better understood in terms of its banality. Whilst periodically presenting spectacular displays of intense emotion, for the most part football has become a kind of backdrop to the world: not necessarily so fundamental to each individual's consciousness that they would be unable to function without it, but part of the tapestry that structures our day-to-day reality. At times it is 'in our face' and seems to be the most important thing in the world but most of the time, it is just 'there'; a kind of quasi-spiritual presence as well as a currency with which we trade. The value of that currency is not based on individual displays of commitment, but on a collective interest in the game which extends far beyond the performative arena of the stadium.

In the final analysis it is not the 'wildest fan' who captivates the interest of a young newly attending football supporter. Rather, it is the opportunity to *be part* of something that is itself 'out of the ordinary'. It is football's capacity to *include*, through the provision of opportunities to share in a collective experience and communal visual and oratorical displays, which is ultimately so seductive. As one of the few remaining spaces in which it is still possible to have a sustained sense of shared collective experience, it would be the final irony if we were to identify the nation's passion for football to a few self-celebrating performers.

The simplicity of the point is perhaps best reflected in the voice of a fan:

I couldn't see how anything could possibly replace the buzz I used to get from supporting [Manchester] United. One of my friends, however, has been mithering me to see for myself what FC United is all about.... After travelling en-masse on the tram to Radcliffe, where the game against Castleton Gabriels was being played, we headed off to the ground and the club house. No segregation, just lots of good natured chanting, banter and drinking and, in

the middle of it all, taking good natured flack from the fans and joining in the singing, were 3 of the injured players who weren't in the team that day! What was this about? Football players mixing with the fans? And genuinely enjoying themselves?

[We] headed off to the area behind the goal... and along with us came the players who had been in the bar. They spent the game on the terracing, with the fans, singing and chanting along with the rest of us.... [Afterwards] the buzz in the pub was excellent but then it went up several notches when all the players, the coaches, the kitman and the manager turned up!... And the players don't just sing along with the fans - they lead the singing, they chant about each other, they request their own songs over and over again. And that goes a little way towards describing a buzz which is still with me today. I made a hundred new mates yesterday and came home hoarse and exhausted but with the biggest smile on my face I've had for ages... And it leaves me more positive about football than I have been for a long, long time.... it wasn't just the session in the pub, the whole experience was a refreshing change from the modern Premiership experience. The crowd was a wonderful mix of men, women and children of all ages, all getting behind the team. There was no aggro and no heavy policing or stewarding. There were lots of colours but no jester hats!... And all this at 3pm on a Saturday, for the princely sum of £6!.¹⁰⁴

It is clear then that the question of what defines a football fan, and more precisely what is 'football fanaticism', is not straightforward. There are many forms of support surrounding the national game, some of which jealously proclaim their status as 'real' fans and thereby seek to discredit other groups who consume football in alternative ways. As a part of this 'fracturing' of English football culture, and also as a result of increasing media interest in supporters' lives and habits, fans are now more than ever required to reflect on who they are as followers of the game and how they fit into the football landscape. This is the context in which the media and a number of fans themselves have sought to firm up notions of fanaticism by drawing attention to 'über fans' who present themselves as *the real* football fanatics: those fans who change their names by Deed Poll to the name of their favourite player or the club they support; who refuse to have grass growing outside their houses because their rivals play in green.

But just as a person who describes themselves as an 'eccentric' is unlikely to be one, so a 'fanatic' who is compelled to display their fanaticism in such extreme forms is probably trying too hard. The key point in terms of the development of English football is that people's attachment to the game has never really depended on such hysterical and self-conscious displays. If it had, the game would probably have been an ephemeral 'craze' and would have died out in the late nineteenth century. Rather, the point about English football and its position

¹⁰⁴ Linda Harvey aka 'Salford Lass' (2005), *Red11*, <http://www.red11.org/mufc/devilsadvocate/articles/FCUnited.htm>.

as a 'national' sport is that it quickly developed a 'taken for granted' nature amongst people who would never define themselves as 'fanatics'. It is this 'unassuming' aspect of the at times obsessive behaviour that surrounds the game which helps it to sit quietly in the background whilst revealing itself at appropriate moments. It also enables people to truly embrace the game as a 'national obsession' as they can feel, with a suitable lack of reflection, that they *should* be interested in it and that it belongs to them culturally. This point is probably best captured by Arthur Hopcraft in his seminal book, *The Football Man*:

