Football Fandom:
Football Fan Identity and Identification
at Luton Town Football Club

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A thesis submitted to Luton Business School, University of Luton, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August 1998
Abstract

This study examines football fan identity and identification within the Nationwide football league in England.

A preliminary examination of the literature concludes that research on fan identity with sports teams in general, focuses primarily upon the behavioural consequences of fan identification. More specific research on the football fan theory framework. Employing a mixed-methods research design, and an embedded case study approach, the study investigates those factors that influence fan identification at Luton Town Football Club. Methods used were those of observation/participant observation, a large scale fan survey, and in-depth semi-structured interviews with fans.

As part of the fan survey, the sport spectator identification scale (Wann and Branscombe, 1993), revealed a fan population that was highly identified with Luton Town. Levels of fan identification were similar across age, gender, and length of support of the club. Subsequent survey and interview data allowed six themes related to this fan identification to emerge: these being the extent of fan identification; the antecedents of fan identification; the maintenance of fan identification; the effects of fan identification upon behaviour; the influence of the cultural identity within which fan identities are enacted; and the relationship between the fan and the football club. Analysis of these themes yields a model of football fan identification which can be adapted to fans of other football clubs, or fans within other contexts.

It was concluded that whenever such identification provides positive social and psychological consequences for fans, levels of identification with the club remain high. For these fans, it is the process of identification with the club that is the most important component of fandom. By contrast, where the individual derives fewer benefits from fandom, identification remains low. For such less identified fans, other factors, such as the quality of facilities or team performance, become more meaningful.

The findings from the study indicate that social identity theory is an appropriate framework with which to explore the concept of football fan identification.
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<td>BIRG</td>
<td>Bask in reflected glory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOLT</td>
<td>“Boys of Luton Town”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORF</td>
<td>Cutting off reflected failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.A.</td>
<td>Football Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTFC</td>
<td>Luton Town Football Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAAH</td>
<td>Mad as a Hatter (Luton Town fanzine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIG</td>
<td>“Men in Gear”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUD*IST</td>
<td>Non-numerical unstructured data indexing, searching and theorising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNCCFR</td>
<td>Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research (University of Leicester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSIS</td>
<td>Sport spectator identification scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTWA</td>
<td>Travel to work area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHOSH</td>
<td>World-wide Hatters on the Super Highway (electronic discussion forum for Fans of Luton Town)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSC</td>
<td>“When Saturday Comes”</td>
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Authors Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Luton. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

_______ day of ________________, 19____
Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The Football Fan and Football Fan Identification

Association football\(^1\) is the world's most popular active sport, whether measured by participation, watching "live", or in terms of television viewing figures (Duke and Crolley, 1996). It has been referred to as the only global idiom other than science (Kitchin, 1966, cited in Dunning, 1988). Nearly every country in the world plays and watches some form of the game (Dunning, 1988). Hopcroft (1968: 9) summarises the seemingly unique importance of football to its fans when he observes:

> it is not just a sport that people take to, like cricket or tennis or running long distances. It is inherent in the people. It is built into the urban psyche, as much a common experience to our children as are uncles and school. It is not a phenomenon, it is an everyday matter.

Despite the cultural, social, economic and even political significance of the game, the football fan has not been correspondingly targeted by researchers. A review of sports fan literature (Wann and Hamlet, 1995) has found that only four percent of recent studies in sport sociology and sport psychology journals investigate the sports fan. Much of this research focuses upon spectator violence, and little exists on the non-violent sports fan. Furthermore, most contemporary studies show a strong North American emphasis, and research into the association football fan is even less commonplace. That which does exist shows an even stronger accent on the violent fan, or football "hooligan". Very little work

\(^1\) Throughout this thesis, the term "football" is used as referring to the game of association football, or "soccer", rather than to any of the other forms of sport that are designated as football, such as American Football.
has been conducted on football fan identity and identification, especially where
the non-violent fan is concerned. Wann, et al. (1996: 995) note, for example, that

although researchers have examined the effects of
identification on spectators' behaviours... they have
neglected to examine the factors that influence
identification.

Given the importance of popular cultural practices in the formation and
expression of identities (Roche, 1998), especially those practices based around
leisure (Urry, 1995), the attention given to football fan identity and identification
is conspicuous by its absence. It is upon the concept of football fan identity and
identification that the thesis is focused.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Research Programme

The overall aim of this study is to explore football fan identification within a
sample of selected fans from the Nationwide Football League\(^2\) with a view to
answering some of the fundamental questions regarding football fandom. This
aim, in turn, comprises the following associated objectives:

- To determine the strength of identification of selected Nationwide League fans
  with their team,
- To investigate those factors of importance in the origin and maintenance of
  fan identification with a selected Nationwide League Football Club,
- To discover other factors that are important to fan identification of selected
  fans from the Nationwide League,
- Once determined, to evaluate the separate importance of each factor to fan
  identification,
- To assess any relationships between levels of identification and fan
  behaviour at selected Nationwide League Football Clubs,

\(^2\) Since 1992, English professional football has comprised of two leagues: the elite top
division - the Premier League, or Premier, and the Nationwide League, comprising of the
three other full-time divisions.
The research objectives are achieved by adopting an embedded case study approach (Yin, 1994). Here, one particular case (that of Luton Town Football Club), containing a number of sub cases (the fans), is selected. By investigating the fans of Luton Town Football Club, theories of identity and identification are applied to football fandom, and outlined and evaluated in the light of empirical investigation. This procedure allows the development of a model of football fan identification to be presented.

1.3 The Research Design

Football fan identification consists of a number of components, these being cognitive, affective and behavioural (Pooley, 1978; Guttman, 1986; Branscombe and Wann, 1992). Certain components are more suited to positivist assumptions (notably the statistical analysis of certain behavioural aspects of fandom), and others are more suited to an interpretative approach (the cognitive, and affective components). Although existing evidence is scarce, it is suggested that behaviour as a sports fan is primarily moderated by the cognitive and affective components (Wann and Branscombe, 1994; Madrigal, 1995; Tomlinson, et al., 1995), components that are more suited to the interpretative approach. However to develop an holistic picture of the multi-dimensional concept of football fan identification, an argument for methodological pluralism has been adopted within the overall philosophical orientation of the researcher. This study uses the mixed-methods approach as defined by Creswell (1994), with continual integration between methods. The argument for this approach is outlined in chapter seven (cf. Jones, 1997b).

The resultant research design that has been adopted within this study can be seen in the following diagram (figure 1.1).
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1.4 The Structure of the Thesis

Chapters two to five are theoretical, and form the framework for the research. Chapters six and seven are methodological. Chapters eight, nine, and ten are primarily empirical in nature, and present the research findings in the context developed through the theoretical framework. The objective of each chapter is outlined below.

Chapter two outlines and reviews existing literature on the football fan, and develops the area of football fan identification within the Nationwide League as an original, appropriate, and legitimate area for research.

Chapters three and four introduce, describe and evaluate existing work on identity and identification. This task is carried out predominantly through a review of relevant work, with existing sports fan research being introduced as and when appropriate. These chapters allow the concept and the consequences of football fan identity and identification to be developed. The resultant identification as a fan is believed to be enacted within a particular cultural context, and this context, or cultural identity of football fandom is discussed within chapter five. The discussion in these three chapters allows the research objectives to be clarified.

The development of a suitable research design to achieve these research objectives is outlined in chapter six. This chapter outlines the use of a mixed-methods case study. Chapter seven describes the use of methods within the study and the resultant issues of analysis and presentation.

In chapter eight, the emergent themes from the research are presented and discussed. The findings are then discussed and evaluated within chapter nine. The discussion relates the findings to the theory developed within the earlier chapters, and enables the development of a model of football fan identification. This model is then discussed in light of fans who show either high, or low levels of identification with the football club, and the mechanisms by which such fans maintain, or cease their identification.
The overall conclusions to the study are then presented in chapter ten. Here, reflections are made on the study, the strengths and weaknesses of the research are considered, and recommendations for future research are suggested.
Chapter Two
Identifying an Agenda for Studying the Football Fan

2.1 Introduction

Despite the evident importance of sport within Western society, whether considered from a social, psychological, cultural, economic, anthropological, political or any other disciplinary viewpoint, the area has been overlooked by researchers for a considerable time. As MacClancy (1996a: 1) notes:

until fairly recently, most sociologists, and social historians, and many anthropologists have neglected sport as a potentially fruitful object of study.

The reasoning for this neglect, whether it be on the basis of the “unchangeability” (and therefore unworthiness of analysis) of the human body and its activities (Hargreaves, 1994), or the “unreality” of sporting activities compared to more “serious” pastimes such as business (Fox, 1981), or the emphasis placed on the study of physical education, athletic performance and motor learning at the expense of the study of the role of sport in society (Coakley, 1990), has become less acceptable over the last twenty years.

The phenomenon of fandom has also received only recent attention, again being seen as “trivial” in nature compared to more central aspects of day to day life, such as work (Lewis, 1992; Bromberger, 1993). Within this context, the academic consideration of football and football fandom within society has also developed, a progression that seems logical, given the cultural and economic significance of football, both world-wide (Morris, 1981; Dunning, 1988), and within British
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society (SNCCFR, 1995, 1996). Such growth, however, has been uneven as regards the types of questions that have received attention by football researchers. As a result, certain features of football and football fandom, notably those of fan violence, or football hooliganism, have received considerable academic attention at the expense of other, less dramatic, issues present within contemporary professional football in England.

It can be demonstrated that during the early development of the sociology of sport, it was not only the non-violent football fan, but also the fan of sport in general that had, according to Anderson (1979: 116), “been virtually ignored by most researchers”. This statement is still currently applicable to a large extent, with the contemporary situation being that little research exists on the non-violent sports fan, (according to Wann and Hamlet, 1995; Wann, 1995; Burca, et al., 1996; Wann, et al., 1996). An outline of existing literature demonstrates this oversight to be the case. It also highlights the exploration of fan identity and identification as an appropriate area of research into football and society.

2.2 The Basis for a Research Agenda

To ascertain and justify an agenda for investigating aspects of English professional football, it is useful to begin with an examination and summary of the literature on football and its fans. Football writing in itself has been in existence since the formation of the Football Association in 1863. Seddon (1995) notes such early works as the 1865 Routledge Handbook of Football, as well as a plethora of club histories and player autobiographies. However many of these works seem to possess a “penchant for rose-coloured assessments” (Murphy, unpublished paper: 1), and thus may be potentially unreliable. Although there are a number of case studies regarding individual clubs, (for example Davies, 1972; Ward and Alister, 1981), and works relating to football culture in a general context (such as Hopcraft, 1968; Dunphy, 1976), these studies predominantly examine the playing records and achievements of the clubs, and the
achievements of players within particular football clubs, with minimal, if any, reference to the fans belonging to such clubs.

The English World Cup triumph of 1966, which Redhead (1987) refers to as the beginning of the “modern” football era, provided a catalyst for football writing (although not academic football research). England’s victory, together with growing media interest in players, saw the beginning of a large increase in football literature. Most of this writing was aimed at a young audience, (for example the magazines Goal, Shoot, Match and Roy of the Rovers). Much of this popular literature, however, and also that aimed at an older audience, was seemingly compiled with style and appearance, rather than substance, as its primary aim. As Haynes (1995:33) notes “By the nineteen-seventies the most prestigious football writing came from the back pages of the Sunday papers”. By this time, however, a number of academics, mostly sociologists and economists, had begun to take a belated interest in English professional football.

Scholarly works on football are therefore comparatively recent, (a point also noted by Elias and Dunning, 1986 and Russell, 1997), mirroring the late development of sport as an area of serious academic study. The quality of the literature that has been produced has itself been the subject of debate. Indeed, Williams and Wagg (1991: ix) suggest that

> [t]he last twenty or so years have seen the emergence of a cogent, often - but not always - academic discourse on football and British society,

and Giulianotti and Armstrong (1997: 27) have argued more recently that

> since the late 1980’s, a network of football researchers has been spun and respun. Rather often the intellectual and explanatory value of the resulting work is questionable and seems to offer little to those not au fait with the game’s minutiae.

The question concerning the value of existing works seems entirely justified. A review of football literature indicates a wide variety of explanations and theories,
(mostly with reference to deviant spectators, or the football hooligan), which, on the whole are seemingly mutually exclusive, rather than complementary. As a result, football research - especially that on the hooligan - within the United Kingdom has tended to show elements of competition, with works competing, rather than consolidating, in terms of theory.

One explanation for the lack of a cohesive "grand unified theory" of football fandom may lie in the fact that football literature has been largely thematic in its development, with researchers approaching the subject from a relatively small variety of individual disciplines, such as sociology, or economics, rather than using a multi-disciplinary analysis. The unilateral approach of football writers is noted by Moorhouse (1986), who states that the academic treatment of football "has been organised around very few themes", predominantly sociologically, with most theorists having ignored potentially significant areas such as the financial aspect of football clubs. The importance of a multi-disciplinary approach, although not explicitly stated, is implied by Moorhouse, who argues that "variations in financial strength translate into activities and ideologies characteristic of different clubs" (Moorhouse, 1986: 254), a point which demonstrates how interdependencies between financial and social aspects can operate within a club. Moorhouse argues, however, that financial aspects are equally, if not more relevant than social considerations to form the basis of an analysis of professional football. Yet, given that he acknowledges that the two factors are interrelated, it is clear that changes in one may affect the other, or that each is interdependent. If this is the case, then they cannot be treated in isolation from each other, a point that suggests that a thematic approach to football research will have implicit weaknesses, and that such a multi-faceted phenomenon requires multi-disciplinary analysis.

For one example of the "rivalries" that have developed within the field see Armstrong (1998: viii; 16-19).
2.3 The Two Eras of Football Literature

Although not readily categorisable, existing football literature can be broadly segregated into two eras. The first era begins with the early academic works, such as those by Taylor (1971a, 1971b), and develops throughout the nineteen-eighties and early nineteen-nineties to the middle of that decade. During this period “the study of football invariably manifests itself into an account of violence in and around football” (Haynes, 1995: 3), although Mason’s (1980) detailed early history of the game and its fans is a notable exception. During this time, Tomlinson (1983: 9) argued that

too much work on football has... concentrated on the hooliganism aspect, at the expense of our understanding of developments within the culture of the game.

This is a point that has been continually restated. As Duke (1991), Haynes (1995), and Burca, et al. (1996) all note, as a result of this emphasis, there is a fundamental lack of information on the non-hooligan fan. According to Duke, (1991: 627)

[a] corollary of this concentration on a form of behaviour involving a minority of football spectators has been the neglect of systematic empirical research into the majority of the football crowd,

with one outcome being that

the Taylor Report on the Hillsborough Stadium Disaster could call upon no recent data on the social composition of the football crowd in Britain (Duke, 1991: 628).

Not only is the descriptive question of fan identity still largely unanswered (except for the Premier League surveys (SNCCFR 1995, 1996), which deal only

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4 The Hillsborough disaster refers to the events of April 15 1989, when “operational errors” led to part of the ground becoming fatally overcrowded, leading to the deaths of ninety-six football fans, mainly as a result of crushing or asphyxiation within a fenced enclosure (Taylor 1990, Williams 1994).
with fans of clubs at the highest level), but also the more interesting causal issue of why they are fans also remains unresearched. The 1995/96 and 1996/97 Premier League surveys (SNCCFR, 1995, 1996) provide some answers, in terms of measuring the profiles and behaviour of fans of the more successful clubs. These investigations, however, have been subject to methodological criticism (Waddington, et al., 1996; Nash, 1997), and have not been aimed at an academic audience (Williams, 1996). Furthermore, these inquiries do not attempt to go beyond quantifiable indicators of overt fan behaviour, such as number of games attended, or amounts of money spent on fandom for example. As yet, few works exist which explore the actual mechanisms of why football fans, especially those at the lower levels of the Football League, become identified with teams. Curren and Redmond (1991) have been a notable exception, in their investigation of fan allegiance among readers of the football magazine When Saturday Comes (WSC).

The authors of this research explicitly acknowledge that their survey is limited only to readers of WSC, and, as such, cannot be seen as representing a wider population of football fans. Among the WSC respondents however, a number of key points emerge. Here, locality, family, peer group influence and tradition are seen as important predictors of allegiance, especially within the lower divisions, where success and failure appear to be less important than within what, at the time of the research, was the First Division (now the Premier League). A number of methodological issues arise, such as the increased likelihood of certain social groups to complete a questionnaire distributed within a comparatively expensive magazine. There is also the issue that it seems unlikely that each family would buy more than one copy of the magazine, thus it is certainly possible that this may create some sampling bias, especially among family groups of supporters. Notwithstanding these criticisms, the survey of Curren and Redmond is certainly worthwhile to the extent that it addresses fundamental questions that appear to have been ignored by many first era researchers, who have favoured research into the hooligan. The reasons for this emphasis may be explained by the development of the first era of football research, an era that is outlined below.
The First Era - Football and the Hooligan

As Tomlinson (1983), Duke (1991), Jary, et al. (1991) and Burca, et al. (1996) note, much of the existing football writing, especially that produced during the 1980s and early 1990's, has concentrated upon hooliganism and fan violence. Four reasons can be suggested for this unilateral emphasis.

Firstly, acts of football hooliganism in the mid to late 1960's - like the emergence of the "teddy boys" and the "mods" and "rockers" in the preceding decade - led to the emergence of what Cohen (1980) has termed a "moral panic" (Marsh, 1982; Dunning, et al., 1988; cf. Pearson, 1983). This moral panic was arguably the catalyst for mainstream sociological research into hooliganism (Taylor, 1971a, 1971b), by providing a high profile target group for researchers interested in deviance.

Secondly, this alarm led, indirectly, to further academic expansion into football hooliganism due to the greater likelihood of gaining funding for "policy relevant research" (Duke, 1991: 627), whereby successive governments searched for the causes of, and solutions to football hooliganism.

Thirdly, the sheer volume of academic research and interest into the hooligan has precipitated even more research into the same area. The positive result of this research emphasis has been, however, to aid the establishment of football as a domain of serious study within the social sciences, as indicated, for example, by the publication of an entire edition of the *Sociological Review* (1991 39 no. 3) devoted to the sociology of football.

The final explanation suggested has to do with the appropriateness of the hooligan as a subject for certain theoretical approaches. One central tenet of the figuralational perspective adopted by sociologists of the "Leicester School", (who

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5 At the same time, Dann (1971) suggested that sociologists were more interested in the study of the "deviant", rather than the normal, within society. Thus, the football hooligan provided a far more attractive proposition to sociologists than the "ordinary" fan.
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were instrumental in the creation of the Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research (SNCCFR), is that of Elias's "civilising process", or theory of the gradual refinement of manners and behaviour within society since the Middle Ages. The football hooligan provides a contemporary, and high profile realm of deviant case analysis for Elias's theories of such processes, and, as such, provides a rich source of data for the centre team, which has been exploited in considerable depth by his colleagues at Leicester University.

Despite the wealth of research into hooliganism, and also perhaps because of it, no clear conclusions have emerged. Researchers have entered a number of contrasting discussions into the extent and causes of football hooliganism, notably Taylor (1971a, 1971b, 1982, 1987, 1991); Marsh, et al. (1978); Clarke (1978); Dunning, et al. (1986, 1987, 1988); Murphy, et al. (1990); Armstrong and Harris (1991); Kerr (1994); and Armstrong (1998).

Within this literature there are some insights that enable a possible understanding of the "ordinary" fan. Many of the referred works are of some interest with regard to the development of the football spectator, and their relationship with the football club. They have provided a useful line of inquiry into the historical development of the football fan, an area that can be shown to have, in general, been under investigated. The most relevant example of the potential application of hooligan studies to the contemporary fan, however, seems to be found in the works of Taylor. His earliest (1971a) publication on the topic suggests a need for fans to be a "part" of the club, or using Williams' (1961) terminology, perceive that they are "members", rather than "consumers" of a football club. This concept of "belonging" was at that time, however, to a large extent ignored, although Taylor's later works touched upon the issue. These later articles (Taylor, 1987, 1989, 1991) outline his concerns for the development and the subsequent devaluing of fandom, from its nostalgic (and perhaps rose-tinted) history, to the stereotyped view of the football fan as typically violent, watching games from within caged terraces. This feeling was arguably reinforced by the severe recommendations of the Popplewell Report (1986), which were, according to Taylor (1987), symptomatic of the Thatcherite attitudes
to football fandom. These mindsets were unsympathetic toward the game, and fully in evidence at Luton Town F.C. at the time, under the chairmanship of David Evans, a future Conservative MP and strong supporter of the "Iron Lady".

Only by 1991, with the outcome of the Taylor Report (1991), did the balance move towards football in terms of softer legislation, in terms of the rejection of the proposed ID membership schemes, the recommendation of the removal of perimeter fences, and the highlighting of a need for modernisation of football facilities. As is noted by Duke (1991), this report, however, was written with a distinct lack of fundamental knowledge about the focus of its intentions - the fans themselves.

Adopting a different approach to, and often critical of Taylor's work, the "Leicester School" has concentrated upon studying the football hooligan using a predominantly figurational approach, utilising a socio-historical framework. Dunning, et al. (1986, 1987, 1988); Williams, et al. (1984); Maguire (1986); and Murphy, et al. (1991) have traced the emergence of hooliganism as a social problem to a greater extent than any other works. Their findings are not dissimilar to those of Clarke (1978) and Taylor (1987, 1989, 1991), placing the problem of hooliganism as one generated within developing cultural conditions involving changing class relations between the middle and working classes, and alterations to social attitudes towards violence within the context of the British "Civilising Process". Their work is useful in attempting to provide an account of the development of the football crowd, which, although concentrating upon the hooligan, provides useful, if limited, sociological data regarding the changing composition of the football crowd, an area that is, as Mason (1980) notes, almost impossible to research given the lack of available data. The socio-historical approach is useful in demonstrating that standards of fan behaviour have not suddenly deteriorated (as argued by Taylor and Clarke for example) since the 1960's. Instead fan behaviour has been an issue since before the beginning of the twentieth century (see especially Dunning, et al., 1988).

6 See appendix A for an outline of the experimental role of Luton Town as a model for certain Conservative policies for football.
Recent publications on the football hooligan (e.g. Armstrong, 1998) have, however, been extremely critical of the Leicester work, referring to it as "confusing", and lacking in empirical evidence. This, to a large extent however, is a criticism that can be aimed at much of the existing football fan literature, and is a point that is continually highlighted throughout this thesis, especially where the fans, even more so the non-violent fans, of less successful clubs are concerned.

Despite the prevalence of literature on the football hooligan, there is no general consensus regarding the causes of football hooliganism. As Armstrong and Harris (1991) argue, the changing historical and cultural conditions mean that differing explanations may have differing values of importance in explaining contrasting types of hooliganism. It seems unrealistic to suggest that there is one correct interpretation for the phenomenon, and that the differing contexts of individuals or groups in diverse situations would require separate explanations. This is more realistic than Redhead's (1991) argument that hooligan studies have reached their "limit of effectiveness" in explaining the phenomenon of football hooliganism. The arguable saturation of hooligan-based research, combined with improving crowd behaviour has allowed the field of football research to gradually reassess its agenda, away from the hooligan, towards the non-violent fan. This move had, although only to a very small extent, begun during the first era of football writing. This work is outlined below.

Although the first era of football writing mostly concentrated upon the hooligan, or deviant fan, a number of economists took an interest in football during this period. Economic theory was first applied in a study of professional football in England by Sloane (1971), who discussed the labour market within, and the utility maximisation of, English professional football clubs. Since that study, it

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7 It is interesting to note, however, that a paper co-authored by the same individual less then three months earlier (Guilianotti and Armstrong 1997) stated that "the most articulate sociological explanation of football hooligan formations... has been advanced by the 'process sociologist' Eric Dunning and his colleagues at Leicester University" (p.4).
8 Although the behaviour of certain English fans at the 1998 France World Cup may again refocus attention towards the football hooligan.
has been the demand for football by fans that has received the overwhelming majority of attention from economists, for example Hart, et al. (1975); Bird (1982); Jennet (1984); Walker (1986); Cairns (1987, 1990); Peel and Thomas (1988); and Dobson and Goddard (1992, 1996). Most of these works attempt to ascertain independent variables that affect the demand for, and hence attendances at, professional football.

All of the economic studies referred to above can be faulted on one main point, a criticism that is outlined more than once by Clarke and Madden (1987, 1988), who argue that quantifiable solutions to the economic problems of the game often suffer from loose correlations with the evidence since the problems need to be conceived more broadly than the economic formulae allow. The problems facing football cannot be addressed without the proper recognition of the cultural traditions of the sport (Clarke and Madden, 1988: 59).

This argument can be applied to other, non-economic studies, and is a criticism that can be aimed at the Premier League surveys (SNCCFR 1995, 1996), in that quantifiable behaviour is described, with little or no reference to the context in which such behaviour takes place, or to the meanings of such behaviour for the participants. This criticism has also been highlighted by Wakefield and Sloan (1995) who note that such studies tend to describe observable behaviour, rather than measure perceptions, values or attitudes. Thus there is a general failure within these works to acknowledge sufficiently that football and football fandom cannot solely be analysed in quantifiable terms, although such analyses are useful in outlining the extent of such behaviour. Instead, an inclusion of the social and cultural factors that motivate those who watch football is desirable.

There is also a general failure in such economic works to acknowledge that the football crowd is not homogenous, but seemingly composed of a wide cross section of society (as indicated by SNCCFR, 1996), including, for example,
increasing numbers of female spectators, and, according at least to the SNCCFR Premier League surveys, an increased number of "affluent" fans. Aveni (1977) also argues that a sports crowd consists of collections of different individuals, and that treating the crowd as a homogenous entity, as has been the case with many economic studies, is undesirable.

Such economic analyses also fail, according to Clarke and Madden (1987, 1988), to recognise the nuances of football fans in their patterns of attendance. They concede that "the supporter imposes rigidities on the market that are not recognised in the economic models" (Clarke and Madden, 1987: 239). Thus the decision to attend football matches is not purely predictable by economic models, but is strongly affected by the fans' own values and attitudes, which will have been socially and culturally constructed. Therefore measurement of overt behaviour, such as attendance, seems unlikely to be able to explain and predict crowd behaviour. Also the issue of combining data from different clubs is one that raises a number of questions. These questions are raised in more depth in chapter six.

The Second Era - The Post-Hillsborough Fan

The second, post-Hillsborough, era of football writing, indicates a reappraisal of the football fan (Williams, 1991; Taylor, 1991; Haynes, 1995) with positive characteristics of English football, such as rising attendances and reduced fan violence, becoming apparent at this time (Duke, 1991). As a result of this emphasis, the culture of the "ordinary" fan receives more academic attention in this period of football writing. The perception of the football fan after the Hillsborough Stadium tragedy has undergone an undoubted transformation. This transformation has led to a gradual, and recent realignment of the directions of football research. As Williams (1994) notes in his work on the modernisation of stadia post-Hillsborough, the media coverage of the tragedy:

did have the effect of displacing, or at least disrupting, prevailing stereotypes in England of
Williams' argument is that the Hillsborough disaster was a catalyst for research into the culture of the 'ordinary' football fan, (Williams and Wagg, 1991). It seems likely, however, that other social factors were also important. The Hillsborough disaster was rapidly followed by events such as the commercially successful 1990 Italian World Cup tournament (Italia '90), and other products of football culture, with the critically and commercially successful book (and later film) Fever Pitch (Hornby, 1992) being a prominent factor in this shift of perceptions of the football fan. According to King (1995: 291):

Fever Pitch was then a response to the new cultural position which football attained after Italia '90 and the outstanding success of the book played dialectically back into the establishment of football's new cultural position.

It was within this fresh cultural context that the "new" football writing developed. This development took place as a result of the changing cultural identity of English professional football, both as a result of what King (1997) calls the "transformed consumption" of Premier League football, and as a reaction against the predominance of hooligan literature by fans wishing to reassert the nature of fandom away from its stereotypical media image (Redhead, 1993).

A contemporary analysis demonstrates that there is a growing quantity of such literature available on the culture of the contemporary fan. As discussed above, many of these studies have arisen as a result of the changing cultural identity of football, leading to increased production, often by:

football fans themselves to reject the media stereotype of inarticulate, macho, hooligan imagery surrounding football fandom (Redhead, 1993: 3).
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A feature of this phenomenon is the literature written by fans themselves, the most successful being that already cited, of Hornby (1992). On a smaller commercial scale the fanzine has also become a significant part of modern football culture. Haynes (1995) has assembled the first in-depth study of the football fanzine, and argues that the fanzine is a form of “cultural defence” by the fan against an increasingly commercialised, and media controlled sport. This echoes a point made by Jary, et al. (1991) who see the fanzine as a resistance to the growing hegemony of modern consumer culture, or “commodification”. What Haynes fails to address, however, is the evaluation of the degree of success which these publications have had in the functional democratisation of the sport, whether they have given the fan actual increased power or influence, or just as important, whether they have given the fan feelings of increased power. Jary, et al. (1991) also have been criticised by Moorhouse (1994), most notably with regard to their vagueness as to what constitutes “terrace culture”, and the assumptions made, rather than detailed information given, about the fan culture within which the fanzine exists.

Moorhouse also notes that English academics generally have examined fanzines uncritically, and have not acknowledged that such publications may be “accommodative, defensive and parochial, rather than being oppositional, radical and inclusive” (Moorhouse, 1994: 190), and may have limited - if any - influence at all. The motives of the producers of fanzines have also yet to be critically analysed. The belief that they exist in order to speak for the common fan against the commercialism of modern football rather than as profit motivated publications, has yet to be empirically tested.

A further contemporary research theme in evidence has to do with the fan and “place”. All socio-cultural interactions, such as those involved in football

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9 A fanzine refers to a publication, often humorous in tone, written and produced by fans themselves. The characteristics of a fanzine within the Nationwide League is that it is independent of, and often critical of the club, it opposes the commercialism of football, it attempts to compensate for the lack of media coverage of such teams, and it opposes the misrepresentation of the football fan as violent.

10 Although, as argued, it is through the media and other commercial enterprises that the contemporary fan has become to be seen as “normal”, rather than “deviant”. 

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fandom, require a “place” (Kelly, 1992) within which such interactions take place. The importance of “place” to the football fan has received recent academic attention, to a greater extent than those interactions themselves. Much of the published work on contemporary football fans and their relationship to football stadia has been published by Bale (1980, 1990, 1991, 1993). He examines the relationships that exist between stadia, the communities within which they are located, and the fans that attend such stadia. He notes that such buildings may produce distinct feelings from those involved in different ways. These sentiments may vary from symbolic feelings of “home” for supporters, to feelings of dread for those non aficionados in the location of the stadium. Some of this fear may emerge as a consequence of those attitudes of “opposition” described by Guilianotti and Armstrong (1997). They note how the role of the ground in providing a focus of identity may lead to “spatial contestation”, where preserving “honour” and “status” may be a contributory factor towards hooliganism and fan violence.

The “places” of English football, the stadia, have been subject to continual development and evaluation in recent years. Bale relatedly refers to the modernisation that is taking place within English football (Duke, 1991), and its effects on the football stadium. With reference to its effect on the fan/club relationship, Bale argues that “the game’s ideological realignment towards commercial consumerism has never circumvented the possibility of fan influence” (Bale, 1991: 142). Thus Bale maintains that, although certain aspects of the game are becoming more commercialised, and that fans are becoming consumers of a commercial “product”, rather than what Williams (1960) refers to as “members” of the football club, there is still potential fan influence, a finding which is in agreement with King (1997). A fan/club relationship exists whereby the fan is not simply a passive consumer of the football “product”, but has a greater involvement, or at least the perception of being “involved”

However, unlike the economic studies of Dobson and Goddard (1992), who state that changes in stadium design, such as the move to more “friendly”, all seater
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stadiums favour the more affluent fan at the expense of the "traditional" football supporter, Bale believes that

the pressures for modernisation and consumerism with the promises of suburban stadiums have served only to alienate the very people whom the modern game would wish to attract, namely the suburban middle classes (Bale, 1991: 142).

Bale, however, does not provide any empirical evidence to support this point. To some extent this omission is understandable, since such evidence is not currently available for the Nationwide League, and little exists other than the Premier League surveys of that particular division.

Bale's later (1993, 1994) work suggests comparisons between the growth of the prison and the functionality of the football stadium, (created in part by anti-hooligan legislation as a result of the Thatcherite stance against football fans). Here, the fan is controlled by a number of measures, such as video surveillance and allocated seating, although there may be a counter-trend towards "softening" of the stadium. This softening of the stadium is arguably an approach that would attract the middle class and family support which, Bale feels, would be alienated by the modernisation of stadia. The need for this modernisation - whether for the middle classes or not - is implied by Taylor (1991: 12), who argues that

the Hillsborough disaster was the product of a quite consistent and ongoing lack of interest on the part of the owners and directors of English League clubs in the comfort, well-being and safety of their paying spectators.

However this view, although possibly correct in emphasising that facilities did require modernisation, is not necessarily responsive to fan expectations and requirements. Williams (1994) outlines many of the implications of the effects of both the Hillsborough disaster and the subsequent Taylor Report (1990), noting that the latter called for a "totally new approach across the whole field of football (requiring) higher standards both in bricks and in human relationships" (Taylor,
Despite its effects upon what Williams refers to as the "traditional" football audience, little empirical evidence is available, and the topic still provides a rich area of inquiry for football researchers.

Within the football stadia, Coalter (1985) has carried out research into crowd control policies in Scottish grounds. He has explored crowd behaviour within Scottish professional football, primarily examining the effect of seating upon fans and determined that the Scottish football crowd varies considerably in social composition, and that differences also exist between clubs. Within this context, the importance of facilities is seen as less significant to the fan than the quality of the actual football in that improved facilities in the absence of an acceptable product is likely to have little effect. It is possible that boredom may be a greater disincentive than poor facilities (Coalter, 1985: 112-113).

However he is not suggesting that the quality of facilities is unimportant. Rather that the importance is relative, and subordinate to performance on the pitch, in terms of the crowd being provided with entertaining and/or successful football.

Coalter's study, however, like many others, tends to ignore the influence of fan identification upon fan behaviour, again treating the crowd as a relatively homogenous collectivity. It seems reasonable to suggest that for fans with differing levels of identification with the team, there will be differences in attitudes and values involved in watching a football match. An evaluation of fan identities may allow such works to be reassessed in the light of such argument.

Canter, et al. (1989) have also examined the fan/stadium relationship, which, although taking what these authors refer to as an "environmental psychology" perspective, is relevant to the present study. They investigate the fan/stadium relationship by using four themes, those of spectator comfort, crowd control, provision for emergencies, and variations in club culture. The final theme is
important, since it recognises an aspect of football research that has arguably been overlooked from past works. With regard to the generalisation of findings, Canter, et al. (1989: 57) note that

[O]f course clubs do have a lot in common with each other. But the view of their homogeneity also seems to feed the desire for neatness. If football is homogenous then all clubs will have similar problems, and solutions to those problems should be applicable with equal success to all clubs... simple solutions ignore the individuality of the clubs.

However, in the attempt to determine different club cultures through survey methods, there is a failure to recognise or investigate the nuances of club culture, instead, as with the Premier League surveys (SNCCFR 1995, 1996), relying upon more overt features, such as frequency of attendance, or proportion of season ticket holders. While the work is useful in demonstrating differences between clubs, it fails to explain why such differences may occur, or to examine the influences on, and consequences of, a particular club’s culture. It is this type of in-depth, intensive research that is proposed within this thesis.

2.4 The Post-Fan

More recent research has acknowledged that the football fan may not be envisaged as just an individual who attends matches. In terms of contemporary fandom, Redhead (1997) relates the football supporter to Feifer (1985) and Urry’s (1988) “post-tourist”. Urry (1988: 100) notes that

The post-tourist does not have to leave his or her house in order to see many of the typical objects of the tourist gaze, with TV and video, all sorts of places cab gazed upon... It is possible to imagine oneself “really” there... this can now be experienced in one’s own living room, at the flick of a switch”

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Additionally, according to Urry, there is no single tourist experience, there is a multitude of choice, with technology freeing the individual from the constraints associated with authentic travel. To the post-tourist, there is no such thing as the single authentic travel experience, but a number of experiences, whether viewed through television for example, or by actually travelling to destinations. Each experience may be seen as a "tourist experience".

Redhead (1997) is thus suggesting that, as with the tourist experience, there is no single authentic football experience. In post-modern society the football fan can experience fandom not only from the terraces, but from television, and other media. The fan is also able to follow foreign teams through the media with similar, if not greater ease than certain less fashionable English teams, and undergo a far wider spectrum of experience, and make a choice as to the nature of his fandom. The post-fan may also have a number of roles, such as the television fan or the "live" fan. Borrows (1998) suggests that this availability has led to a growth of the "new" football fan. He argues that

Football belongs to everybody now. Football is sport, and sport is the cement which holds the country together... we now have, post-World Cup, the new football fan. The corpulent middle class tosser who might have delivered a well practised dinner-party excoriation aimed at football supporters two years ago but who will, this season, be asking his secretary to fax Chelsea re the availability of a box for the Arsenal game (Borrows, 1998: 20).

It is not, according to Borrows, through attending live matches that most "new" fans are becoming involved. Rather, it is through the growth of satellite television coverage and the consumption of SKY television.

In the current media age, research may thus need to acknowledge different fan roles. Surveys such as the Premier League surveys (SNCCFR 1995, 1996) have incorporated aspects of post-fandom, such as television fandom, and researched the "new" fans in some depth. The fan role that is explored within this thesis is
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that of the fan who actually attends matches "live". While these fans may have other roles as a supporter, such as being a television fan or media fan, it is the actual role of the fan who attends matches, and identifies with the team through watching the game "live" that forms the research agenda for the exploration of football fandom. Through this focus, however, it will be possible to ascertain the level of post-fandom within the Nationwide League and to determine the extent of post-fandom within clubs from the lower divisions. Most contemporary research shows a strong emphasis upon the Premier League at the expense of these fans of these clubs, and Redhead's (1997) theory of the post-fan is based upon the Premiership. The degree of post-fandom within the Nationwide League provides a further area of original research.

2.5 A Research Agenda for the Contemporary Football Fan

As described within this chapter, football fandom has received growing, if belated, attention, and research has been disproportionate in favour of the hooligan. A limited number of academic studies have attempted to investigate the contemporary football fan. The most substantial of these studies are the Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research Premier League fan surveys (SNCCFR, 1995, 1996), which provide a wealth of quantitative data about Premier League fans, although failing to explain deeper, underlying explanations of fandom. This issue is partly addressed by more recent research, which has, however, tended to investigate Premier League fandom, Such as King (1995, 1997), who argues that the socio-economic changes of the mid nineteen-eighties onwards have enabled the development of the "Premier League", and a new consumption of football. While King's thesis effectively accounts for the timing and success of the Premier League, and the new types of fans (such as "The Lads") attracted to the Premier League, he understandably does not investigate those fans removed from the new consumption of football, those fans of the Nationwide League. No in-depth academic work on the Nationwide League fan, or the fan of the "less fashionable" club has taken place.

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King (1997) acknowledges the changing cultural identity of football, and the creation of what is effectively a two tier structure of professional football. He investigates the top tier, that of the Premiership. As a review of Redhead’s (1997) work on the contemporary fan notes, however, “there is a tendency with much football writing to categorise all league football as enjoying common characteristics, though lower parts of the Nationwide League clearly operate within very different parameters” (Greenfield and Osborn, 1998a: 25). As yet, the Nationwide League has failed to attract such academic attention, and provides a logical subject of research. Even the recent work of Brown (1998), one of the first pieces of literature to specifically address football fan identity and identification, makes no acknowledgement of the Nationwide League, preferring to concentrate instead upon the Premiership, Scottish and continental football.

In terms of the type of research that is appropriate, the need for future research into football has been discussed by Duke (1991), with many of his conclusions still applicable. He provides a positive view of English professional football in the early nineties to demonstrate that there is more of interest to football research than simply hooliganism. He suggests that research is desirable into such areas as the “modernisation” of football; the increasing volume of fan publications (fanzines); comparative research within the “new Europe” and the social demography of the crowd. Research into two of the four areas - those of fan publications (Jary, et al., 1991 and Haynes, 1995), and football culture in the “new Europe” (Duke and Crolley, 1996; Armstrong and Giuliani, 1997; Brown, 1988) - has been published. The conclusion to make is that the “modernisation” of the sport, and the social demography of the crowd are those areas that need to be addressed.

Clarke (1991) also discusses the need for future research to be less involved on the phenomenon of hooliganism. He argues that a far more interesting sociological investigation would be raised by asking questions about who become fans, and why. Williams (1991: 180) is in agreement with both Duke and
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Clarke, noting that Clarke "is certainly correct to stress the need for more research on the football audience". The need for research on the fan and his relationships to the game is further echoed by Redhead (1993: 5). He argues that "participation" and "passivity" of the football fan will be the most important areas for football research "in the nineties and beyond". As chapters three and four demonstrate, it is through the use of identification theory that these questions can be investigated.

2.6 Identifying an Agenda for Studying the Football Fan - Summary

The objective of this chapter was to identify a suitable research area with regard to English football. By carrying out a review of existing literature, a number of conclusions can be made. These are:

- Most existing football research is thematic in nature. Such a thematic approach may possess inherent weaknesses in that many facets of fandom, such as economic, social and psychological, for example, seem likely to be interrelated,
- There has been a strong, and undue, emphasis on research on the football "hooligan",
- The emphasis on perception of the post-Hillsborough football fan has moved towards that of the non-violent fan, away, although not completely, from the football hooligan,
- Research into the non-violent fan is limited. That which does exist concentrates upon the Premier League. As a result, research into non-Premiership football is limited, and
- Contemporary fandom consists of a number of fan roles. Fandom no longer consists only of attending matches, but the phenomenon of "post-fandom" has arisen, in that a wide range of experiences are available to the post-modern fan. The range of fandom appropriate to the study therefore needs to be defined. The limiting framework adopted in this thesis is that of the fan who actually attends

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matches, rather than the post-fan who supports through only what Smith, et al. (1981) refer to as indirect, or media consumption.

Research into the football fan at the most fundamental level, that of why do fans who attend matches develop and maintain an identification with particular team, seems appropriate. The issue of who fans are has yet to be investigated with any precision outside the Premier League. More interestingly the issue of why such individuals become and maintain an identity as a fan, as highlighted earlier within the chapter, provides an original research question, especially within the Nationwide League. Increasingly, work is being carried out on the Premier League (such as SNCCFR, 1995, 1996; King, 1995, 1997). However little research exists on the fans outside this “elite” division of English football. Thus, the fundamental question of fan identification within the Nationwide League is appropriate, and forms the focus of this thesis.
Chapter Three
Football Fandom, Identity, and Identification

3.1 Identity Theory as an Appropriate Theoretical Framework

Chapter two has determined the question of why fans identify with a particular team as being a suitable area for investigation. To develop an understanding of this sense of identification, or "belonging", a subject that has "infrequently been investigated" (Lee and Zeiss, 1980: 405), a suitable theoretical framework must be utilised. Otherwise such research becomes descriptive, rather than explanatory. Past research into groups and group members has developed theories, such as contagion theory, convergent theory and emergent norm theory, (Killian and Turner 1972), which demonstrate an emphasis upon overt behavioural factors of group members. They show greater power in describing, rather than explaining, why people develop an identity through being part of a group, such as being a football fan of a particular club. Such theories also examine the phenomenon of membership of a social group with either an assumption of homogeneity amongst its members (Killian and Turner 1972), or by concentrating on the crowd as a collection of individuals (Aveni 1977). These approaches do not acknowledge the interrelationship of individuals with the group.

The framework that has been adopted is that based upon theories of social identity and identification, as outlined by Tajfel (1972, 1982), Tajfel and Turner (1986), and Brown (1988), among others. This framework, as will be demonstrated within the following two chapters, seems appropriate for the study of the football fan.

Social identity theory proposes that people do not simply relate to each other as independent, isolated individuals. Instead, membership of a social group, and
being seen by others to be a member of a group, such as being a fan of a particular football team, is an important mediator of an individual’s cognitive, affective and behavioural processes. These processes, in turn, have important consequences for the individual’s personal identity, self-concept and self-esteem (Tajfel, 1972, 1981, 1982; Turner, 1975, 1982; Brown, 1986; Brown, 1988). Thus, the individual’s sense of “who they are” is affected by what activities that individual takes part in, and how they believe others see that individual within those roles that are adopted, such as being a football fan (Mead, 1968; Rosenberg and Turner, 1981).

Identity theory attempts to bridge the gap between individual (psychological) approaches and group (sociological) approaches, by continually examining the interrelationships between the two. The theory acknowledges the psychological “reality” of social groups, that individuals and society are inseparable, the one “utterly implicating the other” (Widdecombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 3). This approach acknowledges that the feeling of “membership” of a group, such as being a football fan, has social, as well as psychological components, this being an important concept within social identity theory. Neither component (social or psychological), is considered more important than the other. Killian and Turner (1972: 7) note that “neither the group nor the individual approach is inherently more error free than the other. Each type of description complements the other”. Contemporary identity theory thus attempts to integrate the complementary strengths of research into the individual and the group, accepting that these are strongly interdependent (Tajfel, 1982; Brown, 1988). This synthesis is the foundation of a theory of identity, with personal and social components being integrated.

Although sports fandom from an identity and identification viewpoint has been investigated to some extent, nearly all existing research investigates the effects of identification on aspects of fan behaviour. Research has been carried out on areas such as the effects of fan identification upon on self-esteem and social identity (Branscombe and Wann, 1991); fans’ attendance at matches (Murrell and Dietz, 1992; Tomlinson, et al., 1995); fans’ arousal during games (Branscombe and
Wann, 1992; Madrigal, 1995); fans' perception of their own influence on game outcome (Wann, et al., 1994a); and fans' subjective and objective beliefs about their favourite team (Lau and Russell, 1980; Wann and Branscombe, 1995). Little research exists on the factors affecting the origin and maintenance of this identification (according to Wann, et al., 1996). As chapter two highlighted, one unanswered question is that of why fans develop and maintain an identification with a football team. A related question is that of why sport fans actually identify with a given team, especially, for example, those teams that are less successful\footnote{Obviously success can be measured in a number of ways, and different clubs will have differing aspirations, and therefore measure success differently. In light of the use of identity theory, success refers to those clubs whose performances may attract fans for the main reason that such performance allows such fans to achieve a positive social identity by associating with such a club.}, or have a relatively low public profile, especially when compared to Premier League clubs. It is these issues that form the focal points of this thesis.

### 3.2 Identity and Identification - Issues of Definition

The question of self-definition, that of "who am I?", or that of the self-concept, is always of importance to the individual (Kelly and Godbey, 1992). The answers to this question are based upon the concept of identity, or the interpretation of that identity, either by that person himself\footnote{The masculine form is used throughout this thesis. This is not to imply that there are no female football fans. Instead, such an approach is adopted to avoid constrictions of grammar}, or by how that person understands others to interpret him. Kelly (1983) outlines the two forms of interpretation of the self:

- **Social Identity** - This refers to the individual's perception of how others define that person in a role context, that is whether he feels that others see them as being part of a group, such as being a fan of a particular football team, and fulfils the role expectations associated with such a position. This social component is what Mead (1968) refers to as the "me" aspect of the self. This is
the identity gained through interaction with others, and would be that referred to, for example, if the individual were to state that “I am one of the fans of this particular football team”. This is related to the individual’s personal identity.

- **Personal Identity** - This term refers to the individual’s self-definition in a role context; that is how the individual sees himself in a given situation, such as “I am somebody who watches football”. Mead (1968) notes that the “I” is the unique self-defining individuality, or what Cooley (1964) refers to as the “empirical self”. The self allows individuals to think consciously about themselves (Leary 1995). The subsequent self-reflection forms the basis for an individual’s personal identity.