The point about football in Britain is that it is not just a sport people take to ... It is inherent in the people. It is not a phenomenon; it is an everyday matter. There is more eccentricity in deliberately disregarding it than in devoting a life to it. The way we play the game, organise it and reward it reflects the kind of community we are.¹⁰⁵

In terms of the question of 'what is football fanaticism?', then, one must conclude that the historically sensitive answer is that it is a commitment to the game (or more specifically, particular clubs and the national team) that sometimes barely speaks its name. Of course, there are moments when football fanatics will reveal themselves as such, especially at matches when they are confronted by the objects of their obsession. But to do this in a continuous, all-consuming and consistently self-conscious manner breeds contempt and ultimately risks destroying the elements of the game which embedded it in the national culture in the first place.

As such in this final section rather than attempting to uncover a clear definition of the football fanatic it may be more appropriate to think in terms of the various modes of consumption or *styles* of fandom, which people adopt depending upon the contexts in which they find themselves. We present here then a series of forms of 'fanaticism' which have been revealed by our research in the context of the English domestic game. However, we do not ascribe the different forms we have identified to individual football supporters. Rather, what we have witnessed is the ways in which people can display a whole variety of these forms of behaviour at different times and in different contexts.

Stoicism

Displaying long standing and unshakable loyalty to the club - in this form of consumption football is, in part at least, a matter of habit rather than motivation. The match day is absolutely central to this form of consumption, yet it is part of a weekly routine, the norm, rather than a phenomenon. As Hopcraft said, 'it is an everyday matter'. The stoicism evident within much football consumption shows itself in long standing support for clubs who may have no chance of winning or even of providing regular moments for ecstatic celebration and as such is very

¹⁰⁵ Hopcraft, A. *The Football Man: People and Passions in Soccer* (London: Aurum Press Ltd, 1968, republished 2006)

common within football consumption and within the 'obsession' for the national game.

As such this is not 'hot' supporter behaviour with elaborate, passionate or very vocal displays of support, but undertaking a steady and steadfast backing of the club which has become part of both a routine and an identity. Stoicism can be found often amongst season ticket holders, and possibly also members of official supporter clubs. They are always there but you probably wouldn't notice particular individuals; and they will complain about the latest FIFA refereeing instruction, the new kick off times and vulgar displays by fellow fans because they have the potential to disrupt their preferred forms of consumption. In this sense the arrival of wall to wall TV coverage of football has been anathema and threatening.

The close season, rather than being a return to 'normal' life, is un-natural. The key moment breaking this 'down time' will be the arrival of the new season ticket, announcing that normal service will soon be resumed. The post-match mood will be entirely dependent on the result.

Partying

Many forms of popular culture - sport, music, festivals - are popular precisely because they allow for ecstatic celebration, transgression of normal routines and behaviour and even geographical distance from domesticity and work lives. Football is no different. Attending football matches, and in particular the habit of following teams to away games, especially European ones, opens up the consumption of the game to the possibilities of partying and letting the good times roll.

Within football consumption there is a desire to look for the big home game, the local derby, the away fixture against a big rival, or the away day to a city or town that offers attractions other than football - such as drinking and nightlife. Or there is the ultimate - the chance of an away international trip for club or country. The summer announcement of fixtures, the balls being pulled from the bag in cup draws, or the staged corporate extravaganzas of draws for European or World Cup competition become seminal moments.

Here, the possibilities for the day out/weekend away/overseas trip with like minded souls begins. Some will be excitedly ringing friends talking about the highlights from the fixture list, reassuring each other that 'we'll have a good beer that day'; others will be poised, fingers on the mouse, ready to bag that bargain cheap flight as soon as the draw is known.

The match is not unimportant - the desire to party can also rest alongside a serious dedication to the game and their club, and this desire to party can often contribute significantly to the match atmosphere. However, the match is also a

catalyst, an excuse, a reason for a weekend long celebration; a means of justifying days away from the family, spending large amounts of money, mainly on beer, and forgetting what the rest went on.

Partying consumption is also now a major feature of major football events, especially the World Cup. Organisers in Germany 2006 recognised this fact with their Fan Fests and beer tents, bucking recent trends and hooligan fears, and invited supporters to come to party, whether they had tickets or not. Back home, those unable to travel took England matches in particular as cues for all-night or all-day drinking, back-garden barbeques and even full blown 'World Cup' parties. The match here serves the party, rather than the other way around.