Related to these two cognitive forms of identity are two interrelated behavioural processes that influence the enactment of an individual’s identity. These are self-presentation, also referred to as impression management, and the enactment of a role identity.

- **Self-Presentation** - Goffman (1959) notes that individuals attempt to present a certain self-image in order to pursue a goal. This goal may be tangible, such as acting in a particular way to secure material reward, or intangible, for example by acting in a particular way to gain approval. The public exhibition of this image is called self-presentation. This is the mode of behaviour adopted by an individual in an attempt to control or influence the impressions that others form of them, to maintain and enhance a social, and subsequently a personal, identity (Leary, 1995). This process may involve the behaviour of a football fan in order to present a strong image as a supporter to others. It is also referred to as impression management (Leary and Kowalski, 1991), and the two terms are used more or less interchangeably within the literature. The types of behaviour carried out as part of this impression management are related to those of the relevant role identity.

- **Role Identity** - This is a type of behaviour typically associated with a specific role (Gahagan, 1984). Football fans may have a certain role identity involving the
wearing of scarves, team colours, the use of various chants, and other fan behaviours, for example those identified by Morris (1981). Role identities provide the criteria for assessing and appraising individual’s “performances” within a specific role (Markus and Cross, 1990). The successful adoption of a particular role identity is an important element of self-presentation, and may facilitate the development or enhancement of an individual’s social and personal identities. Thus the individual, in an attempt to portray himself to others as a football fan (in terms of his social identity), will attempt to present an image (defined by the role identity of the football fan, through strategies such as wearing team colours). This self-presentation, or “performance” as a fan may persuade others to see him in those terms. If the individual feels that he has successfully developed this social identity as a fan, then, in turn, he will also possess a subsequent personal identity as a fan.

A further construct of identity, that of cultural identity, is relevant to this study. The individual in a certain role, that is possessing a certain social identity, enacts that role to maintain his own personal identity (Kelly and Godbey, 1992). In turn, an individual’s personal identity may affect how he presents himself socially (Leary and Kowalski, 1991; Leary, 1995). This dialectical interaction between forms of identity takes place within cultural boundaries, in which shared values, norms and behaviours influence such identities. These boundaries define the individual’s cultural identity within which he operates. The individual’s cultural identity is a significant mediator of other forms of identity. Goffman (1968) provides an analogy by suggesting that individuals perceive themselves as if looking in a mirror. The reflection is framed in terms of society’s views and prejudices (Shilling, 1993). These views and prejudices are social and cultural constructs, specific to that society or culture, and also form the basis upon which the individual, also influenced by the specific culture, assesses his own identities (Mead, 1968; Rosenberg and Turner, 1981; Giulianotti, 1994). The individual seeks continual validation through his performance in front of others, whose own values will be moderated by their own particular culture. Thus, any investigation of social and personal identities requires some acknowledgement of the culture, - or cultural identity - within which such identities are created,
maintained and enacted. The cultural identity of English football is summarised in chapter five.

The possession of a particular personal and social identity is related to the process of identification. Identification refers to having an awareness of gaining, or having, an identity at a specific time. For example the individual may have a relatively permanent, although not always conscious, identity as a football fan. When this identity is meaningful to the individual, (for example whilst attending a football match), that individual will have an identification with a particular team during that time. Thus, to a large extent, the terms identity and identification are interchangeable, dependent upon the context, and will be used in such a manner within this chapter and the rest of the study.

Although such definitions of identity, such as those of Kelly (1983) cited above, provide a simple explanation, an examination of the literature could suggest that such an interpretation of identity is too unsophisticated. Identity and identification are not terms that are easily defined. Relph (1976: 45) suggests that "[p]ossibly, because it is so fundamental, identity is a phenomenon that evades simple definition". As a result, identity has "yet to be defined with precision" (Brown, 1986: 551). Baumann (1996) attempts to explain the term contextually, and notes how "identity" is applied to provide an answer when the individual is unsure of where he "belongs". The feeling of belonging, or identification, is that of being able to place oneself within the wide range of attitudes and behaviours present within a society, community or subculture, so that relationships may be formed with other members of that society. These attitudes are, as noted above, culturally constructed. Identity and identification are essential to allow such relationships to form between members of society (such as membership of a group of friends), and also between individuals and larger social structures (such as the individual having a national identity).

Individuals do not have a single identity. Because of the variety of contexts within which the individual operates within, a variety, or multiplicity of identities exists (McCall and Simmons, 1966; Stryker, 1968; Burke, 1980). Identity
is dialectical in that it will shape the enactment of an individual's role, and it will also be affected reciprocally by the individual's perception of how the enactment of that role is perceived by others within that social context. If the individual feels that he is not creating the desired identity in others' eyes, then he will attempt to modify that identity through a modification of his behaviour, that is through the strategy of impression management. If the gap between the desired identity and the individual's current identity is perceived as too large, then the individual will cease self-presentation, and may attempt to develop a more realistic identity (Leary and Kowalski 1991).

The process of "identification" is less difficult to define once the concept of identity is clarified. Identification can be characterised as the actual process of gaining and maintaining a conscious identity with a specific object or group. Hall (1996: 2) summarises the key point of how identification is created, stating that

identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established as this foundation.

Identification takes place with a group, or what Bornewasser and Bober (1987: 267) refer to as a "holistic entity, a whole that possesses certain features such as organisation, goals, norms, roles and values", features which "occur independently of the particular properties of the individuals". Within the group, shared interests, characteristics or origins may allow strong, rather than nominal, relationships to be formed. This construction is a continual process, and is never complete.

Identification can be with a number of differing groups, ranging from the national level, (such as a possessing a national identity), to the subcultural level, (such as being a football fan). Many identities, such as those of football fans, are
formed at the subcultural level. Abercrombie, *et al.* (1984: 245) define a subculture as

> A system of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and lifestyles of a social group which is distinct from, but related to the dominant culture of society.

Thus identification occurs within a subculture with factors such as shared characteristics, origins or ideals being important in providing a commonality amongst members. Subcultures are derived from, rather being separate entities to the parent culture. They are thus affected by the nature of the parent culture (see chapter five). A number of studies, (Rosenberg and Turowetz, 1975; Donnelly, 1981; Donnelly and Young, 1988; Widdecombe and Wooffitt, 1995), have all implied this relationship between identification and membership of a subculture. Using Hall's (1996) definition of identification and Abercrombie, *et al.*'s (1984) definition of subculture, such a relationship is evidently necessary, in that individuals need a subculture, or perceived commonality with others with which to identify, if identification is to be constructed and maintained.

Identities are central to the concept of a subculture, to the extent that developing a perceived membership of such a group is largely dependent upon the individual developing a social identity as a member of a subculture (Donnelly and Young, 1988; McPherson, *et al.*, 1989). Such membership, however, does not always require close social interaction (Pearson, 1979). Thus football fans may develop a perceived sense of membership of the fan subculture without necessarily interacting socially with other fans. It is the creation of an identity as a member of the fan subculture that is important to the individual's perception of being a fan, rather than close social interaction with other fans.

It is unlikely that an individual will only identify with a larger social structure, (such as possessing only a national identity). The wide range of interdependencies to which the individual in modern society is subject, through participating in various work or leisure roles, means that the individual must construct and maintain a number of identities. The football fan, for example, although constructing an identity within the football context, would also seek to
construct and maintain an identity in other social contexts, such as the work context. Membership of a subculture enables the construction of at least one of an individual's multiplicity of identities.

As has been shown, identity requires perceived membership of a group. This membership is not arbitrary. Instead there must be some foundation, or some reason for the individual to develop membership with one type of group, such as being a football fan, rather than another group. The foundation of football for the development and maintenance of an individual's identity is outlined in the next section.

3.3 Football Fandom as a Basis for Identity and Identification

Any investigation of football fandom as a basis for a sense of identity and identification raises two questions: firstly that of why football is able to provide the basis for identification, and secondly why football is so popular in this respect. To examine these questions, it would seem logical to try to answer some initial questions, these being why fans watch sports such as football, and what function football serves for this purpose. As will be shown, the answers to these questions are, to some extent, interrelated, and linked with the wider social context. Schwartz (1973: 37) notes that

\[\text{[I]ike any social institution, the causes behind spectator sports involve complex interrelationships among personality, culture, and other institutions with analysis being possible on several levels - none of which totally explain characteristic patterns of behaviour. Yet only by isolating variables and examining them can insightful analysis become possible.}\]

This position is in agreement with that of Smith, et al. (1981) who note in their work on the “committed” male sports fan that there are a number of reasons for the phenomenon of fandom, and that these reasons overlap and interact. An
appraisal of this multi-dimensional nature of fandom therefore, out of necessity, needs to refer to a number of interrelated disciplines, notably those of sociology, history, psychology social psychology and cultural studies. Research within each of the disciplines on fandom is limited (Elias and Dunning, 1986: 75-76), and, as such, many of the concepts discussed are predominantly theoretical rather than empirical.

An analysis of existing literature identifies several functions of sports fandom. These can be broadly classified as tension arousal, or as a “quest for excitement” (Elias and Dunning, 1986), tension-release (Zurcher and Meadow, 1970; Morris, 1981), symbolism (Duncan, 1983) and pseudo-religion (Novak, 1976; Morris, 1981; Hoffman, 1992; Price, 1992; Percy and Taylor, 1997). Most explanations can be placed within one of these categories. These functions are briefly outlined below. All of them are, to some extent, ephemeral, that is they provide an experience to the individual in the role of sports fan that other roles, such as those associated with work or the family, do not.

Fandom as part of a “Quest for Excitement” in “Unexciting” Societies

Although the work of Elias and Dunning is more often associated with fan violence, Elias's theory of the civilising process has also formed the basis for a hypothesis of sports fandom, that of fandom as a "quest for excitement". This hypothesis is outlined below.

In England, from the Middle Ages, there has been a gradual development involving the refinement of personal behaviour, and increasing social pressure towards people to maintain more self control over their personal behaviour. The internalisation of such social norms has led to such standards being operational not only consciously, but also unconsciously, with feelings of guilt, shame and anxiety accompanying transgressions of such codes. Behaviour has been subject to continual social and psychological pressure to improve. Since the late nineteenth century, social and emotional behaviour, as part of what Elias (1967)
refers to as a "civilising process", has become highly restrained, when compared to that of less developed societies.

These growing constraints of day to day life are related to the need to demonstrate generally acceptable standards of behaviour within certain leisure activities. Certain leisure activities, however, allow the individual to experience less constrained behaviour. Such activities can be termed "mimetic", in that the "feelings aroused in the imaginary situation of a leisure activity are the siblings of those aroused in real life situations" (Elias and Dunning, 1986: 42). Thus the development of an imaginary situation, or imaginary feelings, may be facilitated by the watching of sport. These feelings may then be enacted within the sports fan context, in ways that would not normally be acceptable in day to day life, for example through chanting or singing. Leisure, for the purpose of temporarily reducing these constraints, exists in all known societies (Elias and Dunning, 1986), so that outbursts of emotion can be acceptably displayed within the social environment. Thus leisure activities are needed to provide such opportunity for excitement. Such mimetic activities all have a similar structure, a structure that is to some extent dependent upon the wider social context within which the activity evolves, in such a manner that the activity is structured to meet the needs of the members of society, rather than developing in an ad hoc manner. Elias and Dunning (1986: 74) note that it is:

not difficult to see that the heart of the problem of leisure lies in its relationship between the structure of the leisure\textsuperscript{13} needs characteristic of our type of society and the structure of the events designed to satisfy these needs.

Investigation into the structures of such events shows that

almost all observations in our own time point to the fact that what people seek in their mimetic leisure activities is not release from tension but, on the contrary, a specific type of tension, a form of

\textsuperscript{13} Given the complexities involved in defining leisure, Elias and Dunning's use of the term may be open to criticism given the wide number of definitions of leisure. Issues of definition are, however, beyond the remit of this thesis, and the quest for excitement theory seems to be applicable to differing conceptualisations of leisure.
excitement often connected... with fear, sadness and other emotions which we would try to avoid in ordinary life (Elias and Dunning, 1986: 82).

Within the context of watching a professional football match, it is this build up, rather than the escape from existing tension, that is of importance. The "entertainment" of sport is not inherent to the sport, but due to the emotional effects that watching has on the individual. Thus the success of football as a spectator sport may be attributed to its ability to fulfil the needs of individuals, such as providing an excitement that is missing from day to day life.

Fandom as Tension - Release
Zurcher and Meadow (1970) agree with the "tension-requirement" hypothesis of Elias and Dunning, in that sport can be seen as a method for providing the type of tensions that are needed, but otherwise absent from modern, "routinised" life. However there is a fundamental difference between the theories, in that Zurcher and Meadow differ from Elias and Dunning when they argue that sports can be seen as an outlet for the release of, rather than the specific generation of tensions and of frustrations. Thus, tensions that are built up during the week may be released catharticly through watching sport. Sport, especially football, is popular in this respect according to Morris (1981) since it provides a socially acceptable arena for this release of emotion (cf. Elias and Dunning 1986, also see above). This function of spectator sport is also suggested by Smith (1988). Thus those sports that allow such catharsis, such as football, are likely to be more popular spectator sports than those where opportunities for catharsis are rare. Unfortunately - as is also the case with the work of Elias and Dunninge there is a lack of empirical data to support this view (Lee and Zeiss, 1980). The "tension-release" hypothesis also shows a weakness in failing to explain an individual's sense of fandom away from the actual sporting event. Thus it is more correct to refer to it as a hypothesis of spectatorship than of fandom.
Symbolic Aspects of Sports Spectatorship

Duncan (1983) has provided one of the most thorough reviews of the functions and causes of spectator sport, noting that few researchers have looked at the symbolic appeal of spectator sport. She argues that “it is this symbolic dimension which scholars must study to understand the power of spectator sport attraction” (Duncan, 1983: 29). She suggests six ways in which sports have symbolic attraction to the fan or spectator:

- Recurring life issues - spectator sports dramatise everyday issues, often involving conflict,
- Transcendence of human limitations - watching professional sport allows fan’s to identify with those performing beyond the fan’s own capabilities, and allows an escape from the realities of day to day life. This aspect of identification with excellence is also outlined by Weiss (1969),
- Rebellion against industrialisation - sports encourage spontaneity and the release of emotion not generally available in everyday life; “perhaps most significant, the game itself offers fans a feeling of continuity, resolution and closure which rarely occurs in every day working life” (Duncan, 1983: 32). The ability to provide feelings not present in industrial, routinised societies is similar to the type of argument developed by Zurcher and Meadow (1970) and Elias and Dunning (1986) on the functions of fandom,
- Spectatorship as an aesthetic experience - sports viewing provides such an experience that is generally lacking in day to day existence. Sports spectatorship provides an aesthetic experience not only through the movements and actions of the participants, but also through the competitive nature of certain spectator sports,
- Religious overtones - through “worship” of sportsmen, women or teams, the mysticisation of sport, and the ritualisation of sporting events, such as discussed by Hoffman (1992) and Price (1992), sport may arguably be seen as a substitute for organised religion. A similar argument has also been developed by Percy and Taylor (1997) who compare the “bonding” capability of football with that of religion, and the similarities in the mechanisms of bonding, such as the use of
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Chants by a football crowd compared with the singing of hymns by a religious congregation, and

- Political dimensions - sports are often tied to a political ideology (Duncan, 1983: 34), and can be used as part of a political policy, or propaganda. Sport may also promote community ties as suggested by Lever (1983), to maintain the stability of a particular community or society.

Duncan's classification is useful in outlining the attractions of spectator sport, however she does fail to adequately explain why sport, rather than any other activity, is so successful as a spectator pastime. There is also a failure to acknowledge that factors may be interrelated, as Schwarz (1973) suggests. Also, it is unclear whether these attractions of spectator sport are antecedents, or consequences of becoming a fan.

**Sport as a “Pseudo” or Surrogate Religion**

According to Duncan (1983), one of the symbolic aspects of sports spectatorship is that of sport having religious overtones. This function has been identified by other authors. Hoffman (1992) notes how the concept of sport generating excitement, (for example as theorised by Elias and Dunning, 1986), can be seen as similar to Durkheim's notion of “collective effervescence”. She identifies a number of similarities between sport and religion, a number of which are also identified by Novak (1976) and Percy and Taylor (1997). These authors suggest that certain features of spectator sport allow the bonding of groups in a manner similar to that of religion. Being a sports fan facilitates the reading of "sacred" material, such as knowledge of the team's history and development. It involves the fan being enclosed in a particular, (and presumably symbolic), place, that of the stadium, or "end" (as suggested by Bale 1991). Finally, it allows worship, or idolatry, of particular teams or individual players.

These behaviours contribute towards a shared sense of belonging, with the focus being the football team, rather than a deity. Within the crowd, it is the importance of communication, through shared symbols, that allows such
bonding to originate. This bonding will then allow an identification to develop with the team, in the same way as identification may develop with a religion. Assessments of the similarities of football and religion can be reappraised in light of identity theory. Thus it may be argued that it is the importance of group membership, rather than the religious characteristics of fandom that is the important factor underpinning identification with a football team (or even, arguably, with a religious order).

De Biasi and Lanfranchi (1997) note how Italian football is often seen as a form of secular religion, with set rituals and fixed rules. The team becomes the focus of this "civil" (rather than sacred) religion. The football team can be seen therefore as a totem, or symbol for fans to devote their support, and provides the basis for common interests and aspirations.

Care must be taken, however, when comparing sport and religion, however. The religious implications of sport will depend in part on the meaning that each fan attaches to religion, and also the meaning that the fan attaches to watching sport. As with many hypotheses that involve the individual's perceptions, or the meanings that such individual's attach to objects, there may be differences at the personal level, and, as such, need to be treated with caution.

**Functions of Fandom - Theory and Evidence**

An examination of hypotheses of spectator sport in the previous section indicated that four primary explanations for fandom can be identified: the "quest for excitement", fandom as a release from the tensions of day to day life, fandom as symbolic for the individual, and fandom as surrogate religion. Although not having been specifically investigated, limited evidence is available to support these hypotheses.

Smith, *et al.* (1981) have researched the relationship between fandom and the quality of life of male sports fans. Many respondents (81%) claimed that fandom
contributes "greatly" to their quality of life, the most frequently cited reason being that fandom allows socialisation with friends with a common interest. Another cited reason is that the fan is able to gain excitement from watching sport (37%), therefore supporting the hypothesis of Elias and Dunning (1986), and Duncan (1983), discussed above with regard to the generation of tensions absent from everyday life. A similar percentage also cite the pleasure involved in watching an expert performance. This feature supports the hypothesis of Weiss (1969) and Duncan (1983) on identification with sportsmen or sports teams' excellence. The final significant reason (19%) cited is that of the release from day to day routines and tensions generated in everyday life. This observation is in agreement with Zurcher and Meadow (1970) and Smith (1988) who argue for sports fandom as a method of tension release, although as can be seen by the results, tension release seems to be a less significant factor than the other hypotheses.

From the available evidence, the salience of affective reactions to fandom seems clear. Cognitive components of fandom are also noted by Tomlinson, et al. (1995). They have determined a wide variety of motivations for fans to attend a specific sporting event. Their findings also suggest that such factors as tradition, "atmosphere" or "social opportunity" are more important than considerations such as team performance or quality of facilities. This evidence strongly indicates therefore that fandom is primarily influenced by the individual fan's affective and cognitive involvement with the team, and with other fans. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that it is those factors which influence this involvement, rather than factors such as the quality of service and facilities, that are those of greater importance.

In terms of developing and maintaining this involvement, the surveys of Smith, et al. (1981) and Tomlinson, et al. (1995) indicate that there are a number of causes of fandom, which, as Schwartz (1973) suggested, are likely to be interrelated. Thus, it is unlikely that simple cause and effect models of fandom can be developed, and that a more complex model of fandom may have more success in explaining football fan identification than has been achieved to date. It seems
probable, therefore, that no single hypothesis of fandom is, or should be considered comprehensive. Instead it is suggested that different fans have differing motives for watching sport. The argument adopted within this thesis is that all of the functions of fandom that have been outlined rely upon the individual's affective reactions to sporting events that are viewed. To produce such an affective reaction, the individual needs to have some emotional "belonging", either to the sport itself, or the sports team. This "belonging" to a particular team is the concept of fan identification.

Although the hypotheses of the functions of spectator sport describe why sport is so popular for spectators, these types of explanation do not consider why watching sport, such as football, provides a strong, or perhaps more nominal basis for identification. Participation in a leisure activity, such as watching football, will not automatically provide the individual with a positive personal and social identity (Kelly, 1983). Instead, an activity, such as football fandom, needs to provide the right context for the exercise of an individual's identity. The assumption that sports fans can, and often do, show differing levels of identification with a specific team, including football teams is not in question (cf. Cialdini, et al., 1976; Anderson, 1979; Sloan, 1979; Branscombe and Wann, 1991, 1993; Hirt, et al., 1992; Bromberger, 1993; Bromberger, et al., 1993; Gruneau and Whitson, 1993; Wann and Branscombe, 1995; MacClancy, 1996a; Weiller and Higgs, 1997). Thus there seems to be no debate that fandom, or identification with a football team, provides a context for the development and maintenance of an identity.

An obvious question to ask, however, is that of why football, as opposed to other sports, is so popular as a spectator sport, in providing the basis for this identification, or 'belonging'. As Armstrong (1998) notes, this is not an easy question to answer. Theories are largely speculative, especially given the lack of available data on the development of football as a spectator sport (as highlighted by Mason, 1980, and Taylor, 1992). It seems reasonable, however, to accept that by the year 1900 professional football was the major male spectator
entertainment in England. This situation has been maintained to the present day with football being the most popular spectator sport in England in terms of attendance. Holt (1989) argues that two aspects of the game explain its development to its contemporary level of popularity, these being:

- The "special" qualities of the game, and
- The changing character of the working class.

Early forms of modern football, those played in the 1870's and 1880's, generally utilised the principles of all out attack, and contained an emphasis upon individual performance (Holt, 1989). By the beginning of the twentieth century, the game had developed into a more balanced contest between attack and defence, with greater emphasis upon teamwork and strategy. Hopcraft (1968: 178) suggests that football held an advantage over other sports in terms of attracting spectators, due to its "continuous flow", its "constancy of conflict" and basic simplicity. Holt (1989) theorises that these features provided the working classes with a form of competition not present in their day to day lives (a point similar to the arguments of Elias and Dunning (1986) on fandom as tension-generation). Thus, football attracted spectators as a result of the wider social context, in this instance that of the context of working patterns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The success of football, according to Dunning (1975), and Holt (1989), cannot be separated from the social context. The prosperity of football as a spectator sport, at least during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was strongly interrelated to its ability to provide individuals, especially those from the working classes, with an affective involvement that was generally unavailable elsewhere.

A second argument put forward by Holt (1989) indicates that a further central cause of football's success in attracting spectators was the process of "urbanisation". Football allowed a demonstration of pride and identification with the newly developing post-industrialised urban areas. Almost all of the sizeable urban areas possessed a professional football team (Taylor, 1984; Holt, 1989), giving the inhabitants of these new centres of population focus for a sense of rootedness and common identity. Urbanisation took place at a time when the
world-view of much of the population was changing. These changes were in terms of becoming much more geographically widespread, from being almost completely part of a "local" context to a greater emphasis on being part of the national context. This development can be attributed firstly to the growth of the national media, notably in the form of newspapers, and secondly the development of more efficient transport systems, with the growth of the railways the most significant factor. Thus there was a shift from the importance of intra-community relations, which were pre-eminent before the industrial revolution, to inter-community relations. During this time the club became representative of its community, as "a symbol of the common interest of a particular locality" (Taylor, 1984:10). Perhaps more so than the town hall or the library, the football team became:

the local centre of a particular set of social relations.
It represented the particular modes of adaptation, compromise and coexistence arrived at by the (male) industrial working class and the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie in each locality (Taylor, 1984: 10; author's italics).

Thus, the representation of the football club, rather than the actual game of football per se, provided a continuous focus of identity within a rapidly changing context of technological, economic and cultural development (Goldhurst, 1987; MacClancy, 1996b). This focus was interrelated to the affective involvement that professional football was able to provide. The relationship between the football team, and the individual's sense of belonging, or of common interest, can be explained in terms of identity theory.

Identity Theory and Football Fandom
The use of identity theory to explain sports (rather than just football) fandom is advocated by Murrell and Dietz (1992). They argue that identification with a sports team appears to operate in the same manner as general group identification, about which much more research exists. Brown (1986) suggests that identity theory is the most appropriate framework for the study of group
identification, and Hogg and Hardie (1991) and Murrell and Dietz (1992) maintain that social identity theory may be the most suitable framework for the study of identification as a sports fan.

The concepts of identity and identification, although far from new\(^{14}\), have undergone a recent revival among social researchers, especially those in the leisure field. As Hill and Williams (1996a: 1) note:

\[
\text{in the mid 1990's the problem of identity is becoming a central, even fashionable one among historians and other social scientists.}
\]

As a result, there has been a growth in leisure and identity research in recent years. Although Roberts (1997a) indicates that, for young people at least, leisure is unable to provide the most significant basis for the development of an individual's identity, especially when compared to sex, sexuality, social class, nationality, ethnicity and religion, Urry (1995) argues that in contemporary (post-Thatcher) society, the development and maintenance of identity and identification are the most significant predictors of an individual's leisure activities, and their motivations for such activities. Leisure is important to the individual's sense of identity in that it provides the basis for preferred (Roberts, 1997b), or avocational (McPherson, et al., 1989) social identities, rather than ascribed social identities. Roberts' and Urry's arguments are slightly different in their approach, and are not mutually exclusive. Both accept that leisure is able to play a role in the development of one of the many identities that an individual possesses. Both are also in agreement with Roche (1998: 4), who suggests that sport, as an example of a leisure activity, "can be argued to play a formative, rather than simply an expressive, role in relation to human identity at the personal and collective levels". Within the age of post-modernism, identities are located in "impulse", or the seeking of affective reactions to activities, the type of reactions that are available through sports spectatorship, rather than identities based upon institutions of work, religion or marriage (Turner, 1976; Harrington

\(^{14}\) See for example Mead (1934); Goffman (1959); and Cooley (1964).
and Bielby, 1995). Thus leisure activities such as football fandom are able to create and form salient social and personal identities.

**Football Fandom, Identity, and Identification - Issues of Definition**

In terms of football fandom, and sports fandom and identification in general, although a number of authors refer to the concept, few have provided a definition. The main area of debate within the literature is the relationship between passive spectating as an observer, and having a more affective involvement with the sports team in question. The question of whether viewing sport as a spectator is comparable to that of watching as a fan needs to be addressed. The argument adopted here is that to form an identity as a fan of a particular team, simply observing, or spectating sport is not sufficient. Thus, what are referred to as spectators are unlikely to be able to develop strong identities from their involvement with a team. Since the terms "fan" and "spectator" are often used interchangeably within much of the literature, so clarification of the point is appropriate at this stage.

In terms of those works that differentiate between the terms, the difference between a fan and a spectator has been summarised in relation to affective involvement. Pooley (1978: 14) implies, rather than explicitly states, that fandom is strongly related to the individual's personal identity, autonomous from others when he argues that

> [w]hereas a spectator of sport will observe a spectacle and forget it very quickly, the fan continues his interest until the intensity of feeling toward the team becomes so great that parts of every day are devoted to either his team or in some instances, to the broad realm of sport itself.

Conversely, Zillman and Paulus (1993: 604) stress the social aspect of fandom, arguing that what differentiates a fan from a spectator is that
fans perceive themselves as members of a tacitly
existing group to which the object of their fanship
belongs.

As well as personal and social elements, the maintained consumption of sport
away from the actual game event is also stressed by the description of Lee and
Zeiss (1980). They characterise a fan as a person with a high frequency of indirect
consumption, most notably through the media, or by contact with other fans. A
spectator, on the other hand, observes the game, but has a limited frequency of
indirect consumption. The definition of Lee and Zeiss acknowledges that certain
committed fans may not be able to attend games on a regular basis on the
grounds of expense or work commitments for example. [This is an
acknowledgement that is often missing from North American works on fandom,
many of which investigate college sports, which are far less problematic in terms
of attendance for many fans, who are students at that college and receive credit
for participation in experimental research].

Guttman (1986: 6) also notes that fandom is attitudinal, rather than directly
measurable, for example in terms of attendance at matches. He summarises the
distinctions that exist between a fan and a spectator, arguing that the term “fan”
refers to

the emotionally committed ‘consumer’ of sports
events. The terms overlap but are obviously not
identical. In practice, most fans are spectators, and
most spectators are fans, but it is logically possible
to be one and not the other. Some fans have never
actually attended a sports event... some allow
themselves to be dragged to games that they then
observe without any of the emotional involvement
characteristic of being a fan.

Other authors (for example Miller, 1976; Lee and Zeiss, 1980) agree with Pooley
(1978) and Guttman (1986) that being a fan requires cognitive and affective, as
well as behavioural involvement with a team. The lack of research on lower
league professional clubs means that this level of interest within the football
crowd is not well documented. However the 1995/6 Premier League survey
(SNCCFR, 1996) indicates that the majority of Premier League fans maintain an interest in football away from the actual game, most notably in terms of the purchase of club products, viewing of matches on television, reading football sections in newspapers, and purchasing of specialist football magazines. Therefore it seems reasonable to assume that, for the majority of the football crowd, the process of actually spectating the game event is only part of fan identification.

Fandom, Spectatorship, Identity and Identification

Although the difference between a fan and a spectator has been clarified, the literature to date has referred to the related concept of "fandom", rather than that of identification, which is the focus of this study. It is important to clarify what is meant by "identification" with a sports team, and to ascertain whether fandom and identification are similar, interchangeable constructs. As with fandom, there appears to be a clear distinction between identification with a sports team, and simply watching, or observing a team. Branscombe and Wann (1992: 1017) define sports fan identification as:

the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as fans of the team, are involved with the team, are concerned with the team's performance, and view the team as a representation of themselves.

This definition is similar to Guttman's (1986) distinction of what constitutes a fan, notably affective, as well as cognitive awareness of one's own involvement with a sports team. Identification comprises those components that are important to fandom, such as an awareness of being identified, and a cognitive and affective involvement with the team, thus showing a high degree of similarity in its nature to how sports fandom is defined.

The definition of fan identification above has also been applied by others investigating sports fandom (for example Hirt, 1992; Madrigal, 1995). The strong similarities that exist between concepts of fandom and concepts of sports fan
identification on the basis of cognitive and affective reactions, suggest that football fandom can be presented as interchangeable with fan identity and identification in such studies.

Thus, a clarification of terms related to football fan identification has been achieved. The next stage is to outline the process by which the individual actually becomes identified with a team.

3.4 Stages of Identity Construction as a Football Fan

Widdecombe and Wooffitt (1995) note that becoming identified with a group, such as becoming a football fan of a particular club, and developing an identity as a fan of a particular club, is more complex than just a change in an individual's identity. They suggest that an "entry process" is necessary. Altman and Chemers (1980) also indicate that a mechanism for socialisation into such a group is required. Marsh, et al. (1978) have outlined career stages of identification with reference to football fans at Oxford United F.C. A more in-depth description has also been provided by Donnelly and Young (1988). They note how identity may be developed through various "career" stages. They have developed a process of the development of a subcultural identity. Using a similar theoretical approach, Kelly and Godbey (1992) have also outlined elements that are salient to the development and maintenance of identity. These existing approaches can be integrated in order to outline the four stages and necessary conditions for identity formation and maintenance. The stages of this derived process are those of:

- Presocialisation,
- Recruitment,
- Socialisation, and
- Acceptance/identity confirmation, or ostracisation.

Each of these phases is described below.
• **Presocialisation** - This stage refers to the acquisition of knowledge by the individual about a specific subculture, and the relevant role identities associated with that subculture or group. This information may be gained through a variety of means, such as family, peer group, media, or contact with the subculture itself. The accuracy of the information is important to the success of the individual in phase two, that of recruitment into the subculture. Without knowledge of a particular subculture, then it is unlikely that an individual will be able to develop an identity as a member. A stereotypical outline of a subculture - especially a subculture such as that of the football fan, which has received biased treatment in the media (Dunning, *et al.*, 1988) - may result in a situation which can lead to the individual collecting information about the media's perception of a group, rather than factual information. If the information collected by the individual is incorrect, then this distortion will affect the initial stage of the recruitment phase, that of "modeling".

In a context where several subgroups are present, presocialisation may only happen once. The presocialisation stage allows an individual to collect information about a number of subgroups, within which the other phases of the model apply, that is those phases of recruitment, socialisation and acceptance.

• **Recruitment** - For the construction of the individual's identity as part of the subculture to continue, he must feel that they are part of the subculture. A significant aspect of the feeling of belonging is that of "modeling" (Donnelly and Young, 1988).

Modeling refers to the process whereby a newcomer to a subculture - for example that of the football fan - takes on the appearance, apparent attitudes and behaviour of existing, established members of the subculture to which the individual aspires. Thus the individual will attempt to act according to the role identity associated with the football fan. This imitation may be intended to provide an "impression" for members of the wider society as well as those
within the group (Leary and Kowalski, 1991; Leary 1995). The process of modeling allows the individual to develop a social identity as a group member. The accuracy of the modeling is dependent upon the presocialisation phase, along with the correctness of the information received by the individual in this period. If these conditions are satisfied, this may enable the individual to gain "competence" as a member of the group. A level of competence, or what Kelly and Godbey (1992) refer to as "entry level" competence is required. Otherwise the discrepancy between the desired image and the individual's current image may be too great for an individual to develop an identity as a football fan. If the individual is successful in this phase however, either gaining the perception of membership of the group by approaching the group himself, or by the group approaching the individual, then he will enter the third phase, that of socialisation.

Entry into the socialisation phase in the football context may be voluntary, as a fan in general, or invited, as a member of a specific sub group within fans, or perhaps even institutionalised, as part of a family tradition of fandom of a particular club.

- **Socialisation** - Socialisation refers to the ongoing process whereby an individual gains knowledge about the roles, norms and values adopted by the subculture. Socialisation can be conceived of in two ways. The first is that of personal socialisation. This is the process whereby norms and values are internalised by the individual, and become largely self imposed by the individual's feelings. These sentiments may be positive, for example that of pride, or achievement based upon group membership. Norms and values may also be reinforced by feelings of guilt, shame or conscience, if the values of the subculture are transgressed.

The second type is social socialisation. This is the process whereby the individual learns to assume those norms and values that he feels will enhance and/or maintain standing in the wider society. These norms and values are developed
with the individual's acquisition and development of his identity as a group member.

Such "training" allows the individual to confirm his own identity within the group. These norms provide signposts that the individual follows to develop a social identity. Socialisation is defined as "The process whereby people learn to conform to social norms" (Abercrombie, et al., 1983: 231). For effective integration into society, the individual needs to learn the accepted norms and values of that society. As Dunning, et al. (1992: 3) note, those who do not conform to accepted norms and values will probably be "treated and/or punished by means of stigmatisation, hospitalisation, imprisonment or a combination of these". Within the football crowd, it is likely that other forms of censure may take place for those who clearly do not fit into the accepted norms and values of the group. This is why the football researcher, especially the participant observer, needs to ensure that he has some knowledge of the roles and norms of the football crowd, in order to prevent stigmatisation by the population that he is researching.

The process of socialisation takes place via "transactions with other people" (Zigler and Seitz, 1978 cited in Klieber and Kelly, 1980: 91), transactions that begin in childhood and then continue in a "lifelong, dynamic process" (Klieber and Kelly, 1980: 91). These transactions can take place within a leisure context. Leisure socialisation may be defined by applying a definition of socialisation to the area of leisure, participation in which is a social norm for many. Iso-Ahola (1980: 132) defines leisure socialisation as:

a process by which basic leisure knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and motives are learned and internalised with the net result of socially relevant and psychologically rewarding leisure behaviour.

Iso-Ahola's model of leisure socialisation is outlined in figure 3.1.
The fundamental points of Iso-Ahola’s model are that there are boundaries within which socialisation occurs. Boundaries allow the development of identity within a set environment (Kelly and Godbey, 1992; cf. chapter five). Within these boundaries, social agents act to socialise the individual into leisure activities, such as football fandom. As the individual gains more knowledge and experience of the leisure context, then his own perceived competence in a particular domain of leisure is altered, either positively or negatively, depending upon that individual’s experience.

Leisure socialisation takes place within social and cultural boundaries, which limit the type of leisure available to the individual (these boundaries being economic, such as cost, geographic, such as the location of leisure facilities, or cultural). Within these boundaries, influences upon leisure socialisation exist. These influences are mainly those of families, peer groups and, in pre-adult
socialisation, teachers. If the individual adopts the roles, norms and values of the group, the final career stage is that of acceptance.

- **Acceptance/identity confirmation, or ostracisation** - This final phase can be defined as the confirmation of the individual’s identity by established members of the subculture, the individual's own perception of acceptance, and the gaining of a subsequent stable social and personal identity as a football fan. Alternatively, there may be a failure to become accepted, or perceive acceptance as part of the group, a situation which leads to subsequent ostracisation.

Once the individual has created a satisfactory perceived identity, then he is likely to demonstrate that adopted identity to others within the social context. He may, as in the recruitment phase, be sufficiently motivated in certain situations to create an “impression” for others, so that the individual perceives others to see him in a particular role (Leary and Kowalski, 1991), further enhancing his identity as a football fan. This outcome may be achieved by the use of certain actions and behaviours (Leary, 1995), such as wearing the colours of the football team, or publicly displaying fandom of a particular team, especially after that team has been victorious (Cialdini, et al., 1976; Lee, 1985; Wann and Branscombe, 1990).

Thus, the process of gaining an identity as a football fan has been summarised. The four stage process is useful in outlining the separate phases that are encountered by the individual in developing the shift from being a mere spectator to being an identified fan, as defined earlier in the chapter. Although such identities are often transient, and short lived, evidence suggests that once such an identity as a football fan has been achieved, than it may be relatively stable. This issue is discussed in the following section.
3.5 The Stability of Football Fan Identification

Although the discussion so far has treated the concept of “identification” as related to the individual’s identification within a single group, there is another important concept to acknowledge. The subculture to which the individual aspires is not static. Each member of the subculture, no matter how established, will also be undergoing a continual process of identity confirmation. Turner (1982) notes that identities may vary within the immediate context and environment wherein the identity is enacted. Within a subculture, the wide range of relationships and interdependencies means that changes will occur, and that such changes will be largely “blind” and unplanned. Additionally, changes may be exerted upon members of a particular subculture by non-members of the subculture.

The obvious example of the influence of non-members on a football subculture is that contained in the Taylor Report (1990), which ended the practice of standing at major football stadia, and required football fans to be seated at all times. Such a dynamic, and to some extent uncontrollable model of identity construction in effect means that the individual’s own sense of identity is “always a temporary and unstable effect of relations” (Grossberg, 1996: 89). Identity construction may be affected by existing members of the subculture, non-members, and also by the individual himself, if the individual in some way alters his perceptions or attitudes concerning the subgroup to which he aspires. Thus the individual will not necessarily have a lifelong stable identity as a football fan, since such identification is always in dynamic process. Hence it may be argued that football fan identification may be unstable, and thus unmeasurable, or that any investigation into fan identification only provides a static picture. Evidence suggests that, however, such an argument is incorrect.

Existing work in social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), suggests that identities should, despite the state of continual change within which they are negotiated, remain reasonably stable for the individual. More recent research into the sports fan provides support for such an argument. With regard to sports fan identification, Murrell and Dietz (1992) theorise that it should be seen as a
stable characteristic of the individual, rather than a volatile characteristic. Empirical support for their argument can also be found elsewhere regarding the North American sports fan (Branscombe and Wann, 1991, 1993; Wann and Schrader, 1996). Wann and Schrader (1996) have also determined that identification with a team remains stable despite team failure or success, although a further study (Wann, 1996) indicates that levels of identification, as well as levels of involvement and identification, may decrease slightly, although not significantly, over a season. Branscombe and Wann (1991) suggest that identification may be affected by success if the fan is geographically distant from the chosen team. In terms of more long term identification, Smith, et al. (1981) note that most spectators intend to maintain an interest in, (and presumably identification with), their team in the long run. Thus the measure of identification can be used to determine what could be referred to as trait (that is a relatively stable measure), identification rather than state (a fluctuating measure, affected by short term factors such as team success) identification.

3.6 Football Fandom, Identity and Identification - Summary

Fandom has been demonstrated to be a different concept to that of sport spectating, and a similar concept to that of identification with a team. Both identification with a sports team and fandom with a sports team are similar constructs, and require cognitive and affective involvement, an involvement which is not necessarily present in sports spectating.

Sport, through its very nature, has been shown to be a legitimate vehicle for the development and maintenance of a salient identity for an individual. Football facilitates this sense of identity to a greater extent than many other sports. This chapter has identified the components of, and processes related to the development of an identity as a football fan. This has been achieved by considering football as the basis for the provision of a significant identity, the
processes by which the individual becomes identified as a football fan, and the relative stability of such identification as a sports fan.

In order to develop this involvement, a four stage model of socialisation as a sports fan has been derived from past studies, and presented. Through these phases, the individual is able to develop both a personal, and a social identity as a fan. Once these phases have been successfully completed by the individual, then he will possess an identity that may prove relatively stable over time.

The next chapter outlines the concept of identity in more depth. Firstly it assesses the suitability of identification theory to explore football fandom. Secondly it distinguishes between, and describes the relationship between, social and personal identities, and examines the effects of possessing such identities on the individual and his behaviour as a football fan.
Chapter Four

Social Identity, Personal Identity, and Football Fan Identification

4.1 Social Identity and Football Fandom

As outlined within chapter three, social identity theory seems to form an appropriate framework for the study of the football fan since it acknowledges the interrelated existence of the fan as both an individual (the "fan") and the “group” to which that individual belongs (“being a fan of the football club”). Thus, despite its denomination, social identity theory includes both social and personal components which are interrelated (Killian and Turner, 1972, Widdecombe and Woofitt, 1995). These components, and the relationships between them are developed in this chapter.

The concept of social identity has been described by numerous authors (notably Tajfel, 1972, 1981, 1982; Oakes and Turner, 1980; Brown, 1986; Brown, 1988; Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Abrams and Hogg, 1990; Turner, 1991; Baumann, 1996; Hall, 1996). Social identity is defined by Tajfel (1972: 31) as

[t]he individual's knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him/her of the group membership.

The sense of belonging is developed through the four stage process of belonging outlined in chapter three. Identification with the group requires three elements which must be pertinent to the individual (Tajfel, 1982). These elements are:

- A cognitive element, where the individual has an awareness that he belongs to a particular group (that is the individual is consciously aware that he is a fan of a particular football club, and feels part of that group of fans),
• An evaluative element, where the individual has an awareness of the value of belonging to a particular group. Thus the fan must see his fandom as important in some way, and
• Emotional investment, where the individual has an affective involvement in being a member of the group. Thus being a fan of the football club should be an involved, rather than a detached, experience for the fan.

These elements are essential components of fandom, according to Madrigal (1995: 209-210), who argues that “fanship represents an association from which the individual derives considerable emotional and value significance”. Smith, et al. (1981) have determined that only two per cent of fans were “not upset” if their team lost, suggesting that many fans do have an emotional and value attachment to their team. The money spent on watching football, (not only in terms of tickets, but also related merchandise), by Premier League fans would also suggest that fans have strong value attachments to their favourite teams (SNCCFR, 1996). Observation at any football league ground would also seem to confirm the strong cognitive, emotional and, to a lesser extent, evaluative awareness of many football fans. On a more theoretical level, many of the functions of fandom referred to in chapter three, section 3.3, such as tension-generation, require cognitive and affective involvement. Group membership, such as being a fan, on the basis of Tajfel’s criteria, would seem to provide such involvement.

The awareness that group members have of themselves as being involved as part of a group is very important; the group does not need to be formal, or structured in any way. Instead, it is the meanings to individual participants of group membership that are important, however these meanings are constructed. This can be illustrated by reference to a non-footballing event, that of the 1980 Bristol riot15. Reicher (1984: 15) notes in his social identity based analysis of the riot that:

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15 The Bristol riot took place within the St Paul’s area of Bristol on the 2nd April 1980. It involved violent confrontation between the police and members of the St Paul’s community, precipitated, according to rioters, by harassment from the Bristol police towards drug users within the St Paul’s district. The violence was limited to the geographical area of St Paul’s, and involved only members of that community.
it is probably false to speak of a single community in the area. Nonetheless, crowd members did see themselves as representing the entirety of St Paul's in the sense of an independent community ... That is to say the notion of the community was a real, albeit ideological, creation for participants.

Thus the individuals' perception of group membership, although ideological, is significant, in that no formal structure existed within the community, other than the members' perception and value awareness of being a part of the group. In the case of the Bristol riot, it was the imagined community of St. Paul's that formed the basis for individuals to categorise themselves as group members, that is as members of the St. Paul's Community. According to Reicher (1984), strong feelings of group membership, with cognitive, evaluative and emotional investment, emerged on the basis of an imagined group. Here the relationship of place to identity and identification can be seen to play a significant role in the creation of groups, in that it was the "place" of St Paul's that allowed the group to emerge. The implication of such a finding is that football fans may perceive themselves to be members of a group on the basis of imagined, rather than formalised membership, based upon the support of the local football club. Although such a feeling is imaginary, it still may allow strong feelings of group membership to emerge. Thus no formal group structure (such as the supporters' club) seems necessary for the football fan to possess a feeling of group membership.

As well as no formal structure being necessary, no close social interaction is necessary among the group for feelings of group membership to emerge (Pearson, 1979; McPherson, et al., 1989), which was the case with many of the individuals involved in the Bristol incidents (Reicher, 1984). Place may form the commonality upon which groups categorise themselves. In terms of place and football fans, it is the clubs themselves that have formalised this focus of categorisation, through their affiliation with their location.
This importance of a focus, such as that of place, or community, or the football club, as the basis for group membership is significant, since it allows a locus of categorisation, and thus a focus of group membership and the subsequent development and maintenance of social identity. In terms of fan identification with a football club, the latter is able to provide this focus of “place”. Relph (1976:42-43) defines “place" as “...a centre of action... possessing features that persist in an identifiable form”s A place has a location, a community that occupies it, and experiences that take place within it. The football club has its own place, that of the stadium, its community of fans, and experiences within the stadium, experiences being those that relate to the football match. Football fans are able to identify with these places. As Bale (1991: 134) notes:

such intense identification between people and places suggests that football grounds are, for many, examples of Relph’s authentic places (about which fans have an unconscious sense of place) given the sentiment and attachment generated by them.

The place is able to provide a focus, or a representation of the football club. This focus can be related to the wider community in that the stadium, and the team itself, provides what Taylor (1991) refers to as an “emblem of locality”. A mechanism is thus provided whereby identifying with the team and the stadium is, to a certain extent, representative of identifying with the wider town. In return, the town provides the basis for categorisation, where the process by which individual’s assign themselves to a group. Thus, the football fan may consider himself a resident of ‘X’, which he will then, according to Taylor (1991) identify with through identifying with the local team. This process may have been especially valid in the early post-industrial period, given the importance of post-industrial urbanisation to the development of football as a spectator sport (as outlined by Holt (1989) and referred to in chapter three). Empirical evidence regarding this is scarce, however, and the relationship between the club, the town and its fans represents a rich area for research, especially in light of recent changes in English football culture, and in light of the concept of post-fandom (Redhead 1997). This issue is developed below.
Although, to date, the importance of locality to group membership, and football fandom seems clear, recent cultural changes may result in a need to reassess the importance of locality. If the new consumption of football is based upon global, rather than local values (King, 1995, 1997) and consumption via television and the media is becoming more important than the actual process of "live" attendance at matches, then it follows that the importance of locality will be reduced. Group membership will still be made on the basis of categorisation, such as being a Manchester United fan, but this classification may be made increasingly upon the basis of factors such as success, the prominence of the team within the media, and peer pressures, rather than on the basis of supporting the local team. Locality is not a necessary prerequisite of identity. Stacey (1969, cited in Crow and Allan, 1994:5) also notes that physical proximity is not necessary for feelings of community to form, and that locality is only one basis of categorisation. Wilmott, (1986, cited in Crow and Allan, 1994), suggests that other factors, such as religion, occupation and leisure pursuits may override geographical factors so as to create a feeling of group membership for the individual. Thus, although place may form a basis of football fan identity, it will not form the only basis. Strong identities may be formed by post-fans on the basis of success, media influence, and factors other than that based upon supporting the home town team.