Clowning Around

Clowning at the match involves some degree of embarrassment by-pass and illustrates how football consumption for some can be liberating. This allows a performativity that is loud both audibly and visually and is based on an understanding that their support for the team needs to be expressed through voice and attire. Whilst there are many imitators (the myriad jester hats on kid's heads) and promoters (the disaster-in-a-paint-factory merchandise on sale), most grow out of this form of consumption by teenage years. Some will dip into clowning around only on major occasions such as Cup Finals or World Cups, but will be unconvincing; lost in a sea of similar clowning they remain unnoticed.

Clowning often involves a degree of amplification of support, seeking distinction from others through more elaborate dress, singing or other performance. Unique selling points include the fat bare gut; the 'zany' top hat and died hair; the big bass drum; the son saddled for life with 11 names of favoured footballers.

However, for clowning to be meaningful it needs to be noticed and as such enjoyment of the 'occasion' can be directly related to being 'noticed' by other fans, or ultimately, the club, players or manager. The big televised match and the major football event offer those that clown around the potential of the ultimate exposure to millions on TV, cementing their position as the 'ultimate' fanatic.

Putting your head above the parapet in a collective of football fans in such a way may be tolerated, even found amusing, for a short while. However, whilst in some respects clowning displays a creativity absent in other forms of football consumption, people who do this can be derided as 'Christmas trees' and their behaviour as 'ballooning' by more discerning supporters who think they lack credibility as 'authentic' fans. Whilst clowning has to be recognised as making an effort to support the team it also has to be understood that a major element of this behaviour is about promoting the self.

Trainspotting

The trainspotter lurks in most football supporters, from the youngster baffling his mates with his knowledge of the San Paulo teenager he's learnt about on FIFA manager, to the old stager who has memorised all his club's 1960s teams from vintage programmes. Knowledge of the club is also a badge of honour, status and authenticity for many types of fans, from cult hero status for the local 'statto' in any particular group to recollections of matches, days away and events for old timers.

Yet, for some, trainspotting becomes a dominant form of consumption and knowing the most about a club, country, era, or player, becomes their goal. This might be displayed in the unnecessary sharing of knowledge, boring fellow fans with another 'fact' or a pedantic 'correction' to the printed program or fanzine. Or it might be openly and aggressively on display in supporter club or coach trip quizzes. Indeed, the quiz or knowledge competition - preferably televised as a 'Cup Final' Mastermind - is the ultimate opportunity for the trainspotter.

Trainspotting can also embrace the 'collectorism' evident in much football consumption. The tendency amongst many fans to retain mementoes from matches, such as tickets, programmes and even newspaper reports is very common. Some fans will retain these from special occasions, others as a matter of habit from more routine games, stuffing them into boxes and drawers when they get home. However, collecting can extend to a pursuit of the rare, to complete a set, to find the exclusive and become a dominant form of football consumption for a few.

Connoisseurship

There is a bit of the connoisseur in most fans who regularly watch football - an appreciation of the beautiful aesthetics of the game. The universal acclaim for Argentina's 6-0 drubbing of Serbia in the recent World Cup is a good example of this element of football consumption. Even in the routine of a season's matches, fans can derive what seems like instinctive personal pleasure from good play, or great goals.

However, for those for whom being a connoisseur is their major connection to the game, there is a deeper, personal and serious love of football, in which the game, and the way it is played, means huge amount. They will have a great knowledge and appreciation of the game that is not always for public consumption - being a connoisseur does not involve the performative displays of the clown or the trainspotter.

Connoisseurship also involves a tendency toward being a fan of the game as much, if not much more, than a particular club; probably involving playing and/or coaching football. Here, it is the playing of the game, rather than the fandom

associated with it that is seen as most important. Indeed both the exuberant displays of fans and the bias that this lends to many peoples' consumption of football will be viewed as naive, foolish, immature and failing to see the 'real' beauty of the game. The connoisseur will, then, be as happy applauding great play from the opposition as a less graceful win for their own team.

Connoisseurship may also involve a very private consumption of football, shunning the collective gatherings in pubs and stadia - where there are too many distractions from a good view of the play. A preference to watch at home on television may still involve complaining (to themselves!) that commentators talk too much and don't understand the game. The personal meaning of football is of course an element in many other types of consumption, but here it is the connection of individual fan and game that dominates.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia has been a common feature of fandom for many years and is prompted in part by changing modes of production and consumption in football. For those being nostalgic, the introduction of new technologies and other changes are not received well - unless it is to introduce a rule enforcing black boots and short haircuts.