The Application of Social Identity Theory to Football Fandom

Although Murrell and Dietz (1992) suggest that identity theory provides the most suitable conceptual framework for the study of the sports fan, and certain similarities between group membership and football fandom have been introduced, the appropriateness of the theory to football fandom requires examination. Tajfel (1982) argues that membership of a social group in order to develop and maintain a positive social identity, such as a football fan requires three consequences:
Chapter Four - Social Identity, Personal Identity, and Football Fan Identification

- **The individual's self-concept as a fan.** The individual will have a personal identity as a fan, and see himself as a fan of a team. Branscombe and Wann (1991a) have determined a significant positive correlation between identification with a sports team, and an individual's feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. Their research indicates that it is likely that fans of a sports team will have a level of self-concept of being a fan that is related to their strength of identification with a team, so that fans who are highly identified with a team will have a greater self-concept as being a fan.

- **The football fan acknowledges some form of group membership with other fans.** Zillman, et al. (1979) suggest that fans will feel a sense of bonding with other fans, although they do not test this sentiment empirically. Evidence to support their suggestion can be found in the work of Wann and Branscombe (1993) whose research has determined that college sports fans see other fans of the same team as "special" in some way, and that fans perceive a sense of belonging with such fans. This finding supports the assumption that fans acknowledge some form of group membership with other fans.

- **The emotional and value significance of having a social and personal identity as a fan is important** (cf. chapter three on the differences between sports spectating and sports fandom, see also Tajfel's (1982) three criteria of group membership outlined above). Smith, et al. (1981) suggest that a strong aspect of fandom is affective involvement, and consequently behavioural commitment to a team, the logical assumption being that more highly identified fans would display greater levels of involvement through attending more matches. Branscombe and Wann (1991b) provide empirical evidence to suggest that those fans exhibiting higher levels of identification with a team show greater physiological and affective arousal when their favoured team is performing than do fans showing lower levels of identification. It seems reasonable, therefore, to argue that sports fandom, and football fandom, involves emotional significance. In terms of value significance, there is a scarcity of empirical evidence available. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to conclude that, given the evident emotional involvement, there will also be a strong value awareness of being a fan.
To summarise, the limited research available on the sports fan indicates that fandom fulfils Tajfel's three consequences of group membership, and as such, Hogg and Hardie (1991) and Murrell and Dietz (1992) seem to be correct to suggest that social identity theory provides an appropriate framework for an exploration of football fan identification. This framework is developed in the following sections of the thesis.

**Football Fandom as Group Membership**

A strong relationship has emerged from the literature associating possession of a particular identity as being related to the individual's perception of being part of a group. Therefore it seems reasonable at this stage to define a group, and to determine whether or not football fandom and fan identification fulfils the criteria of group membership, as suggested by Murrell and Dietz (1992).

Definitions of groups are varied. Brown (1988) has reviewed the literature on groups, and developed an interpretation based on existing definitions. He suggests that a group exists when “two or more people define themselves as members of it and when its existence is recognised by at least one other” (Brown, 1988: 2-3). The existence of a group is dependent upon its members, and others outside the group, to take part in the process of “categorisation” (Tajfel, 1972, 1981; Abrams and Hogg, 1990). This is the process whereby every individual divides the social world into distinct classes or categories. Individuals use these categories to define themselves as particular types of people, or as members of particular groups or categories (Turner, 1991), such as being a member of a particular class, or profession, or as being a football fan of a particular team. A key aspect of Brown's (1988) definition of a group is that the individual does not necessarily require any direct personal or face to face relationships with other members of the group, although such contact is dependent upon the nature of the group in question. Thus again the possibility of group membership, and possession of a social identity on the basis of purely imagined factors is confirmed.
The categorisation of some groups may be obvious in some cases, and may even be institutionalised, (for example a national social identity, or as a fan of a particular football club), however the categorisation of other social groups may be less apparent. Marsh, et al. (1978), for example, identified fan subcultures, such as the "rowdies" or the "town boys" at Oxford United F.C. Hooligan subcultures also exist, such as the "Men in Gear" (MIG's) or "Boys of Luton Town" (BOLT's) at Luton Town F.C. Categorisation is made on the basis of values shared by members of the group (in-group) but not necessarily by those who are not members of the group (out-group). Thus football fans may share certain values that are not necessarily apparent to those who are not members of the group.

Comparisons by members of the group will be made with non-members, often using positive aspects of the group (Abrams and Hogg, 1988), allowing individuals to attribute themselves with desirable qualities compared to non-members of the group (Emler and Hopkins, 1990), who are seen for example as less skilled, or less knowledgeable for example. This positive comparison may allow the individual to achieve or maintain a positive social identity (Tajfel, 1982) which is an important mediator of an individual's personal identity and self-concept and consequently a moderator of the individual's self-esteem (Leary, 1995). This process is referred to as "ethnocentrism". 

Inter-group Behaviour and Ethnocentrism

The Tajfelian theory of social identity proposes that an individual will use group membership to maintain a positive social, and thus positive personal identity to maintain and enhance their self-esteem. Thus, a strong identity as a football fan needs to be able to provide a positive social identity. As well as maintaining a

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16 These were well known groups operating within the Luton crowd during the late 1980's and early 1990's. It has been ascertained that these groups have not actually existed for a number of years, and no other similarly institutionalised groups are known (Source: Personal interview with the football intelligence officer at Luton Town F.C.).

17 Ethnocentrism refers to the consequences of the individual's social identity as a fan. In terms of the individual's personal identity, the term egocentrism is more accurate.
positive identity through group affiliation, and simply being a member of a group, individuals within a group may also enhance self-esteem through inter-group comparison. Groups, such as football fans, do not exist in social isolation, but are interdependent upon other groups to differing extents, even where only one group may exist, and the relationship is in terms of group members and non-group members. Inter-group behaviour refers to interaction between two or more groups. The behaviour of group members is influenced by their perception that they belong to different social groups (Hogg and Vaughn, 1995). A significant feature of inter-group behaviour is ethnocentrism. The term ethnocentrism was first employed in the early 1900's (Sumner, 1906), where it was used to describe the shared attributes of social life. Ethnocentrism is now referred to as

prejudicial attitudes between in-groups and out-groups by which our attitudes, customs and behaviours are unquestionably and uncritically treated as superior to their social arrangements” (Abercrombie, et al., 1986: 90).

Hogg and Vaughn (1995) note that it is possible for a degree of ethnocentrism to be present even in the absence of other groups, that is that members of a group will see themselves as “special” in some way, as well as just “better” than other groups. Thus simply being a member of a group may enhance the self-concept, even if no sense of superiority over other groups actually exists.

Where other groups do exist, the behaviour of group members in relation to those “out-groups” has been charted by Sherif (1966) in his “realistic conflict theory”, a theory that can be seen to have relevance to football fans. This conceptualisation uses the goals of individuals as a basis for explaining inter-group behaviour.

Sherif argues that individuals sharing a common goal requiring interdependence with others tend to form groups with those others. At the group level, those with mutually exclusive goals tend to engage in inter-group conflict. Thus fans of different teams will, as has been reported widely, show signs of conflict with
each other, as they possess mutually exclusive goals, that is the victory of their team, and the defeat of rivals.

Although beyond the scope of this research, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that a combination of ethnocentrism and realistic conflict theory may form a basis for an explanation of football fan violence, in that certain fans may perceive the need to protect the interests of “their” group, and thus their own social and personal identity and identification. This form of self-protection may be achieved through the use of violence, especially following defeat, or any other situation where positive identity is threatened.

Conflict is not always, however, a consequence of inter-group competition, however. Although much existing research demonstrates the nature of such conflict, the experimental conditions tend to acknowledge only a single identity of participants, that is to say individuals are assigned a group, and it is often solely upon the basis of this sole group identity that competition occurs. Individuals, as noted, will have a number of identities, apart from that of the football fan. Therefore, as Finn and Guilianotti (1998) correctly suggest, members of the opposing groups may well share another social identity. It will be the most salient identity at any particular time that affects fan behaviour. Thus, for example, fans of Luton Town F.C., and their closest rivals Watford Town F.C., should not show the levels of conflict while supporting the national team that would be apparent whilst watching a match between the two teams. The most salient social identity for such fans at that time would be as an England fan, rather than as a fan of Watford or Luton. Thus inter group conflict would be diminished on the basis of a shared, salient social identity.

Group Cohesiveness

Membership of certain groups, such as being a football fan of a particular team, is, to a large extent, completely voluntary, or achieved, rather than ascribed. The forces that both enable and/or constrain group membership are defined as the group cohesiveness. An early definition of cohesiveness is that it “refers to the degree that members of a group desire to remain in the group” (Cartwright,
A later definition incorporates the more processual nature of cohesiveness, defining it as "all of the forces both positive and negative that cause individuals to remain in a group" (Baron and Byrne, 1987: 380). It seems likely that cohesiveness does not create identification. Instead it is more likely that strong identification of members within a group brings about strong cohesiveness within that group (Turner, 1991). The direction of this association is in broad agreement with Tajfel (1978), who suggests that as long as membership of a group maintains or enhances an individual's social identity, then he will retain membership of that group. This suggestion does, however, assume that other factors will remain constant, such as commitments or situations external to the group. This provides an explanation of why levels of identification may be the most significant moderator of behaviour and attitudes within a group, such as being a football fan (cf. Murrell and Dietz, 1992; Madrigal, 1995; Wakefield and Sloan, 1995).

Football Fandom, Group Behaviour, Ethnocentrism and Cohesiveness

The effects of conflict upon group cohesiveness have been researched by a number of authors. Tajfel (1982) has summarised the findings, and notes that the results of different researchers suggest that cohesiveness is increased by perceived inter-group conflict, such as that developed through realistic conflict (Sherif, 1966). Thus, rival groups of football fans will have mutually exclusive objectives, such as their team winning. As a result, cohesiveness within the football fan group should be high. Stein (1976) notes however, that it is too simplistic to view only potential conflict as a moderator of cohesiveness, and that four conditions need to be met for potential conflict to affect the cohesiveness of the group. For the football fan, these conditions are as follows:

- There needs to be a perceived external threat to the well-being of the group. This will be, for example, from the performance of other football teams.
• The threat needs to have the potential to affect all members of the group. Thus, defeat by such teams should have the potential to affect all fans of the club.
• The group must be able to have some form of mechanism for dealing with the threat. Football fans may use the mechanisms described in section 4.4, of reducing their association with the team if such a step is necessary to maintain a positive identity.
• Membership of the group must provide some form of benefit against the perceived threat. Thus, being seen to be a fan of the club is seen as protective by the fan in some way.

In terms of the football crowd, research suggests that the crowd is likely to have a perception that it will be able to exert an influence upon the team’s performance, and subsequent result (Wann and Branscombe, 1995). Fans from opposing teams, with the same influence, may be able to threaten the well-being of the team in terms of performance. Thus, the crowd will need to maintain unity to deal with the perceived threat, with, according to Sherif, an increased cohesiveness. If the threat is reduced, (such as playing an opposition that presents little threat to the team, or if the game is a “friendly”, with no threat to the team’s league status) then cohesiveness may be temporarily reduced, with a subsequent drop in attendance. Madrigal (1995) has noted that enjoyment of highly identified fans is reduced for such matches against teams that are seen as non-threatening. This hypothesis may, although empirically untested, may partially explain the reduced attendances that are seen for such matches.

The processes, as outlined above, by which fans may develop an affinity with each other as a cohesive group seem to be reasonably well understood. What is less well understood however, is the role of the football club in the formation of an identity as a fan. This issue is discussed below.
The Football Club and Social Identity

As noted within this chapter, the individual operating within a social context needs to form relationships with others by the development and maintenance of a social identity, through perceived membership of a group with common values, attitudes and behaviours. In pre-industrial society the community was able to provide this focus of "belonging", a focus that has seemingly declined since post-industrial urbanisation (Anderson, 1979; Holt, 1989). Although the place per se may not provide a group focus, the sports team may provide a tie with the larger social structure, and enable a sense of belonging where fewer community or kinship ties exist than in pre-industrial society (Anderson, 1979).

It is not the case that football fandom has arisen simply as a response for this need for belonging and identity. Instead it can be suggested that a reciprocal development has occurred, with football teams arising within centres of available population, that is those urban developments, within which the population had a need for a focus of identity. These two aspects can be seen as interrelated, and the resultant football teams emerging not as part of a pre-planned organisation, but rather emerging "as and where they have been required in response to the expressed need of local communities" (Football Association, 1991: 5), using the population resources of such communities.

This central location of the football club within, and the relationship to particular sets of social relations within which an individual exists has been described with reference to Spanish (MacClancy, 1996b), Scottish (Giulianotti, 1997), and Italian (Bromberger, 1993) football teams. MacClancy's (1996b) investigation of Spanish football looks specifically at Athletico Bilbao Football Club, noting how the local support of this team during its formative years was based not simply on the sporting success of the club, (although Bilbao was consistently one of the best Spanish football teams). Rather fan loyalty emerged and was sustained through mechanisms of identity and identification. Those functions of fandom previously described, such as tension release, or tension generation, are not themselves cited as the primary factors in explaining the strength of support for the club. Instead the club provides a focus of
representation, that is the football team is representative as the team of locality, and representative of the particular culture of that area of Spain (in the case of Bilbao, the team is seen to represent the Basque culture). Thus, the football team operating within a locality possessing a particular culture is able to provide the focus for social identity (that of belonging to the Basque culture), and the related personal identity (that of being a Basque). Through this sense of belonging, fans are able to experience the affective reactions, such as tension-generation, that have been outlined as the basis of sports fandom.

This focus was strengthened during the early development of the team, with the club considering only locally born or raised players for selection (even though this principle was later dropped in an attempt to maintain a competitive standard against other Spanish teams). Identification was further reinforced by the low pay of the Bilbao players, with salary levels being similar to those of the followers of the team, thus allowing the players to be seen as almost “equals” with the fans of the team (MacClancy, 1996b). Thus the team is able to provide a source of identity to its fans, who are able to feel a sense of “belonging”, or membership of the team. Similarly, Lopes (1997) notes the strong bond that exists between black footballers and the black population of the socially deprived areas of Brazil. Fans are able to develop a group identity as Black Brazilians, and, as Lopes notes, the players are able to provide the source of a positive social identity for the group, united in the hope of social emancipation. As a consequence of possessing such social identities, fandom affects such individual’s personal identities. The relationship between fandom and personal identity is introduced in the following section.

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18 Care must be taken in comparing different football cultures, as intercultural differences may make comparative studies invalid. It is certainly not a case of comparing “like with like”, but the use of such references is useful to demonstrate that football provides a strong source of social identification.
4.2 Personal Identity and Football Fandom

The concept of football fandom and social identity has been introduced within this chapter. This allows the related concept of personal identity to be presented. As noted earlier in the thesis, there is a strong relationship between an individual's social identity and his personal identity. Personal identity is defined as "the phenomenological sense that one has of one's own intrinsic self independent of all others" (Reber, 1985: 555). This definition is closely related to the concept of the "self" which is "the cognitive structure that allows people to think consciously about themselves" (Leary, 1995: 157). Individuals will have a self-concept, or a set of beliefs and values that they hold about themselves. These beliefs are about both personal characteristics of the individual, (their intelligence, appearance and so on), and social characteristics, (such as social relationships within which the individual is involved). The self-concept allows individuals to interpret their own experiences (Leary, 1995). Differences within self-concept thus imply that individuals may experience the same events, but interpret them differently according to the self-concept that the individual has. Thus, football fans will each experience the same match, with the same team performance, and the same result. Differences of self-concept, however, suggest that these fans will interpret these experiences differently.

Differences in self-concept also exist in the intrapersonal, as well as at the interpersonal level. Within contemporary society, individuals are subject to an extremely wide range of interdependencies. Just as the individual will have a multiplicity of social identities, not all of which are appropriate all of the time, there will be a number of personal characteristics that are not always relevant. There will only be a certain part of the self-concept of which the individual is aware at any time. This model of the self-concept is referred to as the " multidimensional" model. It is advocated over other models as it accounts for the dynamic nature of the self (Markus and Cross, 1990), and is supported by research to a greater extent than the other models of self-concept (Lee, 1996).

The part of the self-concept that is directly relevant at a particular time is referred to as the phenomenal self (Leary, 1995). The phenomenal self is a strong
moderator of behaviours and attitudes. Thus, the phenomenal self includes the individual's self-concept as a football fan. If an individual has a strong identification with a team, it is likely that fandom will comprise a larger (although not complete) proportion of the phenomenal self, and that the fan will show identification to a team to a greater extent than the other identities that he may possess.

An individual will not only be aware of his self-concept, but will also have a subjective evaluation of it. The subjective evaluation of an individual's self-concept is his self-esteem. Although earlier sociologists (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1968) suggest that overt status, most notably in terms of wealth, position and power is the primary moderator of self-esteem, evidence supporting such associations has been shown to be weak (Wylie, 1979; Crocker & Major, 1989). By contrast, Rosenberg (1979) has found that members of minority, or underprivileged groups sometimes report higher levels of self-esteem than those from more privileged or prestigious groups. This may be a consequence of ethnocentrism, the concept of which was outlined earlier, in that the perception of being group members enhances the self-esteem of such individuals through the possession of a valued social identity. According to social identity theory, self-esteem depends largely upon group memberships or social identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Thus, the awareness of group membership is significant to the overall sense of self-worth of the individual, so that having a positive social identity results in a positive personal identity. Thus having a positive identity as a member of a group is more likely to enhance self-esteem than increased status, power or wealth, a hypothesis which is consistent with existing evidence.

Self-esteem can be either a trait or a state characteristic. Trait self-esteem is the generally consistent evaluation of self-concept. For example, an individual may have a consistently positive evaluation of his self-concept. State self-esteem is a situational evaluation, where a particular situation may affect levels of self-esteem. Thus an individual may have a relatively low general evaluation of the self-concept, but, if he is a strongly identified fan, then he may have a temporary increase in self-esteem whilst watching his team, especially if it performs well or
is successful. Conversely, fans may have low state self-esteem away from football matches, where their perceived "expertise" as fans may be reduced. Thus fans may attempt to maintain state self-esteem at high levels through continually presenting themselves as fans, for example wearing team colours in a non-football environment. The maintenance of this fan identity as a strong component of the phenomenal self may thus be a compensatory mechanism, whereby fans who would otherwise have low self-esteem, maintain levels of self-esteem through their fandom of a particular club, especially if certain aspects of such an identity are seen to be skilled, or knowledgeable, such as knowledge of the team's history (Wann and Branscombe, 1995).

The relationship between sports fandom and an individual's sense of self-concept, or their personal identity, has been touched upon by few authors, especially when compared to fandom and social identity. Bromberger, et al. (1993) observe how supporting a football team allows a fan to identify "the drama which constitutes the match with the experiences... of one's own personal life" (Bromberger, et al., 1993: 118). There is a noted relationship between the football team and such facets of the individual's personal identity as self-esteem (Cialdini, et al., 1976). Therefore it is logical that following a team may affect the development of an individual's personal identity. Branscombe and Wann (1991a) argue that identifying with a sports team may enhance self-esteem, reduce depression and decrease alienation, benefits that may occur even if the team is not necessarily successful in terms of winning (Branscombe and Wann, 1991a: 117). Favouritism may be shown to other fans, whilst derogation is shown to non-fans, a situation which allows a continual maintenance and enhancement of self-image and self-esteem (Oakes and Turner, 1980, Wann and Branscombe, 1993), often through the individual comparing the attributes of his group with other groups (Brown, 1988) as well as emphasising the positive aspects of his own group (Hogg and Hardie, 1991; Wann and Branscombe 1995).

Fans that seem to be more highly identified with a team show this maintenance of a positive personal identity to a greater extent than those who are less highly
identified (Wann and Branscombe, 1993). Thus fan identification has a strong effect upon the individual’s personal identity. It is likely that the maintenance and enhancement of the individual’s personal identity through identification with a sports team is strongly affected by the individual’s social identity as a fan (Cialdini, et al. 1976; Branscombe and Wann, 1991a). As such, much of the theory concerning personal identity and fandom is strongly related to social identity and fandom. The relationship between these two forms of identity is presented below.

4.3 The Interrelationship between Social and Personal Identity

It is important to note that personal and social identity are not discrete elements, separate from each other, even though Mennell (1994) notes how, within sociological and social-psychological literature, there are theories of social identity, and theories of personal identity, which are often seen as separate. Both personal and social identities are universal properties of the individual (Elias, 1978, Leary, 1995) and are interdependent concepts that cannot exist without each other (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1998). As Elias (1978: 128) notes,

one’s self-conception as a separate person, one’s sense of personal identity is closely connected with the “we” and “they” relationships of our group, and one’s position within those units of which one speaks of “we” and “they”.

Thus, personal identity is defined to some extent by an individual’s social identity, and vice versa. Changes in one have the potential to change the other. Goffman (1968), for example, sees a positive social identity as vital to the maintenance of a positive personal identity. Thus, seen in this light, there is a strong connection between the individual’s personal identity as a football fan and his social identity as a football fan, which can be summarised as in figure 4.1 below.
A more complex model of the relationship between social and personal identity has been produced by Brown (1986: 557). Browns' model (figure 4.2) acknowledges the interrelationship between personal and social identities. In addition, it incorporates some of the dynamic processes that contribute towards the maintenance of positive identities.
Individuals will endeavour to maintain a positive self-concept. To achieve this aim, they will attempt to sustain a positive social identity (Tajfel, 1982) and a positive personal identity (Brown, 1986). Brown’s model above represents the process of maintaining the positive self-concept through identification.

An individual’s personal identity is maintained through action without external reference, such as the individual conceptualising himself as, for example, “someone who likes football”. This identity can thus be manipulated by the individual, so that certain personal identities, those which the individual sees as positive, take on a more personal relevance. The individual will then attempt to
develop or maintain a social identity related to that personal identity. Thus, the individual sees his football fandom as a positive personal attribute. Thus, he will attempt to maintain a social identity, so that he believes that others see him as a football fan, thereby reinforcing his own self-concept as a fan.

As noted earlier, The individual will also have a number of social identities. These social identities are constructed via the processes of categorisation, group membership and evaluation and developed through the four stage model of identity formation as presented in chapter three. If, as a result of developing an identity as being part of a group helps maintain a positive social, and thus personal identity, then group membership will also enhance the self-concept. If membership of the group, such as being a fan of a particular team fails to provide an individual with a positive self-concept, then three courses of action are available:

- The individual will exit the group. The football fan whose support of a particular team fails to provide a positive social identity may leave that group, and not consider himself a fan anymore. This action is available where movement out of a group is possible, such as cessation of identification with a football team. This is consistent with the concept of group cohesiveness outlined earlier, in that those highly identified fans, that is those who gain a positive identity through being a football fan, are more likely to show cohesiveness, that is to remain in the group. Fans with a lower level of identification are more likely to show lower cohesiveness, and to leave the group. Occasionally, the strategy of exit is not always available to the football fan. When this is the case, the process of “pass” may be appropriate.

- The individual will pass. This is where the fan chooses to show support for another team, a team which he considers will provide him with a positive social identity. Pass involves maintaining the positive status of personal identity through a change in the social identity. Thus, a football fan may show public support of a successful team to maintain a positive social identity, while having a personal identity as an individual who likes the original team.
• The individual will take on the process of "voice", or identity enhancing strategies. This is the process whereby rather than leave the original group, the positive aspects of the group are emphasised. This action may be in the form of a "minority creation", such as the example of "black is beautiful" applied to young British blacks in the nineteen-seventies (Gaskell and Smith, 1986). Thus, the fan of an unsuccessful team may stress other aspects that come to be seen as positive to members of the group, such as that team being a "good footballing" team, or an "entertaining team". The team's results assume less importance for the group, and thus poor results are less likely to provide a negative social identity for the fans of that club.

Further strategies also exist. These actions may be to re-evaluate negative aspects in a new light, for example fans of an unsuccessful team may argue that "our team is more successful than team "X", a strategy that could be termed as a downward comparison strategy. Fans may also externalise team failure, in terms of ascribing defeat to external factors, such as the referee being biased (Hasdorf and Cantril, 1954; Wann and Dolan, 1994), especially for those highly identified with the group (Hirt, et al., 1992). These tactics may maintain a positive identity for the individual as a member of the group.

As noted above, the individual's desire to possess a positive social and personal identity suggests there will be motivation for him to engage in social behaviour to develop, maintain or enhance that identity (Tajfel, 1981, 1982; Turner, 1982). Glasser (1970; 1975) goes as far to suggest that the creation of a desired identity is the primary mediator of all human behaviour, and that all voluntary activities, such as those of leisure, are constructed to maintain such an identity. This is a claim which has recently found some agreement in the work of Urry (1995), who suggests that participation in leisure is strongly moderated by the individual's identity needs. As will be shown, levels of identification appear to be the most significant moderator of fan behaviour, behaviour which, in turn, can be seen to be related to the need for the individual to maintain and demonstrate a positive
identity as a football fan. The influence of identification upon behaviour is discussed below.

4.4 Identification and Football Fan Behaviour

Although, prior to this thesis, those factors that originate and maintain fan identification had yet to be researched in any depth, there exists a substantial quantity of literature upon the subsequent effects of identification with a sports team upon fan behaviour. The obvious direct measure of fan behaviour is that of levels of attendance. Iso-Ahola (1980) suggests that a team’s immediate past performance in terms of win/loss record is the most, (although not the only), important factor that affects fan’s decisions to attend matches. Later work, however, tends to suggest that level of identification with a team is the most important factor, not only affecting attendance, but also fan “satisfaction” a Madrigal (1995) has demonstrated with his work on basketball that identification with a team has the greatest influence upon behaviour and satisfaction at games, and that other aspects of sports spectatorship, such as service quality and stadium condition for example, may all be moderated by levels of fan identification. The enjoyment of attending matches is likely to be higher if the fan is highly identified, as his cognitive and affective involvement is likely to be greater. The cohesiveness of the group will also be higher if identification is generally high, and other environmental factors, such as the quality of facilities, will not be as important. Therefore highly identified fans are more likely to attend games even if facilities are poor, or if the team is unsuccessful.

Additionally, fans may attempt to develop a strong social identity as a fan by attending as many games as possible. The logical assumption is that highly identified group members should demonstrate a greater display of identification. Thus, highly identified fans should attend more matches than less identified fans. Although not adopting an identity theory framework, Schurr, et al. (1988) do argue that one measure of a fan’s strength of identity is in terms of levels of attendance. Wann and Branscombe (1993) have also determined that highly
identified fans are likely to attend more games than less identified fans, supporting the argument of Schurr, et al. There is a strong argument, however, against measuring identification simply in terms of attendance. As has been shown, identity cannot just be measured in terms of behavioural aspects, but is strongly related to the cognitive and affective reactions of the individual fan.

Although no clear relationship has been identified between levels of identification and fan loyalty in terms of number of matches attended (there is no necessary causal link between the two), an analysis of the intrinsic processes that may affect fan attendance has been undertaken by Ferrand and Pages (1996). They note that an important issue for a professional football club is to maintain and increase numbers of season ticket holders. Therefore an understanding of the processes that lead to this maintenance and increase of perceived identity is of value. They argue that the concept of involvement is central to supporter loyalty. Ferrand and Pages (1996) identify five dimensions that affect spectator involvement, these being: interest; pleasure; degree of “risk” involved in attending an event; probability of error (in wrongly anticipating the outcomes of attending the game); and identification with the team. Of these dimensions, identification seems to be the most important. Thus the literature highlights again the importance of identification to fan behaviour. The important distinction is drawn between level of identification as a fan, and fan behaviour. Unlike the argument of Schurr, et al. (1988), the level of fan identity is not measured solely in terms of fan behaviour, such as patterns of match attendance. Rather, it is the case that such behaviour as a fan is a consequence of identification.

External constraints, notably time, money or family commitments, are also likely to be strong moderators of attendance, even for highly identified fans. Using the findings of Turner (1991), it seems likely that increased attendance does not lead to increased identification. Instead, it seems more probable that increased attendance is one outcome of high identification. Thus attending more games in itself will not necessarily increase identity with a team. Therefore highly identified fans will attend as many games as possible within the constraints
exerted by external factors. These factors will vary between fans, and would need to be evaluated before a relationship between attendance and identification could be investigated. It is more likely, as Wann and Branscombe (1991) and Ferrand and Pages (1996) suggest, that affective and cognitive measurements of identification are more valid than behavioural measures, and it is these cognitive and affective factors that have received more recent attention. They are summarised below.

Wann, et al. (1994a) have provided evidence that highly identified spectators have a greater emotional involvement during a game involving their team relative to those low in identification, supporting the untested suggestion of Smith, et al. (1981). Involvement away from the game has also been shown to be related to identification, in terms of fan interest in subjective and objective knowledge, statistics and history (McPherson, 1975; Wann and Branscombe, 1995), although, as Lau and Russell (1980) have shown, this knowledge is often biased in terms of fans' tendency to recall selective knowledge, that is knowledge that shows their team in a positive light. The highly identified fan is more likely to demonstrate positive or negative mood states as a response to articles about their favourite team (Wann and Branscombe, 1990). These findings tend to support Pooley's (1978) definition of a fan as one who maintains an interest in the team away from the actual sporting event.

Evaluations of team performance have been investigated by Hirt, et al. (1992) who note that fans tend to give biased evaluations of their team's performance. These findings are replicated by Wann and Dolan (1994) who also observe that levels of bias become greater with increases in fan identification. Wann and Dolan suggest that association with a favourable group, (that of fans of the successful team), leads to this behaviour. Hirt, et al. (1992), however, argue that these findings are affected by the maintenance of self-esteem, and that therefore the team's immediate record, and its effect on the individual's self-esteem, is more important. Given the relationship between personal and social factors (Kelly, 1983), and social identity and self-esteem (Hogg and Abrams, 1988), it seems more likely that both social and personal factors may lead to bias in
evaluation of the team, so that team identification may perform the function of self-esteem maintenance, rather than team performance, especially if "voice" (as according to Tajfel, 1982; Brown, 1986) takes place.

In terms of group membership, a general consensus has been reached regarding perceptions of those who see themselves and others as fans, and those seen as non-fans. Zillman, et al. (1979) note how fans identify with other fans of the same team. Branscombe and Wann (1992b) have determined that fans of particular teams are more likely to behave aggressively to fans of other teams. Many of the findings are in line with social identity theory, as outlined by Tajfel (1982), for instance, who notes that the need for individuals to maintain positive feelings about a particular social identity may motivate in-group favouritism, and out-group derogation. These findings have been replicated within a sporting context by Branscombe and Wann (1994), Wann (1994), and Wann and Dolan, (1994b).

As well as the moderating effects of identification upon behavioural, cognitive and affective factors, levels of identification and their relationship with the individuals need to "protect" his social identity, and thus enhance self-esteem has been examined. Wann and Dolan (1994b) have found that those highly identified with a team tend to internalise success as a team attribution, but to externalise failure as an attribute of factors such as refereeing or even fate. Highly identified spectators do this to protect self-esteem, whereas low identification fans, whose perceived identity as a fan is less important, were not motivated to utilise this method of maintaining self-esteem. This is consistent with Wann and Branscombe (1990), who noted that highly identified spectators are less likely to distance themselves from their team in the event of failure. The concept of "protecting" a social identity through fandom has been investigated in some depth within existing literature, and is referred to in terms of "basking in reflected glory ("BIRGing"), or "cutting off reflected failure" ("CORFing"), these being two related concepts. These concepts are outlined below.
The Maintenance of a Positive Personal and Social Identity through Identification with a Sports Team - BIRGing, CORFing and Blasting

Individuals are motivated to maintain both a positive social identity (Tajfel, 1981) and a positive personal identity (Glasser, 1975). Sports fandom has been observed to have a role in the maintenance of a positive identity by a number of authors. Anderson (1979) and Branscombe and Wann (1991a), for example, note that fandom can be an important part of the individual's "self", and that fandom can play an important role in affirming feelings of self-worth and self-esteem for the individual. The relative success of the sports team will not have any direct causal effect upon either fan identification (Branscombe and Wann, 1991) or levels of attendance (Tomlinson, et al., 1995). Degrees of identification have been shown, however, to affect responses to team success or failure in terms of what has come to be known as "BIRGing" and "CORFing".

BIRGing refers to "Basking in Reflected Glory", whereby the individual will base his own personal and/or social identity as a fan on the basis of the perceived success of the team with which he identifies. CORFing refers to "cutting off reflected failure", whereby the fan reduces his own association with an unsuccessful team. Both concepts are features of what Schlenker (1980) refers to as offensive and defensive impression management, whereby strategic self-presentation may be used protect an individual's sense of identity. Thus, both BIRGing and CORFing seem to be driven by an individual's desire to maintain a positive social identity, with a resultant enhancement, or even just a maintenance of the individual's evaluation of his of personal identity, self-worth and self-esteem (Wann and Branscombe, 1990).

The concept of BIRGing was initially suggested by Cialdini, et al. (1976). They noted that after a victory, fans of a particular team were more likely to wear clothes identifying them as fans of that team, and were more likely to use the term "we" when talking about their teams. They termed this phenomenon "basking in reflected glory", or "BIRGing". Madrigal (1995) explains that

the BIRG response is an ego-enhancement technique whereby individuals raise their status in
the eyes of others by increasing their association or connection with highly successful others (Madrigal, 1995: 206).

As well as using BIRGing in a social context, BIRGing may also enhance personal identity. Cialdini, et al. (1976) noted in their early study of BIRGing that "for wholly intrapersonal reasons, people may draw connections between themselves and positive sources" (Cialdini, et al. 1976:375), these reasons being those of self-esteem enhancement.

In addition, individuals may distance themselves from unsuccessful teams as part of what Wann and Branscombe (1990: 104) refer to as an "ego protective function". This situation occurs with the act of "cutting off reflected failure" (CORFing), that is disassociating oneself from a losing team. This takes place in order to protect the individual's personal and social identity as a football fan. Snyder, et al. (1986) have noted that individuals are less likely to associate themselves with an unsuccessful group, compared to a successful group. It is suggested that those individuals increase their "psychological distance" from failure in order to protect their social identity and to maintain self-esteem levels. However associating with such a group may result in the development of a negative social identity (as a member of an unsuccessful group) and a consequent lowering of self-esteem.

BIRGing and CORFing are both attitudinal and affective. They require the individual to evaluate team performance, as well as having an affective reaction, which in itself is a key aspect of identification. The evaluation of team performance is multi-dimensional, in that the performance of the fan's team needs to be subjectively evaluated, as well as the quality and perceived threat of the opposing team (Madrigal, 1995). Cialdini, et al. (1976) observe that the greater the perceived threat, the more likely the individual is to BIRG. Thus a good performance against a superior team, although resulting in defeat, may result in BIRGing. This trend is in broad agreement with that determined by Madrigal (1995), who notes that expectancy disconfirmation (i.e. an outcome opposite to the fan's expectancy of either success or defeat) has a marked influence on fan
Chapter Four - Social Identity, Personal Identity, and Football Fan Identification

behaviour, in that fan satisfaction will be moderated by the subjective evaluation of the team's performance.

Not all fans exhibit BIRGing and CORFing tendencies. Highly identified fans have been found to be more likely to BIRG, while being less likely to CORF (Wann and Branscombe, 1990). Less identified fans show the reverse, although theoretically, all fans should exhibit some degree of BIRGing (Wann, 1993). This finding suggests that highly identified fans will always maintain a social identification with their team despite its lack of success, which is in agreement with the findings of Sloan (1979). For those less identified fans, Snyder, et al. (1986) have determined that CORFing is more significant as a means of social and personal identity maintenance. Sigelman (1986) has attempted a replication within a non-sporting context, with differing results, indicating that BIRGing and CORFing may not be applicable to all contexts. However existing evidence tends to suggest that it seems likely to exist within the context of sports - including football - fandom.

Whether BIRGing and CORFing are completely due to personal factors, such as the intended maintenance of self-esteem, or to social factors, such as the maintenance of a desirable social identity is not clear from the literature. It seems likely, however, that both personal and social factors are involved. Madrigal (1995) indicates that BIRGing and CORFing are related, being part of a "hedonistic continuum", whereby they enhance both the individual's personal and social identity and identification, which, given the strong relationship already outlined between these two forms of identity, seems likely.

Despite the possibilities of enhancing and protecting social and personal identity, the fan will be faced with situations where there is a likelihood of identifying with a team negatively affecting the individual's social and personal identity, for example after a heavy defeat. The individual may then attempt to restore his positive identity through the technique of "blasting". Although blasting is a form of "voice", as outlined earlier in the chapter, here it refers specifically to a particular type of voice utilised by sports fans. The concept refers
to the denigration of out-group members by members of the group. The denigration of out-group members increases the perception of the individual that his group is “better”, which may have the result of restoring levels of personal and social identity (Oakes and Turner, 1980; Simon, et al., 1990). This position is related to downward comparison theory, where individuals will belittle others in order to maintain their own identity, that may be under threat of derogation by others. Branscombe and Wann (1991a) note that blasting is particularly prevalent in sports fans after their team has been defeated. Brewer (1979) observes how out-group disparagement exists even with those individuals that hold low identification with a particular group. Thus it seems reasonable to suggest that blasting is a potential form of behaviour from all fans, whatever their levels of identification.

From existing literature, a summary of the likelihood of certain identity enhancement behaviours of football fans can be seen in table 4.1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fan behaviour</th>
<th>BIRGing</th>
<th>CORFing</th>
<th>Blasting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High identification fans</td>
<td>More likely</td>
<td>Less likely</td>
<td>More Likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low identification fans</td>
<td>Less likely</td>
<td>More likely</td>
<td>More likely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus fans that are highly identified with a team are more likely to display their fandom publicly after a good performance. They are also less likely to conceal their fandom after a poor performance. Fans that are not as highly identified, however, are more likely to conceal their fandom after a poor performance and less likely to bask in the team's success. All fans who have a feel of group membership are likely to “blast” other fans, and show levels of ethnocentrism, which is an important part of the process of maintaining a positive identity.
4.5 Social Identity, Personal Identity and Football Fan Identification - Summary

Football fan identification can be seen to consist of two interrelated components, those of a social identity as a fan, and a personal identity as a fan. Identification requires the fan to have a value awareness of, and an emotional investment in, being a fan, along with the acknowledgement of being part of a group ("being a Luton fan"). Identification as a football fan allows the development and maintenance of a positive social, and thus personal, identity through such processes as BIRGing, CORFing and blasting. Certain strategies are available to fans to protect their identity, these being either those of exiting or passing from the group, or, more often, the process of "voice", whereby attributes of the group are created or adapted to allow identification to maintain its identity enhancing function. Fans identifying with a club may also display elements of ethnocentrism, cohesion and out-group denigration. In consequence, identification as a football fan may also be the most important predictor of a fan's behaviour, such as in terms of attendance, and attitudinal components, such as fan satisfaction.

The development and maintenance of such identities does not take place in social isolation, but is part of a dialectical relationship with the wider society. Such processes are enacted within, and affected by a particular cultural identity, which in itself will affect personal and social identities. The role of the cultural identity in defining personal and social identities is the focus of the next chapter.
5.1 Culture and Cultural Identity

Although nearly all existing work on fan identities does not incorporate cultural factors, it can be demonstrated that such an omission is a potential weakness in such works. The development and maintenance of an individual's personal and social identities does not take place in a social vacuum. The development and maintenance of such identities is influenced strongly by the cultural context wherein such identities are enacted. Thus the concept of cultural identity, along with its effects upon social and personal identities, needs to be presented.

Cultural identity is a term that is subject to the same ambiguities and problems as other forms of identity. Morley and Robins (1995) note that the expression "cultural identity" is used predominantly without reference to its meaning, and that assumptions have to be made as to such meaning. Thus, a clarification of terms is required in order that the concept can be adequately defined, rather than relying upon presumption.

Abercrombie, et al. (1984) define culture as the symbolic, learned, non-biological characteristics of society. These features are those common meanings that are maintained through language and imitation, that is to say they are socially, rather than genetically, transmitted (Roberts, 1983) and, via these processes, collective values, roles and norms can be maintained in patterns that are:

learned and created in the mind and patterns communicated and made active in relationships, conventions and institutions. Culture is our name for this process and its results (Williams, 1961: 89).
Hall (1976: 14) illustrates the pervasiveness of culture in day to day life, noting that

there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. This means personality, how people express themselves (including shows of emotion), the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved, how their cities are planned and laid out, how transportation systems function and are organised, as well as how economic and government systems are put together and function.

Altman and Chemers (1980) suggest that any culture has the four following characteristics:

- Shared beliefs, roles, norms and values,
- A general consensus of opinions, behaviours and perceptions,
- A mechanism of socialisation for new members into the culture, and
- Manifestation in created artefacts.

Social and personal identities are enacted and assessed within the individual’s cultural identity, which, in turn, moderates these social and personal identities. Any culture will possess a cultural identity. Cultural identity can be defined as how a culture is perceived by both members and non-members, how it is institutionalised within the society, and how that the culture is historically transmitted. The relationships between cultural, personal and social identity are simplified diagramatically in figure 5.1 below:
As chapter three demonstrated, any given individual possesses a personal identity. This identity, in turn, is affected by his social identity. This interrelationship takes place within the context of a cultural identity. Cultural boundaries exist for each specific instance of social interaction (Iso-Ahola, 1980; Kelly, 1983). Within particular cultural boundaries there is a cultural identity that moderates not only the individual’s personal and social identity, but the personal and social identities of all of those within a particular cultural boundary (Leary, 1995). With regard to the relationship between leisure activities, such as watching football, and the cultural identity of the leisure environment, Kelly (1983: 99) argues that “the contribution of leisure to identity development is rooted in both the nature of leisure and the ethnic forms it takes in a culture and in the structures and value orientations of the culture itself”. Thus, for example, it could be argued that for individuals within a particular geographical sporting area, such as Newcastle, for example, with a cultural boundary that includes a strong football culture (Williams, 1995), individuals are more likely to possess a strong social and personal identity as a football fan. Relatedly, because of the cultural identity within which Scottish football takes place, Irish Catholics are likely to possess strong identities as Celtic fans rather than as Rangers fans (Boyle, 1994). The choices of Newcastle and Celtic may be open to the charge of stereotyping those from the area, but stereotypes themselves can be seen as cultural constructs, which are transferred to the individual via the process of
socialisation (Condor, 1990) and group membership. The cultural context, even if stereotyped and inaccurate, will affect those within that culture. As Hill and Williams (1996: 2) note, “it is through the cultural activities of our everyday lives, many of which, such as sport, are apparently trivial, that identity is being constantly produced”. These identities are not simply “internally” generated by members of a specific group, or subculture. They may also derive from external enterprise, from “outside”, that is from the cultural identity within which the group operates (Redhead, 1990).

Cultural identity is not created entirely as a result of social factors, such as social interaction, since such interaction is grounded in the personal or psychological level. Hofstede (1991) notes how a culture is interrelated to both the individual and “universal” level of society. At the universal level, which can be seen as the entire population of members and non-members of a culture, all individuals are affected by what is referred to as “human nature”, or shared, non-learned biological and psychological characteristics. Within the overall population, a number of cultures exist. Unlike human nature, cultures are learned. Within the culture, the individual's personality affects his behaviour. The personality is partially inherited, and partially learned, with nurture being moderated by the culture within which the behaviour is taking place, as well as the social interactions within that culture, which, in itself is developed within the “universal” level of society. Hofstede’s graphic representation of culture can be seen below, in Figure 5.2.
suggests that over the past decade or two there has been a striking transformation in the nature of people's social identity, and that this is the consequence of massive changes in the organisation and culture of contemporary societies.

As well as being bound to the universal and individual levels of society, cultural identity is also bound temporally to the remembered past and anticipated future. Hall (1990) argues that a cultural identity is not static, but affects the development of identities through the past, in terms of "how things were", and in the future, in terms of "how we would like things to be", with both perceptions of yesterday and tomorrow affecting the contemporary cultural identity within which social and personal identities are enacted developed. Thus, the influence of culture is not static, but is continually in process. As Urry (1995: 211) relatedly observes:

a large body of literature has developed which suggests that over the past decade or two there has been a striking transformation in the nature of people's social identity, and that this is the consequence of massive changes in the organisation and culture of contemporary societies.

Thus comparatively recent changes within contemporary British society, such as those identified by Urry (1995) resulting from Thatcherism, and by King (1995) on the phenomenon of "post-Fordism"19 and its effects upon the Premier League,

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19 Post-Fordism is a situation where consumer demand has a strong influence on production. Advanced production techniques are able to respond rapidly to changing
will have an effect upon the cultural identity within society. Cultural identity, in turn, will then influence the social and personal identities of those who share a particular culture.

According to Urry (1995), post-Thatcherite British culture has developed an emphasis upon a hedonistic approach. Here, identity is derived largely through the consumption of leisure, rather than from an effect of the “Protestant work ethic” wherein a positive social identity may be gained via the consumption of work. Thus identities derived through leisure, such as football fandom, may be seen as just as valuable as those derived through work, or even more so in contemporary society.

Although King (1995) suggests that this consumption is consumer, rather than producer, driven, rather than producer driven, certain football legislation outlined later within this chapter, such as the Taylor Report, suggests that football consumption is, to some extent a Fordist, rather than post-Fordist, leisure activity. Thus those consumers are affected by a changing cultural identity which is to a certain extent imposed from without, rather than created from within, by the fans themselves. Those impositions are outlined later in this chapter.

5.2 Cultural Identity and Sports Team Identification

The discussion in the preceding section demonstrates that cultural identity has a strong influence upon an individual's social and personal identities, such as those identities that relate to football fandom. Slepicka (1995) has outlined the cultural environment of the sports fan, and the connections between various factors such as those of the family and occupation. These associations are outlined as follows in figure 5.3 below:

customer demand. Thus the consumer is able to dictate patterns of consumption, rather than patterns of consumption being determined by producers. Thus the Premier League may be seen as a response to consumer influence and demand of fans.
Slepicka's model is useful in outlining the pervasiveness of the external environment to the sports fan, however it is too simplistic in terms of failing to acknowledge the interrelationships between all the components of the model. This limitation aside, however, it does demonstrate that the fan does not exist in isolation from a wide variety of external factors which are part of the encompassing culture.

The importance of the cultural context within which football fan identification occurs has already been touched upon with reference to the Basque fans of *Athletico Bilbao* (MacClancy, 1996b). Giulianotti (1997) has also described a similar relationship with reference to the fans of Aberdeen Football Club. Giulianotti notes the relationship between the cultural context of the fan, and fandom. The culture of the Aberdeen fan reflects “the North-East populations' marginality, self-deprecation and their capacity to distort stereotypes about their ‘otherness’ to their own advantage” (p.219). The stereotype of the Aberdeen fan and his “interests” is significant in the adoption of the mascot of the fanzine, that of a bull. This stereotype creates a set of ‘rules’ within which the fan
operates, rules which are culturally constructed and transmitted through generations. This construction takes place within the environment of the sports fan as described by Slepicka, and provides a common group identity on the basis of this “imaginary” commonality amongst fans. In line with social identity theory, the common group identity shows both elements of ethnocentricity amongst Aberdeen fans (Giulianotti, 1997: 225) and out-group derogation, notably towards fans of the most “threatening” clubs to Aberdeen’s success, these being Glasgow Rangers F.C. and Celtic F.C. (Giulianotti, 1997: 224; cf. Sherif, 1966).