The commercial development in the game, all-seater stadia, the Premier League, agents, 'too many' foreign players, and tabloid-fuelled celebrity football culture are rejected as not only poorer than what has existed in previous times, but also a betrayal of what football's authentic form and audience should be. Within nostalgic football consumption, there is a longing for a mythic past in which the game was the preserve of the working man and the commodification of football was less pronounced and diverse. As such, 'nostalgics' are in need of salvation and will search for less commercial ways to connect to the game, perhaps seeking out lower league, or grass roots football to watch.

For the nostalgic, internet chat rooms, text messaging and radio phone-ins may represent new (and alien) forms of football consumption, which you might expect to be rejected as superficial and transient. However, they can also become an arena in which to rehearse arguments about how the game isn't as good as it used to be and that it has left its roots behind. The internet in particular can also become a site for what might be considered nostalgic fan campaigns, around, for instance, a return to standing at football. Satellite television, the DVD market and the internet also provide the nostalgic with myriad opportunities to view vintage images and matches and listen to interviews of past stars who reinforce their impression that 'it isn't as good as it used to be'. Here, new and nostalgic forms of football consumption collide and overlap.

Pick 'n' mixing

Pick 'n' mix consumption rejects nostalgia and instead rejoices in change in football and immerses fandom in the commodification of the game. Football here is to be consumed in all its forms and new football products or ways of watching the game are greeted with enthusiasm. This form of consumption will have subscription to wall to wall satellite television; SMS and video updates on their phones; a high priority given to the internet chat rooms and gossip columns; a fascination with football computer gaming; and a desire to purchase club merchandise.

However, pick 'n' mixing can also extend to a chameleon-like approach to support, especially among younger fans today. Here fans may have more than one team - anathema to the nostalgic or the stoic - possibly supporting their father's team and a local team, a top flight and a lower division side, or even a team found as a favourite on a FIFA game. In part this reflects the shifting demographics of contemporary society as traditions of supporting a local or a father's team no longer coincide, or are adversely affected by social mobility or family breakdown.

Pick 'n' mixing is also part of the flaneur fan's consumption and is particularly evident during international tournaments. Here 'new fans' will come to the game and watch matches to a degree which is never visible during non-event times. Whilst there is a less critical and reflexive relationship to football consumption here, there is a relaxed and easy-going enjoyment of football's variety and a celebration of its diversity. Pick 'n' mixing will embrace the choosing of favourite teams of countries they may never have even watched before - the public sympathy for Ghana during World Cup 2006 being an example - and it will most likely involve, at some point, wearing a Brazil shirt.

Out and proud

Football remains a space in which homophobia is rife, among fans, players as well as clubs and authorities. This can limit and constrain the consumption of the game for gay people as well as restrict opportunities to play. As our research has shown however, some groups of gay people have found within football, through the formation of gay teams, a space in which they can play the game

This provides gay people with a space to share and celebrate a love of football as both players and fans. As such, gay teams can also lead to the consumption of football in the same collective, safe and familiar environment in which the threats of consuming or playing football in the 'football mainstream' are removed. Here marginalised identities are formed into football 'interest' groups and the exclusionary nature of the mainstream game is to some extent removed.

Blagging

Part of football's appeal is its ability to both attract a wide spectrum of people, but also to provide transformative moments of freedom, an escape from other responsibilities. This is of course gendered and our research has unveiled a consumption of the game in which 'new dads' in particular find the freedom that football offers. As such, here, football consumption is about escaping domestic responsibilities and the restrictions of family life, providing an excuse to re-engage with former identities and freedoms.

Football is presented here as a legitimate pastime, another love that allows men to spend time with their mates which (most of the time) does not 'get them into trouble'; nor is it seen as being 'unfaithful' to the marriage. This form of consumption is of course most visible where new domestic and family responsibilities arrive - a marriage, the arrival of children in particular. Football remains in men's lives, providing a world of (temporary) hedonistic possibilities.

Imprisonment

On the other side of this coin, women whose partners are keen football fans find themselves and their relationships under tremendous strain. The 'legitimate' nature of the partner's absence squeezes room for debate and they feel that they have less grounds to object to 'football' related social events. Here football is something which overrides commitments to family and domestic responsibilities, often against the wishes of one partner and in which they are left, literally, holding the baby

However, more positively, and as children get older, relationships with the game can involve football acting as a means of connection between parent and child and relieving domestic pressures. Here football becomes a site for the development of relationships with children, a means by which leverage can be generated with children and even a form of 'alternative childcare'. Given the gendered relationships with football, we have discussed, men taking children to football matches can act as a very temporary form of liberation from domestic chores for the other partner.

Militancy

There is a militancy in many fans relationship to football, but it is rarely exposed in a political and visible way. When clubs go into administration and face extinction; or as a hated chairman sacks a beloved manager; or as an American tycoon buys your club and plunges it into debt, it can be a 'tipping point' for many supporters. The focus of their obsession, affection, socialising and consumption is under threat, being used or being usurped.

Here football becomes something to be politically defended against commercial exploitation and commodification. Fans form independent supporter organisations and supporters trusts, set up internet sites and launch petitions. This form of militant consumption can produce startling results such as Charlton's return to the Valley, the rejection of BSkyB's bid for Manchester United.

Others fans will go further and organise direct action against the powerful football and economic interests they oppose. Director's cars can be attacked, companies can be harassed and harried, demonstrations organised and shops 'flash-mobbed'. For this type of football consumption, fans are in a crisis situation, their clubs and/or preferred modes of consumption under threat or removed, and they see few alternatives. Another manifestation of militancy can be when the battle is lost, the campaign over. In two cases recently this has led to fans rejecting their former clubs - in their eyes preserving an essence of it - by forming new, fan owned clubs.

Kicking for Kicks

Violence has always been part and parcel of football since its inception, both on and off the field and is in no way a contemporary phenomenon. There is both a form of football consumption that sees the game as a site for the conduct of violent behaviour; as well as the consumption of violence by those who may never take part.

In the former case, groups of fans (almost always men) collectively pursue violent encounters with opposition fans in part, at least, as a form of entertainment, thrill-seeking and risk-taking. There is a distinction within this form of consumption as fans separate themselves from the mass, often dressing differently in expensive designer clothes, pursuing elaborate routes to the game and remote locations to engage rival fans, away from the forces of law and order.

In the latter case instances of violence around football are like honey pots for other supporters, even those who never take part or utterly condemn violent fans. Instances of player violence are a cue for righteous indignation, anger and passion within stadia; and in repeat after repeat showing on TV. Violence within football is also consumed on web sites, in DVDs and TV documentaries by those that take part - rejecting portrayals of violence, or rejoicing in portrayals of themselves - and in much greater numbers by those that do not. This 'consumption of deviance' is an often unrecognised form of football consumption

In the following table we summarise these form of fanaticism alongside a sense of both their qualities and the contexts in which they are revealed.

Table 7: Re-thinking football fanaticism

Fanaticism	When football is...	Revealed by...
Stoicism	a matter of habit rather than motivation. They are always there but you probably wouldn't notice.	arrival of the season ticket renewal form. Wall to wall TV coverage
Partying	an opportunity to have a day out/ weekend away/overseas trip with like minded souls which will guarantee a good time regardless of what happens on the pitch.	publication of the fixture lists. Draws for the next round of the Cup. Major football events
Clowning	an opportunity to celebrate the self and perform an attachment to the game with enjoyment of the 'occasion' related to being 'noticed'.	the 'big' televised match. Major football events
Trainspotting	to know the most about	unnecessary sharing of knowledge
Connoisseurship	a deep, personal and serious love	a great knowledge and appreciation of the game that is not always for public consumption
Blagging	an excuse to re-engage with former identities and freedoms	the arrival of new family responsibilities
Nostalgia	in need of salvation	the search for less commercial ways to connect to the game
Pick 'n' mixing	to be consumed in all its forms	the arrival of new football 'products'
Out and proud	a space to share and celebrate a marginalised identity	formation of football 'interest' groups
Imprisonment	something which overrides commitments to family and domestic responsibilities.	being left holding the baby
Militancy	something to be politically defended against commercial exploitation and commodification	organised direct action against powerful football interests
Kicking for kicks	an excuse for a 'tear up' or somewhere to observe and enjoy the spectacle of violence	football hooliganism and the media interest in it

We can not then talk of the 'wildest', 'maddest', 'daftest', 'most fanatical' football fan as fixed identity categories. All we can do is identify the ways in which many lives are touched by people's associations with the game which vary across time, place and context.