In the case of Italian football, the importance of a locality’s cultural identity is again implied, although not explicitly stated. Bromberger (1993) comments that football fans in certain cities believe their team’s style of play is “representative of a specific collective existence”. Here the football club’s style of play is related to “the city’s and the region’s imagery” (Bromberger, 1993: 91) although, as Bromberger, et al. (1993) argue elsewhere, it is more probable that the “practical reality” of professional football makes this association unlikely (Bromberger, et al., 1993: 120). However, it can be argued that, even if the perception of the football fan in this case is misguided, and that the business of Italian football is slightly more prosaic than imagined by the fans, football still provides a basis for the formation of social identity. This basis arises as a result of how others view the team based upon the stereotypical image of the club’s style of play, and therefore also provides a basis for personal identity.

The football fan exists within what Slepicka refers to as the “general social environment”, or what has so far been defined in this study as the cultural identity, within which other identities are formed. Thus identification is affected by those institutions that shape cultural identity, which, according to Slepicka, are the media, the occupational environment, the social environment (including the political environment), and the sports environment. These settings are all affected by changes within the cultural boundaries. Within the context of the present study, there have been significant changes within the cultural identity of English professional football. These changes need to be outlined, and assessed,
since they have led to significant changes in what Slepicka (1995) refers to as the general social environment.

5.3 The Changing Cultural Identity of English Professional Football

The development and maintenance of a positive personal and social identity takes place within a particular cultural context, such as that provided by football fandom (see chapter three). Thus it seems reasonable to suggest that the changing cultural conditions or what King (1997) refers to as the “transformed consumption” offered by football may modify individuals’ identities as fans. King (1997: 329) concisely summarises the changing cultural identity of top level English football, stating that

In the 1990s, the top level of English football has undergone radical transformation; the political economy of the League has been restructured, new and lucrative television contracts have been signed and the grounds have been completely rebuilt into all seater stadiums. These all seater stadiums have altered the possibilities for the ritualistic expression of identity and solidarity and have also attracted new (more affluent and familial) audiences to football.

These changes were not the result of any specific policy, but took place within a complex network of interdependencies, which are outlined below.

The Growing Dichotomisation of English Football

Russell (1997) pinpoints 1981 as the beginning of the development of a two-tier structure of professional football within England, catalysed by the top clubs. A number of reforms were introduced in subsequent years, all of which apparently benefited the larger clubs, at the expense of smaller clubs. The main reforms were those of allowing clubs to keep the full revenue from home games, changing the league management structure in favour of First Division clubs, and
a redistribution of income from sponsorship and television deals in favour of larger clubs.

Further plans for reform were developed in 1985, when football was arguably at its lowest ebb in terms of public perception. The "big five" clubs\textsuperscript{20} threatened to develop a breakaway league, forcing the Football League to reform voting rights in favour of larger teams, and to redistribute income from television and sponsorship, also in favour of larger clubs. As Russell (1997: 211) notes:

\begin{quote}
there was little doubt about who gained the most from such a deal. The gap between rich and poor in British football was set to become wider, just as it was in British society at large.
\end{quote}

The steps carried out by the Football League to prevent a breakaway from the top clubs required further reform only three years later, following ITV's proposal for the creation of a 'super-league'. First Division clubs were allocated an even larger share of income, further increasing the gap between the 'rich' and the 'poor'. It was within this context that Lord Justice Taylor produced his report on English football after the Hillsborough disaster of 1989.

The Taylor Report (1990)

In the aftermath of the Hillsborough disaster (1989), Lord Justice Taylor was commissioned by the government to inquire into crowd control and safety at sports events. Government intervention, rather than self-regulation, within football was necessary as a result of "the inadequacy of the organisation of football to its own political, economic and organic development" (King, 1995: 111). The final product was a much further reaching document than its initial remit suggested. The final report can be seen to be critical of a number of features of English football, notably:

- Old grounds,

\textsuperscript{20} These being Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool, Tottenham Hotspur and Everton.
• Poor facilities within grounds, and
• Lack of communication between clubs and fans.

The Taylor Report called for "A totally new approach across the whole field of football (requiring) higher standards both in bricks and in human relationships" (cited in Williams, 1994: 8). The overall aims of the Taylor Report can be generally stated to be the realignment of the cultural identity of football, away from that of the "traditional" football product, and towards the ethos of other leisure facilities. This ethos considered quality of service and facilities as the prime moderator of satisfaction. Additionally, the family unit, especially that involving women and children, was seen as desirable, rather than an emphasis upon the working class male. The effects of such values were to relocate football fandom into the more affluent sections of society (King, 1995), away from its proletarian roots, for example by the increased cost of tickets as a result of the all-seater policy.

The subsequent recommendations through which such a realignment was to take place included those of the compulsory replacement of terraces with seats in the (then) First and Second Division by the start of the 1994/95 season, and the removal of perimeter fencing. The costs of these requirements were substantial, especially for an industry within which most clubs were seriously in debt at the time (Williams, 1994a). This situation accelerated the progress towards what King referred to earlier as changes in the political economy of football, notably the development of the Premier League.

The F.A. Premier League

Following the publication of the Taylor Report, the Football Association published their Blueprint for the Future of Football (1991). A central tenet of this document was the development of an elite division of teams, the Premier League. Because this proposal was made by the Football Association, rather than by the clubs themselves, it was more likely to be successful (Russell, 1997). Thus, from
the following season, English football was restructured. It subsequently composed of two separately administered leagues, the "Premier League" and the Football League, currently sponsored by Nationwide.

According to Williams (1994) and Russell (1997) the publicly given rationale for this development was to reduce the number of games played by top players. The underlying reason, however, was that of creating an easily marketable, elite structure that would be more attractive to sponsors than the cumbersome, four division, parochial Football League. The results of the Premier League have been, according to Russell (1997) to increase even further the gap between 'rich' and 'poor'. To date, the first six years of the Premier League have resulted in a disproportionate allocation of both financial resources (such as the distribution of money from SKY TV) and playing quality. This development was, and still is, facilitated as a result of interrelated features of society. Continual improvements in travel infrastructure, (especially in terms of car ownership) combined with the growing media emphasis on the Premier League have resulted in a situation in which fans have

the choice of a day at a glamorous event of national importance, shared with tens of thousands, or an afternoon at the bleak and half empty ground of a local town team (King, 1995:70).

It is precisely this situation which, if King's analysis is correct, can lead to a spiralling decline in attendances at lower league clubs as "traditional" support declines, and new support becomes increasingly attracted to the Premiership through either live attendance or through media consumption as a post-fan.
5.4 Cultural Identity and Football Fandom - Summary

The development and enactment of personal and social identities do not take place without reference to the external context within which such activity occurs. This environment contains shared norms, attitudes and values. These elements form the cultural identity within which identities operate. Cultural identity is dialectical, in that it affects the enactment of individuals personal and social identities. Simultaneously it is a creation of those individuals within that culture. Changes within cultural identity have the ability to affect those identities within that culture. Thus, a relationship exists between all three forms of identity. Thus it could be argued, to concentrate upon a single form is undesirable, given the strong connections that exist.

English professional football has undergone major cultural modification in recent years. These changes thus have the potential to influence fan identity within that context. Thus the changing cultural identity of English football and, more significantly, the effects of these changes upon fan identification within the Nationwide League, form a necessary component of this research. Although the cultural identity of English football is not the focus of the research, as noted above, the concept needs to be incorporated into such research on fan identities and identification. The overall objectives of such research can now be clarified in light of the review of literature.
5.5 Football Fandom, Identity and Identification - Overall Summary of the Literature Review, and Clarification of Research Objectives

In light of the research area identified in chapter two, relevant literature was reviewed. An examination of this literature reveals the emergence of three strong themes. Firstly, it is evident that the development and maintenance of a positive social and personal identity is a fundamental aspect of social life. Secondly, football fandom may provide one source of social and personal identity and identification for the individual. The possession of such an identity may subsequently affect the individual’s behaviour as a football fan. Identities are not formed and enacted in isolation from the wider society however, and identification is moderated by external values, attitudes and norms. Thus the cultural identity within which such identities are enacted is important to the individual’s own sense of identity. It is within this context, and the context outlined in chapter two, of the lack of such information regarding fan identities within the Nationwide League that the research objectives can be clarified and presented.

5.6 Clarification of Research Objectives

A review of the relevant literature in chapter two showed that there was a fundamental lack of basic information about the English football fan, especially the fan of non-Premiership clubs. Identification theory, as Murrell and Dietz (1992) suggest, would seem to provide a theoretical framework within which to explore football fandom. The essence of football fandom is the sense of “belonging” to a team. This feeling of belonging occurs when an individual has a cognitive and emotional identification with a team. Thus it is the individual’s perceptions of membership that are important, rather than his subsequent behaviour as a fan. This behaviour is, however, moderated by identification with a group, for example as a football fan. Chapter three and chapter four outline the
possible use of identity theory as a framework that can be used to investigate the phenomenon of football fan identification with a specific club, and it is within this context that the research objectives of the thesis are clarified.

Most existing research into sports fandom investigates the behavioural consequences of identification, such as the effects of identification upon fans' perception of their own influence upon the outcome of the game (Wann, et al., 1994a), fan aggression (Branscombe and Wann, 1992), or fan satisfaction (Madrigal, 1995). Those processes that originate and maintain this identification, however, have been under-researched (Wann, et al., 1996). Thus the origin and maintenance of identification forms the focus of the study. The research is inductive, in that those factors that are significant within fan identification will emerge from the data, rather than from predetermined, testable hypotheses, the use of which can be seen to characterise previous work.

The inductive nature of the research indicates that no specific hypotheses will be developed a priori, instead, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) note, certain research areas can be outlined, even within such a grounded approach. These research areas are as follows:

- To determine the strength of identification of selected Nationwide League fans with their team.
- To investigate those factors of importance in the origination and the maintenance of identification with a selected Nationwide League Football Club.

These two domains are highlighted by Wann, et al. (1996) as fundamental and original areas for fan research. Related to the aims of this thesis, further objectives can be identified. These are:

- To discover other factors that are important to fan identification within the selected fans from the Nationwide League,
- Once determined, to evaluate the separate importance of each factor to fan identification,
• To assess any relationships between levels of identification and fan behaviour at selected Nationwide League Football Clubs,
• To identify relationships, if any, between those components of football fan identification,
• To assess the phenomenon of “post-fandom” of fans at Luton Town Football Club, and
• To discover other factors that are important to fan identification within the sample population.

The exploratory nature of the research also allows for other important themes to emerge from the data. The overall methodological design adopted to achieve these objectives is that of the mixed-methods case study. The choice and justification for the mixed-methods case study approach is developed in the next chapter.
Chapter Six

The Research Methodology

6.1 Introduction to the Research Methodology

Chapters two to five have specified the general research area, that of football fan identity and identification. This specification has allowed the clarification of the research objectives. The next stage is to develop an appropriate methodology to achieve these objectives. The methodology is the framework of the overall study, stipulating which information is to be gathered, from which sources, and using which procedures (Green and Tull, 1978; Frankfort-Nachimas and Nachimas, 1996). A schematic outline of the research design has been outlined in chapter one (see figure 1.1). This section deals with phase II of the research design. The relevant section of figure 1.1 is reproduced below.

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### Figure 6.1

The primary research phase of the research design

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Chapter six outlines the case study approach, and the subsequent use of a mixed-methods case study. Chapter seven discusses each of those methods adopted,
and also relates the use of such methods to those issues of football fan research that arise within the thesis.

6.2 The Case Study Approach

The case study approach is a method of social inquiry that has developed from within the “Chicago School” of Sociology. The initial argument for its adoption was that understanding human activity requires analysis of both its development over time, and the environment and context within which the activity occurs, (the importance of the cultural environment to social behaviour has already been outlined in chapter five). Using a single case, the approach attempts to grasp the overall essence of a phenomenon, such as those cited by Worsley (1987), of Gans’ (1967) critique of the concept of suburban conformity in Levittown, U.S.A. and Bell’s (1968) embedded case study of residents of Bethnal Green, London, both of which were able to successfully develop and refine theories of social relationships, on the basis of a single case.

The case study has also been used within the football context, both to investigate football hooliganism among young fans (Marsh, et al., 1978), and to examine changes within the consumption of Premier League football (King, 1995, 1997). These cases demonstrate that the use of a single case may enhance understanding. This is not to argue that the case study is the only appropriate methodology, but rather to demonstrate that the case study is an appropriate methodology, and, given the differences that exist between football clubs that are outlined below, the most suitable methodology to achieve the objectives of this research.

Definition of the Case Study

Yin (1989) defines a case study as the study of a phenomenon within its natural context, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not
clear. Within these boundaries, the overall essence of case studies is, according to Tellis (1997a: 4), that they:

strive towards a holistic understanding of cultural systems of action... Cultural systems of action refer to sets of interrelated activities engaged in by the actors in a social situation.

Thus, the case study is an appropriate methodology when an in-depth, holistic study of a phenomenon is required, and where the viewpoints of the participants within a social system are important (Feagin, et al., 1991; Tellis, 1997b). The case study avoids a reductionist approach (Gummesson (1991), thus rejecting Zustandsreduktion21, or the tendency to reduce any social phenomenon to its component parts (Rojek, 1985).

Advantages of the Case Study Approach
The case study is a strong technique for research into the football fan. McCormick (1996) has outlined the advantages of the approach within leisure research. These advantages are extremely pertinent to football fan research and are summarised below:

• It allows the grounding of social processes within their natural settings. A significant advantage for this thesis is that the case study allows the researcher “to see in contextualised action how theories... are enacted” (McCormick, 1996: 367), in this instance how football fan identification is actually enacted, rather than investigating fandom from outside its real life context.

• A holistic piece of research may develop from the case study. Multiple lines of action and strategy are open to the investigator. The researcher can continually

21 This is an approach often associated with the work of Norbert Elias, whose theory of the "Civilising Process", as noted in chapter two, formed the basis for much of the Leicester University research into football hooliganism.
develop and refine the research to deal with unexpected findings, and changes in
research objectives. As Gall, et al. (1996) note, case studies have this “emergent”
quality, that larger, more quantitative studies do not possess. Thus themes of fan
identification do not need to be predetermined, but may arise from the
fieldwork.

- The case study allows a sense of time and history to develop. One assumption
of the case study is that it is not possible to develop understanding by looking
only at the contemporary situation. The history that has led to that situation,
needs to be examined.

- The case study permits the confirmation and/or the disconfirmation, or the
refinement, of existing theory (as, of course, do other methods) as well as, less
commonly, the generation of new theory.

Validity and Reliability of Case Studies

The case study approach needs to be assessed for rigour (Yin, 1994; Stake,
1995). To enhance the rigour of the case study, four criteria have been identified which
should be addressed while developing the research design (Yin, 1989; Gall, et al.,
1996). These are the criteria of

- Construct validity - This refers to the accuracy of the researcher’s
understanding of the concepts under investigation, and their active role within
the phenomenon, such as the relevance of identification theory to football
fandom. The use of several methods of data collection may strengthen the
construct validity of a case study (Yin, 1984; Denzin, 1984).

- Internal validity - or the extent to which identified relationships, such as that
between ‘X’ and ‘Y’ have not been caused by other factors, which have not been
acknowledged by the researcher. In descriptive case studies, the importance of
internal validity is reduced, in that the discovery of causal relationships is not
within the case study objectives. In explanatory case studies, however, internal
validity needs to be ensured. Again, the use of a number of methods may aid the researcher in achieving internal validity, especially if certain methods are used that may be lower in internal validity, such as the questionnaire survey (Kellehear, 1993). Thus, in this research, the use of methods such as observation/participant observation and semi-structured interviews may strengthen internal validity.

- External validity - refers to the generalisability of the findings to other similar cases. A problem of external validity is the evaluation of what exactly is a similar case. Many cases will operate within slightly different contexts, for example different football clubs will operate within different social, cultural and aspirational contexts. Therefore it has been argued that it is the generalisability to existing theory, that should be determined (Bryman, 1988; Tellis, 1997b), rather than generalisability to other cases, or what is referred to as “ecological validity” (Kellehear, 1993). Stake (1995) argues that external validity of a case study is less important than gaining an accurate description and understanding of a particular case. The understanding, however, should be related to the theoretical framework that has been adopted.

- Reliability - This refers to the extent to which other researchers, carrying out exactly the same procedures at the same time, achieve similar results (internal reliability), or the extent to which results would be consistent over time, or consistent in other contexts (external reliability).

Assessing the case study in terms of these concepts, especially when qualitative methods are adopted, may be problematic. The issues involved in validity and reliability that arise when meanings, values and attitudes, rather than when quantifiable facts or measures are considered determine that the case study researcher should look at other concepts, such as plausibility, authenticity, credibility and relevance of the findings (Gall, et al., 1996). Althiede and Johnson (1994, cited in Gall, et al., 1996) have developed four criteria for case study evaluation. These are:
• Usefulness - The study should be enlightening to the readers of the report, especially to those who have formed the focus of the report, in this instance, the football fan.

• Contextually complete - The findings need to be reported with reference to the context within which they have been made, such as the physical environment, routines, rules and norms, and significant events.

• Researcher positioning - This criterion refers to the role that the researcher has taken whilst carrying out fieldwork. It includes his own personal beliefs and knowledge, especially any prior values or bias that the researcher may have developed, with regard to football fan identification.

• Reporting style - The written report should aim to achieve "verisimilitude". This is the situation whereby the reader of the report is able to convey the accurate meanings and explanation of the phenomenon, to allow the reader to develop a "feel" for the case. The reader is able to place himself in the position of being a football fan.

The Case Study and Football Fan Research

It can be argued that the case study is the most appropriate instrument to explore football fan identification. The justification for adopting the case study approach to the study of the football club is summarised by Canter, et al. (1989: 57), who note that

of course clubs do have a lot in common with each other. But the view of their homogeneity also seems to feed the desire for neatness. If football is homogenous then all clubs will have similar problems, and solutions to those problems should be applicable with equal success to all clubs...simple solutions ignore the individuality of the clubs.
Thus, each club is set within a unique cultural context, one which embraces past history and tradition, playing performance, fan aspirations, the socio-economic context of the town within which the club is located and so on. This context is different for each team, and, as such, generalisations across this cultural context are difficult. Marsh, et al. (1978: 20) argue for their use of a case study at Oxford United F.C. They note that, if a number of football clubs are investigated, the increased empirical confidence may be “paid for by the relatively few properties which are likely to survive a generalising procedure over many individuals”.

The argument that clubs possess fundamental differences is also presented by Moorhouse (1986), and supported to some extent by the 1994/95 and 1995/96 Premier League Fan Surveys (SNCCFR, 1995, 1996). The amalgamation of a number of clubs may lead to the situation described by Clarke and Madden (1986, 1988), who argue that such quantitative approaches fail to ascertain underlying explanations, and become mostly descriptive of a particular phenomenon. Thus a more “in-depth’ approach, as provided for by the case study, is necessary to go beyond the descriptive, and move towards the explanatory.

The findings from the case study, as outlined in the previous section, can be used to develop and refine theory, which can then be applied to other cases. Thus the case study does not produce findings that are applicable only to the single case, or football club, but are applicable to theories of fan identification on a more generalised level. The question of generalisability is outlined in more depth below.

Generalisability of the Case Study

The external validity, or generalisability of case study findings can sometimes, though often incorrectly, be considered problematic. Despite its acknowledged strengths in the investigation of social relationships, the use of case study research is one that can, and does, arouse opposition (Yin, 1989). A principle argument against the use of a case study is that it lacks generalisability.
As Bryman (1988) notes, however, such a conclusion may often be misguided. Three arguments may be introduced to counteract such reasoning. Firstly, within the current project, although Luton Town fans are a sample population drawn from one football club out of a possible seventy-two within the Nationwide League, the units of the study (the fans) are drawn from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. This situation is what Yin (1994) refers to as an "embedded case study" in that there is a diverse sample population (the fans) that are being investigated. Thus, it may be that the term "setting" is preferable to case within this instance, as the actual case may be hard to define (Stake, 1995).

Secondly, the question of whether the findings are generalisable to other clubs is not a central concern. Instead "the issue should be couched in terms of the generalisability of cases to theoretical propositions rather than to populations or universes" (Bryman, 1988: 90). Thus, for example, if the concept of identification is determined as significant to the maintenance of the club and fan relationship, then the significance of the research should lie in its typicality to identification theory, rather than its typicality to other populations. As Mitchell (cited in Smith, 1991:14) suggests, a case study may allow:

>a detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general theoretical principle.

Finally, as Stake (1995) notes, it is extremely rare that a case study will only generate new theory. Instead it is far more likely that the case study will refine understanding of existing theory. Thus, it seems appropriate as a tool with which to examine football fandom in the context of social identity theory. Stake (1995) uses the term "particularisation" to refer to the need for the researcher to generate a full understanding of the particular case, and the relationship of that case to existing theory. Although a case study should focus upon the case in question, rather than on comparison (Stake, 1995), it is important that the case is
generalisable to the adopted theory (Bryman, 1988). Generalisation however, should not be the prime concern of the researcher. Rather, the case study should attempt to provide a full understanding of the meanings of identification for football fans within the framework of identification theory, using empirical evidence gathered in one setting.

Once the choice of the case study approach has been determined, the design of the case study should be planned at the beginning of the research (Yin, 1994). The outline of the methods adopted, and their relationships have been noted in figures 1.1 and 6.1. Three techniques have been adopted within this study. These techniques are those of

- Observation/participant observation,
- The questionnaire survey, and
- The semi-structured interview.

These methods allow both quantitative and qualitative information to be collected as part of an overall mixed-methods research design, the justification for which is outlined below.

6.3 Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Football Fan Research

As noted in chapter two, the non-violent football fan has been under researched. Although interest in the sports fan dates back to the beginning of this century, there is little empirical research on the subject (Duke, 1991; Wann and Hamlet, 1995; Burca, et al., 1996). Existing work has tended to favour quantitative methodologies (such as Miller, 1976; Iso-Ahola, 1980; Lee, 1980; Schurr, et al., 1987; Branscombe and Wann, 1991a, 1992; Hirt, et al., 1992; Wann and

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22 The section “Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Sports Fan Research” has formed the basis for a subsequent article (Jones, 1997b).
Branscombe, 1993; Madrigal, 1995; Wakefield and Sloan, 1995; SNCCFR, 1996, 1997). By contrast, qualitative research on the sports fan is extremely rare (although certain works have been produced, such as Marsh, et al., 1978; Dunning, et al., 1987; King, 1995, 1997; Armstrong, 1998). Although some investigations do show elements of combining qualitative and quantitative methods, few, if any, existing studies of the sports fan adopt the mixed methods approach as an explicit research strategy. This section argues that such an approach is a worthwhile means for gaining a fuller understanding of the football fan.

The choice of research design must be appropriate to the subject under investigation (Patton, 1990). Thus, the nature of football fandom will have implications for the choice of a suitable methodology. Although the concept of fandom was introduced in chapter three, section 3.3, it seems pertinent to recap some of the main issues, so that the relationship between the nature of fandom, and the mixed methods approach can be summarised.

Those authors who define sports fandom (Pooley, 1978; Guttman, 1986; Branscombe and Wann, 1992) all stress that cognitive and affective, as well as behavioural components are significant. These dimensions are also noted by other authors (Miller, 1976; Lee and Zeiss, 1980; Madrigal, 1995), and summarised by Pooley (1978: 14), who states that

whereas a spectator of sport will observe a spectacle and forget it very quickly, the fan continues his interest until the intensity of feeling toward the team becomes so great that parts of every day are devoted to either his team or in some instances, to the broad realm of the sport itself.

It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that fandom comprises more than simply attending and observing a sporting event. Rather, being a fan "represents an association from which the individual derives considerable emotional and value significance" (Madrigal, 1995: 209-210). This acknowledgement that
football fandom consists of more than overt behaviour has important implications for the choice of research methodology.

Quantitative Research and the Football Fan
Quantitative research designs are characterised by the assumption that human behaviour can be explained by what may be termed "social facts". These facts can be investigated by methodologies that utilise "the deductive logic of the natural sciences" (Horna, 1994: 121). Quantitative investigations look for "distinguishing characteristics, elemental properties and empirical boundaries" (Horna, 1994: 121) and tend to measure "how much", or "how often" (Nau, 1995). They are appropriate for examining the behavioural component of football fandom, such as attendance at games.

A quantitative research design allows flexibility in the treatment of data, in terms of comparative analyses, statistical analyses, and the repeatability of data collection in order to verify reliability. The advantages of a quantitative approach are demonstrated by the research carried out into the English "Premier League" football fan (SNCCFR, 1995, 1996). This survey-based study produced broad data across a large fan population at Premier League clubs, allowing the behavioural patterns of the English football fan to be ascertained. The quantitative design permitted a simple comparative analysis between clubs. It also enabled longitudinal data to be collected in consecutive seasons, in order to enhance reliability. These surveys clearly illustrate the composition of the crowd, their overt behaviour, and their scaleable attitudes towards pre-determined items. Although the approach is obviously useful in determining the extent of such behaviour or attitudes, the methodology adopted, however, fails to provide any explanation or analysis beyond the descriptive level.

Although the Premier League surveys do not utilise any form of statistical analysis beyond the parametric measures of frequency counts and means, Jayaratne
(1993) introduces a further advantage of a quantitative research design, noting that as well as producing what may be considered more objective data, it may also allow more objective analysis. Thus, other quantitative research into the sports fan (such as Branscombe and Wann, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Murrell and Dietz, 1992; Madrigal, 1995) demonstrates a strong emphasis upon significance testing, with most existing research examining the relationship between level of fandom and aspects of fan behaviour, such as level of identification with a team and patterns of attendance (Schurr, et al., 1987), fan satisfaction (Madrigal, 1995), or evaluation of team performance (Wann and Dolan, 1994). Many of the scales used within these studies, such as the use of the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann and Branscombe, 1993), are also tested for validity and reliability, thus claiming further “scientific” credibility.

Thus, it can be seen that quantitative methodologies do have strengths for football fan research. These may be summarised as follows:

• Quantitative methodologies are appropriate to measure overt behaviour.
• They are also strong in measuring descriptive aspects, such as the composition of the football crowd.
• Quantitative methodologies allow comparison and replication.
• Reliability and validity may be determined more objectively than qualitative techniques.

These strengths however, are not the sole prerogatives of quantitative designs. Indeed, many of the arguments for the use of quantitative research, especially in an academic climate where resources are limited, have more pragmatic origins. For example there may be difficulties in terms of allowing large scale data collection and analysis at reasonable cost and effort, as well as providing statistical “proof”.

The weaknesses of such quantitative research designs lie mainly in their failure to ascertain deeper underlying meanings and explanations of football fandom,
even when they have been shown to be significant, reliable and valid. The quantitative assumption regarding fandom is that "people can be reduced to a set of variables which are somehow equivalent across persons and across situations" (Reason and Rowan, 1981: xiv). Quantitative research is strong in measuring such variables, and, if this measurement is the focus of the research, such as the case with the Premier League survey, then a quantitative approach may be justified. However, as noted earlier, psychological factors, such as affect and cognition, are important to the concept of football fandom. Although quantitative methods can be used to measure such factors, their appropriateness in explaining them in depth is more limited. A further weakness of quantitative approaches lies in their tendencies to take a "snapshot" of a situation, that is to measure variables at a specific moment in time. Football fandom, on the other hand, is processual. It may be affected by temporal changes, such as the team's performance, or the quality of opposition, which cannot always be identified within a single quantitative study.

Qualitative Research and the Football Fan

Qualitative research designs are those that are associated with interpretative approaches, from the informants' emic point of view, rather than etically measuring discrete, observable behaviour. Qualitative methodologies are strong in those areas that have been identified as potential weaknesses within the quantitative approach, for example the use of interviews and observations to provide a deep, rather than broad, set of knowledge about a particular phenomenon, and the appropriateness to investigate cognitive and affective aspects of fandom. This added depth allows the researcher to achieve "Verstehen", or empathetic "understanding". The Weberian concept of Verstehen is the basis for a critique of quantitative research designs, and their empiricist emphasis. The argument used is that quantitative methods measure human behaviour "from the outside", without accessing the meanings that individuals give to their measurable behaviour. If, as many authors have suggested, fandom contains psychological, as well as sociological dimensions, then the emphasis should rather be upon gaining an understanding of how the subjects themselves
view their own particular situations. A qualitative research design allows these understandings to be investigated from the informants' point of view. The advantages of a qualitative methodology for football fan research can be summarised as follows.

- Qualitative methodologies allow the cognitive and affective components of fandom to be explored in greater depth than quantitative methodologies.
- Qualitative methodologies encourage the informant to introduce concepts of importance from the emic standpoint, rather than adhering to subject areas that have been pre-determined by the researcher. As noted earlier, (chapter two), research into the football fan is rare, and thus the flexibility of qualitative methodologies is appropriate for research that may be more exploratory in nature.
- Qualitative approaches permit the identification of longitudinal changes in fandom, whereas quantitative approaches tend to take a "snapshot" of behaviour, cognition or affect at the one time the research is conducted.

Objections to the qualitative approach do exist, however. The main argument against it is the concept of validity, in that it is difficult to determine the truthfulness of findings. The relatively low sample numbers often encountered may also lead to claims that findings are unrepresentative of the population. This point may be illustrated by an evaluation of the work of Marsh, et al. (1978) on "ritual violence" of football fans. Whilst full of "rich", descriptive data on the violence itself, enabling a deep understanding of the underlying explanations to be developed, the findings fail to give any clear indication as to extent of such violence among fans. Their results fail to highlight the degree to which ritual violence is an important issue. Thus, even if certain issues are identified by the researcher, the claim that such issues are not unrepresentative of the population as a whole is possible. Secondly, the choice of case may lead to criticisms of it being untypical. As will be argued within this chapter, the use of a mixed methods' approach may enable the researcher to avoid such potential criticisms.
If the football fan researcher does develop a qualitative research design however, then certain issues need to be recognised. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) recognise that the adoption of a qualitative methodology may invite hostility. The objectivity of quantitative research is apparently “synonymous with good research” and the inherent lack of objectivity within qualitative research is synonymous with “sloppy” (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 19) and “unscientific” research (Nau, 1995).

Whilst not arguing for a hierarchy of research methods, this chapter suggests that a third approach, the mixed methods approach, provides even greater strengths to the researcher, and may enhance both the qualities, and perception by others, of the research.

A Mixed-Methods Approach to the Study of the Football Fan

Although the use of a single methodology has been advocated by a number of authors, many of the supporting arguments are decidedly pragmatic, such as time constraints, the need to limit the scope of a study, and the difficulty of publishing the findings (Creswell, 1994).

The crucial point in justifying a mixed-methods research design is that both single methodology approaches (qualitative only and quantitative only) have both strengths and weaknesses. A combination of methodologies, on the other hand, can legitimately focus on their relevant strengths. The researcher should aim to achieve the situation where “blending qualitative and quantitative methods of research can produce a final product which can highlight the significant contributions of both” (Nau, 1995: 1), where “qualitative data can support and explicate the meaning of quantitative research” (Jayaratne, 1993: 117). By adopting the following assumptions, the researcher should ensure that the final product maximises the strengths of the mixed methods approach.
• Qualitative methods, especially observation, or unstructured interviews allow the researcher to develop an overall “picture” of the subject under investigation. This may guide the initial phases of the research.
• Quantitative analysis may be more appropriate to assess behavioural or descriptive components of football fandom.
• The descriptive analysis, such as the socio-demographic profile of the crowd, may allow a representative sample to be drawn for the qualitative analysis. Marsh, *et al.* (1978) who note that quantitative research may confirm or deny the representativeness of a sample group for such qualitative research. Thus the mixed-methods strategy will guide the researcher who is carrying out qualitative research, that his sample has some representativeness of the overall population.
• Football fandom involves cognitive and affective characteristics, as well as overt behavioural aspects. Thus a qualitative “core” is appropriate to investigate these aspects, by examining the informants point of view.
• Much football fan research is still largely exploratory. The use of qualitative methods allows for unexpected developments that may arise as part of such research, *(serendipity).*
• Quantitative analysis may complement the findings of qualitative methods by indicating their extent within the fan population.
• Quantitative analysis may confirm or disconfirm any significant data that emerge from the study. Thus, for example, if level of fandom, as measured by existing scales (such as that employed by Wann and Branscombe, 1993) appears to have an effect upon aspects of fan behaviour, quantitative methods can be used to enable the statistical testing of the strength of such a relationship.
• If such a relationship is determined, then quantitative methods are weaker in providing explanation. Qualitative methods may assist the researcher in understanding the underlying explanations for significance.
• The inclusion of quantitative methods and analysis within leisure research may increase the likelihood of publication, especially within those journals with a strong neo-positivist tradition.

As noted before, the purpose of this chapter is not to suggest that a mixed methods strategy is the only suitable research design for this topic; rather that it
is an appropriate, and at times desirable design. The overall choice needs, of course, to be the most suitable one to achieve the objectives of the research. A mixed methods approach, however, has a number of advantages within football fan research, as well as other social science disciplines, and for those reasons should be able to enhance the quality of such work in such ways as have been outlined. The methods that have been adopted as part of such an overall strategy are described in the following chapter.
7.1 Introduction to the Research Methods

The research process consists of a number of interrelated phases within a case study, all of which need to be planned before, rather than during the research (Patton, 1987). Although the research may comprise of these separate phases, the overall objective of the thesis is to produce an holistic, integrated piece of research into football fan identification. Thus the research design needs to be appropriate to achieve this objective.

Additionally, investigation into social phenomena should be flexible, and the overall research process should be adaptable to change, especially if the study is partly or wholly exploratory. Thus a number of initial considerations, rather than a concrete research design, should be noted beforehand. These have been outlined by Lofland and Lofland (1984), and can be adapted diagramatically to show interrelationships between phases of the research:
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Figure 7.1
The Research Process.

I. "Start where you are"
   personal circumstances, interests, etc.

II. Evaluate data sites
   Goals of research
   Epistemological assumptions
   Researchers relationship to data site

III. Access to data sites
     Public v. private

IV. Problems within data sites
    Fear of disclosure
    Desire to withdraw
    Impulse to help
    "Going native"

V. Logging Data
   Error, bias, selectivity

VI. Focus of Analysis
    Roles, meanings, relationships

VII. Questions to ask
     Frequencies, causes, processes

VIII. Creativity
      "Sociological imagination"

IX. Analysing data
    Coding, memos

X. Reporting

XI. Consequences
    Personal, subjects, social knowledge

(Source: Adapted from Lofland and Lofland, 1984)
Chapter Seven - Research Methods

The overall data collection process thus consists of eleven clusters, each of which has a relationship to another cluster. These clusters are dependent upon the objectives of the research, and should be planned to meet these objectives.

The goals of the current research have been outlined (chapter five, section 5.6). The attainment of these objectives can be met using a simplified version of Lofland and Lofland's scheme, adapting it into a four-phase research process. These phases are:

- Choice of, evaluation of, and access to the data collection site - chapter seven.
- Collecting data - chapter seven.
- Analysing data - chapter eight.
- Reporting data - chapters nine and ten.

Each of these phases is outlined within the relevant part of the thesis.

7.2 The Choice of the Data Collection Site - Luton Town Football Club

Once the choice of research topic is made, evaluation and subsequent choice of data sites are the first processes. As the approach suggested by Lofland and Lofland (1984) suggests, the researcher should evaluate the data sites, confirm access to data sites, and evaluate potential problems within data sites.

Both theoretical and practical arguments were employed in the choice of Luton Town Football Club as the case. The following criteria were proposed:

- The club should be located within a reasonably "typical" socio-demographic and economic context, that is there should be no idiosyncratic features that may affect the findings. Although there are, arguably, no typical football clubs, using the typology of "Travel To Work Areas" (TTWA's) developed by Green and Owen (1990), Luton could be seen to be a member of the most common classification of TTWA within the "Nationwide League" (see appendix B).
• It was felt advisable that some background academic literature on the locality and on the football club itself should be available. This was available in both instances on Luton, notably Goldthorpe, et al. (1968a, 1969b) and Devine (1992a, 1992b) on the town itself, and Williams, et al. (1989) on the football club.

• In terms of more pragmatic aspects, the choice of Luton Town was also influenced by the location of the club, and more importantly the majority of its fans. These considerations allowed the fieldwork to be carried out within an acceptable use of time and resources.

• In terms of case study research, access was a crucial factor. The offer by the club of co-operation with the project, especially with regard to access to matches free of charge, and the co-operation of members of staff was deemed to be vital to the viability of the research.

• The locality of the club allowed continual monitoring of the local press, and other media, and permitted the researcher to "immerse" himself into the cultural context within which the club existed. Whilst not strictly an ethnographic approach, in terms of total immersion within the football fan environment, researching from within, the research did reveal some features of an ethnographic study, such as the observation of fan behaviour within the context of the football match.

Once the choice of site has been confirmed, the next stage in Lofland and Lofland's process is that of logging data. The mixed methods approach adopted meant that data could be logged using a variety of methods concurrently, with continual adaptation of each method throughout the research if required. The three methods adopted were those of observation/participant observation, the questionnaire survey, and the in-depth interview. Each of these complimentary methods is outlined within the methodology, along with their appropriateness to the objectives of the research.
Within the case study, three main methods were incorporated into the overall research design. These methods are observation/participant observation, questionnaire surveys, and in-depth interviews. Each of these methods is briefly described within the following chapter, and their use within the current research outlined. Rather than describe the general use and assumptions of each method selected, here the discussion focuses primarily upon the use of each method within the specific context of research into Luton Town Football Club.

7.3 The Research Timescale

The fieldwork was undertaken during the football season. The timetable for the research was as follows:

![Figure 7.2: The Fieldwork Timetable](image)

The order of methods was thus observation/participant observation, the fan survey and the semi-structured interviews. The use of each of these methods is outlined in a similar order below.
7.4 Observation/Participant Observation

One of the important qualities of case study research is that of gaining a holistic and accurate "feeling" for the case in question (Stake, 1995). Firsthand, direct observation is an important source of such information for the researcher (Patton, 1990). As a research tool, it allows the researcher to confirm that findings from other methods, such as the questionnaire survey, are accurate in describing reality (Yin, 1984). As observation allows this "feel" to be developed, it is appropriate as a preliminary method before the main investigation commences.

Observation is a technique whereby the researcher does not manipulate or influence the subjects in any way other than by his presence, the effects of which - due to the non interventionist and relatively unobtrusive nature of the observation adopted within this study - can be minimised by the researcher (Kellehear, 1993). By minimising any undue influence upon the subjects, observation allows the researcher to collect data from the natural social context within which those subjects operate, in this instance while being a fan of the football club.

Observation can be broadly divided into two categories, those of non-participant observation and participant observation. This dichotomisation is not always clear however, as there is not always a strict division between the two. Smith (1991) notes that the researcher will be act along a "role continuum" that can be outlined below:
Chapter Seven - Research Methods

Figure 7.3
The observation/participant observation continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complete</th>
<th>Participant as Observer as Complete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Observer as Participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role Continuum

Subjective
Sympathetic
Involved
Deceptive

Objective
Unsympathetic
Detached
Candid

Source: Adapted from Smith, 1991: 332

Non-participation observation can be a useful source of information. Used in isolation however, it does rely to a great extent upon the interpretative skills of the researcher in determining the actual meanings that can be attached to the findings from the observation. This is especially the case if there is no verbal or other communicative aspect of the observation. Therefore it is often desirable that observation be used in conjunction with other techniques, such as interviewing.

Within this investigation, the researcher partially countered the problem of attaching meanings to action through acting as "observer as participant". Although the objective was primarily to observe the behaviours of fans, a further objective, however, was to gain an understanding of the meanings of such behaviours, and it was through being an observer as participant that this was achieved.

The Advantages of Observation/Participant Observation

Observation was been adopted to complement the other methods utilised within this study. It has been argued that participant observation is the most effective method to study non-verbal behaviour since observation takes place in the subject's natural environment (Spradley, 1980). Patton (1990) has outlined the
benefits of observation for assessment purposes. These benefits can be classified into five broad areas.

- Direct observation allows the context of the activity to be understood. That is to say the researcher may gain an understanding of the context within which watching football takes place, rather than just investigating the actors' meanings and perceptions of fandom.

- Observation allows an inductive approach. The researcher can develop ideas from the context, rather than from just *a priori* reasoning. Ideas can be continually refined, as the observation allows a "continual reworking of our own understandings in the light of new knowledge" (King, 1995: 338).

- The researcher may be able to observe features that are not apparent to the participants, or identify aspects that are taken for granted by fans.

- Observation may identify features that interviewees or survey respondents may be unwilling to disclose, or unable to verbalise.

- The researcher may be able to use his own participation as a source of information about the meanings of fandom. The researcher can gain direct, rather than abstract understanding of a particular context.

### The Disadvantages of Observation/Participant Observation

The major problem of observation is that of the potential introduction of bias by the researcher (Yin, 1994: 89). The investigator may be subject to the danger of developing support or condemnation of a particular group. It can be argued that the presence and interaction of the observer may influence or alter natural behaviour of those being observed. Vinten (1994) suggests that certain groups may deliberately invent stories, traditions or actions that may portray that group inaccurately. Problems encountered by Guilianootti (1995) were based upon the attempts of his subjects to manipulate his findings to present a particular image of the subject group, notably to present their group as the "hardest" football hooligans in Scottish football. These problems may be partially countered by the researcher adopting more of an unobtrusive role, rather than a participant role.
The researcher needs to be certain that of the accuracy of the data that is being provided. This may be ensured by the researcher taking a more covert stance. Within the initial phase of the observational research, the researcher should attempt to view the subject group in a natural setting, and have no, or very little influence over the subjects. Thus the researcher should maintain a low profile, which will involve certain prior knowledge, in terms of dress and behaviour. If the presence of the researcher is known to the subjects, it is important that the subjects do not influence the initial research findings. Such initial findings should not be bound by predetermined criteria, but, as discussed, such criteria should be developed during this phase. This will then allow a recording framework to be produced.

There are two other main disadvantages associated with observational research.

- Misconceptions on the part of the researcher - The researcher's evidence may be tainted by language or cultural barriers. If the researcher has failed to understand the group's language, norms and behaviours misunderstandings and misconceptions on the part of the researcher may invalidate any conclusions drawn. This understanding may not be immediate, but should be well developed at the conclusion of the study.

- Difficulties in coding data - If observations take the form of descriptive analyses it is difficult to attach numeric values to observational and interpretative data.

Possibilities and Problems of Observation/Participant Observation at Luton Town Football Club.

Within the context of the current research, certain possibilities and potential problems need to be acknowledged. Observation at football matches allows a number of possible advantages to be developed. These are that the researcher may systematically choose different areas within which to observe, and all home
areas can be accessed in a systematic approach. Secondly, pilot observations revealed that throughout the ground, recording of data by fans, whilst not commonplace, is not an action that is “out of place” in that many fans keep their own reports or statistics of the game. This practice, therefore, removes any difficulties that may occur if covert recording is necessary. Therefore data recording can take place without the problems of recall, and data can be recorded as it happens.

A further justification for the use of observation and participant observation at football grounds is that the usefulness of these tools has already been shown (Marsh, et al., 1978; Williams, et al., 1989a), even though such studies have concentrated upon the football hooligan, rather than non-hooligan fans.

Few problems can be anticipated in undertaking such observation where the need for covert recording is not necessary. Provided the recording criteria are valid, such problems should be minimal, and be dealt with over the period of the research.

The Recording Criteria
The primarily qualitative and inductive nature of observational approaches implies that the data collection is not as predictable as with other research techniques. The objectives of the observational research phase can be predetermined, however, as follows:

- Identification of patterns of entry to the ground, including timing and entry as part of a group or family,
- Approximate composition of the crowd with regard to age, sex and ethnic type,
- Publicity of identification, that is the extent of fans wearing shirts, scarves, etc.,
- Relationships between on-field action and fan behaviour,
- Effectiveness of club provision, in terms of view, access to tickets, programmes, refreshments, public address system and other information, and
• Patterns of exit from the ground.

The recording of other occurrences takes place inductively during the field observations.

Different parts of the ground have varying physical characteristics, such as quality of viewing, and thus the observation should be planned to permit the researcher sufficient access to each area. Thus a pass was obtained allowing free access to all parts of the ground (except for the executive boxes). Four general areas were identified, those of the Kenilworth Upper Stand, the Kenilworth Lower Stand, the Main Stand and the New Stand. In the first season of the fieldwork, attendance at twenty home games, staged at both weekends and evenings, was scheduled, allowing five observational visits to each section. However due to size differences between areas, notably the comparatively small size of the New Stand, fewer observational visits were made there, and more to the larger Main Stand. With attendances averaging significantly below capacity for most games, the researcher was able to have a relatively large choice of observation points, and movement between points was also unproblematic.

The second season followed a similar pattern, although the observation in this period was carried out to assess the validity and reliability of findings developed through the other methods, rather than to explore and develop orienting ideas about fan identification.

The Analysis of Observational Data

The observational data was intended to provide support for the findings of the survey and interviews. As such, no direct analysis was made of the data. Rather, the data was used as and when appropriate to support such findings, and assess the plausibility of findings wherever possible. Thus, findings from the observation are introduced where appropriate within chapter eight. Although
the observation/participant observation phase did provide relatively little empirical information, it was, as highlighted below, crucial to the overall study.

Reflections on the Observation/Participant Observation

Although comprising the longest time period of any method, the observation/participant observation phase yielded fewer empirical data than the survey or interviews. This is not to understate its value, however. The observation was crucial in gaining a tacit knowledge of fan identification. This tacit knowledge was gained within a specific cultural context, as highlighted in chapter five, and a knowledge of this cultural environment was important in terms of interpreting and analysing findings from other research tools. Knowledge of the cultural identity of fandom at Luton Town could not be gained immediately, thus the observation phase consisted of a two year process. On reflection, this phase, despite its lack of empirical productivity, was important in providing tacit understanding, and allowing the researcher to plausibly interpret the meanings of Luton Town fans.

7.5 The Fan Survey

The survey was adopted as the primary quantitative method, to obtain mostly objective information from fans at Luton Town. The overall processes involved in this phase of the research can be mapped as displayed in figure 7.2 below:
The aims of the research allow the survey to be structured and administered to provide data to allow the research objectives to be achieved. The use, structure and administration of the survey are outlined in the following section.

Advantages of the Survey

As the review of literature has determined, there was a scarcity of information on the Nationwide League football fan. This phase of the fieldwork was to some extent determined by this lack of information, and consisted of basic data collection, rather than specific theory testing. The advantages of the survey in this respect are that it is appropriate as a means to collect information from a large - potentially widespread - population (Goode and Hatt, 1952; Bailey, 1994; Judd, et al., 1995), with no interviewer bias (Judd, et al., 1995; Frankfort and Frankfort-Nachimas, 1996), in a structured format which may facilitate analysis.
(Jayaratne, 1993). From the fan's perspective, completion can be achieved at a convenient time, away from the match situation, and anonymity is ensured if so desired (Bailey, 1994). Thus the survey is appropriate to collect potentially sensitive information from large numbers of fans. The usefulness of such a survey has been demonstrated by the Premier League surveys (SNCCFR 1995, 1996) which, despite methodological criticism (Waddington, et al., 1996; Nash 1997) have determined a substantial amount of information about the Premier League fan.

Disadvantages of the Survey

Despite the undoubted strengths of the survey with respect to this study, a number of potential weaknesses may be identified. Firstly, the relatively low response rates encountered by many surveys indicates some form of response bias (Goode and Hatt 1952; Bailey 1994). Secondly Frankfort-Nachimas and Nachimas (1996) note that the set format of the survey means that questions cannot be varied according to the nature of the responses. Related to this point, Bailey (1994) suggests that the use of probes to clarify, or elicit further information is not possible. Thus the questions included must be relatively straightforward (de Vaus, 1985), especially if respondents have difficulty in reading or writing (Judd, et al. 1995). There is also no opportunity to observe non-verbal behaviour from the respondent. Finally, as noted in chapter six, the survey may not be able to elicit information regarding the cognitive and affective components of football fan identification.

These issues are, to a large extent, however, countered by the use of other methods within the study. Chapter six outlines how the use of a mixed methods approach is able to enhance football fan research through the acknowledgement of the weaknesses of certain methods, and by combating such weaknesses through the use of complimentary research tools.
The weaknesses may also be countered through careful design of the questionnaire, and through the use of various strategies to maximise response rates. These issues are outlined below.

**The Structure of the Survey**

Although in this respect, the survey is exploratory in its investigation of fan identification, there are a number of objectives for the survey phase, and the structure of the survey has been designed to achieve these objectives. These are:

- To produce a socio-demographic profile of the Luton Town football fan,
- To determine factors involved in the origin, maintenance, and influence of identification with Luton Town Football Club, and
- To allow for a representative sample to be identified for future stages of the research.

These objectives were achieved using not only the survey method, but a combination of methods, including observation and interviews. Whilst this approach did not completely fulfil the methodological ideal of triangulation, in that different methods are not always collecting evidence for the same theory, it will allow for relevant issues to be identified from a number of sources. Thus this approach gives the researcher increased confidence in terms of the reliability of the identified issues.

**The Survey Design**

Before identifying the questions to be included, a number of broad concepts had to be examined. Smith (1975) notes that three components of a survey need to be addressed in the overall survey design. These are language, the conceptual level of the questions, and frames of reference. Briefly examining each concept, their relation to the survey can be outlined.
Language used in the survey is important, in that it needs to be understandable to both the researcher and the respondent. There was a need therefore for a shared vocabulary so that ideas could be communicated effectively. Thus, within the questionnaire survey of football fans, certain terminology, especially jargon and specialist terminology, was avoided, and the questions worded for the lowest level of education that would be encountered. This is also related to conceptual level of questions, whereby the questions were worded so that the respondents had the necessary skills to answer the questions. This was be tested out during the pilot stage of the survey. The observation phase determined that there was a diversity of age ranges, and it seems reasonable to suggest that there was a diversity of educational levels. Thus the structure and wording of the questionnaire were important.

The frames of reference refer to the interpretation that each respondent may have of a question, or of a set of questions. Therefore ambiguous terms or phrasing obviously were avoided. This was where the importance of carrying out a pilot survey was evident. It is within the piloting of the survey that such ambiguities were identified. The observation stage was also useful for the researcher in identifying ambiguities.

Themes within the Survey
A number of themes were identified for the survey to achieve the objectives outlined above. The structure of the questionnaire, demonstrating how these themes were integrated within the questionnaire is included in appendix C. The themes included were:

- The measurement and evaluation of the extent of identification with Luton Town Football Club,
- Patterns of support. These included areas such as introduction to the football club, frequency of attendance and modes of attendance (who with, whereabouts in the ground the game was viewed, means of travel to the ground),
• Fan attitudes towards their own identification with the club, towards the football club, and towards other fans, and
• Socio-demographic details.

The Measurement of Identity

The framework of identity theory within this thesis assumes that fans will possess personal and social identities as fans of Luton Town F.C. If this is the case, then many of the consequences of group membership, as predicted by identity theory, may be manifested by fans. Thus, the measurement of identity is of primary importance.

A measure of identification - the Sport Spectator Identification Scale - has been developed by Wann and Branscombe (1993). Using a seven item scale questioning, the individual’s own perception of factors involved in identifying with, (rather than following), a sports team may be measured. Their scale has been shown to have a high level of validity and reliability, achieving a Cronbach standardised reliability coefficient of .91, suggesting high internal validity, and a one year re-test coefficient of .60, which, given the one year re-test interval is considered acceptable. The stability of sports fan identification (cf. chapter three) also suggests high predictive validity (Oppenheim, 1992), in that the score achieved through the sample should be related to the subsequent behaviour of the sample. Thus this measure of identification was considered to be appropriate, and was used within the study. This scale was chosen in preference to a further measure of fandom developed by Gantz and Wenner (1995), who used a four response questionnaire to ascertain cognitive, behavioural and affective involvement to develop a “fanship index”. The measure developed by Gantz and Wenner was designed with television, rather than “live” fans as the focus of the study, and assumed comparative freedom of opportunity to view sports as desired. Constraints of the “live” sports fan, such as distance to the ground, ticket cost and availability therefore suggested that operationalising fandom using this scale was inappropriate given the differing context of the television and the “live” sports fan.

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The measurement scale, although applicable to the "live" sports fan, did possess one main weakness in its use within the current research. As noted in chapter four, individuals possess a number of personal and social identities. The *Sport Spectator Identification Scale* measured only the identification as a football fan, and did not allow the researcher to ascertain the role of that identity compared to the other identities possessed by the individual. Thus the individual may have other, equally strong, or stronger, identities. Thus the use of other methods, such as the fan interviews were used to ascertain the nature of the football fan identity in relation to the other identities possessed by the individual.

One issue already outlined is that the measurement of identification with a football team assumes that individual's have identities that are stable enough to be measured (*cf.* Widdecombe and Wooffitt, 1995: 109). Although Turner (1982) notes that identities may vary with the immediate context and environment within which the identity is enacted, work on general social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) and sports fan identification theory (Murrell and Dietz, 1992) suggests that identities should remain stable. Empirical support can also be found elsewhere (Branscombe and Wann, 1991, 1993) arguing that identification remains reasonably constant. Wann and Schrader (1996) have also determined that identification with a team remains stable despite team failure or success. Branscombe and Wann however (1991) suggest that identification may be affected by success if the fan is geographically distant from the chosen team. Williams, *et al.* (1989) suggest that the support of Luton Town is localised, and thus bias should be minimal if this is the case, however their assumption is not empirically based and thus should be treated with caution. A further study (Wann, 1996) tends to suggest that levels of identification, as well as levels of involvement and identification may decrease slightly over a season. Thus it was felt undesirable to administer the questionnaire at either the beginning or the end of the season, when either fan optimism, or fan disappointment may bias results.
In terms of more long term identification, Smith, et al. (1981) note that most spectators intend to maintain an interest (and presumably identification) with their team in the long run. Thus the measure of identification was used to determine what could be referred to as trait (a relatively stable measure) identification rather than state (a fluctuating measure, affected by short term factors such as team success) identification. In addition no differences have been found between those who have completed the test either pre-game or post-game (Wann and Dolan, 1994). The Sport Spectator Identification Scale measure of identification has been tested for reliability and validity (Wann and Branscombe, 1993), and is the measure that has been adopted within this study, as it incorporates both social and personal factors that have been identified within the review of identification theory.

**Patterns of Support**

Related to the concept of identification were questions regarding behavioural aspects. As has been noted in the review of existing works on the sports fan, identification is strongly related to fan's behaviour. Thus, a series of questions were included to determine whether there is any association between certain behavioural aspects, such as levels of attendance and identification with the team.

The questionnaire ascertained patterns of attendance, in terms of the respondent's history and frequency of live attendance. This allowed relationships between such areas as fan identification and behavioural, cognitive or affective consequences to be investigated. Thus questions were included that identified these patterns of support.
Fan Attitudes Towards the Club

The identification of attitudes of fans towards the football club is a significant aspect of the study in that it seems uncertain as to the role of the actual football club towards fan identification. Certain aspects of the fan/club relationship were identified through participant observation and the use of past surveys (SNCCFR, 1996). Additional open questions were included so that aspects that were not identified by these methods could be included.

Socio-demographic Details

Little is known about who fans actually are. Thus, respondents were requested to supply certain socio-demographic details. As well as providing a profile of fans at Luton Town F.C., this allowed any variations in identity amongst various groups to be investigated.

The Format of the Questionnaire

In terms of the overall structure of the questionnaire, questions regarding attitudes, rather than measurable facts, were administered using a Likert scale. This type of scaling was adopted due to their ease of use for respondents (Neuman, 1991), increased reliability over other scales, such as Thurstone and Guttman scales (Chisnall, 1997), and their greater appropriateness in measuring multidimensional constructs (Judd, et al., 1995). The remainder of the questions not concerned with facts were open ended, to allow idiosyncratic issues to emerge (Haddock and Zanna, 1998).

In terms of maximising response rates, Frankfort-Nachimas and Nachimas (1996) have summarised existing literature on increasing numbers of returned questionnaires. Given the difficulty of administering a follow up survey in this study, these procedures are important. Thus the questionnaire survey packet
included inducement, in the form of a prize draw, sponsorship, (from the University of Luton, and not Luton Town F.C.), an introductory letter, a prepaid reply envelope, and an aesthetically pleasing format.

**Questionnaire Administration**

Administering a questionnaire survey at a sporting event creates a number of issues that have to be addressed by the researcher. The most obvious method that could be applied is that of the postal survey. However, postal surveys of football clubs provide limitations that are not immediately apparent. Firstly, the accuracy of the mailing list could not be verified by the football club. Secondly, the use of the members' database would not have targeted occasional guest or casual spectators. Prior to 1994 this would not have been an issue with the club operating a member only scheme. After 1994 however, the club reverted to a less strict membership scheme, allowing casual spectators to watch matches. These casual spectators would have been unreachable with a mailed survey. The postal survey would also not have accounted for guests of members, such as members who took their children on guest tickets. A further limitation of the mailing list is its failure to record younger (those aged under sixteen) supporters, who have been underrepresented in past surveys (SNCCFR, 1995, 1996). Finally, the use of the Luton Town mailing list, and the implied connection between the club and the research would, it was felt both by the club and the researcher, possibly concern respondents who wished to include more controversial comments within their response. A telephone survey using numbers supplied by the club was also considered undesirable for these reasons, as well as the possible introduction of bias towards telephone owners.

The most desirable option open to the researcher was thus administering an on-site survey. On-site surveys take a number of forms, and need to be chosen with reference to the context within which they are administered. On-site interviews during the game are undesirable because of the possibility that they may divert
the spectators' attention from the game, and thus arouse some hostility, especially if the schedule is a lengthy one. Additionally the practical requirements of administering sufficient questionnaires raise some concern. Distributing or administering the survey after the game is also undesirable, with limitations having been outlined by Pol and Pak (1994), in terms of people's desire to leave the stadium quickly, distractions from other spectators, and the difficulties in deciding upon, and administering a sampling frame, especially in light of the relatively disorganised patterns of exit observed at Luton Town Football Club.

Another on-site method available, and one used by the 1994/5 Premier League survey, is the distribution of questionnaires within programmes, a method that also leads to bias (Waddington, et al., 1996), in that it favours certain groups that are more likely to buy programmes. This method may also discriminate against those less likely to buy programmes such as children, and the less well off, a factor that may in part account for the middle class profile of the "average" fan produced by past surveys.

All methods of administering a questionnaire for football fans raise potential problems. The chosen method was decided upon to limit such problems and reduce potential bias as much as possible. The method utilised was that of distributing to members of the crowd as they entered the stadium through the turnstiles, to attempt to gain a representative distribution of questionnaires. The sampling frame is produced using a simple systematic sample, with the questionnaire distributed to each chosen subject regardless of age, sex or any other factors. The issues of sampling discussed later within this chapter.

The Pilot Survey

For an effective and valid survey, it is vital that the three components referred to above, those of language, frames of reference, and conceptual level are tested prior to administering the survey. Additionally, the actual administration of the questionnaire should be pre-tested. This testing is carried out via effective
piloting of the survey. The piloting ideally needs to be carried out on a sample that is broadly representative of the overall population. Characteristics of the overall population, however, were unknown at the piloting stage, and would be until the actual survey analysis was completed. Therefore the pilot study was carried out on a varied population of football fans that could be reasonably expected to fulfil the purposes of a pilot study. The pilot study was designed to test all aspects of the survey. As well as testing the three components discussed, the pilot study tested:

- The administration of the questionnaire, including the effectiveness of methods of distribution and return,
- The ordering of the questions,
- The time taken to complete the questionnaire,
- The effectiveness of the covering letter, and
- The methods of analysis of responses.

The pilot survey consisted of two phases. The first phase was carried out using the technique of "snowballing". Snowballing refers to the process of locating a small number of fans, and asking those supporters for details of others who may fit the sampling requirements, and so on, until a satisfactory sample has been achieved. Because of the lack of existing data on the population, it was decided to draw a judgement sample, whereby a range of samples was achieved, that was close to being representative of the perceived overall football fan population at Luton Town as determined by the observation phase and data from Premier League surveys (SNCCFR, 1995, 1996)

This technique led to thirty-five pilot questionnaires being completed and analysed. The analysis was for piloting purposes and not included in subsequent analysis. Although some authors, (such as de Vaus, 1985), suggest an undeclared pilot to simulate the conditions of completion, this first stage of the pilot was declared, in that respondents were requested to highlight issues that were relevant to a pilot survey, such as ambiguity, lack of clarity, or lack of relevance of the questions.
The pilot questionnaires were also used in the initial creation and development of the *SPSS for Windows* data file, for analysis of the main survey so that issues of data analysis could be determined before, rather than after the data collection.

The second phase of the pilot work was carried out after the refinements to the questionnaire had been completed from phase one of the pilot survey. This phase of the pilot was undeclared. As well as testing those questions that had been redesigned, this phase tested the administration of the questionnaire. A total of one hundred pilot questionnaires were distributed at a home game using a systematic sample, whereby every third entrant was handed a questionnaire packet. Questionnaires were distributed during the peak flow of fans into the ground. The observation phase had determined this to be between 2.45 and 3.00 p.m. for a Saturday match. A questionnaire packet was handed to every third entrant. If the packet was refused, then the next entrant was offered the packet, as was every third entrant after the successful acceptance.

Three weeks after the questionnaire distribution, sixty-six questionnaires were returned via the pre-paid postage envelopes provided in the questionnaire package. Four weeks after the distribution sixty-eight questionnaires had been returned, giving a response of sixty-eight per cent. No other questionnaires were returned. Given the levels of response after the third week, it was decided to use a four week cut off point for questionnaire returns for the main survey.

Those questionnaires received were input into the *SPSS for Windows* data analysis package, and underwent pilot analysis, including basis statistical tests, to check the design of the *SPSS* data file, and also to carry out a tacit assessment of whether the data was "realistic". These questionnaires were not included in the final analysis. The satisfactory administration of the pilot survey allowed the next phase, the administration of the main survey to be undertaken.
The Fan Survey - Distribution and Sample Sizes

Response rates from the pilot distribution, and past football surveys, such as the 1995/96 and 1996/97 Premier League Surveys, although varied, seem to indicate that a likely response rate of approximately thirty per cent could be expected. Thus it was decided to distribute approximately 1200 questionnaires to achieve a sample size of approximately four hundred, a sample size giving an acceptably low sampling error. Sampling error is the introduction of bias or incorrect information due to bias amongst respondents, often caused by low numbers of responses (Kalton, 1983). A subsequent response of thirty per cent would give a sample size of 400. This would provide an estimated variance of the means of the achieved sample of +/- 5% with the means of the overall population at the ninety five per cent confidence level for those variables of high variation, and higher levels of accuracy for those variables showing less variation.

Because of the difficulty in carrying out a follow up survey, the researcher had to ensure as large a response rate as possible. Thus the inclusion of a prize draw was utilised towards this objective. Although the use of a prize draw may be more attractive to younger fans, it has been suggested that this fan group is less likely to fill in questionnaires (SNCCFR, 1996, 1997). Thus it was hoped that any production of bias through the use of a prize draw would be minimised, and that the use of such an incentive would actually reduce bias in the overall sample.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their willingness to take part in the subsequent fan interviews. Although the covering letter stressed the confidential nature of the responses, fans were also able to complete the questionnaire anonymously.

23 The subsequent response rate after the four week cut off point was 48.2 per cent for the main fan survey.
Administration of the Fan Survey

The main distribution of questionnaires took place on Saturday, February 8th, 1997, before the home game against Plymouth Argyle Football Club. Prior to this game, the club had achieved three consecutive draws, after a three week absence from competitive football caused by the bad weather at the time. Given the lack of an existing accurate sampling frame, a systematic sample was used. A systematic sample is a sample where every $K$th element is chosen after a random start. To achieve the desired sample size, each third entrant was handed a questionnaire.

No targeting of particular groups was attempted via methods such as quota or stratified sampling, as it was the entire range of the match day crowd that was of interest, rather than any specific groups. There were no limiting factors in terms of the distribution of questionnaires in that the questionnaire was handed to the subject regardless of age, sex or other characteristics. If the questionnaire was refused, then that subject was ignored, as recommended by Kalton (1983), and the questionnaire handed to the next entrant, and to every third entrant after that. This method gives all elements within the population an equal probability of being chosen, and reduces potential bias. The systematic distribution allowed approximately 1250 questionnaires to be distributed between 1.45 p.m. and 3.10 p.m. on the day of the game, at all entrance points, between the estimated population of 3,800-4,000 Luton fans.

Questionnaires were distributed by the researcher, and a team of five other researchers, each with experience of questionnaire administration. This was felt to be a more reliable method of distribution than using the club's assistance. The administration of the questionnaires was determined to a large extent by the layout of the ground.

Three entry points are available to home fans at Luton Town F.C. (see the plan of the Kenilworth Road Stadium below - figure 7.3). Point 'A' serves the New Stand, the Main Stand and the Main Stand Enclosure. Point 'B' serves the Kenilworth End Upper Tier, and point 'C' serves the Kenilworth End Lower Tier.
The capacity served by each entry point was determined, and questionnaires proportionally divided between the entry points to ensure that a particular area was not under or over represented. Questionnaires were distributed in a packet containing full instructions, a covering letter and a pre-paid reply envelope that allowed the respondent to return the completed questionnaire post-free. A four week cut off date was determined from the distribution date. At the end of the four week period, the questionnaires were input into the SPSS for Windows data file developed from the second phase of the pilot study and analysed. Closed questions were analysed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests. Open questions were coded, as recommended by Patton (1987) both into numeric values, and using the constant comparative method as suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) (see section 7.8 - Analytical Issues).
Chapter Seven - Research Methods

Reflections on the Fan Survey

The fan survey was able to provide substantial data on the fan population at Luton Town F.C. Both the willingness of fans to accept the questionnaire packet, and the subsequent high response rate (48.2%) was pleasing, and allowed primarily quantitative information on the fan to emerge. The survey also indicated a high number (over 50%) of respondents who were interested in taking part in further research. This allowed a sample to be drawn for the interview phase of the fieldwork (see section 7.6).

The physical administration of the survey was also considered successful. As noted earlier in the chapter, distributing a questionnaire to sports fans raises a number of issues. The method adopted here proved to be successful, and achieved a sample population that, as far as could be determined from the observation/participant observation, reflected the composition of the match day crowd, and is one that perhaps could be considered for future Premier League surveys.

7.6 Fan Interviews

As chapter six highlighted, the use of a mixed methods approach may enhance research findings. Whereas the fan survey is able to provide data from a large number of fans, the use of the semi-structured interview allows more in-depth data to emerge on the Luton Town fan.

Advantages of the Interview Method

There are a number of methods that can be utilised within qualitative research. The interview method was chosen as the most appropriate. The choice of the interview method was made for the following reasons:

- The increased response rate of interviews (Oppenheim, 1992) over open ended surveys makes the interview more suitable for targeting (Yin, 1994).
Increased confidence concerning response rates allows the researcher to choose a purposive sample.

- Interviews allow flexibility in terms of assessing the ability of those who may be less able to complete surveys, (such as the less well educated, or those older or younger respondents). They enable fans to talk about their own experiences in their own words (Kvale, 1996).
- By using interviews, the researcher can introduce himself to the subject and establish trust and rapport, especially if any information is considered confidential, or sensitive.
- The interview can be more insightful than other methods. As Yin (1994: 80) notes, the interview “provides perceived causal inferences” from the actor's, rather than the researcher's point of view. This allows the respondent to become more of an “informant”, providing data from his own point of view, which is desirable within the inductive stage of research. Unstructured, or semi-structured interviews allow the emergence of important themes that may not emerge from a more structured format (Oppenheim, 1992). This enables the subjects to reveal insights into their attitudes and behaviour that may not readily be apparent.
- Interviews may allow the researcher to develop a sense of time and history, rather than providing a series of “static” responses, which may be the outcome of a survey. They allow the responses to be put into context, rather than providing a “snapshot” picture (Moser and Kalton, 1971; Seidman, 1991; Yin, 1994).

Disadvantages of the Interview Method

The interview method has a number of potential weaknesses that need to be identified before administration.

- Interviews require more time than questionnaires, especially if the researcher has to travel to interview respondents,
- Interviewers may add bias to results as a result of verbal and non-verbal reactions, and inappropriate choice of probes,
- Inappropriate coding of interview may result in biased results, and

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• As with all self-report measures, the quality of the data is dependent upon the responses of the interviewee. Interviewees are subject to problems of recall, misperception, and incorrect knowledge (Yin, 1994).

Thus, as with all methods, the strengths of the interview need to consolidated, with the weaknesses eradicated as far as possible. The use of appropriate probes, minimal body language, and validation of the coding used is able to minimise such bias. In terms of interviewee reliability, the interviewer should assess the suitability of each informant.

The Use of the Semi-Structured Interview
Kvale (1996: 5-6) defines the semi-structured interview as “an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena”. The semi-structured interview allows the testing of the conceptual framework developed in the first phase. Unlike the structured interview, it also allows the refinement and alteration of the framework, and subjects can introduce those concepts that are of importance to them, rather than to the researcher.

The use of a semi-structured rather than a structured interview is determined by the aims and objectives of the research. Although the structured interview allows easy analysis, direct comparisons between groups, and easier testing of hypotheses (Silverman, 1995), the objective of the interview phase is to determine cognitive and affective aspects of fan identification. The semi-structured interview allows the respondent to develop his own experiences, rather than responding to areas that have been predetermined by the interviewer. The semi-structured interview enables the respondent to outline those experiences of importance to him, whilst ensuring that all areas that have emerged from the literature review and other methodological tools, (the fan survey and observation), are covered (Moser and Kalton, 1971; Kvale, 1996).
Sampling Decisions

This research is theory driven, in that it attempts to explore an overall theory of football fan identity and identification, and be theoretically valid, rather than to produce findings that are directly generalisable to other populations (or ecologically valid). Case study research in this respect is not sampling research, whereby the sample should necessarily match the profile of the overall population under investigation (Feagin, et al., 1991; Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995). Thus the sample should be picked to facilitate the research objectives, rather than for purposes of generalisability.

The number of interview respondents does not need to be determined a priori, however the researcher should ensure that the sample reflects the range of the overall population (Seidman, 1991) which is determined from the survey phase. Kvale (1996) notes however, that the emphasis should tend towards more thorough analysis of data, rather than increased sample size.

With no predetermined sample size, the use of what Seidman (1991) and Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to as "saturation" will determine the overall sample size. Saturation occurs when themes begin to re-emerge from interviewees where little new is being learnt by the researcher, and interviewees are adding little or nothing of value to the research. This was achieved after no new second order themes had emerged from four consecutive interviewees.

The Selection of the Sample

The sample was selected to be theoretically, rather than statistically representative, however the characteristics of the interviewees were intended to be broadly characteristic of the overall match day crowd, as determined by the fan survey. The sample was chosen using the filter command on SPSS for Windows, which allowed certain characteristics of the sample to be ensured.
This allowed a list of potential interviewees to be developed that included a broad range of identification levels, histories of attendance, and patterns of support. These interviewees were then contacted by telephone, and a mutually convenient time was arranged for the interview, at the fan’s house, or place of work if more convenient. Details of the interviewees are presented in appendix E, and sample characteristics are presented at the beginning of chapter eight, in table 8.1.

Reliability and Validity

As with the survey design, the issues of reliability and validity need to be addressed. The main issue concerning reliability is the effectiveness of transcription. To maintain acceptable levels of reliability, the interviews should be recorded with the interviewees’ permission. The interview should then be transcribed within as short a time as possible by the researcher (Mishler, 1986).

Validity is harder to ensure, given that transcriptions are a tool for interpreting the interview (Kvale, 1996), rather than an analysis in themselves. The methods of obtaining the transcripts need to be stated clearly so that the validity of the transcripts can be evaluated. A number of problems need to be considered at the outset. These are:

- Will the informant interpret the question correctly. This will be more of an issue with younger or less educated fans.
- Is the informant able to verbalise his thoughts, is he saying what he actually feels, that is whether he is able to accurately convey his feelings through his own command of language. In their investigation of youth subcultures and social identity, Widdecombe and Wooffitt (1995: 2) noted with reference to their methodology that “it became untenable to treat accounts as transparent representations of inner mental events, like cognitive processes or attitudes”. Therefore responses need to be critically questioned by the researcher. The
researcher's own experience through participant observation will be important in this respect in being able to tacitly assess responses.

- Is the informant giving a response that is applicable only to that moment in time, or are his views more long term? Although fan identification may be relatively stable, responses may be affected by events or occurrences at the time of the interview.

- Will the informant's own values affect the response? That is whether fans will provide information based upon what they think is the correct response, rather than their own attitudes.

Dean and Whyte (1978) have noted that the interviewer needs to take into account four major factors prior to the interview. These are:

- Does the informant have any motives that may influence his responses? This may be the case if the informant stands to benefit in any way from a particular response. Thus the researcher should stress the confidential, or "blind" nature of the interview. This was stressed for each of the fan interviews.

- Are there any "bars to spontaneity", that is are there any instances where the informant hesitates to mention things that will show him in a negative light? Again the confidentiality of the interview may ensure reliability.

- Will the informant attempt to please the interviewer?

- Are there any idiosyncratic features that may affect a response? An example of this potential effect may be a particular news story concerning the club on a particular day that will have a short term affect on the respondents' attitudes.

All of these considerations need to be accounted for before each interview. Two suggestions made by Dean and Whyte (1978) are to ensure that the subject is aware of the confidentiality of the interview, and to structure the interview so that a range of questions may be asked upon any areas that may cause concern in terms of validity. The interviewer cannot assume a relationship between responses and actual behaviour. This framework will allow a more reasoned evaluation as to what is reality, and what is distortion.

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Themes within the Interview

The interviews began with a discussion intended to put the respondent at ease. Here, it was decided to use a discussion of the team's footballing performance at the previous home match. Once the respondent was at ease, the interview schedule began. Four predetermined themes were included within the schedule. These were:

- The extent of the interviewee's identification with Luton Town F.C.,
- The origin of identification,
- The maintenance of the interviewee's identification with Luton Town, and
- The effects of identification upon the interviewee's behaviour as a Luton Town fan.

These themes were covered using an interview schedule, consisting of sixteen questions, and accompanying probes (appendix D). In addition, the semi-structured nature of the interview allowed other themes to emerge, as appropriate to the inductive nature of analysis (see below). The themes were not introduced at exactly the same time for each interviewee, but included as and when appropriate as determined by the interviewer.

The use of probes was also important within the interview to maximise the information gained from each subject. Two types of probes were used:

- clarification probes, to make the respondent repeat and clarify to the researcher any point that was not clear, or open to misunderstanding, and
- elaboration probes, to elicit a more in-depth response about a particular point related to football fan identification.

The interviews took between forty minutes and an hour and a half to complete. In all cases there were no individuals other than the researcher and the interviewee present.
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The interviews were taped with the interviewee's permission, thus allowing the researcher to concentrate upon the developing themes of the interview and to allow greater attention to be paid towards guiding the interview schedule. (Yin, 1994; Kvale, 1996). The recordings of the interviews were subsequently transcribed within as short a time as possible. The interviews were then analysed. A detailed explanation of the procedures used to analyse the interviews can be seen below (Analytical issues - qualitative data analysis).

Reflections on the Fan Interviews
The interviews proved highly successful. The relative willing of survey respondents to be considered for further research allowed a valuable quantity of "rich" data to emerge to complement the broad data from the interview. Respondents showed high levels of similarities in many of their responses, and, due to the use of clarification probes, validity was considered to be high. Respondents proved willing to answer questions in depth, and provide relevant information on their identities as fans of Luton Town F.C. that other methods were unable to provide. Few, if any problems were encountered, and the interviews were able to provide important qualitative information, that, together with the subsequent analysis (section 7.8) was able to provide important findings regarding fan identification at Luton Town F.C.

7.7 Reflections on the Research Methodology
Chapters six and seven have presented the justification for, and details of the research methodology to achieve the objectives of the research. On reflection, The chosen research methodology was appropriate to the study of the football fan. As the review of literature indicated, fan identification consists of components that are more suited to quantitative inquiry, and also components that are more suited to qualitative inquiry. It is within this context that a mixed methods approach was outlined. This approach consisted of two seasons of
observation/participant observation, a substantial survey of Luton Town F.C.
fans, and in-depth interviews of selected fans. The qualitative inquiries emerged
to a greater extent in ascertaining fan's perceptions of identification with the
club, however the quantitative phase was useful in ascertaining the extent of
certain findings. These methods were carried out within the context of the
continuous observation phase/participant observation phase which, as well as
providing a degree of triangulation to specific findings, provided the researcher
with a tacit understanding of the concepts of fan identification at Luton Town
F.C. The methodology allowed certain findings to be drawn from the study,
findings which are presented in the next chapter.

7.8 Analytical Issues

Quantitative Data Analysis
Although the study consists of largely qualitative methods and analysis, chapter
six has outlined the suitability of including quantitative analysis of fan data to
enhance the research findings. The fieldwork has produced data that is suitable
for more quantitative analysis techniques. Although basic descriptive statistics
(frequency counts, means, etc.) form the basis of the quantitative analysis, certain
statistical techniques are adopted. Because of the nature of the data, the primary
statistical techniques adopted are those of the chi-squared test ($\chi^2$), and the
correlation statistic. The purpose of using such quantitative analysis has been
outlined previously (cf. chapter six; see also Jones, 1997b). Quantitative methods
of analysis seem to be open to less debate than qualitative methods, especially in
leisure research (Krane, et al. 1997), and, in many cases, the form of analysis is
evident. Qualitative data analysis is open to more ambiguity, and, as such, is
outlined in more depth.
Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis of data presents a number of issues due to the variety of methods that are available (Miles and Huberman, 1994), and the lack of a predominantly accepted method within the sociology or social psychology of leisure (Krane, et al., 1997).

As seen in chapter six, the use of qualitative methodologies within leisure research is increasing. Krane, et al. (1997: 213) note the variety of methods of analyses employed within such studies, and state that there is "not a single acceptable method for conducting qualitative analyses", arguing that different forms of analysis will provide differing, often complementary forms of knowledge, and that the method of analysis chosen should reflect the methodological perspective of the researcher. The method adopted within this study is based upon that advocated by Krane, et al. (1997), and used, for example, by Scanlan, et al. (1989, 1991); Gould, et al. (1993); and James and Collins (1997). This procedure develops emergent themes from raw data, and maps the relationships between them, thus allowing a conceptual framework to be developed, as advocated by Miles and Huberman (1994). This method is also referred to as the "constant comparative" method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), and allows themes to emerge from data, rather than being assigned before analysis, thus demonstrating to some extent a grounded, or inductive approach to the analysis.

There are also elements of quantitative analysis in that this method also allows the assignment of frequency counts to the themes, in a form of content analysis, although as Krane, et al. (1997) note, this form of analysis is not a necessity, and may, in certain cases, be inappropriate, arguing that

placing a frequency count after a category of experiences is tantamount to saying how important it is; thus value is derived by number. In many cases, rare experiences are no less meaningful, useful, or important than common ones. In some cases, the rare experience may be the most enlightening one (Krane, et al., 1997: 214).
Thus the importance of a particular theme may develop not from frequency counts, but from the researcher's own interpretation of the data. This operation is open to critical scrutiny, and thus the researcher must provide a clear methodology so that the rigour of the analysis may be judged (Howe, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1994). This methodology is outlined below.

Using the approach described by Scanlan, et al. (1989, 1991); Gould, et al. (1993); Cote, et al., 1995); and James and Collins (1997), the analysis of the interview data consisted of three processes, that were employed for each transcript, namely

(I) Familiarisation with each interview. Familiarisation was achieved by a combination of listening to the interview tapes and reading the transcriptions. This procedure was also useful to confirm the reliability of each interview in terms of identifying transcription errors.

(II) Identification of relevant raw data quotes by interviewees. A raw data theme is defined by Scanlan, et al (1991: 106) as "a statement...which was self definable and self delimiting in the expression of a single recognisable aspect of the subjects' experiences", in other words, a specific statement referring to a single aspect of the fan's experiences of identifying with the football club. A raw data theme may also be referred to as a "meaning unit" (Tesch, 1990).

(III) Organisation of the raw data into categories. Categorisation is "a process of funnelling the data into relevant categories for analysis" (Dey, 1993: 42), whereby relationships and connections between data themes are identified (cf. Cote, et al., 1995). These categories were:
- Raw data themes - The specific information provided by the subject.
- First order and second order themes - These were generalised themes to emerge from the raw data.
- General dimensions. These were the most abstract categories within which raw data, and first and second order themes were classified.
The analysis results in the following type of analytical framework:

![Figure 7.6](image)

An example of an analytical framework

Categorisation requires the relationships between, and distinctions among categories to be determined with reference to the underlying concept of the research. Thus the basis of categorisation is the concept of fan identification, and the categories were produced in relation to this criterion. The overall categorisation of data needed to fulfil four conditions (Dey, 1993):

- Categories needed to fit the raw data,
- Categories needed to be meaningful in relation to the data,
- Categories needed to be related to each other, and
- Categories needed to be related to the underlying concept.

Two methods of ensuring the reliability of this method have been suggested. Scanlan, et al. (1991) suggest consensus validation, whereby the use of multiple coders to reach agreement to classify data is used. Krane, et al. (1997) argue that such an approach may have the effect of magnifying the researcher's subjectivity, thereby actually decreasing reliability. They suggest that a preferable approach
may be for a research partner to critically question the coding and analysis. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive, and, as such can be combined within the research to ensure reliability of the qualitative coding and classification. Thus a continual process of consensus validation and critical analysis was adopted. Two consensus coders were employed (each with postgraduate degrees in the social sciences) to develop categories of data. The resultant three classifications (including that of the researcher’s) were then subjected to critical questioning by a further two coders, with the researcher, until consensus was reached. The continual redefinition of categories provided a more rigorous conceptualisation of the relationships between the relevant concepts (Dey, 1993).

A number of authors have suggested using computer software to develop these themes once manual coding has taken place. The use of such packages, such as NUD*IST™ or Atlas/ti™ was considered and rejected. Although such software may allow much quicker analysis (Buston, 1997), the process of manually "tagging" specific quotations was considered desirable in that it gave the researcher a "feel" for the data, and allowed familiarity with them. Secondly, as Dey (1993: 61) notes, “the use of a computer can encourage a 'mechanistic' approach to analysis. In this scenario, the roles of creativity, intuition and insight into analysis are eclipsed”. The research analysis may then become a routine and mechanical process (Lee and Fielding, 1996). Thirdly, much of the tagging that is carried out by such software requires words to be specified or coded a priori by the researcher, which, given the wide age and educational range of respondents would require such words to be identified manually beforehand, which may not be possible. Fourthly most of the available software only identifies the sentence within which a specific word or phrase occurs (especially packages such as "Key-Word-in-Context"), and thus often fails to locate the context. Finally, the increased time incurred by manual tagging of transcripts is offset by the time required to develop competence in an appropriate computer software package.

If the researcher rejects the use of computer software for analysis, there should not be an immediate assumption that the quality of analysis is lowered. Issues of
methodological rigour are not considered problematic, as Krane, et al. (1997: 215) note:

none of these procedures directly affects the value of the study; they are merely ways for the inquirers to work with their data... If individuals use NUD*IST or Hyperqual computer programs, or 3 x 5 cards and paste them to the wall, they are really doing the same thing conceptually.

Thus provided the analysis is carried out correctly, as outlined above, the method of analysis is not related to the quality of the information obtained, and, in effect, the researcher is doing the same process, whether using a computer program or manual methods (Buston, 1997).

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data is presented in the following chapter, where the themes of football fan identification at Luton Town F.C. are outlined, and discussed.
Chapter Eight
Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

8.1 Introduction
As chapter seven, section 7.8 outlined, the research methodology adopted allowed a number of findings regarding fan identification to be drawn. Information was, as a result of the mixed-methods approach, both qualitative, which formed the most in-depth information, and quantitative, which allowed a broader picture of the features of fan identification to be ascertained. This information was collected in the context of the continuous participant observation, which allowed the researcher to develop a tacit understanding of fan identification at Luton Town F.C., and to be able to judge the plausibility, credibility, authenticity and relevance of the findings.

The characteristics of the survey and interview respondents are presented in section 8.2. Issues regarding the integration of results from each group are outlined in section 8.3. This allows the six themes to be introduced in section 8.4. The findings are presented in more depth in sections 8.4.1 to 8.4.6, and followed by a summary of football fan identification in 8.4.7.

8.2 Sample Characteristics
The relationship between the characteristics of the survey population and the interview respondents can be seen below:
Table 8.1
Sample characteristics

| Survey Respondents | n=514 | mean identity score 6.6  
|                   |       | 88.2% male, 11.8% female  
|                   |       | mean age 37.8 (male 38.2, female 34.7)  
|                   |       | attended for a mean of 21.9 years  
|                   |       | went to first match with father (47.9%)  
|                   |       | or friends (20.2%) rather than alone (4.2%)  
|                   |       | attend mainly with family (40.0%) or friends (34.8%) rather than alone (10.2%)  
|                   |       | most (81.7%) support only one team  
| Interview Respondents | n=21 | mean identity score 6.5  
|                     |       | 90.5% male, 9.5% female  
|                     |       | mean age 42.1 (male 43.2, female 32.0)  
|                     |       | attended for a mean of 30.0 years  
|                     |       | went to first match with father (52.4%)  
|                     |       | or friends (42.9%) rather than alone (4.8%)  
|                     |       | attend mainly with family (38.1%) or friends (57.1%) rather than alone (4.8%)  
|                     |       | most (90.5%) support only one team  

8.3 The Combination and Integration of the Survey Interviews and Observation/Participant Observation

As the methodology followed what Creswell (1994) refers to as a “mixed-methodology”, in that there was a continual mixing of qualitative and quantitative methods, rather than, for example, qualitative research following quantitative research, the presentation and analysis of results also continually integrated findings. Thus, there is no set pattern to the presentation of results, and findings from the different methods are introduced as and when appropriate to explain, describe or illuminate a particular point. Each general theme is analysed through outlining and discussing the second order themes that are developed from the interviews as the framework for the presentation of results. This process allows an outline of the themes of fan identity and identification to be developed. Football fandom is not thematic, however, and an integration of the findings from this section are developed into a more holistic discussion of football fan identification within chapter nine.

24 Further socio-demographic details regarding the fan composition can be seen in appendix F.
8.4 Themes of Fan Identity and Identification

The combination of empirical analysis of the data produced through the use of methods described in chapter seven, and the review of existing literature enabled the identification of six themes, or general dimensions, which emerged in relation to fan identification at Luton Town F.C. The themes emerged largely from the interview phase, and the use of the constant comparative method of coding the raw data. These themes were:

- **The extent of identification** - This general dimension explored the extent of identification of fans at Luton Town, investigating levels of identification amongst fans with the club.

- **The antecedents of identification** - This theme emerged from those factors that were related to the origin of identification with Luton Town, notably the fans' need for identification, Luton Town as the focus of identification, and the immediate development of identification with the club.

- **The maintenance of identification** - This was the theme that related to the fans' continuing identification with the club, and the identification of those factors that reduced or constrained identification with Luton Town, such as team performance, external constraints to identification and social aspects of fandom.

- **The effects of identification upon fan behaviour** - This theme emerged from the raw data that was allied with the effects that were a consequence of identifying with Luton Town, such as feelings of group membership, fan cohesion, fan rivalry, and the effects of identification upon satisfaction.

- **The changing cultural identity of English professional football** - This general dimension investigated the changing cultural identity of English professional

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25 For questionnaire respondents n=531 (response rate of 42.8%) unless otherwise stated, for interview respondents n=21 (response rate of 95.5%).
football, and the subsequent consequences on Luton fans' sense of identification with the club.

• The relationship between the fan and Luton Town Football Club - This theme incorporated data that related to the fans' perceived relationship with the club, either in terms of the club administrative, or playing staff, or the fans' perceived "membership" of the club.

The emergence of each of these themes, and their relationships to the raw data themes within each particular general dimension are displayed graphically within each relevant section of the analysis. An overall summary of the interrelationships that emerged between themes is then evaluated within chapter eleven.

8.4.1 The Extent of Fan Identity and Identification

The first general dimension to be developed is that of the extent of fan identification. This dimension refers to those themes related to the fan's strength of identity and identification with Luton Town F.C. in terms of how strongly fans see themselves as fans, how others perceive them as fans, and the extent to which this fandom is displayed. Thus the overall objective of this section is to evaluate levels of identification of attendees at Luton Town F.C.

Levels of Fan Identification at Luton Town F.C.

In terms of the focus of identification, the questionnaire survey highlighted, predictably, that most fans (97%) considered Luton Town to be their favourite team.
Table 8.2
Survey respondents favourite team (n=531).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which team do you support?</th>
<th>% survey respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luton</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premier League team</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Team</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Nationwide League team</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-League team</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the strength of identification, past work on the sports fan (Wann and Branscombe, 1993) has developed a measurement scale of fan identification with a particular sports team. This scale, which consists of a series of subscales to provide an overall identification score, was adopted within the current study. The scale gave each respondent a score of how highly they were identified with Luton Town F.C. There was a maximum score of eight on each of the seven subscales, giving a maximum total of fifty-six. This score was then divided by seven to give an overall level of identification with Luton Town Football Club. The scale ranged from a minimum score of one (not at all identified) to eight (very highly identified). In terms of internal validity, or the extent to which each of the subscales was measuring the same construct, that of fan identification with Luton Town, an acceptable Cronbach alpha score of .73 emerged\(^\text{26}\). The results demonstrated a sample population showing mostly high levels of identification with Luton Town F.C.

\(^{26}\) Carmines and Zeller (1979) suggest that a score of 0.6 is desirable. Nunnally (1978) and de Vaus (1985) suggest that any score above 0.70 should be considered as reliable. Bryman (1989) indicates, however, that 0.80 is the minimum value that should be acceptable to the researcher.
Some caution may be exercised in that it is possible that highly identified fans are more likely to complete and return questionnaires as when compared to less identified fans. This may have incorporated a degree of non-response bias into the sample. Given the response rate from the questionnaire however (42.48%), a degree of confidence must be shown in the findings (Frankfort-Nachimas and Nachimas, 1996). Levels of identity are displayed in Figure 8.1 below to illustrate the high levels of respondents' identification with Luton Town F.C.

### Table 8.3
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Score (1 - very low identification, 8 - very high identification)</th>
<th>% of survey respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 8.1
Distribution of identification levels of Luton Town fans (n=528).
Chapter Eight - Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

In terms of the timing of the survey affecting identification scores, past studies suggest that identification with a particular group is likely to be relatively stable (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Identification with a particular sports team is also relatively fixed (Murrell and Dietz, 1992). It has been suggested that the identification score is not affected by either time (Wann, 1996) or team performance in terms of success or failure (Wann and Schrader, 1996), especially for highly identified fans (Hirt, et al., 1992). Although Branscombe and Wann (1993) suggest that levels of identity may be more variable among geographically distant fans, the fan base of Luton Town is, as Williams, et al. (1989) suggest, fairly localised, with 78.7% of survey respondents having travelled less than twenty miles to watch matches. Thus, these scores are taken as relatively stable trait, rather than state characteristics of respondents.

A strong relationship emerged between level of identification with Luton Town and respondents' favourite team. The mean identity score of those citing Luton Town as their favourite team was 6.73. However, those giving another team as their favourite side scored a mean identification of 5.10 with Luton Town. This difference was significant at the P>0.001 using chi-square analysis. This result is predictable in that it is expected that most fans who would be likely to complete the questionnaire would have some interest in Luton Town.

In terms of variation between levels of identification with Luton Town and demographic variables, no significant relationships emerged between social class, gender, length of support and level of identification. Using a chi-square analysis a significant (p>0.01) variation did emerge in terms of age and level of identification. Those fans aged under thirty years of age showed significantly higher levels of identification than those aged over fifty years. The lower levels of identification amongst older fans may be attributable to three reasons. Firstly, in terms of “leisure cohorts”, the cohort of elderly fans may, due to socialisation within a different cultural context (during the nineteen-thirties to the nineteen-sixties) place less emphasis upon leisure (Elder, 1974) than the contemporary cohort. As such, an individuals’ social and personal identity as a Luton Town fan would not have been as important to the individuals overall identity, as for
example the work identity. Secondly, the increased level of solitary, rather than group activity, especially in terms of leisure participation (Mannell and Kleiber, 1997) suggests that the importance of maintaining a strong social identity may be reduced within this age group. Many individuals of an advanced age suffer from what McGuire refers to as “disuse atrophy of social skills and connections” (McGuire, 1984: 315). Finally, the elderly may also publicly “reduce” their level of identification, as many individuals may feel that they receive a lack of approval, being seen as strong football fans at an elderly age (McGuire, 1984). Given the relative stability of team identification outlined earlier however, the “leisure cohort” and “approval” explanations seem most likely, especially as a subsequent test on level of identification by job title revealed no significant differences between retired and other categories of fans.

Further analysis also indicated the source of higher identification amongst younger fans. Those fans in full time education were significantly (p>0.001) more identified those in other employment or the unemployed, of a similar age. Although a comparison between those elder fans in education against those not in education is desirable to test for spuriousness (Francis, 1979), cell sizes were too low to carry out a valid test. The source of this higher identification must therefore be presumed, rather than statistically demonstrated, to lie in the roles adopted within, and outside of education. Fans within education will have a need for personal autonomy, or “individualisation” within the school, college or university. Possessing an identity as a Luton Town fan is one such source. Additionally, those fans who have left education will be developing identities in the work or family context. Section 8.4.3 of this chapter discusses the extrinsic constraints to fan identification outlined by fans, and it seems reasonable to suggest that the development of certain important role identities may have been a constraining factor on the identity as a football fan. Further evidence can be found in Zillman, et al. (1979); Murrell and Dietz (1992); and Wann and Branscombe (1993) who have determined that fans of college sports, with likely high proportions of college students are more highly identified than other fans.
The interview phase of the research identified nineteen raw data themes that were coded as relating to the general dimension of the fans' viewpoint of the extent of their identification with Luton Town F.C. The raw data themes were further categorised into nine first order themes and four second order themes. The second order themes were the individual's own concept of being a fan; having a continual feeling of identification with Luton Town; the publicity of informants' fandom; and the feeling of identification with only one football team. The development of these themes is displayed in figure 8.2 below:
my life is organised around being a fan
I'm a fan when they are not playing
I'm not interested in any other team

Chapter Eight - Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

Figure 8.2
Coding of raw data themes - The extent of fan identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Data Themes</th>
<th>First Order Themes</th>
<th>Second Order Themes</th>
<th>General Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>being a fan is a big part of life</td>
<td></td>
<td>fan's perceived</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>always been strong fan</td>
<td></td>
<td>strength of fandom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being a fan is the most important part of who I am</td>
<td></td>
<td>perception of strength</td>
<td>being a fan”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I go to all games possible</td>
<td></td>
<td>identification with LTFC not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm hard to live with after a loss</td>
<td></td>
<td>the most important thing in life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm still a fan even though I can't go</td>
<td></td>
<td>I'm not a strong fan as I don’t go to away games</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>although I don't go to games, I'm still a fan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people I know consider me a strong fan</td>
<td></td>
<td>others perceive me as a fan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there are other, more important things in my life</td>
<td></td>
<td>identification affects day to day life</td>
<td>continual feeling of identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being a fan is not the most important thing in my life</td>
<td></td>
<td>continual feeling of fandom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm not a strong fan as I don’t go to away games</td>
<td></td>
<td>identification with only one team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my life is organised around being a fan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm a fan when they are not playing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm not interested in any other team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although a number of the second order themes are interrelated to each other, and also to other general dimensions of fan identification, as with the other general dimensions, each of the second order themes is evaluated separately.

- **Fans' perception of own Fandom** - All fans interviewed cited at least one raw data theme relating to their own perception of being a Luton Town fan. The raw data within this dimension were strongly related to the fan's self-concept, or personal identity as a Luton Town fan. The importance of being a fan was highlighted from the survey, and is outlined in table 8.4.

| Table 8.4 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Importance of being a fan to survey respondents (n=527). | % respondents (1 = not at all, 8 = very much so) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| How strongly do you see YOURSELF as a fan of Luton Town F.C.? | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 1.1 | 2.4 | 7.0 | 14.1 | 73.3 |
| How important is being a fan of Luton Town F.C. to YOU? | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 1.5 | 4.0 | 11.7 | 15.2 | 65.5 |

Thus almost three quarters (73%) of fans responded that they saw themselves “very strongly” as a fan of the club. Two thirds (66%) of fans responded that being a Luton Town fan was “very important” to them. One highly identified fan noted how important being a fan of Luton Town was to him, noting that

> it has become a habit, a love affair. It runs in my blood. I love supporting the Town through thick and thin. It makes me sick, all the pretentious glory hunters who walk through Luton. Ninety nine percent have no idea what being a real fan is all about (no.1, identity score 827).

27 Each interviewee is identified by an accompanying number. Details of interviewees can be found in Appendix E. The identity score refers to the fans score on the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) and ranges from a score of 1 (not at all identified with Luton Town) to 8 (very highly identified with Luton Town).
Fandom as a strong component of the self-concept was cited by a number of fans. One fan explained why he felt a strong identity with the club, when he stated that

it's a difficult one really, probably silly things. I mean I've got scrapbooks of the seasons, I've got every home programme from the year I was born, things like that I suppose. I've got hundreds of programmes stashed away, things like that. It's a difficult one to explain really, I suppose it's a personal feeling (no.2, identity score 8).

Respondents also cited an awareness of others seeing them as a fan. One of the perceived requirements for a strong identity to be developed is that of others' assessment of the individuals "performance" within a role (Mead, 1968; Rosenberg and Turner, 1981). Forty-three per cent of interview respondents (all highly identified with the club) referred to friends or colleagues seeing them as a marked Luton Town fan. This was strongly supported by data from the survey (see table 8.5 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% respondents (1 = not at all, 8 = very much so)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How strongly do your FRIENDS see you as a fan of Luton Town?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individuals have a number of identities, including that of being a football fan. The interview probed the relative strength of football fan identity to the individual compared to other role identities that he may possess. Thirty-three per cent of respondents, all highly identified, noted that being a Luton Town fan was their most important identity to them. This importance of fandom to the individual suggested that, overall, for many fans, identification with Luton Town was a strong source of identity. This finding is in agreement with Urry (1995) in that certain leisure activities are able to provide a strong, if not the strongest source of identity within contemporary society.
Although the overall population displayed high levels of identity with the club, a number (25%) of interview respondents noted that their identity as a Luton fan was not their most important role identity. Sixty per cent of low identification and twenty per cent of highly identified interviewees stated that being a fan was not the most important thing in their life, citing either family or work identities as being the most important. These are identities that develop in post-adolescent life, and may provide further explanation as to the higher levels of identification encountered in younger fans. This finding supports Roberts (1997a) to some extent, in that identities other than leisure identities may be the most significant for certain individuals.

- **Continual Feeling of Identification** - A number of interview respondents noted that their identification with the football club overlapped the boundaries of the actual match situation. Thirty per cent of interviewees, all highly identified with Luton Town, indicated this feeling of identification away from matches. The survey indicated a higher percentage of fans following the club “everyday” in some form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Following the team through the season (n=527).</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How closely do you follow Luton Town F.C. through the season by media or contact with other fans?</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This continual identification with the club is one of the characteristics of a “fan” (rather than spectator) suggested by Pooley (1978), Lee and Zeiss (1980) and Smith, et al. (1981) outlined in chapter three. Fans will keep in contact with the focus of the identification even away from the game situation, through the media, or contact with other fans, for example.
The percentage of fans following the club every day through indirect consumption is relatively high considering the dominance of Premier League coverage within the media, and Luton Town's comparatively low status in Division Two. This relative difficulty of accessing information was summarised by a retired fan in the survey. He noted that

apart from local radio and press we get very little attention from the BBC, who, along with SKY and the national press only seem concerned with the Premier League and I feel that the FA has sold all Nationwide teams down the river (no.3, identity score 7).

Three local newspapers - The Luton News, the Luton Herald and Post and Luton on Sunday - were mentioned by fans, although all three are weekly, rather than daily, with two having the same publication day. The two local radio stations - Three Counties Radio and Chiltern Radio - were used as a source of information for many fans. However much of the information was on an ad hoc basis, apart from a Thursday night programme devoted to local sport.

- Identification with Only One Team - The survey investigated the extent of the focus of fans' identification in terms of how many football teams fans felt that they supported. The evidence from the survey strongly suggested that most fans identified with only one football team. Fan responses were coded as follows:
Chapter Eight - Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other teams supported</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Premiership</em></td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-league team</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other <em>Nationwide</em></td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luton Town F.C.</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish club team</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National team</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European club team</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The individual teams cited most frequently by respondents in this respect were Luton Town itself - by fans who favoured another team - (2.3%); Manchester United (1.6%); Arsenal (1.6%); Tottenham Hotspur (1.0%) and Stevenage Borough (0.65%).

The high proportion of fans only supporting one team suggests that identification was focused predominantly upon a single club. No theories have been proposed as to why individuals identify with only one group, and, given the multiplicity of identities discussed earlier, identifying with more than one club is possible, although not common within this context. It may be that fans identified strongly with clubs that they watched live, and, as such, identified with Luton Town.

**The Extent of Fan Identification at Luton Town F.C. - Summary**

The fan population demonstrated generally high identification with Luton Town football club. This strong identification was apparent in all three components of fan identification, in terms of the behavioural, cognitive and affective aspects of being a Luton Town fan as scored using the *Sport Spectator Identification Scale* (SSIS). No significant differences emerged between groups in terms of level of identity other than elderly fans, who showed lower levels of identification, and
those in full time education, who displayed higher levels of identification than the overall fan population. Elsewhere, levels of fan identification with Luton Town were consistently high.

8.4.2 Antecedents of Fan Identity and Identification

The second general dimension identified was that of the antecedents of identification. Identification with a team does not develop spontaneously, but its origin is dependent upon certain antecedents. Twenty-four raw data themes related to this origin of identification emerged from the fan interviews. These were coded into five first order and three second order themes. The second order themes were the fans' perceived need for identification with a football team, Luton Town F.C. as the focus of identification and the immediate development of identification with the team.

As discussed in chapter four, identification with a team is not necessarily dependent upon attending games, and thus the assumption that the origin of identification with Luton Town is equivalent to attendance at the first game would be flawed. Thus fans were asked about their origin of support, rather than when they went to their first game, although information about respondent's history of support was elicited from the survey. The coding of the raw data themes can be seen in figure 8.3 below:
Figure 8.3
Coding of raw data themes - The antecedents of fan identification

- need for team for identity
- need团队 at school
- I needed to support a team

- I'm a fan because I was born in Luton
- I support them because I'm a Lutonian
- I support them because I live near Luton
- I support them because my family does
- I support them because they are home town team
- I wanted to be able to watch the team I supported
- They are easy to get to

- the FA Cup run made me interested in going
- went with a friend after the cup run
- my father decided to take me
- a neighbour thought I should go

- a neighbour took me to my first game
- I went to my first game because friends went
- I went to my first game with my father
- taken first with brother
- convenient to get to
- they were easy to get to

- I had immediate identification with another team
- I had immediate identification with the team
- Luton were the first team I saw

- Basis for identification with Luton
- Luton Town F.C. as focus of identification
- Antecedents of identification

- Motivation to attend first game
- Opportunity to develop identification

- need for identification
- immediate development of identification

- need for identification
- immediate development of identification
Chapter Eighteen Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

- **The Need for Identification** - Few respondents actually noted that identification with the football team came as a result of a perceived need. The need for identification was not a theme that emerged from either the observation phase or the survey. Nineteen per cent of interview respondents did produce at least one raw data theme relating to this need for an identity however. This need for identity was cited as taking place within the school context by all of these respondents. Supporting a football team was seen as an appropriate method of developing and maintaining a positive social identity. As a strongly identified male fan noted:

In my day you needed to have a football team at school as people would ask you who you supported so you needed a football team to latch on to. You needed an identity as a Man United supporter or an Arsenal supporter or whatever. It's an identity isn't it, who you support, and you carry that identity with you. It's an immediate response when someone says who do you support (no. 4, identity score 3).

The importance of gaining a sense of personal autonomy was also cited by another respondent, who suggested that his identity as a Luton Town fan developed during his adolescence, saying that

I suppose it coincided with when I was fourteen or fifteen and you start to get a bit of individuality as a teenager. I guess it was something I was doing and my parents weren't involved much and I used to go on my own, or with a couple of mates (no. 5, identity score 6).

This need to establish an identity is in accord with Roberts (1997b), who notes that it is one of the principle stages of an adolescent's development, and Hendry (1993), who notes that at this age, individuals develop identities that allow some degree of personal autonomy, away from organised leisure such as youth clubs, or school related leisure activities.
Luton Town F.C. as the Focus of Identification - Respondents were asked, as an open ended question, the reason why they supported their favourite team. A wide variety of responses were given. The following responses were received:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons cited for supporting Luton Town</th>
<th>Per cent citing reason*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local team</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in Luton</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family influence</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closest team</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style of play</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I always have&quot;</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Just like football&quot;</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken when young</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First team seen</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know why</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends influence</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>League or cup success</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to get to</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;In my blood&quot;</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;They are the best&quot;</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A particular player</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team colours</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underdogs</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly club</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Liked what I saw&quot;</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No interest in other teams</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of other fans</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some fans cited more than one reason, hence the total percentage is greater than 100%*

Although the responses received seemed to be related both to factors determining the origin and the maintenance of identification, the overall responses showed that locality was important (Figure 8.4 below). Data from the interview stage also suggested that locality was an important antecedent of identification with a particular team, and thus is evaluated within this section. Given the increasing globalisation of English football (see Williams and Wagg, 1991; Russell, 1997), it seems that locality still has a role in focusing the fandom towards local, rather than high profile clubs.
Chapter Eight - Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

These findings were supported by an analysis of secondary data on the Luton fan. Members of the electronic mailing list (WHOSH) were asked, on their joining the list, the same question, namely “why do you support Luton Town?”. Although the list is likely to be highly unrepresentative of the overall fan population, (being restricted to those with internet access, with a subsequent over representation of university students), the findings did support the importance of locality. Luton being the local team was the reason mentioned by 33.6% of members\textsuperscript{28}, and those citing being born in Luton accounted for 20.1% of respondents\textsuperscript{29}. Family influence was mentioned by 15.9%.

The interviews allowed respondents to elaborate on the importance of locality to their origin of identification. Three interrelated first order themes emerged from the interviews that related to fan’s actual origin of support and locality. These

\textsuperscript{28} (n=119)

\textsuperscript{29} It seems likely that the higher proportion of fans being born in Luton but currently living away from the area was due to the high numbers of students on the electronic mailing list.
Chapter Eight - Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

First order themes were the motivation to attend the first game, the opportunity to attend the first game, and the basis for Luton as the focus of fan identification. The importance of locality as identified from the survey was strongly supported by the interview phase. Eighty-one per cent of interview respondents noted the importance of locality towards their support of Luton Town. This sense of Luton being the "local" team was created through fans' being born in Luton (cited by nineteen per cent of interviewees); currently living in Luton (twenty-nine per cent); living near, but not actually in Luton (nine per cent); and considering Luton to be their "hometown" (twenty-three per cent). One informant commented that

you just build up an attachment to the idea of supporting the club, a club that's local as well, you become attached to it, and the idea that it is local. At the moment there's all these debates about people supporting clubs that they're not close to, and I come down being a Luton fan and being born in Bedfordshire so I'm quite a supporter of following your local team which I know isn't the done thing these days (no. 6, identity score 7).

This ideological relationship between the locality and the club was further highlighted by a male fan who said that he was a Luton fan because:

I think you have an allegiance to your local team, and I was brought up locally. I was born in Leighton Buzzard but I was brought to Luton when I was two so basically I've been brought up with supporting my home team. I think that is characteristic of supporters of lower league clubs, you have an allegiance to your local team and it goes beyond just football, it's something to do with the locality of the team, it's your own team as it were (no. 7, identity score five).

Other fans however, suggested that more pragmatic reasons were most important. One fan suggested that most fans, especially fans of lower league clubs, picked their team on the basis that
you just pick the biggest team with decent players
in a decent league that's closest to you more than
anything (no. 4, identity score 5).

Another informant echoed this point when recounting his decision to attend his
first game, remembering that

I decided I was going to watch a football match and
Luton were the closest (no. 8, identity score 7).a

This point was also mentioned by yet another fan who recollected that his choice
of watching his first game was due to the fact that

my father took me... there was no reason to see
anyone else, it was more difficult in those days (no.
9, identity score 7).

Thus the importance of the team representing the locality may not be a strong
motivation to attend that particular club, even for highly identified fans, especially when compared to more pragmatic determinants. One less identified
fan suggested that his support of a club was based on physical proximity, stating
that

you feel part of the club, although you are just a
paying customer to them, but you wanted that
identity to be a bit stronger than just that distant
support of Liverpool... so I liked the idea of
supporting a local team, and even if I was to move
somewhere, like to Hull for example then I would
probably be more involved with Hull than I would
with Luton. I moved down to Bournemouth for a
little while and although I still kept an interest in
Luton I wouldn't have called myself a supporter
(no.10, identity score 4).

Although the ideological importance of locality emerged as a strong overall
theme in the origin of fandom, the more pragmatic importance of locality was
strongly suggested. The sense of supporting the local team emerged strongly
from the interviews. However it was noted by approximately forty per cent of
Chapter Eight - Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

interview respondents that Luton Town was easy, or convenient to access, and that, in some way, was related to their choice of Luton Town as their favourite team. Thus the importance of locality for a number of fans was in terms of actual entry to the club, rather than the club representing the town. As a highly identified female fan noted, the basis of Luton as the focus of identification originated not because of a sense of loyalty to the local team, but rather because:

it is easier to get to really. I couldn’t really see myself going into London or anywhere for example to support a team or to watch somebody else... I wouldn’t consider travelling to watch another club at all. I started going and that was it. I never considered going anywhere else (no.11, identity score 8).

It can be suggested, although not empirically tested within this thesis, that the convenience of the Luton ground in terms of access may have an historical importance. Most of the survey respondents (75%) attended their first Luton Town game with their families, with almost half of the overall survey sample (48%) attending their first match with their fathers. It can be surmised that the fathers attended their first game at a time when transport was less readily available, and, as such, the importance of Luton Town being easy to get to, compared to the next closest league club (Northampton F.C.), would have been a strong influence on the choice to go to Luton Town, rather than other grounds. Most (seventy-nine per cent) of fans travelled twenty miles or less to home games. Thus, it seems likely that convenience, or accessibility is still a strong moderator of fans’ decisions to watch matches at Luton Town.

Peer group influence upon the choice of identification with Luton Town was also related to the convenience of the ground. One fan noted that

off the field you’ve got some friends as well who support them... going to the schools in the area you’ve got a lot of people who support your Liverpools, Totteneams and Man Uniteds. And I thought well I don’t want to be the sort of person who supports a team just because they are

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successful... I thought well this is my local club as well and I would rather support somebody that I can go and see now and again and that I’ve got other friends who support them as well so you’ve got something to talk about (no. 10, identity score 4).

The most common age for fans attending their first game was ten years old, and the sense of being taken to games by others emerged strongly from the interviews. Over forty-five per cent of respondents went to their first game aged eleven or under, attendance at this age was largely dependent upon others. Even at higher ages most fans went to their first game with at least one other person, and only four per cent went alone (see table 8.9):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First game seen with:</th>
<th>Percent of survey respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend(s)</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relative(s)</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father and other relative(s)</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and relatives</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results show a striking similarity to those obtained by Smith, et al. (1981) who asked respondents if there was a person or persons who encouraged them to become sports fans. Smith, et al. determined that fifty-one per cent of respondents were taken by their fathers, as compared to forty-eight per cent of fans who went to their first game with their fathers in the current sample. As with the findings of Smith, et al. however, it is unclear as to whether it was the father’s decision to take the child, or the child’s decision to attend with the father. Interview respondents within this study showed that both situations were likely. Apart from family influence, nineteen per cent were encouraged by friends, as compared to twenty per cent in the Luton Town sample who went to their first game with friends. These results are not surprising, given the
importance of immediate family and friends in defining leisure roles (Kelly, 1983).

In terms of being taken to the first game, the decision to attend was not always taken by the respondents themselves. As a very highly identified fan noted:

I suppose it was my dad's [decision]... I was too young to make a decision like that (no. 12, identity score 8).

The decision was not always family oriented. One informant recalled having no particular interest in Luton Town. However:

This gentleman who took me was interested in football and he thought it was done thing to do (no. 7, identity score 5)

In terms of levels of identification, there were no relationships between the person with whom fans went to their first game with, and their subsequent level of identification with the team. Thus, for example, those fans who attended their first game with members of their family were not likely to have different levels of identification from those who attended their first game alone. The most significant moderator of identification in this respect was whether Luton Town were the first team seen by the respondent. This relationship is outlined in the following section.

• The Immediate Development of Identification - One theme that emerged strongly from the fan interviews was the sense of the rapidity at which identification with a football team developed among respondents. Although the origin of identification and attendance at the first “live game” are not necessarily synonymous, over half (55%) of interview respondents stated that they felt they had an immediate “bond”, or sense of belonging, with the club the first time they
saw the team play “live”. One fan provided an illuminating statement with regard to his own immediate development of identification. He recalled that

at the instant I went there for the first time I thought this is great, I really felt that sense of belonging, I really felt it being there, it was just the passion. The football was only a minor part of it in a sense, I imagine it was like when some people go to a cathedral and pray. It was like a religious experience (no. 10, identity score 4).

The strong sense of having an immediate identification with the team was supported the survey findings. No relationships emerged when comparing length of support to overall level of identification with Luton Town. Those fans who saw Luton Town as their first live game, however, showed significantly (p>0.01) higher levels of identification than those who watched another team. Figure 8.5 below highlights differences between the two groups:

![Figure 8.5](image)

Although it seems reasonable to assume that many fans had a level of identification with Luton Town before attending their first “live” match, this was
not the case for all fans, and immediate identification with the team was an issue that seemed unrelated to the motivation to attend the first game. Forty per cent of interview respondents claimed to have no identification with the club when they went to their first game. Thirty-eight per cent of these subsequently claimed to have developed an immediate identification with the team. One highly identified fan recalled the process of instant identification:

> After the first game I was a definite Luton fan. Yes, definitely. I think I got hooked on the atmosphere. We were up in the Oak Road in those days and we were standing. And there was a terrific atmosphere (no. 8, identity score 7).

This sense of immediate identification appeared to form the foundation for fans' subsequent identification with the club. One fan, although aged only eight at his first game, remembered that

> although Luton's a small ground, I suppose I was overwhelmed by the atmosphere. In those days there was a lot of singing and there was quite a good following, and I suppose I was overwhelmed by that more than by watching the football. That got me straight away. After that I knew I'd always be a fan (no. 12, identity score 8).

Although it could be suggested that fans would have a prior identification with Luton Town before the first game, the evidence suggested that this was not always the case. One fan recounted that he had no prior interest in Luton Town. Attending the first match at Luton came about because:

> My father took me... there was no reason to see anyone else. It was more difficult in those days.

Although it was not the fan's choice to attend that game, he recollected a sense of immediate identification, suggesting that

> I think you realise straight away that you are a Lutonian and that Luton are your club. That's how I felt anyway. I've never been interested in supporting anybody else (no. 13, identity score 7).
A number of fans decided to attend Luton matches due to the ease of accessing the ground (section 8.4.2). Even these fans were able to develop an instant sense of identification with the club. As already noted, one fan suggested that he chose Luton Town because:

you just pick the biggest team with decent players in a decent league that's closest to you more than anything (no. 4, identity score 5).

Despite this lack of prior interest in the club, the same fan noted that:

I think that the first ground you go to, the atmosphere and the crowd, if they do quite well then you're hooked.

This sentiment was echoed by a very highly identified fan who went to Luton rather than to another club because:

it's easier to get to really... I wouldn't consider travelling to watch another club at all. I started going and that was it, I never considered going anywhere else (no. 11, identity score 8).

And a less highly identified fan who thought that, at his first game:

I was an immediate fan, I think as soon as I was there I liked the atmosphere and the excitement of it (no. 7, identity score 5).

Thus, fans were able to develop high levels of identification even if no prior interest in Luton were apparent. Thus, although many fans would have had prior identification, especially through their fathers' support, such preceding support was not a prerequisite for identification.
Antecedents of Fan Identity and Identification at Luton Town F.C. - Summary

The origin of fan identification among respondents emerged as a consequence of three main factors, two of which - the perceived need for identification and a desire for identification were intrinsic, while the third, that of being taken to games, was extrinsic. The three may interrelated, in that the fan might have been taken to a game as a result of an intrinsic desire to attend games.

The focus of identification - Luton Town - was chosen on both pragmatic and ideological grounds. Although a strong sense of supporting the local team emerged from the informants, the importance of the ground being the most convenient to respondents was also an important factor.

Finally a strong sense of immediate identification developed from the respondents. Although it may be argued that many fans would feel they were a fan of Luton Town before attending their first game, a strong feeling developed from the interview phase that it was actually attendance at the game that originated this sense of identity as a Luton fan.

8.4.3 The Maintenance of Fan Identity and Identification

The general dimension of the maintenance of identification refers to constructs that are related to the development and maintenance of an identity and identification as a fan. The maintenance of fan identification provided the most raw data themes (forty-seven in total), first order themes (fourteen) and second order themes (seven) within any general dimension. Using the constant comparative method, these data were coded as shown below (Figure 8.6):
## Chapter Eight: Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

### Figure 8.6
Coding of raw data themes - The maintenance of fan identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Development of friendships</th>
<th>Importance of company at matches</th>
<th>Social aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>being a fan helps me to meet people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being a fan allows me to meet people that I wouldn't normally do so in day to day life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel benefits of friendships made</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>football allows a bonding between strangers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made friends through football</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being a fan allows you to talk to people you don't know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the social aspect of being a fan is important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wouldn't go if I had to go alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better atmosphere if you go with people you like</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it's important to go with friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fans are all there for the same reason</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>football provides a common interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel a sense of togetherness with the crowd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important to be seen as part of a group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't mind failure</td>
<td></td>
<td>failure not important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'll still go if they keep losing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure may stop me going</td>
<td></td>
<td>failure as a constraint to identification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success is important to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continually hope for success like the 80's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success is a bonus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success is not important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>style of play is important to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it's important they play good football</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important that results are unpredictable identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I go despite the facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities are not important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the atmosphere is the most important thing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>club needs to stay in Luton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be less of a fan if they moved outside Luton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would support another team if they were closer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they're easy to get to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fandom has become stronger over time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a continual optimism for the future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will always be a Luton fan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will always go while they are a league club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it's not a conscious decision, being a Luton fan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tradition of fandom is very important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't go to all games because of the expense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ticket prices mean I can't go always</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be more identified if I could afford to go more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can't go as much since I got married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I play football on Saturdays and can't go to all games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interest in work has reduced interest in club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification dropped after marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's not fashionable being a Luton fan anymore</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work prevents attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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• **Social Aspects of Fan Identification** - Membership of any social group requires some form of interaction, or perceived interaction among its members. Smith, *et al.* (1981) indicated that for highly committed American male sports fans, the most frequently cited reason for the contribution of fandom towards the overall quality of life was that of socialisation among friends with a common interest. Thus, it was not surprising to discover in the current study that social interactions among fans were highlighted as important to the maintenance of identification at Luton Town.

Going to games with friends was a theme that emerged strongly from the fan interviews. One informant felt that identification with the football club simply provided the opportunity for socialising. He suggested that:

> I honestly feel that in a general sense it is the social aspect, and the team playing is just an opportunity for that social aspect to take place. It provides a common goal, a common point of interest (no. 14, identity score 6).

The origin of such social relationships through football was cited by sixty-two per cent of interviewees, and was a strong theme throughout many of these interviews. A central sub-theme that emerged from the interviews was the development of friendships in general. As one female fan noted:

> I have made friends with them (other fans) through actually going to football (no. 11, identity score 8).

One fan, a managing director, observed that he had made many friends through football that:

> I would otherwise never meet, not in the social sense, but in the economic sense because I obviously live a different life to them (no. 14, identity score 6).
Thus it seems reasonable to suggest that these friendships were made on the basis of group membership with Luton Town, that is to say the foundation of these friendships was a common support of the football club. Hence social relations were made on the basis of the most salient identity at matches, that of the Luton Town fan. It is on the basis of this shared identity, rather than work identities, that formed the basis for this socialising. Thus, as Finn and Guilianotti (1998) suggest, football may form identities that transcend other exclusive, or possibly competitive, identities.

The high percentage (approximately eighty per cent) of season ticket holders meant that most fans sat in the same seat for each home game. Thus, understandably, interaction occurred between fans on this basis of shared identity. The development of these relationships was outlined by a highly identified fan:

It's weird, but there's this definite sense of solidarity, and then you talk to people you don't even know, when your team is winning you get that sense of euphoria and you're talking to people sitting in front of you... you do build up these weird types of football relationships with other people you know. You know you see them there and they always sit in the same seats, and it builds up over the weeks and I actually saw one of the blokes the other week, I saw him in the Arndale and he was chatting even though it's outside the football ground (no. 6, identity score 7).

This interaction would theoretically be facilitated by fans seeing each other as “special” (Zillman, et al., 1979; Wann and Branscombe, 1993). Thus the individual would see himself as being part of a “special” group when compared to other groups (Brown, 1988), with a resultant enhancement of the self-image and self-esteem (Oakes and Turner, 1980).

- **Team Performance and the Maintenance of Identification** - The importance of team performance towards the maintenance of identification was
an interesting theme, given that, as noted in chapter four, team success or failure should not affect identification to a significant extent. Therefore it was considered important to evaluate fans' perceptions of the team's performance towards their own identification. Two constructs were involved in evaluating team success, these being the objective measure of the team's win/loss record, and, harder to evaluate, the subjective measure of how well the team played. In terms of the importance of the team winning, the evidence from the different phases of the fieldwork was contradictory. Table 8.10 below shows that winning was "very important" for over half of the respondents (52%):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important in it to YOU that Luton Town wins?</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% respondents (1 = not important, 8 = very important)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This finding was in agreement with Smith, *et al.* (1981) who determined that only two per cent of male fans were "not upset" if their team lost. However, when respondents were asked how important team success was to their continuing support of the club, findings from the survey demonstrated that success was less important (Table 8.11 below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is the team's success to you continuing to support Luton Town?</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% respondents (1 = not important, 6 = very important)</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview respondents attached less importance to the team winning. Less than fifteen per cent of interviewees stated that the team's winning was important to
the maintenance of identification, and approximately twenty per cent of interview respondents stated that "some" success was important. Forty per cent of interview respondents, however, noted that success was not important to their continued identification with the team, and twenty-five per cent of respondents remarked that success was a bonus, rather than necessary. One informant predicted that

I'll be there to the end. I'll be there until they drop out of the league and I'd possibly even go if they went down to the conference or worse (no. 15, identity score 7).

Thus the overall sentiment was that it was important to fans that their team won, (especially to enhance their social and personal identity, for example through the process of baking in reflected glory, or BIRGing - see chapter four). Failure, however, was not perceived as constraining identification, through, for example, the process of cutting off reflected failure, or CORFing. As table 4.1 (chapter four) indicates, highly identified fans were less likely to CORF. Thus the seemingly contradictory findings were actually consistent with identity theory, and past findings. Although Iso-Ahola's (1980) suggests that the team's win/loss record is the most important predictor of a fan's decision to attend, the findings of the current study indicated that this consideration was more relevant to less identified fans, and that highly identified fans were less affected by the team's record.

More consensus was reached in terms of the importance of the team's style of play. Luton Town had been traditionally noted for playing "attractive" football, and this tradition might have been reflected in the importance attached to playing style. Forty-three per cent of interview respondents noted that the team's style of play was important to them.
Chapter Eight: Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

Table 8.12
The importance of entertaining football (n=516).

| How important is entertaining football to you continuing to watch Luton Town? | % respondents (1 = not important, 6 = very important) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7.2 | 4.3 | 12.4 | 19.6 | 24.6 | 32.0 |

The significance of the entertaining nature of football as a spectator sport in providing the focus of identification is noted by Hopcraft (1968) and Holt (1989), who suggest that the character of the game is significant in attracting fans. Within the questionnaire, an open question asked respondents to cite aspects about being a Luton Town fan with which they were satisfied. Fans were able to list as many features as necessary, in order of satisfaction. Responses, coded in relation to team performance in terms of the win/loss record were supplied more frequently than those regarding the team’s playing style. However, given the team’s relatively high league placing, (sixth, albeit it in Division Two), at the time of the survey, the limitations of these data must be recognised. The findings are presented in table 8.13 below:

Table 8.13
Percentage of fans citing satisfaction with playing performance and playing style of the team (n=531).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage citing as 1st response</th>
<th>Percentage citing as 2nd response</th>
<th>Percentage citing as 3rd response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team Performance</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Playing Style</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite such limitations, clearly many fans perceived Luton Town’s team performance and style of play favourably, and cited these within the survey. This response set may be due to what Tajfel (1982) and Brown (1986) refer to as “voicing”. As noted in chapter four, members of a group, such as Luton Town fans, should theoretically, and did some extent, stress positive aspects of being a
member of the group, such as being a fan of a team with an entertaining style of play.

- **Facilities and the Maintenance of Identification** - Coalter (1985), Madrigal (1995), Tomlinson, *et al.* (1995) and Redhead (1997) all note how the quality of facilities is not a significant predictor of fan identification. The findings in this study also suggest that the quality of facilities is not a major issue to fan identification at Luton Town F.C. Only fourteen per cent of interview respondents overall, and five per cent of highly identified fans provided raw data themes relating to the quality or importance of facilities to their identification with Luton Town. Tomlinson, *et al.* (1995) indicate that the quality of facilities is less important than factors such as atmosphere or social opportunity. Thus it seems reasonable to suggest that facilities are not important to the maintenance of fan identification at Luton Town, rather that the consequence of possessing strong identification as a follower of the club is to make the quality of facilities less of an issue to fans. As such, this section is analysed in more depth in section 8.4.4 - The effects of identification upon fan behaviour.

- **The “Atmosphere” and Fan Identification** - Although hard to define, the “atmosphere” was mentioned by only fourteen per cent of interviewees as being important to their maintenance of identification. Given the relatively poor rating of the atmosphere at home games, (chapter eight, section 8.4.3), this finding is not surprising. However, the interview respondents highlighted how important atmosphere was to their immediate sense of identification with the team (see section 8.4.3). Thus, the concern over the fans’ perception of poor atmosphere was that fans might not develop this immediate identification within the current atmosphere. One implication for the club was that if, as had happened in the past, free tickets were distributed, then such a marketing plan may require an improvement in the perceived atmosphere for such a strategy to be successful.
Because of the relatively low importance of atmosphere as being important to the maintenance of identification, respondents' attitudes towards the atmosphere at Luton Town are discussed in more depth as part of the effects of identification on fan behaviour in section 8.4.4.

- **Locality and the Maintenance of Fan Identification** - The importance of Luton as a place as the basis for the focus of identification was highlighted in section 8.4.2. The importance of the club staying in Luton in terms of the maintenance of fan identification, also arose from the fieldwork, as can be seen from Table 8.14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.14</th>
<th>Importance of ground location to fans continued support (n=518).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% respondents (1 = not important, 6 = very important)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is the location of the ground in your continuing to support Luton Town?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of interview respondents suggested that a proposed move from the current stadium in Luton, to a new stadium in Milton Keynes (see appendix A) would have affected their continued support. In general, the movement of Luton Town away from the Borough of Luton did not emerge as a strong issue for many. This outcome could have been attributable to the high profile promotion of the plans for the “Kohlerdome” stadium at the time of the research, with the resultant feeling that Luton would be located in the town in the future.

- **Fan Identification as Habit** - Cohesiveness, and resultant maintained membership of a group is one result of fandom (cf. chapter four). Thus, certain fans may see identification with Luton Town as habitual. One highly identified fan noted that his reasons for currently supporting the team were as follows:
Habit, probably would form a strong part of it, er a certain amount of loyalty as well, although that fluctuates a bit these days I'm afraid. I've got into the habit of going now, and even now I've moved on from being a schoolboy to being a married man with responsibilities and a family still that's never changed. I've always had the viewpoint that Saturday afternoons from August through to May were for going to watch my team and never moved away from that so as I say, habit has a lot to do with that (no. 16, identity score 7).

Loyalty was cited by other fans as overriding other factors, such as team failure. The importance of the fans' perceived loyalty was summarised by a fan who noted that:

once you get into it you know, I mean it's all different now because you've got SKY and all that, you just get into it and you look at the other teams and it just doesn't mean the same thing, I mean even now you go and they lose every game for a while and you get fed up with it but it's in you, and there's a history to it. I mean I go back twenty years, almost twenty five years, and it's all the things they've done, the players that they've had, it's the history, although I'm quite sure that they are getting to a stage where they are being a test to people's loyalty I suppose but that loyalty is still there (no. 17, identity score 6).

As fans show high levels of identification with the club, it seems likely that they will have a strong emotional "investment" (Tajfel, 1972, 1981, 1982) and high cohesiveness within the group (Turner, 1991). Poor performances are theoretically unlikely to constrain fans' identification with the team (Wann and Branscombe, 1990), especially given the overall high levels of identification with Luton Town displayed by the sample population. Therefore fans' perception of habit is likely, according to identity theory. One fan noted the consequences of this association, noting how:

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30 At the time of this particular interview Luton Town F.C. had just lost their fourth consecutive home game (2-3 v. Burnley) the preceding evening.
You support them through thick and thin, at Lincoln City where we saw eight go past them, or in sixty-seven when I've stood up at Hartlepool in January where we lost two one (no. 9, identity score 7).

Thus maintained identification despite the team's results is a consequence of fan identification, and consistent with identity theory.

- **Tradition and Fan Identification** - Tradition may be seen as related to fan loyalty, and habit to a certain extent. Tradition emerged as an important factor affecting continued identification with Luton Town in the survey (table 8.15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is tradition in your continuing to support Luton Town?</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% respondents (1 = not important, 6 = very important)</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Few raw data themes emerged from the interview phase, however. More importance was attached to the history of identification in that family members, notably the fathers, with a history of support took their children to games at an early age, a situation which led to the subsequent, and often simultaneous identification of the child (section 8.4.2). As with the case of habit, a sense of tradition may emerge with strong cohesiveness. It may be surmised that, in many cases, the sense of identification of the father would be passed through via socialisation to the child. A high proportion of fans who attended their first game aged eleven or under (49.7% of the current sample) with their family supported this influence of the family, rather than peer, socialisation (cf. Coleman, 1974; Hendry, et al., 1993, 1995).
Extrinsic Constraints to Fan Identification - It seems reasonable to suggest that more identified fans would attend more games. This association is discussed in section 8.4.4. There are, however, external constraints to fan identification which emerged from the fieldwork that made a direct causal relationship between attendance and level of identification unlikely. These constraints were both structural, such as financial constraints, and interpersonal, such as family commitments (Crawford, et al., 1991). As one male fan noted:

there are factors of life that say you can’t go or whatever, you can’t always go for whatever reason (no. 17, identity score 6).

When probed about the factors which made that particular fan unable to attend all games, he responded that

I go to less games now because I have a young family, I go to less games as it’s not quite so easy because I have a young family. When you’ve got a three year old and a five year old it’s not so easy, it’s the practicality of the thing.

Marriage was cited by several interview respondents as an important constraint. Relatedly, one highly identified fan suggested that:

I think you’ve got to have a certain amount of loyalty to the wife as well and I think it would be too much. I can’t really spend every Saturday watching football as much as I’d like to (no. 9, identity score 7).

Survey respondents gave the factors of cost (mostly in the form of ticket prices, but also travel costs), work commitments, distance and poor football all above family commitments, (a “general lack of time” was the most often cited reason, but is difficult to interpret). Constraints that were mentioned by survey respondents were competing time commitments (cited by 21.1% of fans); ticket cost (15.1%); work commitments (10.4%); distance (6.6%); Luton’s poor playing...
performance at the time (5.9%); cost of travel (4.7%); the poor quality of the opponents (4.0%); family commitments (3.0%); not being interested enough (1.1%); and watching other football (1.0%). Thus, many of the reasons were external to the fan. One fan summarised why, even as a highly identified fan, he did not attend every home game:

I am one of those floating fans that only turn up when we are doing well. I work all week, long hours, and play in a band nearly every Friday and Saturday night. Towards the end of the season I half kill myself by going to as many matches as possible as the tension rises (no. 18, identity score 7).

Some further explanation for the higher identification of those in education, rather than working, is also indicated. Whilst being in education, one informant noted that

there was less distractions, I mean now there’s the wife, there’s more distractions and you can’t commit yourself in the same way as when you were seventeen or eighteen, I mean then there was just football and drinking and that was it (no. 8, identity 7).

Thus a clear sense of extrinsic constraints to identification emerges here. Firstly, other identities become more significant to the individual. Secondly, structural constraints to attendance exist, in that even those fans who maintained high identification would not necessarily be able to attend every game.

The stability of identification outlined earlier suggests that for those fans who developed other, more important identities, identification as a Luton Town fan was not necessarily reduced. Instead it seems more likely that the other identities became more important. Therefore, there is no reason why such fans should not maintain strong identities, which could then be transferred via socialisation to children, as discussed above, and which has been historically evident.
The Maintenance of Fan Identity and Identification at Luton Town F.C. - Summary

The overall conclusions to be drawn from an examination of the maintenance of fan identification at Luton Town are that football fan identification was relatively stable, especially for highly identified fans, and that fans showed evidence of, and intentions to maintain such identification. The findings from this section were in accord with Branscombe and Wann (1991) and Wann and Schrader (1996) in that identification with the team seemed to remain stable, rather than fluctuate. The results also supported Coalter (1985) who states that the quality of facilities may not be important to the football fan. Rather it is the team performance, and more importantly the style of play of the team that is important to the maintenance of fan identification. As with the findings from chapter eight section 8.4.3, the locality of the club was also important, in that movement of the club from Luton to another would reduce the identification of a number of fans.

In terms of reducing or constraining identification, the findings suggest that external factors were more likely to reduce levels of identity with Luton Town. Thus cost, marriage and employment were all potentially likely to reduce interest in, and thus levels of identification with, Luton Town, to a greater degree than team failure or poor facilities.

8.4.4 The Effects of Fan Identity and Identification upon Fan Behaviour

The interview phase developed twenty-one raw data themes related to the effect of being identified with the club on facets of fans' behaviour (other than on the maintenance of identification, which is dealt with in section 8.4.3 of this chapter). These raw data themes were coded into seven first order, and four second order themes. The second order themes were those of fan rivalry, fan cohesion, levels of attendance, and suggested improvements to the fans' experience whilst watching Luton Town. Some raw data themes related to other general
dimensions, notably those of the maintenance of fan identification. As in the other sections where this occurs, the analysis is concentrated within the most appropriate, rather than each of the general dimensions.
### Figure 8.7
Coding of raw data themes - The effects of fan identification upon behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I talk about being a fan at work</td>
<td>publicity of fandom</td>
<td>publicity of fandom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wear kit to show my identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its important others see me as a fan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dislike Watford because they are the closest to Luton</td>
<td>Dislike of Watford</td>
<td>fan rivalry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beating Watford is everything to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watford are the enemy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being a fan provides common interest</td>
<td>part of a common interest</td>
<td>fan cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fans are all there for the same reason</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football provides a common interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel a sense of togetherness with the crowd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important to be seen as part of a group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend as many games as I can</td>
<td>Fan attendance</td>
<td>fan attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm not really interested enough to go to all matches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't get to see all the matches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't want same seat every week</td>
<td>Disadvantages of seating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seating has ruined atmosphere</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should be able to choose seat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>season tickets mean you're stuck with certain fans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the atmosphere is bad at the moment</td>
<td>poor atmosphere</td>
<td>perceived improvements to fan experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atmosphere at home is dreadful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atmosphere has declined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing would make a better atmosphere</td>
<td>desire to stand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should be able to stand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could move around if standing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standing allows you to be with people you want</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Eight - Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

- **Publicity of Fandom** - Once the individual has developed a satisfactory social identity, then he is likely to demonstrate that identity to others, to confirm an "impression" to others that he has that particular identity (Leary and Kowalski, 1991). This is done through the use of strategic behaviour (Leary, 1995). Within the football fan context, this impression management involves those behaviours that are associated with the fan role.

Three raw data themes were identified that related to the publicity of fandom of interview respondents. A substantial number (thirty-eight per cent) of interview respondents mentioned talking about being a fan at work. Raw data within this category emerged in two contexts from the interviews.

Firstly, football fandom was used as a method of developing social relationships, (see section 8.4.3), through a shared interest. This enabled fans to show identification away from the actual match situation, even with those where no other commonality appeared to exist. A good description of this was provided by a highly identified male training officer, who stated that:

> I go round and check the quality of training that these young people get, and I go round and they all know that I'm a Luton fan. I can go and have a chat to these young people and have a cup of tea and in most cases it gives a common interest, I mean you still have to get down to the hard nitty gritty about training but it brings down a barrier, I mean what does a sixty year old man have in common with a sixteen year old youngster? (no. 19, identity score 6).

Secondly, fandom was a strong topic of conversation for respondents who worked with other football fans, both of Luton and of other clubs. Work provided an opportunity for a number of fans to be a 'public' fan, that is publicly promoting their fandom. One example encountered was from a highly identified male fan working for the Inland Revenue. He asserted that

> I tend to work all around East Anglia at various locations and I should think that everywhere I go
Chapter Eight - Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

it’s oh no here’s the Luton fan when I arrive, so yes, it’s a pretty important thing. There’s about four or five thousand people working for the revenue in the Eastern region and I think that everyone who knows me knows I’m a Luton Fan (no. 16, identity score 7).

Not all fans were able to have a strong social identity as a Luton fan within the work environment. As Goffman’s (1968) work suggests, the individual sees himself as he perceives others viewing him. Thus, if those others have little, or no interest in football, then it is more difficult for the fan to have a salient social identity within the work context. As one fan noted:

I work with children, so a lot of the people I work with are female, so to a certain degree the fact that I support Luton doesn’t mean much to a lot of the people I meet but if I was in a different profession you can often use football in getting to know someone so in that sort of light I would use it a lot (no. 12, identity score 8).

Thus it seems reasonable to suggest that the strength of social identity of Luton fans within the work context could have been be dependent upon both the fan’s identification, and the knowledge or interest of colleagues.

One feature that emerged from covert observation during the interviews, (that took place at fans’ homes, or places of work), was the display of Luton Town F.C. memorabilia, notably car and window stickers, calendars and pennants. The importance of displaying such material was also highlighted by survey respondents as well. Respondents to the questionnaire indicated that over one quarter (28%) of fans “always” displayed the team’s name in some form at home, at work or on clothing (see table 8.16):
Table 8.16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Display of team name at work, home or on clothing (n=527)</th>
<th>% respondents (1 = never, 8 = always)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do YOU display Luton Towns' name at your place of work, where you live, or on clothing?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2 6.6 6.2 4.5 13.7 14.5 13.6 27.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observation revealed a higher percentage wearing the team's name on match days, although a high proportion of fans' wearing the Luton Town name appeared to be younger fans. Observation indicated that shirts were more popular among younger fans, while Luton Town scarves or coats were favoured by older fans. A significant proportion of fans was observed wearing no Luton Town clothing or insignia at all. Approximately one third of the shirts worn were not of the current, or previous design, but one of two 1970's designs offered by the fanzine, Mad as a Hatter. Few fans wore the away kit, and no fans were observed on match days wearing the “third kit”. One fan explained why she wore her shirt regularly, away from the match situation as well as at games, saying that

it shows who I support to other people (no. 11, identity score 8).

When asked why it was important for other people to know she was a Luton fan, she replied that

I think it's important to be seen as part of a group.
You can identify people from what they've got on.

The observation phase highlighted the strength of this publicity of fandom. Although it would have been reasonable to assume that most fans who attended matches were Luton Town fans, the wearing of shirts, and the team's name on
other clothing demonstrated the strength of many fans’ publicly displaying their social identity as part of the group.

- **Fan Rivalry** - The concept of in-group/out-group rivalry was introduced in chapter three, and the fieldwork identified this characteristic as a strong consequence of fan identification with Luton Town. Observation at matches indicated a high proportion of anti-Watford chants. Participation in these chants was strong in terms of numbers of participants, and also in terms of the ratio of anti-Watford chants heard as a proportion of the overall chants that occurred during matches. Anti-Watford chants were a feature almost predominantly heard when Luton Town were either losing, or drawing but being outperformed. Chants against the actual visiting team were predominant whilst Luton were winning or “on top” of the opposition. The findings from the survey demonstrated a dichotomy of feeling towards Watford, in that fans tended either to have little anti-Watford feeling, or a strong dislike of Watford (table 8.17). Although fans were asked to rate their dislike of their “greatest rivals”, Luton have had, historically, only one rival team, and it is reasonable to assume that most fans were referring to Watford. This point is not critical however, as group membership theoretically results in dislike of any other groups that are a “competitive threat”, for example a rival team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.17</th>
<th>Survey respondents dislike of greatest rivals (n=524)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(% respondents 1=not at all 8=very much so)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do YOU dislike Luton’s greatest rivals? (%)</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social identity theory suggests that those fans with a higher identity have a greater dislike of rivals, a point that was borne out by the survey. Table 8.18 shows the mean scores of dislike of local rivals by level of identification with
Luton Town. As predicted, the higher the level of identification with Luton Town, the higher were the mean scores of dislike of greatest rivals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of identification with Luton Town F.C.</th>
<th>Mean score of dislike of “greatest rivals”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A strong correlation ($r=0.6443$, $p>0.001$) was calculated between level of identity and dislike of greatest rivals ($n=516$), a finding consistent with past research on reactions to out-groups (Oakes and Turner, 1980; Branscombe and Wann, 1992, 1994).

Although the playing success of the team has been shown to be not significant to fans’ identification with the team, the importance of beating Watford, and thus confirming their own team as “better” was recorded by approximately ten per cent of interview respondents. A highly identified fan summarised that

if we had beaten Watford twice, then a lot of supporters wouldn’t have been too bothered if we’d been relegated the feeling is that strong. Beating Watford is everything (no. 20, identity score 7).

When probed about the reason for this feeling, the respondent found it hard to verbalise an explanation, however he did allude to the concept of group membership:

I don’t know why, it’s a tribal thing really isn’t it? It’s very basic. I don’t know at my age if I should really be thinking that sort of thing, but I do.

Social identity theory posits that this feeling of being “better” has the effect of enhancing the individual’s personal identity through his group identity as a fan,
and thereby enhancing self-esteem, especially among those fans who are highly identified with Luton Town. This effect was pronounced among many fans, who referred to Watford as a "long ball" team, when contrasted with Luton's passing game. This direct comparison of desirable and undesirable attributes allowed further positive consequences of being a Luton Town fan to emerge (Emler and Hopkins, 1990).

- **Fan Cohesion** - One of the themes in the interview schedule was that of assessing whether fans felt a connection with each other, or saw other fans as "special" in some other way. Fifty per cent of interview respondents cited at least one raw data theme relating to perceiving this "common bond", even amongst strangers. One subject described how this bonding was apparent even away from the football stadium:

> There’s this bonding between complete strangers in the street, you see them in the street and you don’t know them from Adam but you see them in a Luton shirt and you say hello even if it’s a complete stranger which is quite unusual. It’s probably the only walk of life that this happens that I can think of (no. 6, identity score 7).

One highly identified survey respondent noted that while watching Luton Town, he felt a sense of common identity with other fans, in that he felt that

> you are all part of an army (survey respondent, identity score 8).

Thus, as Zillman and Paulus (1993: 604) suggest, fans see themselves as part of a "tacitly existing group". It is the awareness of belonging to the individual that is more important than having a formalised structure of membership (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1986). The feeling of belonging to this army was more important to fans than the quality of play or the quality of facilities. One fan noted that
I was thinking of the Watford game...well you hit rock bottom during the game but there’s this sense of solidarity when you’re so bad because everyone feels the same, you go in at half-time and wander down to the crappy toilets and everyone’s but in the same way you don’t feel so bad (no. 6, identity score 7).

Thus some strong evidence of fan cohesion emerged from the fieldwork. Again, given the high identification levels that were apparent, it seems likely that the strong group identification of fans' resulted in strong cohesiveness. Thus, the poor quality of facilities, for example, was unlikely to constrain identification of most fans.

As noted in chapter three, a cohesive group will have particular norms and values. Those who transgress such values may be subject to stigmatisation by other members. One fan provided an illuminating example of how norms operate within the football crowd. He suggested that

I think that you become part of a subculture which has its own rules

with the result that when such rules were broken, subsequent ostracisation was likely. The fan recollected that

There was a fellow who was sitting behind us who was foul mouthed... and he shouted out an insult that was so utterly dire that all the fans within earshot all turned and glared at him together, because its one thing, its part of the subculture, its one thing to shout at the ref. or the teams, that’s one reason why people go... but this was so disgusting.

Because of the fan’s behaviour, he was subsequently ostracised by the other group members. The same fan recalled that

everyone actually glared at him, and do you know, for the rest of the season he hardly spoke and the

---

31 This informant was referring to the 1997/98 Luton Town versus Watford Town game at Kenilworth Road. Watford, strong local rivals, beat Luton for the first time in ten years, eventually winning four-nil. Significant crowd violence was observed at this game.
following season he never came back. The subculture didn’t like it and froze him out. You’ve got to learn to be part of the group. (no 14, identity score 6).

Thus, an illuminating example of the pressures to behave as “part of the group” was provided, with a demonstration of the pressures that may lead to the subsequent exit of such an individual from the group.

• Fan Attendance - Fan attendance has already been discussed in section (8.4.3), where it was suggested that external constraints, rather than an intrinsic decision, may affect the ability of the fan to attend matches. The main issue is whether level of attendance directly influences level of identity, in that fans who attend more will feel more identified with the club. Alternatively, level of identity may be an important predictor of attendance at matches. Given the sense of immediate identification with the club that was outlined by a number of highly identified fans in section 8.4.2, the most reasonable explanation is that level of identification with the club is associated with attendance. Analysis of the secondary research indicated that the higher the level of identity as a Luton Town fan, the more games the fan would see, taking into account the external constraints to attendance discussed in section 8.4.3.

The question of whether strength of identification is related to levels of attendance can be investigated. Although it seems reasonable to suggest that highly identified fans would attend more matches than less identified fans, there were a number of variables that affected attendance. The survey findings, however, demonstrated a relationship between levels of identification and attendance (see figure 8.8).
A significant correlation coefficient ($r=0.1791$, $p>0.001$) was yielded between attendance and identification ($n=517$).

Thus, apart from the lowest levels of identification, (where small sample sizes may have skewed the results), there was a tendency for attendance to increase with level of identification. Constraints to attendance however, such as those imposed by work, or the family, meant that a simple causal relationship between attendance and identification was unlikely.

A strong relationship emerged between attendance at away matches and level of identity. Figure 8.9 shows the general trend for attendance at away matches to rise with level of identity.
A strong correlation was calculated ($r=0.2581$, $p>0.001$) between level of identification with Luton Town F.C. and away matches attended, in that those fans who were more highly identified tended to attend more away games ($n=518$). It is interesting however, that attendance at away matches was generally low among most fans. This finding may be partly attributable to the relative geographical isolation of Luton town when compared to other clubs within the division.

Again it was not possible to determine whether increased attendance was a result of increased identification with Luton Town, or whether identification was a consequence of increased attendance at matches. Given the immediate development of identification with the club, however, it seems reasonable to suggest that increased attendance at matches was a consequence of high identification with the football club.
• **Improvements to the Fan Experience** - A limited number of raw data themes related to suggested improvements to the experience of being an identified fan emerged. Although the observation phase determined that the quality of the home ground was undoubtedly poor in comparison to other grounds within the division, poor facilities did not emerge as an issue to fans. Only three interview respondents cited the facilities as affecting their fandom. Of these three fans, two were not highly identified with the club, which is supportive to some extent, of Madrigal (1995) who suggests that the quality of facilities is not an issue for highly identified fans, and Tomlinson, *et al.* (1995) who note that factors such as socialising and tradition are more important to sports fans.

Related to the issue of the quality of facilities is the question of the all-seater policy of Luton Town F.C. At the time of the Taylor Report, Luton Town was in Division One, and thus required to replace terracing. With the club currently in Division Two, an all-seater stadium is no longer mandatory. The club, however, has not restored any standing areas, despite the apparent willingness of the government to allow standing at all levels of the Football League (anonymous, 1997). Two survey respondents highlighted the role of the Government, rather than the football club, in introducing those measures. One of the respondents noted that

> although it's not the clubs' fault, I object to the fact that I have to sit at a football match. The knee jerk reaction to the Taylor Report has in my view detracted from the atmosphere at football matches. The improvement in football stadia is to be welcomed but not if it disaffects football (survey respondent, identity score 7).

The other respondent, a fan who had attended games for over fifty years, stated that

> seating was a government namby pamby imposition, like most rushed through legislation. Adrenaline flows in excitement for the game.
Passive seating destroys the sense of belonging (survey respondent, identity score 6).

Another fan gave his reasons for supporting the return of terraces, recalling that, as a result of terracing:

you could move around I suppose, you could get into a position where you were happy. If it was getting a bit noisy in a particular area then you could move away, you could suit yourself. You weren’t pigeonholed for the whole season where you didn’t want to be (no. 13, identity score 7).

The administration of season tickets means that fans are allocated seats for the entire season. Thus, even if fans are unhappy about their placement, they have to retain those seats for the entire season. There is, hence, always an element of risk in purchasing a season ticket, either through placement adjacent to certain “undesirable” fans, or, as is especially the case at the Kenilworth Road stadium, in terms of restricted view. Although the majority of seats at the Kenilworth Ends and the New Stand have good views of the pitch, observation indicated that a large percentage of seats in the Main Stand and the Main Stand Enclosure had restricted views, mostly on account of pillars supporting the roof of the stand.

A strong relationship emerged between the loss of atmosphere, the introduction of seating, and being forced to stay in the same areas for the entire season. A number of highly identified interview respondents noted the poor atmosphere at Kenilworth Road. One fan said that, as a result of being allocated specific seating, it was harder to create an atmosphere, stating that

it’s a bit embarrassing if you’re sitting there and you’re trying to sing and the group of people sitting around you are quiet and not doing anything (no. 21, identity score 8).

By contrast one suggestion that emerged from the fan interviews to counter this problem was the creation of “singing areas”. According to this proposal, fans
could choose to sit in an area designated for those who wished to sing with other fans in the ground. The idea was summarised as follows:

there's got to be some way of getting the people to create the atmosphere together, to give them the freedom to get them together. If you have one central point generating the atmosphere then it does spread, something like a singing area (no. 8, identity score 7).

Freedom of movement was seen as directly related to atmosphere at matches by a number of fans. One fan talked of the atmosphere that he had experienced at away matches, noting that it was, in his opinion:

far better. I've seen the atmosphere at away games and it's completely different, it's much better than it is at home games. The away support are much more fanatical. I think it's because all the singers can choose to sit together. At Kenilworth Road all the singers are spread out and it makes it a lot harder to sing, but it's easier at away games and that's why the atmosphere is so good (no. 21, identity score 8).

As well as being able to sit together, the existence of terracing at many Second Division clubs facilitated an improved atmosphere. As an informant observed:

it's more exciting standing, people get closer together and when there's a big crowd I think that does provide a bit more atmosphere. It does encourage the crowd... Lots of Luton fans would definitely prefer to stand... I think there would be a lot more vocal support and a lot more atmosphere (no. 13, identity score 7).

Moreover, as indicated earlier, highly identified fans are more likely to attend away matches, and thus there is likely to be a more highly identified crowd, which may contribute to the improved atmosphere. The ability to stand may therefore facilitate these highly identified fans in the demonstration of their fandom, or identities as Luton Town fans. Thus it may be that the improvement
of facilities *per se* does not need to be conducted. Rather, it would appear that the facilities need adapting to facilitate group behaviour, such as standing, or singing, at matches, so that fans may be able to sing, or chant, or demonstrate their fandom. This demonstration may be done by the introduction of singing areas, or even through the return of limited terracing.

The Effects of Fan Identity and Identification upon Fan Behaviour at Luton Town F.C. - Summary

A number of consequences of identification upon the behaviour, attitudes or cognition of fans at Luton Town were identified within this section.

As a result of being a Luton Town fan, informants tended to show behaviour consistent with social identity theory. Fans showed strong awareness of being a member of the group, that is being a Luton Town fan, strong elements of out-group derogation (towards Watford Town) and strong fan cohesion. As a result, facilities were less important to identified fans, a finding that was determined in theme three. Rather, identification appeared to be the moderating factor affecting fan behaviours, such as attendance at matches.

It can be argued that identification with Luton Town thus resulted in effects upon the behavioural aspects of fandom. Highly identified fans showed a desire to attend as many games as possible, and, as a result demonstrated higher levels of attendance at home and away matches. Although the quality of facilities did not seem to be an important predictor of fan identification (section 8.4.3), highly identified fans noted a number of improvements that could be made to the actual process of watching Luton Town. These improvements were based mainly on the fans’ perceived need to be able to stand, and to have a choice in their own location. This would allow fans to position themselves together, with a predicted improvement in the atmosphere. However, in light of the findings from the last two themes of fan identification, these improvements were not necessary for
continuation of identification. Rather, it would appear that suggested improvements were those related to the facilitation of identification, that is being able to display fandom and group membership publicly, for example through singing. Those fans showing strong identities as Luton fans were likely to want to see as many games as possible, even if the facilities remained unchanged, as it was the feeling of identification, rather than the physical environment of the football stadium which was of importance.

8.4.5 The Changing Cultural Identity of English Football and Fan Identification at Luton Town F.C.

The fifth general dimension to emerge from the fieldwork was that relating to the changing cultural identity of English professional football. The changing cultural identity of English professional football, as highlighted by the restructuring of the game with the introduction of the Premier League, was a theme that emerged primarily from the interview phase. Interview respondents noted fourteen raw data themes. These themes were coded into the second order themes of the gap between Luton town and the Premier League; the fans' needs or desires for Luton to be a Premier League club; and the need of the club to be in the Premier League. The raw data were coded as in figure 8.10.
Figure 8.10
Coding of raw data themes - The changing cultural identity of English football

- Gulf between Premier and Nationwide is widening
- Luton are a different club to Premier teams now
- Premier League has removed fans optimism about success
- Premier League has removed natural progression
- We’ll never get into the Premiership
- All Nationwide clubs aspire to Premier
- children in Luton just wear Premier League shirts
- never hear about club in the media
- Premier considered only football to exist by media
- Premier gets nearly all the media coverage
- SKY means we can watch Premier League anyway
- Premier League has all the control over football
- Premier League has the monopoly on players
- Premier no longer gives the club money for players

Luton are not a Premiership club
Luton can never be a Premiership club
Premier League teams more attractive to support
Premier League receives more media coverage
Unequal power balance
Premier League no longer supports Luton

Effects of Premiership
Fans' need to be in Premiership
clubs' need to be in Premiership

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• **The Gulf between Luton Town F.C. and Premiership Clubs** - One strong theme to emerge within this section was that of the gulf that fans felt existed between the Premier League clubs and Luton Town. Despite the fact that Luton was in the highest division as late as 1991, (before the restructuring of English football into the Premier and Nationwide Leagues), forty-three percent of interview respondents produced at least one raw data theme that was subsequently coded as relating to the gap between Luton Town and the Premier League clubs. The timing of the restructuring was noted by one fan, who said that he was:

> dissatisfied with the knowledge that if our period of success happened in the 1990's instead of the 1980's we could have developed as a club due to the increased amount of money available. Now we've fallen behind and the gap is too large to close (no. 13, identity score 7).

Because of this perceived gap, it was suggested that

> the days when a little club like Luton can win the League Cup, and be runners up, and be in three FA Cup semis, all in the space of ten years have gone forever (survey respondent, identity score 6).

As well as the gap being in terms of financial aspects, the interrelated area of playing quality arose. It was noted that

> The quality of football is the only important factor in my opinion. I believe that only the Premiership can offer this now (no. 20, identity score 5).

One fan summarised the different factors that have accounted for the fans perception of Luton Town being unable to return to the top division arguing that

> I can't see Luton getting there in the short, or even the medium term which is a shame because it's not that long since they were up there. It's just that they haven't got the resources that are needed to get there. You've got to pay wages and get players, get the ground, you need so much cash... It's just
**The Gulf between Luton Town F.C. and Premiership Clubs** - One strong theme to emerge within this section was that of the gulf that fans felt existed between the Premier League clubs and Luton Town. Despite the fact that Luton was in the highest division as late as 1991, (before the restructuring of English football into the Premier and Nationwide Leagues), forty-three percent of interview respondents produced at least one raw data theme that was subsequently coded as relating to the gap between Luton Town and the Premier League clubs. The timing of the restructuring was noted by one fan, who said that he was:

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Although the gap between Luton Town and Premier League clubs emerged strongly from the interviews, the actual desire of fans for Luton Town to be a Premier League club did not develop as much as might be anticipated (see section 8.4.5). The maintenance of a positive social identity could be anticipated to be linked to supporting a successful club, however this did not emerge as the case in this study.

- **The Fans’ need to be in the Premier League** - One area that emerged from the interview phase that is of interest to fandom and identity theory was the fans’ need to be in the Premier League. In terms of the fans’ (rather than the club’s) need to be in the Premier League, respondents argued that being able to be a fan was easier for those supporting Premier League clubs than for Luton fans, even those living in Luton. Media coverage was seen to concentrate almost solely upon Premier League clubs. Fifty-two per cent of interview respondents cited the emphasis of media attention on the Premier League. Although there was no particular question about the Premier League within the questionnaire, fans were asked an open question about features of being a Luton fan with which they were either satisfied or dissatisfied. The results from these questions were extremely insular in that almost all responses related to Luton Town. No fans mentioned the Premier League in these sections, and thus the overall conclusion of this theme must be that the fans need to be in the Premier League, and to be supporting a Premier League club was not essential. The existence of the Premier League, however, did seem to make it more difficult to support Luton. One interviewee suggested that

It’s quite hard being a Luton fan especially when you’re a strong Luton fan and they’re doing so badly and everyone else supports Manchester United who are always winning all the time (no. 21, identity score 8).
In terms of the implications for attracting new fans, the problems were perceived in that that *Premiership* clubs were considered more attractive to support. This was suggested by one interviewee, who, although a highly identified Luton fan, discussed his sons, noting that

the youngest one, he's only fifteen and he's not really interested in Luton. He feels that he should be supporting someone like Manchester United like everyone else does in his group at school and like everyone else in his age group (no. 21, identity score 7).

The interviews did however, highlight that fans were concerned about the need for the club to be in the top flight. This need, however, was mostly in terms of profitability and continued existence of the club, rather than for the fans' need to support a successful club (section 8.4.5). In terms of the fans' needing the team to achieve *Premier League* status, little evidence emerged to suggest that this was actually the case. As one informant noted

I think in the long term, whilst making a very very highly skilled top division it will really spoil the skill factor in the lower divisions, that's my view. It's probably very obvious but it won't affect me as much as others because I don't go primarily for the football (no. 14, identity score 6).

Thus the evidence from the fieldwork suggests that team success was not a significant factor affecting fan identification. The club, although being affected by the changing nature of football, was still able to provide a strong focus of identity for its current fans. This raised the question for discussion, however, of the potential effects of the growing dichotomisation of English football on future fans, and to what extent their potential identification with the club would be affected. Although the empirical evidence is scarce, this point is discussed in chapter nine.
• The Club's need to be in the Premiership - In line with the findings from section 8.4.5 to date, the perceived need of the club was less in terms of status, and more in terms of what several fans referred to as “survival”. The disproportionate power balance, both in terms of finance and the media, was highlighted by fans. Thirty per cent of interview respondents highlighted the perceived discrepancy in power between the Premier League and the Football League. The apprehension of a number of fans was summarised by one interview respondent who stated that

I have fears for the future of the survival of lower league teams with the amount of money the Premier League teams attract through SKY and the trend towards stockmarket flotation. I would not like to see Luton taken over by a bigger team to use as a nursery team (no. 5, identity score 7).

The fans perception of SKY TV as the main threat to clubs such as Luton was described by a number of other fans, including the following informant, who was concerned that

SKY is going to kill football off, Murdoch is possibly the worst thing that has happened to football. He is in it for the money, not the game. (no. 2, Identity score 7)

One source of power held by SKY was noted by a fan, who suggested that as a result of economies of scale that

if the family had SKY then we could see all of those live Premiership matches for the cost of one match ticket to go and see Luton play. The cost of one ticket would pay for SKY for a month and you get all these Premiership matches beamed straight into your home (no. 19, identity score 4).

Certain clubs perceived greed in accepting the money from SKY TV was highlighted by one of the survey respondents, who was concerned that
if Luton don't get back into Division One then I think that they will be joining a list of clubs who will go bankrupt or part time. We once had a football league that was the envy of the world but the greed of the big clubs has meant that a small elite is going to win everything and giant killing will be a rare event (Anonymous survey respondent, identity score 6).

A prediction that emerged as the prime concern of fans at Luton Town with regard to the effects of the *Premiership*.

The Changing Cultural Identity of English Professional Football and Fan Identification at Luton Town F.C. - Summary

The changes in English professional football, outlined in chapter five, suggests that fan identification with Luton Town takes place in a different cultural context to that of previous seasons. The overall effects of this changing cultural identity however, does not appear to have significantly affected fan identification at Luton *per se*, with little information being elicited from the fieldwork. However informants did show an awareness of the changing cultural identity of football, and its effects upon Luton's place within the football hierarchy. Luton fans demonstrated an acknowledgement that there was a perceived gulf between the *Premier League* and Luton Town. Two effects of this gulf that were perceived by fans emerged from the study.

Firstly, it was clear that Luton would never again become a *Premier League* club. This position was, however, not seen as a major concern by fans. The second effect, and the one which did affect fan identification with the team, was that of the growing discrepancy in resources between *Premier League* and *Nationwide League* clubs. Those resources that were cited by fans were those of playing, financial, and more significantly media coverage. The lack of media coverage made it more difficult to follow Luton, in that the club received less media coverage. Consequently, it became easier to support a *Premier League* club
Chapter Eight - Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

through the media. The main concerns of fans in this respect were not that this situation would affect their own fandom, which was consistent with the finding that identification remained stable. Fans demonstrated a concern that it would affect identification of subsequent generations of fans, in that younger fans were going to be more likely to support high profile and successful teams, such as Arsenal or Manchester United. This was a reasonable concern, especially given the mechanism of BIRGing, whereby through supporting such clubs, individuals could develop a positive social identity through supporting such teams. Additionally, younger fans might show a tendency to CORF, that is choose not to identify with Luton Town because of the club's relative failure in comparison to the most successful teams.

The overall conclusion to be drawn from these findings is that, although structural changes within English football were affecting the context within which fandom was enacted at Luton Town, these changes had little, if any, direct impact upon fan identification of attenders at Luton Town matches. Although these fans seemed relatively unaffected, such changes did have implications for other fans, or potential fans of Luton Town. These implications are examined in chapter nine.

8.4.6 The Relationship between the Fan and Luton Town F.C.

A number of authors (such as Brown, 1986; Bornewasser and Bober, 1987; and Brown, 1988), note that identification takes place with an entity, or focus of the identity. The area of the fan/club relationship did not emerge, however, as important to fan identification at Luton Town. Relations with the club tended to be seen by fans as being a by-product of identification, rather than as a fundamental aspect. Indeed it could be argued that the function of the club was to provide what Relph (1976) refers to as a "place", where fans could congregate, and experience "being a fan", or watching football. Thus the data suggested that being a football fan, and having an identity as a football fan was important to
respondents, whereas the focus of the identification, that being Luton Town, was not important to this sense of identification.

The survey investigated fans' overall attitudes towards the fan/club relationship, with respondents being asked to rate the club/fan relationship in general. These responses were then investigated in more depth through the fan interviews. In terms of the overall club/fan relationship, eighty-five per cent of fans responded that it was "fair" or better (table 8.19):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.19 Fans rating of the fan/club relationship (n=514)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>terrible (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do you rate the relationship between the fans and the club?

In order to gain some sort of picture as to the development of this relationship, especially given the past conflict between the board and the fans at Luton Town (see appendix A), fans were asked how it had changed over recent years, if indeed it had. The responses show that over half (52%) saw there being no change (table 8.20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.20 Fans rating of the changing fan/club relationship (n=514)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>don't know (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How has the relationship between the fans and the club changed over recent years?

A total of fourteen raw data themes coded as being related to the general dimension of the club/fan relationship were cited during the interview stage.
Four second order themes were developed, these being the fans' view of the club being run as a business; the fans being seen as providing for the club; the relationships between the players and the fans; and the feeling of "membership" with the club. The development of these themes is shown in figure 8.11 below.
Figure 8.11
Coding of raw data themes - The relationship between the fan and Luton Town F.C.

- chairman only interested in profit
- club interested only in fans' money
- club not really bothered about its fans
- club run too much as a business
- club see fans just as providing money
- club is run as a business although this is necessary

The club is a business
club run as business

- club needs fans like me for atmosphere
- club needs my support financially
- I feel a financial supporter
- players appreciate fans
- players are not committed to the club
- players don't get involved in the community

fans provide atmosphere
fans provide financial support

players appreciate fans
players not committed to Luton
involvement with club

feeling of membership

club/fan relationship
player/fan relationship

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Chapter Eight - Themes of Football Fan Identity and Identification

- **The Football Club being run as a Business** - Forty-eight per cent of fans interviewed spoke of the club being a business. Thirty-three per cent of interview respondents felt that the club was being run “too much as a business”, whereas fifteen per cent of interviewees noted that the club had to be run as a business at that level. In terms of providing value for money, the main issue was that of ticket prices. However many fans also, as part of the experience of going to a match, incorporated associated costs. These additional expenses came in the form of programmes, car park fees, refreshments, and other football related goods. Fans were asked as to how watching football, rather than just ticket prices, was rated in terms of value for money. The results were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you rate watching football at Luton Town as value for money?</th>
<th>terrible (%)</th>
<th>poor (%)</th>
<th>fair (%)</th>
<th>good (%)</th>
<th>very good (%)</th>
<th>excellent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some bias can be expected, however. Those fans who would rate value for money as “terrible” for example may be less likely to attend matches. Only fifteen per cent of respondents from the survey stated that ticket prices were important in them not going to all home games. This finding is similar to that of Wakefield and Sloan (1995), who have determined that ticket prices had no significant effects upon levels of attendance. However, notwithstanding such limitations, survey respondents tended to rate watching Luton as “fair” or “good” value for money. Forty-two per cent of survey respondents did note, however, that watching football as value for money had either “worsened a lot” or “worsened a little” over recent years.
Table 8.22  
How Watching Luton Town as Value for Money has Changed over recent Years (n=514)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>don't know (%)</th>
<th>worsened a lot (%)</th>
<th>worsened a little (%)</th>
<th>no change (%)</th>
<th>improved a little (%)</th>
<th>improved a lot (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How has watching Luton Town as value for money changed over recent years?</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the observation/participant observation stage, this finding may be attributable to the club maintaining price levels after being relegated from Division One in nineteen ninety-six. Prices start at thirteen pounds-fifty, the highest in Division Two, and sixteen pounds' fifty for non members, considerably more than most teams in Division One.

- **Fans' Supporting the Club** - One quarter (25%) of interview respondents mentioned that they felt that they supported the club financially, as well as in terms of identifying with the club. This financial support was mostly in the form of buying tickets, sponsoring games, or sponsoring players. This contribution formed a tangible relationship between the club and the fan, but emerged more as an accepted facet of fan identification, rather than a negative feature. The club appeared to be more important in providing a basis for identification, rather than in terms of giving fans something to support, especially given the relative lack of importance of the team winning (section 8.4.3).

- **The Player/Fan Relationship** - Although forming the obvious focus of identification, Luton Town players were only rarely mentioned by both interview and survey respondents. One informant suggested that

  we've had a number of players who have come along for an easy ride, some performances are despicable, very lazy, not playing for the club, for example like [-], he's just there for an easy ride, he
doesn't represent the club and he doesn't represent us (no. 2, identity score 8).

The data suggested that, overall, players were not important to fan identification at the club, and that fans did not identify with players. Instead the players were considered as part of the overall experience of watching football. Observation at matches suggested that, while certain players were either popular or unpopular they formed the focus or catalyst for crowd behaviour, such as singing or chanting. The players formed the focus of the actual match day experience, but did not emerge at all from the fieldwork as significant. Thus, the contention that the game simply forms the basis for social activity (theme 8.4.3) is supported to some extent by the lack of concern over the playing staff of the club.

- **Fans' Perceived Relationship with the Club** - Williams (1961) noted the distinction between being a member and being a consumer of an institution. One of the themes developed within the interview schedule was that of the perceived relationship of the fan to the football club. Only fifteen per cent of interview respondents felt that they had some form of reciprocal relationship with the club. Most interview respondents (55%) believed that the relationship was “one way”, in that fans provided for, or had a sense of belonging to the club, but that the club had no reciprocal attitude, as was evident with forty per cent of interview respondents feeling that the club were only interested in the fans’ financial contribution. Indeed, certain fans suggested that the importance of the club to their sense of fandom was minimal. One informant reasoned that

I honestly feel that in a general sense it is the social aspect, and the team playing is just an opportunity for that social aspect to take place. It provides a common goal, a common point of interest (no. 14, identity score 6)

This respondent also noted that if another, more successful team were to move into the area, he, and his fellow fans would have no reservations in attending
their matches instead, and that Luton Town was a facilitator, rather than a focus, of identification.

Related to the overall theme of the fan/club relationship, three components were measured within the questionnaire. These components were the club's attitudes to fans' views; information from the club about its activities to the fans; and the overall relationship between the club and the fans. Respondents were asked to rate each of these features at that particular moment in time, and also to rate how each of those components had changed over recent years, if at all. In terms of the current ratings, the relationship between the club and the fan was seen to be positive by most fans (see table 8.23 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.23</th>
<th>Ratings of components of the fan/club relationship (n=514).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club attitude to fan views</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from the club about its activities</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between the club and the fan</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of how these components had changed over recent years, the overall results indicated that there had been a positive trend in all (table 8.24).
I wonder if those players (and more importantly staff) who gladly draw their wages each month have a clue as to how much this club means to us? Do they realise the ambition we hold, the desire to see success we crave? Do they know that every dismal performance and dire defeat really leaves us drained? Do they have a clue how we work, save and go without in order to travel to see them week in week out? Have they noticed us queuing for tickets at all hours? Do they see us standing on rain soaked terraces having driven half way across the country just to watch them play? Do they know that those who can't travel stare blankly at teletext or sit by a PC desperately waiting for news of their beloved team? Do they have a clue as to the lengths we would go to in order to get to a crucial game? Maybe if the club made them realise the efforts the fans go to just to follow them they might realise the passion there is for this club and repay it with some effort and devotion (female fan, engineer, identity score 8, personal communication).

This respondent suggested that the club and its fans were not part of the same group, hence the strong emphasis on the use of the term “we” for fellow fans, and “they” when referring to the club. Although Taylor (1991) maintains that the
club provides a representation of the wider community, and MacClancy (1996b) and Lopes (1997) indicate a strong relationship between the club and the fans, this general dimension of the club/fan relationship, and the general dimension of the maintenance of fan identification (section 8.4.3) suggests that the club, rather than forming the focus of identification, facilitates identification. The football club achieves this by providing common goals and objectives, on the basis of a shared interest, that being the provision of an important identity.

The Club/Fan Relationship and Fan Identification at Luton Town F.C. - Summary

Despite the seemingly turbulent period of relations between the club and its fans, especially since the late 1980's (see appendix A), the overall dimension of fan/club relations did not emerge as a significant predictor of fan identification at Luton Town. Many fans (85%), however, rated the relationship as “fair” or better. Over half of fans (52%) indicated that there had been “no change” in this relationship over recent years.

The overall conclusions to be drawn from the data relating to the fan/club relationship were that, on the whole, dissatisfaction with the club was not an important moderator of fan identification with Luton Town. Interview respondents suggested that a feeling of membership with the club was not related to high levels of identity, in that a number of highly identified fans noted that they did not feel like a member of the club. Instead, a number of informants felt that they were more of a paying customer, perhaps in line with the ethos of the Taylor Report (1990) outlined in chapter five. Despite the lack of a feeling of membership, these individuals did show high levels of identification with the club. The findings related to this general dimension do therefore suggested that the club's role in the development and maintenance of its fans' identification was limited, and could be overstated.
8.5 A Summary of Football Fan Identity and Identification at Luton Town Football Club

As suggested within this thesis, football fan identification has a number of causes (Schwarz, 1973; Smith, et al., 1981; Duncan, 1983; Tomlinson, et al., 1995) and subsequent effects (Branscombe and Wann, 1991; Murrell and Dietz, 1992; Wann, et al., 1994; Madrigal, 1995). Although the literature strongly concentrates upon these aspects of fandom and fan identification, six themes have emerged from the data relating to fan identification at Luton Town F.C., these themes being the extent of identification, the antecedents of identification, the maintenance of identification, the effects of identification upon behaviour, the effects of the changing cultural identity upon fan behaviour, and the relationship between the fan and the club, each of which has been presented in sections 8.4.1 to 8.4.6 respectively.

The first finding to emerge was a strong identification with Luton Town. Ninety-seven per cent of survey respondents cited Luton Town as their favourite team. Eighty-two per cent supported only one team, and over sixty per cent scored identification scores of seven or eight. Only two per cent scored identification levels of less than three (section 8.4.1). Thus the crowd at Luton, on the whole, showed high identification with Luton Town. This identification was not with the club as such, in that the club itself did not seem a crucial component of fan identification (section 8.4.6). Rather the club seems to facilitate this identity for fans (section 8.4.3). In general, identity did not vary significantly among different socio-demographic groups, although those respondents in full-time education showed higher levels and older fans were less identified with the club (section 8.4.1).

In terms of the nature of this identity as a Luton fan, fans possessed both strong personal and social identities as Luton Town fans, and the strength of each was strongly correlated among fans. For certain fans, these identities were their strongest perceived identities. However, for other fans different identities
emerged as being stronger, such as those of the work or family identity. Identification as a Luton fan was not restricted to certain key times, such as when Luton was actually playing, but was a relevant identity at other times away from the game situation (section 8.4.1).

The development of identification was, in many cases, almost instantaneous, with a number of informants citing an immediate sense of identity with the club (section 8.4.2). For most fans, the actual act of going to watch Luton Town play "live" was the catalyst for the development of this identity. This was the case even if no prior identification with the team was in evidence, and those fans who saw Luton as their first live game were significantly more identified with the club than those who had seen other teams. Few fans actually made an independent decision to attend this first game, however, and most fans were taken by a parent, or other adult, mostly at the age of ten or eleven. Luton Town F.C. was chosen as the focus for this identification for varying reasons. The two most important reasons being the ideal of supporting the local team, and, more practically, the ease of access of the stadium, especially given the lack of competing league teams within the local area. No relationship emerged between the reason for supporting the club and level of identification.

Once the sense of identification had developed, the overall feeling to emerge was that, as predicted by past findings, the level of this identification would remain stable. Factors that could be seen as possible predictors of fan identification, notably team success and the quality of the facilities, seemed to be insignificant for highly identified fans. The style of play was considered to be more important than winning, although certain respondents noted that it would be important for the team to maintain its league status. Those factors that did emerge as significant predictors of fan identification were extrinsic, such as marriage, work or general time constraints. Thus, once the sense of identification had developed, it seemed likely that, excepting extrinsic constraints, the individuals identity as a football fan would remain relatively stable over the long term (over seventy years in the case of certain informants), supporting the assumptions of Murrell

The effects of possessing this relatively stable identification were outlined in section 8.4.4. The effects of having an identity as part of a group, such as being a Luton fan were consistent with the effects of group membership outlined in chapters three and four. Informants, and those viewed during the observation phase showed strong elements of self-presentation (Goffman, 1968; Leary and Kowalski, 1991; Leary, 1995). This form of impression management was achieved either verbally, in terms of talking about being a fan, or non-verbally, mostly in terms of wearing Luton apparel. This self-presentation allowed fans to present themselves as a fan, often to achieve some target, such as to form relationships with other fans when no other sense of commonality was present, as well as to confirm the individual’s social identity as a fan of Luton Town F.C.

Two related consequences of group membership referred to in the review of identification theory (see section 4.1) were those of out-group derogation and in-group favouritism. A strong sense of these emerged from respondents, most clearly in terms of out-group derogation, notably towards Watford Town F.C. Although almost a quarter (24%) of respondents stated no dislike at all of their greatest rivals, dislike was cited by almost a third of fans, with extremely strong dislike shown by a number of respondents, both from the survey and from the fan interviews. A relationship emerged between level of identification with Luton and dislike of Watford (section 8.4.4), a finding that is consistent with identity theory.

Fan cohesion was also cited as a consequence of identification by fans, especially interviewees. Informants tended to see themselves as part of a common group, and developed social relationships on this basis, even with other fans that they did not know. The strong identification of the crowd highlighted in section 8.4.1 would suggest that there was strong cohesiveness among fans, and this feeling emerged from the fieldwork. As well as perceiving other fans as part of the same group, informants stated a desire to be able to sit or stand with like-minded fans.
at games, with a suggested improvement in atmosphere, atmosphere which was generally seen as poor by most fans (section 8.4.4).

A further finding that is consistent with existing identity theory, as outlined in chapters three and four, was that of the effects of identification upon attendance. Although extrinsic constraints did exist, highly identified fans attended significantly more matches than those who were not as highly identified. This was predictable in that for those with a strong identity as a fan would show a need to enact such an identity through attendance at matches. A number of reasons can be suggested for this.

The obvious explanation is in terms of enacting a particular role identity. One of the behaviours associated with the role of football fan was that of attending matches, and thus the higher the identification, the greater the desire to attend games. This increased attendance of highly identified fans may also be due to such fans wanting to be with other fans that are seen as "special", as a consequence of ethnocentrism. The social aspect also emerged strongly (section 8.4.3), and it may be the case that highly identified fans attend more matches because of the social aspect of being a Luton Town fan. Further explanation for the higher attendance of highly identified fans may also lie in the fact that highly identified fans seem not to be deterred by either poor team performance or poor quality of facilities.

A final reason can also be suggested. It may be that the greater the cognitive and affective involvement with the team (that is the two most important components of fan identification), then the greater the attractiveness of the sport as a consequence of increased affective involvement, such as through providing a "quest for excitement", or as tension release, for example (see section 3.5 - Football as the basis for identity and identification). These attractions of fandom, as noted within the thesis, require both a cognitive and affective involvement. Thus it seems logical that the greater the involvement, then the more attractive the game for highly identified individuals. Although such a direct causal
relationship cannot be easily determined, the evidence from this research does not contradict this hypothesis.

Such fan behaviour, such as attendance at games, does not occur in social isolation. As noted in chapter five, the enactment of social and personal identities takes place within the cultural identity of that enactment. The changes within English professional football, and Luton’s place within those changes was noted by informants (section 8.4.5). The evidence from the research suggested that fans perceived that there was a clear dichotomy in the structure of English professional football. Luton Town fans tended to show acceptance of the situation, and accepted that Luton Town did not aspire to be a Premiership club. The main information to emerge was that the disproportionate power balance between the Premiership and the Nationwide League made it harder to be a Luton fan (section 8.4.5). This difficulty was ascribed to the media emphasis given to Premier League clubs, and the balance of financial power, which allowed those clubs an enlarged proportion of playing resources. However, provided the gulf between the two leagues did not grow, then existing fans did not see the situation as overly problematic. In terms of potential fans, the future was perceived as less promising by existing fans with a perception that younger football followers would be more likely to develop an identification with teams such as Manchester United and Arsenal, possibly as post-fans, rather than in terms of live attendance.

The role of the club emerged as also relatively unimportant. In terms of the focus of identities, or what Bornewasser and Bober (1987) refer to as the entity with which identification is constructed, Luton Town Football Club emerged as a facilitator, rather than a direct focus of identification, for many fans, in that the club provided a common basis for identities to be created and enacted (section 8.4.3). The institution was not in itself seen as important to fan identity and identification (section 8.4.6), rather providing a place and a time for social interaction (section 8.4.3), that is whilst the club were actually playing. Little, if any, strong symbolic meaning to fans emerged from the research, and the sentiments that arose were those of the club facilitating interaction, rather than as
a strong sense of belonging. The club was able to provide the basis for those functions of fandom identified in chapter three, that is providing an opportunity for tension generation, tension release, identification with excellence or even as pseudo-religion. In turn, the financial contribution of fans was able to maintain the club. Thus a reciprocal relationship was observed, but with fans seeing themselves as "customers" rather than as members of the football clu
Chapter Nine

Discussion of Findings

9.1 Fan Identity and Identification at Luton Town F.C.

Prior to this study, existing research had not offered any substantial evidence regarding the nature of football fan identity, or the extent of such fan identification, especially within the Nationwide Football League. Contemporary works displayed a tendency to operate on assumption and conjecture rather than on empirical support. Such evidence which did exist prior to this study provided either data on the behavioural effects of possessing such an identity as a football fan, or else, focused upon the ethnographically derived, more masculine centred, violent identities of the football hooligan (such as Giulianotti and Armstrong, 1997; Armstrong, 1998). The antecedents, extent and nature of fan identification had received little attention.

In terms of the appropriateness of identity theory as a framework with which to examine football fan identity, the findings of this study show a high level of agreement with theory and previous evidence from a non football-related context. The evidence suggests that football fandom is, in many respects, similar to group membership in other contexts. Thus, many of the consequences of such membership, such as ethnocentrism, cohesiveness, out-group derogation and voice (as outlined in chapter four) are in evidence: in many respects, having an identity as a football fan is similar to possessing any other personal and social identity.

It is within the context of examining football fandom using a framework of identity theory that various themes of identification related to the football fan have emerged from the case study. The emergence of such themes of fan
identification have provided a number of original findings in itself, however these findings also raise several subsequent points for discussion.

Firstly, the question emerges as to the extent to which Luton Town F.C., as a relatively small, unfashionable and unsuccessful club, is able to provide a source of identity, and relatedly, is the club is able to provide strong and meaningful identities for its fans, and, if so, to what type of people does this fandom provide such identities?

Secondly, the creation of identities was important in terms of ascertaining the antecedents of such an identity. The issue of whether fan identities at Luton Town are being developed as a result of traditional and historical values, or whether the development of identity as a fan of Luton Town is as a result of more post-modern influences is pertinent. Related to the above point, is the question of post-fandom, and whether the phenomenon of the "post-fan" emerges at Luton Town. Cultural changes in English football have led to a changing nature of fandom, according to Redhead (1997), whereby football fandom consists of a wide variety of activities, and the actual process of attending matches is only one aspect of fandom. The question must be posed as to whether this post-fandom is applicable to the Luton Town fan, for whom many of the sources of the phenomenon are less readily available than to the fan of the Premier League, and for whom post-fandom would appear to be more difficult to enact. The relationship between identification and fan behaviour may provide evidence as to the stability of traditional aspects of fandom.

Thirdly the stability of such identification is significant. It is important to consider whether football fandom at Luton Town is able to provide a stable, lasting identity for individuals, or whether such identities are transitory, and changeable.

Finally, the nature of consumption at Luton Town Football Club within the context of the changing cultural identity needs to be evaluated. Identification requires a focus, and it is the consumption of the football event that seems to
form this focus for fans of Luton Town F.C. As well as evaluating the question of traditional fandom/post-fandom at Luton Town, the nature of the consumption of football will be discussed. This is in the context of the "new consumption" of football highlighted by King (1995, 1997). This "new consumption" may be less readily available to Luton fans, in terms of media coverage, when compared to the Premier League.

Luton Town as a Source of Identity and Identification

The focus of the research was fans who actually attended "live" matches, and as such, the discussion of findings relates primarily to those fans. For such fans, Luton Town provides a strong source of identification, both in terms of social and personal identities, and most fans showed strong identities as Luton followers, rather than as general followers of the game, or supporters of the bigger clubs. Fans who attended matches but were not highly identified with the club were rare in comparison. Thus a strong relationship emerged between attending, or "consuming" matches live, and having a strong identity as a fan.

Fans were able to develop strong social and personal identities as Luton Town fans. The strength of these identities suggests that such identities were seen as positive by fans, as the evidence indicates that individuals attempt to maintain and display such identities if they are able to enhance the self-concept and self-esteem (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1982; Brown, 1986). Thus it is likely that if fandom was unable to provide the source of such positive identity, then identification levels amongst fans would not be as high, or that fans would simply choose to support another team, through the process of "pass" (Tajfel, 1982), or "exit", that is cease being a football fan (Brown, 1988). Football fandom is able to provide the individual with a sense of identity, and, in many cases, an extremely strong identity.

In terms of the question raised in chapter two of who these fans actually are, that is to whom fandom at Luton Town is able to provide such a focus of identification, the results indicated a broad range in terms of gender, age, length
Chapter Nine - Discussion of Findings

of attendance, and employment details. Fandom provided a strong sense of identity for female fans, as well as male fans, and also for the more affluent, as opposed to the more traditional "working class" supporter. Strong identities were also reported by younger fans, who had developed these identities in recent years, even in the shadow of the newly created of the Premier League and the associated changes within English football.

Identities as a Luton Town fan were immediate, rather than developed over time, and emerged often as a result of simply attending the first live match. Unlike the four stage process of socialisation proposed in chapter three, certain fans perceived acceptance, and a strong identity after the first match in a number of cases. Although some form of identity as a Luton fan was present for some fans before attending this first game, a strong sense of identification often emerged as a consequence of watching this first "live" game (cf. chapter eight, section 8.4.2), and thus the first experience of attending games was seen as important. Rather than invalidating the suggested process of socialisation, outlined earlier, in suggesting that developing a perceived identity does not require the individual to undergo a "learning" process, the findings indicated that certain early processes, such as presocialisation, may have taken place prior to such a game. The likelihood of this increased as many fans attended their first game with family of friends, and thus would have been influenced by interpersonal relationships with other fans, such as immediate family members. The other phases of the socialisation model, those of recruitment, acceptance, and identity confirmation could have all happened within an extremely short space of time, during the duration of the first live game. For other fans, the process might have been slower, but the model is still applicable to such fans.

The Creation of Identities

The changing cultural identity of English football, the new consumption of soccer, and the concept of the post-fan suggest that, at Premier League level, identities are likely to be created on the basis of what Smith, et al. (1981) refer to as "indirect" fandom, that is fandom via television, radio or other forms of media,
as well as those through the more traditional bases of live attendance. Identities at Luton Town, however showed strong elements of being formed on the bases of tradition and locality. The globalisation of the Premier League makes it easy to become a fan of almost any team within the Premiership, and to develop and maintain a strong identity as a “post-fan” (as described by Redhead, 1997 and outlined in chapter two). This fandom is enacted through watching games on television, or through consumption of the game via the printed or electronic media, with high levels of coverage given to elite teams. Fandom within the lower leagues in this form was not as readily available. Thus it may have been reasonable to assume that many fans within Luton were such post-fans of teams such as Manchester United, or Arsenal. Those survey respondents citing an interest in other teams was low, however, and indicated that fandom at Luton Town was almost what could be termed "monogamous", in terms of the single focus of identification of its followers.

The evidence suggested that for many fans at Luton Town F.C., it was the traditional aspects of fandom that were important to the enactment of their identities. In this respect most fans at Luton did not develop their identities through the post-fan activities of watching TV through SKY, or through media consumption of the game, and many considered that the “authentic” experience of fandom was that of attending live matches, rather than through indirect consumption. For most fans, however, these identities were created prior to the expansion of television coverage, and the subsequent rise in importance of SKY television. In the contemporary age of post-fandom, the effects of such media may be to provide a focus of identities through media fandom, rather than live fandom. At Luton Town, as has been noted however, such a focus had not yet replaced the ties related to tradition and locality. The effects of such phenomena as SKY may need to be re-evaluated in future years, however.

Identities were created for many fans on the basis of the first “authentic” experience. The basis for this first experience was in many cases traditional, in terms of the father or other family influence, whilst the fan was young, most often whilst aged ten or eleven years. Doubts were expressed, however, as to the
continuity of this process. Whereas the current fan population had developed its identities on the basis of traditional, and what were considered authentic, experiences of fandom, it was noted by older fans that their children were developing identities as fans of elite clubs through SKY TV, and media coverage. The creation of identities for certain fans then influenced the identities of peers, as others attempted to develop and maintain a positive social identity, especially whilst at school. Post-fandom was an experience that was more open to very young fans, both in terms of availability and cost, through television coverage, and required less adult supervision. By the time the individual was ten years old, he might have seen a favourite Premier League team many times, with a resultant identity as a fan, especially if the “authentic” experience of fandom became to be seen as indirect, rather than direct consumption of the football match.

This authentic nature of fandom may, as outlined within the thesis, be subject to cultural changes. The effects of seating upon the atmosphere at Luton Town were highlighted by a number of fans, and Greenfield and Osborn (1998b: 196) note that such reduced atmosphere may affect the “authentic football atmosphere”. If this atmosphere disappears, then it would be likely that the nature of the football experience would change, and that watching elite teams via television rather than teams from the lower leagues live may become the most popular option for the fan. Thus fears about Luton Town F.C. not providing the only “authentic” mode of consumption, or that most likely to provide a positive social identity, seemed to be pertinent, and have strong implications for less successful clubs such as Luton Town.

A final point to note regarding the creation of identities at Luton Town is that the research only investigated fans who actually attended matches live. By setting the constraints of the research in such a manner, it was not possible to investigate those fans who showed high levels of identification with the club, but did not attend matches, and how they created and developed such identities. It may be that, for those fans, the authentic experience of fandom might not have been through live viewing, but could have consisted of other modes of consumption, such as the local press, local radio, peer communication and so on. The issues
raised in researching the non-attender were raised within chapter seven, but were beyond the defined parameters of the research. Such an area forms a substantial future research project.

The Stability of Identities

The question of the creation of identities seems particularly pertinent given the perceived stability of identities that were predicted through past work, and that emerged from the empirical phase of the research programme. Membership of the group, that is being a Luton Town fan, provided what was perceived by many fans to be a stable, perhaps lifelong, identity, unaffected by team performance or the quality of facilities.

Although certain identities, such as those related to school or work, may be transitory, football fandom appears to provide the basis for a relatively stable identity, even though an identity as a Luton Town fan is voluntary and avocational, rather than ascribed. This stability was often, however, formed on the basis of locality, in that fans supported their local team. In cases such as Luton, there is only one team in the area. Certain fans did suggest that if other teams were close, then their allegiances may be transferred, however other fans had developed firm identities as fans of the club, often after the first game. Fans were shown to often have a tie to the first club that they viewed live. The situation of Luton Town F.C. as a relatively isolated club in terms of its geography, especially for those fans who attended their first game a number of years ago, gives fans few options in terms of both watching this first match, and in the subsequent focus of their identity. Thus a relatively stable set of identities as fans was indicated from the research.

Whilst this situation is beneficial to the club on the basis that the current fan population should show a fairly stable identification, through the consequences of identification, such as those of cohesiveness, ethnocentrism and voice (cf. chapter four), the implications of the post-fan in this respect are not as welcome to the football club. Identification developed with other clubs, through
experiences other than those of actually attending games, for example watching teams on television, seems as likely to show stability as those identities developed through attending matches. This is especially pertinent if the “authentic” experience of fandom changes, as suggested above, so that football fandom through the media becomes seen as authentic. Thus, fans who watch teams at an early age, notably through SKY, but also to some extent the coverage of the Italian *Seria A* on Channel Four, may develop a stable identity as fans of clubs such as Arsenal, Manchester United, or even Juventus or AC Milan. Younger fans will be likely to watch such teams for some years before having the opportunity of attending their first live game. By this time, it may be too late to develop an identity as a Luton fan, especially given the changes in atmosphere cited by many of the respondents, (also by Greenfield and Osborn, 1998b regarding the post-Taylor football atmosphere in general). This reduction in atmosphere may make the first actual visit to a game disappointing in terms of the experience of the fan, especially given the experience that could be anticipated through exposure to the *Premier* or Italian Leagues. This will be a serious issue for smaller clubs to address in future years, as the globalisation of the game continues.

The Nature of Consumption at Luton Town Football Club

Overall, it can be seen that the consumption of football at Luton Town is presently more “traditional”, rather than showing elements of the “new” consumption of football highlighted by King (1995, 1997) and Redhead (1997). For many fans this nature of consumption is not a reaction against the new consumption of football. It can be argued that it is reactionary, however, in that the changing cultural identity of English football has led to changes in fans' attitudes to the overall context within which fan identities are formed and enacted, in that such enactment takes place as part of a separate entity, that of the *Nationwide League*. This league has come to be seen as largely unrelated to the *Premiership*. 

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The general reaction to emerge from the research is that the changes in the structure of English professional football have not led to alterations within the consumption of football for all fans. Rather the divide between Premier League clubs and smaller clubs has resulted in a division in the nature and context of football consumption between the two types of club\(^\text{32}\). The consumption of football at Luton Town still appears to show strong traditional elements. Identities are formed mostly on the basis of locality and family, rather than through media and fashion. Although the decline of strong feelings of community may have weakened the ideological ties involved in supporting the local team (Critcher, 1979; Whannel, 1998), and although convenience may form a strong basis of Luton as the focus of such identities (cf. chapter eight, section 8.4.2), and the club itself may not have a strong symbolic role in fandom (cf. chapter eight, section 8.4.6), there is still a tie between the club and its fans. This tie exists even if it is related to the physical geography, rather than the symbolic location of the ground. This convenience is still related to the experience of respondents of watching matches live, rather than the experiences of post-fandom, where the issue of convenience is equated more often with the ease of watching a team on television, or through indirect consumption via the media.

The empirical phase of the thesis suggested that fans perceived a gulf between the clubs that formed the focus of the new consumption, and clubs such as Luton Town (chapter eight, section 8.4.5). Disproportionate resources, both in playing and financial resources suggest that such a gulf will widen, rather than become narrower. Thus, those clubs within the Premiership may be able to form a basis for a positive social identity to a greater extent than teams such as Luton Town, due to their greater public profile.

Issues of football fan identification at Luton Town have been outlined above. The following section relates such issues to the theoretical framework adopted, that

\(^{32}\) Although this is creating a false dichotomy between Premiership and Nationwide clubs, some evidence emerged from the 1997/98 season when the three clubs promoted from the Nationwide League in the preceding season - Bolton, Crystal Palace and Barnsley - were those that were relegated from the Premier League, and two of the three to be promoted (Nottingham Forest and Middlesborough) had been relegated from the Premiership the previous year.
of social identity theory, and uses the combination of the review of literature and the empirical findings to develop a model of football fan identification at Luton Town F.C., and to discuss issues of the generalisability of findings to fans of other football clubs.

Football Fandom and Identification - Theory Reconsidered

The findings from the study, and past research on the sports fan suggests that identity theory is an appropriate theoretical framework to explain football fan identity, and subsequent behaviour as a consequence of identification. In this research fans showed strong cohesiveness, strong value awareness of being part of a group membership, and strong dislike of competing groups. Those factors that were liable to constrain a positive identity, such as poor team performance, or poor facilities were not important to the overall identity as a Luton Town fan. Those factors that emerged, were, to a large extent, diminished by the process of "voice", such as re-evaluation, or minority creation. Thus fans developed attitudes and behaviours to maintain sense of positive identity. Luton Town was able to provide this strong focus of identity, in a more "traditional" mode than many fan identities that could be developed within the context of Premier League football.

In terms of the applicability of findings to other football clubs, it seems likely that such processes of identity and identification would be similar within comparable clubs whereby the authentic fan experience, that of watching a match, forms the focus of a strong identity for such fans. The actual mechanisms of identity and identification are likely to be similar, however within different cultural identities. In terms of Premiership clubs it seems probable that the formation of such identities is similar, but that such identities are formed upon the basis of a different experience, and not necessarily those involved in attending matches, but also those of post-fandom, such as through media consumption. Thus the importance of the social aspect of football fan identification (cf. chapter eight, section 8.4.3) may be enacted within the home, or the pub, and not only at the stadium. This actually makes the process of "pass"
The combination of existing theory and empirical evidence from the fieldwork allows a model of football fan identification to be presented. The overall premise of the model is that of whilst group membership provides a positive identity, the individual will attempt to remain in that group (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Thus, while football fandom provides a positive social and personal identity, the individual will maintain a sense of identification with the club.

Although there are cultural differences between clubs, which will have consequences for fan identification, a model of fan identification can still be produced that is generalisable amongst fans of different football teams. This model is presented below.

9.2 A Model of Football Fan Identification at Luton Town F.C.

The combination of existing theory and empirical evidence from the fieldwork allows a model of football fan identification to be presented. The overall premise of the model is that of whilst group membership provides a positive identity, the individual will attempt to remain in that group (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Thus, while football fandom provides a positive social and personal identity, the individual will maintain a sense of identification with the club. The model is presented in figure 9.1.
This model shows the continual processes through which a social and personal identity as a football fan identities may be developed, maintained, and, potentially exited. It incorporates the social, personal, and cultural factors that were identified in chapters three, four and five as being pertinent to fan identification.

The enactment of fandom takes place within a cultural environment with its own cultural identity. This cultural identity is dialectic in that it affects the development and maintenance of other identities. These social and identities also have a role in the development and maintenance of culture (cf. chapter five), either as producers or as consumers of such culture. Within this cultural
boundary, fan identification is precipitated by certain antecedents. As noted in chapter ten, these antecedents may be a strong moderator of fan identity. Once this identity has been confirmed in terms of the four stage process of identity confirmation outlined in chapter three, then such identification is the strongest predictor of fan behaviour.

Highly identified fans will show elements of group membership, such as ethnocentrism and out-group derogation. Such consequences of identification maintain cohesion as a Luton fan, and subsequently maintain identification. If being a fan does not provide a positive identity, then highly identified fans may show "voice", that is stressing the positive aspects of being a Luton Town fan, such as their entertaining style of play. These behavioural consequences facilitate the maintenance of identification for highly identified fans, and thus the importance of team success, or the quality of facilities is reduced.

These factors may be more important for less identified fans, however. These fans may attach less importance to the group membership of being a Luton Town fan, and thus are less likely to exhibit the behavioural consequences of group membership. Thus if the quality of facilities, or the team performance is below a standard sufficient to maintain a positive identity, then the low identification fan may exit from the group, rather than attempt to compensate through voice.

The highly identified fan will attempt to stay in the group, however. This is subject to the cultural context, and extrinsic factors that may constrain fandom, such as work, or social requirements. Thus, the model suggests that for teams that are either less successful in terms of playing record, or those with poor facilities or a combination of both, it is highly likely that the fan population would be highly identified, as many less identified fans would have exited the group. Levels of identification were indeed high at Luton Town F.C., with the crowd profile showing generally high levels of identification. The model also indicates the importance of positive social and personal consequences to the maintenance of identification.
The model can be demonstrated through the use of case studies of individual fans. These case studies are not intended to be representative of the fan population at Luton Town, rather they are intended to demonstrate the model in a real life context. The three sample cases were drawn from the overall fan sample obtained through the survey and interview phases, and, as with the interview sampling, were drawn as a theoretically representative sample, rather than being statistically representative of the fan population at Luton Town F.C.

The first two cases are of fans who are highly identified with Luton Town F.C., and demonstrate the mechanism via which fan identities are developed and maintained for such individuals. The third case is a fan who is less identified with the football club. This case demonstrates potential routes of exit and pass for such fans.

Case Study One - Identity score seven.
This fan had been watching Luton for thirty-four years. He was taken to see the team play aged seven years of age by his father, and developed a subsequent identification with Luton Town. He thus crossed the boundary of group membership outlined within the model, through his perception of becoming a fan. His current identity score was seven, showing strong identification with the club, or what this fan referred to as a “strange bond”, watching all home, and a large proportion of away games. As a result of identification, certain behavioural consequences were evident. Some degree of ethnocentric affiliation with the Nationwide League and out-group derogation towards the Premiership was apparent when he noted that

I look at Premiership football and then what I call real football. I’m very cynical of people who have got involved with Premier League football... There’s a lot of things I wouldn’t like about being in the Premiership, I actually enjoy going to what I call grass roots football”
These behavioural consequences, as predicted by the model, allowed the fan to see supporting Luton as a positive experience, through perceiving identification with Luton as positive compared to, for example, supporting a *Premiership* club. The consequence of this positive perception was the maintenance of identity. This fan suggested that

If it [the club] drops out of this division you'd be looking at Conference football which would be the death of the club. But I would still be there.

Not all aspects of identifying with the club could be seen as positive, for example team failure. When such outcomes resulted in a possible negative social or personal consequences then the fan might compensate using the process of "voice", or stressing the positive aspects of identification, in this case, the style of play of the team, noting that

They're not a boring team, they've got a tradition for playing good football.

and suggesting that, if the team was beaten, then:

If we lose, we lose with style. I can't imagine going to watch a team whether it be Watford or Wimbledon just humping the ball up in the air.

Thus, the fan would be less likely to cut off reflected failure (CORF), as suggested in chapter four. Even if the team was unsuccessful, the fan maintained identification, and the positive consequences of identification, through processes such as ethnocentrism, that is seeing his team as "better", and out-group derogation, seeing competitive threats as "worse". Thus the fan was able to perceive his fandom of Luton as being a positive experience. Those experiences that threatened this perception, such as team failures were compensated through stressing positive aspects (voice), with resultant continual identification with the team.
Case Study Two - Identity score seven.

This fan watched his first game in 1966, and was a committed fan for six years until he moved out of the area. On returning to the nearby town of Hitchin in 1988, he began watching Luton Town again. The motivation to see Luton was that the fan wanted to watch a game of football and “Luton were the closest”. Identification was immediate, and strong. Although, at the time of the study, that his identification with Luton was less important to him, mostly as a result of the development of other identities involved with the family and employment, he was still strongly identified with the club, watching approximately twenty home games and two to three away games each year. As a result, he gained positive social and psychological consequences, for example noting that:

if the players look like they’re trying to play and enjoying themselves then I’m likely to enjoy myself as well, the entertainment is important but if that’s not the case then it’s also good to be with fellow fans and have a bit of a chat about it, or if there’s a good atmosphere

The social consequences of fandom were also cited as important in the fan being seen as:

part of the club in that respect, being seen to be a Luton fan and even people on the street seeing you as a Luton fan

Elements of perceived group membership were also apparent. This fan also suggested that

there’s this bonding between complete strangers in the street, you see them in the street, you don’t know them from Adam but you see them in a Luton shirt and you say hello even if it’s a complete stranger, it’s a binding with complete strangers

Thus the fan showed strong indications of having an awareness of being part of the group. As such membership was seen by the fan as positive, and worth maintaining. This fan felt that, because of these value and emotional ties with the club, he would be a fan in the foreseeable future, suggesting that
I don’t think that anything would put me off the club ever. The only thing is if the prices got too high and I couldn’t afford them, but I’d still be a fan even if I couldn’t go. I’d still be a very strong fan, it would still be a part of me.

Again, team success was not considered important to the maintenance of identification, with the fan seeming to be unlikely to demonstrate CORFing tendencies. Thus positive consequences were not solely based upon the team’s record. The fan noted that

it’s inevitable that Luton Town are never going to be consistently successful like the likes of Manchester United and all that. They are always going to be spasmodic in our success, there’s not the money, there’s not the ground, there’s not really the support to provide that success, so when it happens, as it does, it’s a bonus.

This is a form of voice, whereby the lack of resources of Luton Town was cited as an explanation for the team’s lack of playing success, thus protecting the positive consequences of fan identification. The fan also highlighted that style of play was subsequently more important, and that Luton traditionally played better football than their rivals, a finding that was supported from the respondent’s survey answers, suggesting both a degree of ethnocentrism and out-group derogation, which would further enhance the positive consequences of identification.

The model of fan identification can be applied to those two highly identified fans, demonstrating how such fans maintain a sense of identity, even with a less successful club. The routes through the model of fan identification presented earlier can be outlined below (Figure 9.2):
As a consequence of being highly identified, the fans displayed ethnocentrism, such as seeing other fans as “special”, especially those of “grass roots” fans, and having a bond to such fans. Out-group derogation was also shown, notably in terms of dislike of Watford. Such consequences, allied with the attractive footballing style of the team cited by the fans allowed identification to be seen as a positive experience.

The potential negative consequences of supporting a less successful team were eliminated to a large extent through voice. The process of voice that emerged from these case studies, and also from the interview phase, was that of Luton Town’s style of play, which was taken as positive, and seen to be more important than the team’s success. Thus, through voice, potential negative consequences were removed, or substituted by other factors that were more likely to provide positive consequences. Thus, once within the cycle of high identification, it is
highly likely that such fans will remain highly identified, especially give the strong value and emotional investments that result as a consequence of such membership of such a group (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Brown, 1988; Abrams and Hogg, 1990).

Case Study Three - Identity score three.
The first two cases demonstrated how certain fans fitted into the model through achieving what they would perceive as positive personal and social consequences in identifying with Luton Town. The model also acknowledges that, for some fans, identification may not provide such positive results. Case number three is of a low identification fan. Although such fans were rare within the sample, this case provides an illustration of how the model may apply to them.

This fan had been watching Luton for three years, attending approximately “five to ten” home and no away games a season. Luton was not the first professional team he had watched, having seen Birmingham City (his hometown team) on a number of occasions. The fan scored a low identification score, which was indicative of his perception of his own fan identification, and reflected in the following comment that

I support them in an indirect sense in that I pay money to go and watch a game... and that I cheer for them and not the opposing side.

The fan showed few attributes of group membership compared to more highly identified fans.

I wouldn’t say that I’m a Luton fan. I’d tell someone if they asked what team I watched but I wouldn’t say I’m a fan, not in the true sense of the word. It’s more in a detached sense.
As a result, the fan had more of a feeling of group membership with his friends than other fans, stating that

you get an affinity towards other fans and you chat to them during the match but I don’t think that’s the same as going with your mates, it’s just not the same

This fan did note that he would have rather gone with people that he knew, even if they had little interest in football, rather than going alone or meeting other fans at the ground. Thus stronger identification emerged with his peer group than with Luton Town F.C. The positive consequences of identifying with the club were insignificant, and based mostly upon the team’s success. When asked the main reason why he watched games, the fan cited the team’s success, which, as chapter four suggested, is a likely response from less identified fans. While the maintenance of positive consequences through basking in reflected glory was thus likely, and would maintain identification, even at a lower level, the fan suggested that if the team’s performance began to decline, then he wouldn’t undertake “voice”, but instead:

I wouldn’t lose a lot of sleep over not going to watch them at all.

Thus the fan would either pass, that is transfer his allegiance to another, more successful team, or exit, and cease identifying with a football club altogether. The fan acknowledged that

I’m quite happy to go along and cheer but I wouldn’t feel that badly if my ties were severed with the club.

Therefore, for such fans, the model demonstrates how the perceived lack of positive personal and social consequences may increase the likelihood of pass or exit from being a Luton Town fan. The routes within the model for such fans can be outlined below (Figure 9.3).
As a result of having a low identification with the club, few qualities of group membership are apparent. The fan does not see himself as part of a group, or having any strong relations with other fans, unless they are friends away from football. Thus the low identification fan does not achieve any positive benefits from this group membership. Thus the benefits of fandom are based upon the team’s success. If the team is successful, then the fan is able to demonstrate a form of voice, by placing the importance upon that aspect (“basking in reflected glory). If the team is unsuccessful, such a strategy is unavailable. As a result, the low identification fan is more likely to exit, or to pass, thus showing a likelihood of CORFing.

The three cases selected demonstrate the routes within the model by which fan identification may be affected by the perceived consequences of being a fan by
an individual. In this respect, it provides an explanation of why certain fans maintain an identification with clubs that are less successful, and why others may cease being a fan of a particular club. The model is dynamic, in that the fan will constantly be in the process of evaluating his identity as a fan. Although English football has been, and is likely to be in a continual state of change, the acknowledgement of the cultural context suggests that the model should be able to incorporate such continual modification.

**The Generalisability of the Model of Fan Identification**

In terms of the generalisability of the model, it seems reasonable to suggest that, once the different cultural identity of each club is taken into account, then the model may be generalisable to any other club. *Premier League* clubs will operate within a different cultural context to that of Third Division clubs. Once these cultural differences are taken into account, then the model may be applied to any club. The model has been developed however, through fieldwork of fans who actually attend matches "live". Given the phenomenon of the post-fan, however, certain issues need to be addressed.

While the authentic fan experience consists of actually attending matches, then teams such as Luton will continue to attract crowds of high identification fans. If, however, the phenomenon of post-fandom becomes more pervasive, then the boundaries of group membership will alter, so that they are not crossed through the process of attending matches live, but rather through indirect consumption, via television, radio, the printed or the electronic media, or through product purchase, such as football shirts. Thus fans will be able to develop and maintain positive identities without going to games. The implication is, that for many younger fans, identification will develop with a larger, high profile team at an early age, rather than through attending the first live game. By the age of ten or eleven, when most fans are taken to see their first Luton Town match, it seems likely that many will have developed an identity as a fan of Manchester United, Arsenal, some other *Premier League* team, or even a foreign side. Group
interaction may not be on the terraces, but within schools and amongst peer groups, where indirect consumption will allow this feeling of group membership, and categorisation as a group member, with resultant value and emotional investment. Observation of fans within the town of Luton suggests that this is a process that is already underway, with large numbers of fans showing public support as fans of Premiership clubs.

For many fans, however, it can be argued that the authentic consumption of football will remain that of watching live games. For certain fans, the functions of football outlined in chapter three, such as football as tension-release, or as a quest for excitement, or as pseudo-religion may require live attendance. Given that the “atmosphere” was cited by a number of fans as being crucial to their identification. Thus the importance of atmosphere in maintaining this consumption of football is likely to remain significant. The club has to market a potential identity, rather than a particular product. The components of this identity are more likely to be those of atmosphere and social interaction, such as the ability to develop social relationships, rather than those of facilities or team success.

9.3 Discussion of Findings - Summary
This chapter has provided a discussion of fan identification at Luton Town F.C. Fan identification has been shown to be similar to other forms of group membership, and as such, fans display attributes similar to other types of group members, about which more research has been completed. This has allowed a model of fan identification to be presented which allows the overall concepts of fan identification to be applied not only to Luton Town fans, but also to fans of other clubs.

The importance of the changing cultural context within such a model has been highlighted, not only in terms of those changes directly affecting fans of Luton Town, but also in terms of the changing cultural identity of football fandom.
within England which may have an effect on future, as well as current fans of the club as evidenced, for example, by the phenomenon of the post-fan.

This chapter has also highlighted that the nature of fandom is still, to a large extent, traditional at Luton Town, in that identities are formed mostly upon the basis of locality. Resultant identities show relative stability, and are based upon the actual process of attendance rather than through the post-fan consumption via the media. The extent to which this situation will remain at Luton Town F.C. is, however, unclear. Longitudinal research may be desirable to assess such changes, and their impact upon the model of football fan identification presented here, however the model is, itself dynamic, and incorporates potential changes within the cultural identity of English football.
10.1 Football Fan Identification at Luton Town Football Club

When this study commenced, little empirical data were available on the fan of non-Premiership clubs, or indeed on the non-violent fan of football at any level. Even less theoretical debate had taken place within the literature as to the nature of fan identification from clubs outside the elite division (cf. chapter two). It was within such a context that the research objectives were constructed, and a suitable research methodology developed to investigate football fan identification within the Nationwide League.

The overall objectives of the research were to determine the extent of fan identity and identification at Luton Town, to ascertain those factors important to such identification, to discover the subsequent effects of identification upon fans, to look for any relationships between features of fan identification and to explore any additional elements of fan identification that emerged.

The findings revealed a clear picture of football fan identification at Luton Town Football Club. Being a Luton Town fan, and one who attends matches "live", provided a strong source of identity for many of its supporters. Most of the fan population showed high levels of identification with the club. The development of such identities was quite rapid among fans, with a strong sense of identification with the club often being confirmed at the first live game by a number of fans. Attendance at this first game was strongly influenced by family, notably in terms of fans' fathers, being fans of the club themselves, and also strongly related to the locality of the club.
Once such an identity had developed, then it appeared to be the most important moderator of fan attitudes, values and behaviours. Identification had an important role in maintaining and enhancing an individual’s overall sense of identity, and fan behaviour was moderated as a result of fans’ desires to maintain a positive identity. Thus fans utilised strategies to maximise this sense of positive identity. These strategies, outlined within the model of fan identification (figure 9.1) ensured that, for many fans, identification with Luton Town was a long term commitment.

The intention of research such as this is to advance on both theoretical and descriptive fronts. The research has explored, in depth, the nature of football fan identification within a selected club from the Nationwide League. Through the use of an appropriate methodology the extent, antecedents and consequences of football fan identification have been identified and evaluated. The findings have confirmed the suggestions of a number of authors who have advocated, though not empirically tested, identity theory as a suitable framework for sports fan research (e.g. Hogg and Hardie, 1991; Murrell and Dietz 1992). The social identity approach has allowed a much more thorough analysis of football fan identification to be developed than is evident in previous studies. The findings suggest that identity theory provides a useful paradigm for academic research into the sports fan.

The model of fandom presented within the discussion (figure 9.1) also expands upon the use of social identity theory by incorporating current socio-cultural concerns regarding English football fandom with the socio-psychological basis of identification theory. The interrelationships between social, psychological and cultural factors suggests that a multi-disciplinary approach is appropriate to an investigation into football fandom. The multi-dimensional nature of fandom that has emerged during the study seems to indicate that the use of a single discipline may not fully account for other influencing factors. The use of social, psychological and cultural insight allows the interrelated components of fandom to be concurrently investigated.

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Prior empirical investigations into the sports fan suggest that fandom was an activity determined primarily by structural factors, notably gender and occupation (for example Chorbajian, 1978; Smith, et al. 1981). This research, by contrast, has allowed the influence of the fans themselves in the development and maintenance of fan identities to become apparent, demonstrating the fans' own agency in creating patterns and behaviours of fan identification.

This thesis also provides a basis from which to reassess previous work on the sports fan. Much of the earlier research on the sports fan investigated fan behaviour, or satisfaction. Few of these studies acknowledged the significance of fan identification to these topics. However, in light of the findings of the current investigation, the importance of identity emerges strongly to the degree that fan identity is the most important predictor of such behaviour. As such, many of the findings of such studies, such as fans’ seeing other fans as special or fans’ dislike of other teams are thus seen as predictable consequences of identification. The application of identity theory hence allows these phenomena to be explained, rather than merely described.

Finally, and in terms of the overall aims of the thesis, this research has concentrated on a holistic exploration of football fan identity and identification. As outlined in chapter two, such a contribution is long overdue. As a result of this thesis, the questions of who are, and, more importantly, why do individuals become fans were answered. This outcome has allowed a much more comprehensive picture of football fandom to be presented.
Reflections on the Research Programme

The strengths of this study firstly derive from the use of a case study approach. This approach has allowed the researcher at least partial "immersion" into the culture of the Luton Town fan, and to thereby strengthening tacit knowledge, thus enabling some form of examining and reviewing those criteria of research noted in chapters one and seven, such as relevance, validity, plausibility, authenticity and credibility. When combined with the mixed methods' approach, it enabled both description and explanation to emerge from the research. Thus a holistic picture of fan identification was made, rather than identifying certain components of identification for investigation. This allowed a much fuller picture of fan identification to emerge than has previously been the case.

The findings from this study are consistent both with existing identity theory, and also with the scarce work that has been carried out on this topic. Many of the recent studies on sports fandom demonstrate a consistency with identity theory (almost always implicit, rather than stated), in terms of their findings. Nearly all of these studies, however, show one consistent limitation, this being in terms of the samples employed. Almost without exception, existing studies utilises populations of college students. As has been noted, however, college students are very likely to show higher levels of identification than other groups. Thus, in this regard, the use of a broader cross-section of sports fans in terms of age, length of support, and so on, within the current study provides a strength that is absent elsewhere.

Even so, certain limitations were also present within the research programme. the most obvious criticism that could be levelled at the research is that it investigates fans of only one club. Given the strong association that emerged between theory and fact, this is not problematic, in that it could be seen that findings were generalisable to theory, rather than directly to other clubs. Thus, the theory of football fan identification can be applied to other clubs within different cultural environments.
Conclusions

Secondly, and as noted within the thesis, the culture of English football is continually changing. This study provides a contemporary picture of fan identification. Future changes in football culture cannot be predicted with any certainty, and as such, the nature of fan identification may change considerably. Recent changes, notably the introduction of the Premier League, the growth of media financing of football and the post-fan, all affect football culture. Future occurrences in English football may well affect the validity of findings. Two arguments exist against this weakness. Firstly, in terms of the current situation, such findings are valid, and provide a grounded and corroborated account of football fan identity and identification. Secondly, the model of fan identification is dynamic, and allows the changing cultural identity of English football to be incorporated.

Recommendations for Future Research

A number of research areas for further investigation emerge from the present study. Firstly, although the objective of the case study approach was not specifically that of generalisation to other clubs, some form of comparative analysis would be useful in order to assess whether or not the findings from other clubs would be similar. In this respect, in-depth research at a variety of clubs, such as Premier League clubs, those clubs that are newer to league football, and those within differing cultural contexts, such as those smaller clubs in the same urban area as larger clubs, is highly desirable.

Secondly, an analysis of those fans who show low levels of identification would be of considerable interest. Low cell sizes within Luton Town sample rendered this unfeasible within the current study. The development of a database of low identification fans may be desirable to facilitate further research into this area. Although such fans provide a small proportion of the match day crowd, exploration into the fan identification of such fans may be desirable in identifying differences between those fans and highly identified fans. This may allow some insight as to why certain fans are highly identified, and other fans are not.
Thirdly, a form of longitudinal study would be useful in order to allow the development of football fan identification to be explored over a substantial time period. Although it was suggested that fan identification is relatively stable and mechanisms resulting in stable identities were also proposed within this thesis, such a longitudinal study would be useful in providing confirmatory findings. A longitudinal study would thus allow the testing and refinement of the model of football fan identification to be tested and refined over a longer period of time, and to incorporate changes within English football culture, along with their effects upon fan identification to be investigated.

An analysis of fans of other sports would be of additional interest. The historical development of football has led to its position as the most popular spectator sport in the United Kingdom. An examination of fans of less popular sports would be intriguing. Such sports would, presumably, not be as conducive as football to the formation of a social identity, and yet still may attract equally loyal fans. The antecedents and consequences of their identification would provide a rich research area, both in team sports, which have received most attention to date in leisure research, and in individual sports.

Finally, the implications of the study for football (and other sports) club administrators indicate further research from the clubs' point of view. The importance of identification in fan loyalty and behaviour suggests that clubs should investigate methods of increasing both the numbers of highly identified fans at their clubs, and increasing levels of identity of their existing fans. The differing cultural context of each club implies that a single, generic approach to this issue would not be feasible. Rather, it would seem to be the case that each club should undertake similar inquiry into fan identification. This research would allow policies to be developed in order to influence identities of current, and potential fans, for example in the development of standing, or of "singing" areas, as proposed by fans (section 8.4.4).
Furthermore, an examination of identities within certain clubs would permit the question of football hooliganism to be investigated from an original standpoint. If hooliganism can be explained by a combination of ethnocentrism, out-group derogation, and blasting, then football fan violence may be explained as a means of maintaining positive social identity. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide an in-depth explanation and remedy for football hooliganism, future research from a social identity standpoint could well provide answers to the issue of fan violence at football matches.

The issue of fan violence should not, however, be over-emphasised. As chapter two indicated, football research has almost become synonymous with research into the football hooligan. This thesis has argued for a fuller understanding of the meanings of fandom for the normal fan. This type of research into fundamental issues of fandom and fan identification may then form the foundations for future work into different types of football fan.
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A.1 The Town of Luton

Luton is Bedfordshire’s largest town in terms of population, and home to the County’s only professional football club - Luton Town. Luton is the largest manufacturing centre in the South-East. The geographical location of Luton can be seen below, in figure A.1.
The town’s growth can be attributed mainly to the hat trade of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This trade declined rapidly during the twentieth century, but was replaced by “new” manufacturing industries, notably those related to the motor car. The location of the car manufacturer Vauxhall in Luton combined with the rapid expansion of the car industry, attracted a large number of migrants to the town during the inter-war years, when other industries were affected by the economic recession at that time. After the Second World War, an increased demand for Luton produced goods led to an expansion in the local workforce, an expansion that was filled with recruitment of workers from outside the locality. The 1950’s and 1960’s were “boom” years for Luton and the success of Luton’s industry provided a basis for the “considerable population growth” (Devine, 1992b: 9) that occurred during the period.

The broad interdependence between the socio economic health of Luton and the car industry - specifically Vauxhall motors and associated companies - meant that the decline in the demand for cars and the increasing sales of foreign made motor vehicles in the 1970’s affected Luton severely. Between 1978 and 1990 the workforce at Luton’s Vauxhall factory dropped from 33,000 to 6,000 (Devine, 1992b: 10)

At present, motor vehicle manufacture and related activities are the still the major industries within the town, with over five thousand of the population being employed by the Vauxhall company. An associated company based in Luton, IBC, employs almost three thousand employees. In addition to automotive products, the major industries are those of engineering - primarily information technology and domestic electrical goods - and, although in decline, the hat trade. The hat trade was the industry upon which Luton’s growth in the Twentieth Century was largely founded, and the industry which gives Luton Town Football Club its nickname of the “Hatters”. Although economically not a major employer, it is a “symbolically important industry” according to Luton Borough Council, and, as such, should be encouraged to play a visible role within the community. Overall, 24% of the entire Luton workforce are employed by automotive and automotive related industries, and engineering (Source:
Luton Borough Council, 1996). The other significant industry, and one that has been the subject of considerable growth is that of the service industry. Over half of the employment in Luton is within shops and offices (Williams, et al., 1989: 3), and overall by 1995, 63% of the workforce were employed in the service industries (Luton Borough Council, 1996), demonstrating the town’s transition from manufacturing to service oriented.

Wages and salaries within Bedfordshire overall (figures are only available for county level) are below the average for the South East, and are approximately twenty per cent lower than wages and salaries in the Greater London Region. Manufacturing wages are, however, higher than in surrounding areas. Therefore, with the cheaper cost of living enjoyed in Luton compared to surrounding areas, it is assumed that Luton has a higher than average level of what Devine (1992a) terms as “affluent workers” in the working classes.

Population
Luton’s population is 170414 (Source: 1991 census) and comprises approximately 32% of the population of Bedfordshire. Until 1991, Luton has witnessed a disproportionate level of population growth, being larger compared to the rest of the county, although this has been forecast to even out during the 1990’s (Source: Population estimates and forecasts 1994, Bedfordshire County Council). The population is evenly split between male and female. The age profile of Luton is as follows:
Thus it can be seen that between 1991 and 2001, falls are expected in the 15-24 age range (a fall of 10% is forecast) and the 25-44 age group. The increases in these years are forecast to be the 5-14 age range, which will experience a significant growth of 19%.

Luton has a substantial ethnic population (running at approximately 20% of the population). The ethnic origins of this ethnic population are mainly Pakistan (6.2%), India (4.2%), Black Caribbean (3.6%) and Bangladesh (2.7%). Much of the ethnic population is located within and around the “Bury Park” area of Luton, where the football club is also located.

**Employment and Earnings**

From the ten per cent sample used in the 1991 census, employment within Luton is broken down as follows in Table A.2, (the total employees from this table equal greater than Luton population as these figures include those who travel into Luton from elsewhere to work).
Table A.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Number employed within Luton</th>
<th>Percentage of Workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers, Managers and Professionals</td>
<td>5615</td>
<td>(22.79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate and Junior Management</td>
<td>8473</td>
<td>(34.38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Manual</td>
<td>5155</td>
<td>(20.92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi Skilled Manual</td>
<td>3703</td>
<td>(15.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>(3.91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>(2.97%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: 1991 Census)

There is a high proportion of intermediate and junior management, which reflects the significant proportion of service and service related industries within Luton. Almost one-third of the workforce is currently employed in manufacturing however, despite the decline of this sector of the industry in Luton.

Unemployment within the town runs at approximately 8.2%. This figure is substantially lower than the rate experienced during the 1980’s, although a temporary drop to approximately 5% in the late 1980’s did occur (Source: Luton Borough Council). Unemployment in Luton is slightly lower than for the South East overall (9.4%). Unemployment within the town is higher within the ethnic population (at approximately 14%). Certain ethnic groups display highly disproportionate levels of unemployment, such as Bangladeshis (37.3%), Pakistanis (29.4%) and Black Caribbean (18.2%). Pockets of high unemployment are located in peripheral housing estates, all of which have a significant proportion of ethnic residents. Because of changes in the employment profile of Luton, from predominantly manufacturing to service dominated, above average levels of unemployment can be seen for manual workers (skilled and non-skilled), especially those with specific craft skills, and machine operators.
A.2 Luton Town Football Club

Luton Town Football Club was formed on April 11th 1885 with the merger of two Luton clubs, "The Wanderers", and "The Excelsiors". The club turned professional in 1890, possibly the first team in the south of England to do so. Seven years later the club became a limited company and joined the Football League. Relegation to the Southern League occurred in 1900, and relegation to the Southern League Division Two took place in 1912. During this spell, the club moved to the present site at Kenilworth Road.

An upturn in the club’s fortunes allowed promotion into the Football League in 1920. Progress was made resulting in the club gaining promotion to Division One in 1955. Further success was gained in the F.A. Cup, when Luton Town were finalists in 1959. During the 1960’s, however, an extended run of poor form saw the team relegated in 1960, 1963 and 1965, placing the team in Division Four. Promotion in 1968, 1970 and 1974 restored the club to the top division. The club was once again relegated in 1975, and remained in Division Two until 1982, when promotion was gained to Division One. The club managed its highest ever league placing (seventh) in 1987 aided by the introduction of an artificial pitch in 1985, which remained in place until 1991. The following year (1992) saw relegation to the new Division One (following the introduction of the "Premier League"). The club was then relegated in 1996 to Division Two, where it is presently located. The playing status is summarised in figure A.3 below, which indicates the team’s divisional placement.
As a football team Luton Town has "had few claims to national prominence" (Dunning, et al., 1989b: 4), and appears to have few qualities to attract fans from outside the locality, especially with the ease of access to more prominent clubs (most notably North London clubs such as Arsenal and Tottenham, each with substantially greater success than Luton Town throughout their history). In recent years however, notably since 1983, Luton Town Football Club has been subject to a number of influences, which are outlined below.

The Away Fans Ban
The appointment of David Evans gave the club a chairman with innovative ideas about how a football club should be managed, and how fans should watch the game. A significant idea was that of the role of the away fan. After less than one month in charge, Evans apparently:

33 The divisions referred to in the Figure above (1,2,3,4) refer to the old system of divisional numbering. In 1992 the introduction of the FA Premier League resulted in Division Two being renamed Division One, Division Three being renamed Division Two, and Division Four becoming Division Three.
reported his "new thinking on football which envisaged family entertainment at Luton Town with away fans barred from the ground. The away fan era is coming to a close. Fans will go to their home ground to watch away matches on video screens" (Dunning et al, 1989b: 7).

Thus, almost immediately after taking over as chairman, Evans revealed his preference for home supporters only. It seems likely that this statement was made to appease Milton Keynes Borough Council, which expressed fears over the likelihood of football related violence within the town, and voted against Luton Town's relocation in Milton Keynes for this reason. Whatever Evans's reasoning behind his support of a ban on away fans, such an attitude was further strengthened by the events of March 13, 1985, and the so called "Millwall Riot" (Greenfield and Osborn, 1998c).

The 1985 Millwall Riot

Some of the most serious disturbances ever seen at an English football match were those witnessed at the 1985 Luton Town v. Millwall FA Cup match at Kenilworth Road. This game saw as many as 8,000 "Millwall supporters" travel to Luton. (Many of those who attended were reported by Luton fans to be supporters of Tottenham, Arsenal and Chelsea fans, a claim that is strengthened by the fact that Millwall's average home attendance for that season was approximately 5,000 - Source WHOSH: September 1996). Acts of hooliganism inside and outside the ground left forty seven fans injured, and caused thousands of pounds of damage both inside and outside the stadium. The Government response was to propose the national membership scheme, with the introduction of a scheme to exclude visiting fans from matches. The Football League argued that such a scheme would be impractical, recommending that clubs should introduce their own schemes, a recommendation that met with limited response. Luton was required, at the Football League's request, to erect additional fencing around the ground, a step which would further reduce the attractiveness of watching football at Kenilworth Road, a step which was
however made unnecessary after appeal. The event of that night, however, had strengthened the club's argument for the away fans ban.

The events of the Luton - Millwall game took place in the worst year for football in terms of crowd disasters and violence. Crowd disturbances in that year led to deaths at Heysel and Birmingham, and a number of fans were burnt to death at the Bradford fire disaster. As a result of these disasters, Government legislation in the form of the Sporting Events Act, 1985, the Public Order Act, 1986, and the Safety of Sports Grounds Act, 1987 was introduced. In addition, an inquiry was opened under the direction of Lord Justice Popplewell to investigate factors affecting safety at sports stadia, leading to the Football Spectators Act, 1989, which recommended the national identity card scheme for football fans, which was however, on the advice of the Taylor Report (1990), rejected.

Home Alone - The Luton Members Only Scheme

Because of the club's inability to relocate satisfactorily, (see above), the club made the decision to upgrade its existing stadium for the 1985/86 season. This upgrade included plans for an artificial pitch, the introduction of a "family stand", and the replacement of the "Bobbers" stand with a row of executive boxes. The upgrade did not allow however, for any away fans to be accommodated in seats. Those who attended would have to stand in an open area of the ground, an area that maintained fencing, a move which was undoubtedly influenced by the events of 1985. This situation appeared to be, although it is not able to be confirmed, the deliberate start of the plan to remove the ability of away fans to watch football at Luton Town. The club decided to install a computerised membership scheme for the start of the 1986/87 season. It should be noted that the introduction of a members-only scheme, similar to that which the Conservative Government was recommending, was done under the ownership of David Evans, who, at the time, was a prospective Conservative candidate for the nearby area of Welwyn-Hatfield. Haynes (1995) argues that the Luton members-only plan was a "trial-run" for a nationwide scheme, although given
the events of the Luton - Millwall match, such an argument may be unfair to Evans.

The premise behind the membership scheme was that all those who wished to support Luton Town must be members of the club, or guests of members, and be Luton Town supporters. According to the scheme, simply living in Luton did not qualify the individual for membership of the club, evidence had to be provided of the individuals commitment to the football club. In addition, a geographical limit was imposed - The ease with which 8,000 Millwall supporters travelled from South London to Luton in 1985 was a contributing factor in prescribing this limit. This limit would not be problematic in any case as, according to Dunning, et al. (1989b: 17), most of Luton's support was "highly localised". In addition to preventing non-Luton fans attending matches, the scheme also allowed violent Luton fans to be identified and memberships terminated. The scheme resulted in significant reductions in both trouble at Luton matches, and in policing costs.

Although there were undoubted reservations regarding members-only at Luton, few clubs openly opposed the scheme (Dunning, et al., 1989b: 41). Reasons for opposition were those of accelerating the decline in attendances, and the unfair advantages enjoyed by Luton in having a members only scheme in terms of atmosphere at games. Luton had, by this time, installed the plastic pitch as part of their stadium redevelopment, which in itself was seen as an advantage to Luton (Luton Towns highest ever league placing - seventh - was experienced whilst the plastic pitch was in place), and the away fans ban was seen as providing further advantage to Luton Town.

Some opposition was encountered within the football establishment itself. The Luton Town approach was taken as a challenge to the running of the game in England (Dunning, et al., 1989b: 42). The conflict came to a head with the expulsion of Luton Town from the 1986 "Littlewoods Cup" by the Football League. The expulsion was made on technical grounds. League rules at that time stated that visiting clubs - in this instance Cardiff City F.C. - were to receive a quarter of match tickets in advance. Luton's members-only scheme did not
accommodate such an arrangement, and, as such were deemed to be in breach of League regulations. Despite opposition from the Government, the Sports Council and the Football Association the decision was upheld. In 1987 - ironically after Luton Town won the Littlewoods Cup - the club's new owners - David Kohler and Peter Nelkin - reversed the decision to exclude away fans, although the membership scheme was retained to ensure segregation of supporters.

1987 - 1996 Club/Fan Conflict
Following victory in the Littlewoods Cup, the Club's owner, David Evans, sold his shares to David Kohler and Peter Nelkin, business partners who, despite not being Luton Town fans, were keen to own a football club. The early years of Nelkin's and Kohler's ownership were to lead to an undoubted decline in fan/club relationships (*MAAH Issue 39*). The decline can be traced partly to the teams playing performance, and, more significantly, the relationship perceived by the fans between the controlling functions of the club (Kohler, Nelkin and the board of directors) and the fans' wishes.

Poor performances at the start of the 1989 season led to the removal of the first team manager, and the resignation of the chairman (to be replaced by Nelkin). The appointment of the next manager was one that received significant support from Luton Town fans - the appointment of former Luton coach and player, Jimmy Ryan (Source: *WHOSH* November 1997). After beginning to sell players off in the close season (Notably the sale of Kingsley Black to Nottingham Forest for £1.5 million) the team avoided relegation to Division Two on the last day of the season. The manager - Ryan - was sacked, leading to conflict between the club (notably Nelkin) and fans. As a result of the personal abuse that Nelkin suffered, he left the club, leaving David Kohler as Chairman/Managing Director. At the time of this research, Mr Kohler maintained overall control of Luton Town F.C.
Business v Pleasure - The Corporate Culture of the Football Club

The 1990's have witnessed a decline in the playing fortunes of Luton Town F.C. (see figure A.3). Although at this stage it would seem impractical to search for simple causal explanations for the decline, the Luton Town Supporters club has argued their reasoning for such a swift decline, the reasoning which will be outlined here. Such views are obviously significant in an analysis of club/fan relations in that, even if the argument put forward by the Luton Town supporters cannot explain the teams decline, it can provide an indication of the fans attitudes towards the situation. It also provides a simple outline of the relationship between playing and financial success.

During the early 1990's a substantial number of Luton Town's better players were sold off. The reduction in the overall quality of the team resulted in relegation from Division One. The club's explanation for the sale of so many players was that it was necessary to pay off loans made by David Evans. Such loans were made to enable the club to afford the wage bill during its more successful years between 1986 and 1988. After leaving the club, Evans requested repayment of the loans with interest, claiming that "a football club is a business, not a charity" (Source: WHOSH: October 1997). Relegation was blamed on the board, rather than the existing players (WHOSH: October 1997), and as part of the decline in relations between the fans and the football club, a number of organisations, such as Loyal Luton Supporters and Luton Action were formed to campaign against the chairman, David Kohler.

Improvements in the clubs fortunes between 1992 and 1995 saw improvement in fan/club relations (WHOSH: October 1997), with Kohler expressing his support for Luton Town fans. A significant point to note is that relegation to Division Two saw little criticism of the board and administration of the club, and that, to a great extent, blame was placed upon the players, rather than the chairman, for relegation. During this time, however, other "off the field" activities were becoming a major issue, notably in terms of club relocation.
Club Relocation

Since 1983, club relocation has been a continual issue for both fans and officials of the club. The club’s stadium, “Kenilworth Road” is evidently unsuitable for provision of football at high levels. Inglis (1991) provides a description and graphic illustration of the problems facing the ground. Kenilworth Road is located in the Bury Park area of the town, a run-down area with a high proportion of ethnic residents. To the north, east and south of the ground, dense terraced housing prevents expansion, and to the west of the ground a combination of the A505 Luton-Dunstable road and the location of the railway line make ground development impossible.

Luton Borough Council has claimed that the site is viable for high level football (Dunning, et al., 1989b: 6), a claim which was, and still is, refuted by the club. In 1996 the club chairman, David Kohler listed the problems facing the club in its Kenilworth Road Stadium. Spectator facilities were “poor”, the timber construction of part of the ground led to conflict with fans who wanted to smoke, and, located at Kenilworth Road, the club was unable to do more than break even. The club therefore was unable to progress. This reasoning has led to the development of a number of proposals by the club to relocate in recent years. In addition, evidence supplied by Luton Town Football Club to the Public Enquiry for the planning application for the new stadium suggested a number of further reasons, many of which are generalisable to other football clubs. These were as follows:

- Most existing stadia originated between 1890 and 1920. Although these stadia have been modernised to some extent, fundamental problems exist in terms of the location of these stadia in residential areas. When such stadia were built, the primary mode of transport was walking. The location of these stadia is not helpful to motor access.

- There has been little ongoing investment in stadia. Many stadia provide poor viewing and are difficult to access. Economic and spatial constraints have led to
Many club's developing grounds on a partial, or an ad-hoc basis. Very few clubs have chosen to relocate.

- Many stadia contained, before the publication of the Taylor Report, areas of terracing. This terracing failed to provide safe and attractive facilities for fans. The Taylor Report has led clubs however, to redesign grounds as all seating stadia.

(adapted from evidence supplied by Luton Town F.C. to the 1996 public inquiry into the Kohlerdome application).

The Milton Keynes Proposal

On the final day of the 1982/83 football season, Luton Town officials, led by the chairman at that time, Mr Dennis Mortimore, announced plans for a stadium relocation to the new city of Milton Keynes, located twenty-six miles to the north of Luton, although easily accessible via the M1 motorway. The development plan was for a sports complex, including hotel and conference facilities, at a cost of £35 million at that time. The plan met major opposition within Luton, resulting in protest marches, the boycotting of matches by fans and the resignation of some club officials. In April 1984 the issue was raised in a shareholders' meeting. The chairman refused to comment, and walked out of the meeting, which was perhaps "the lowest point in the decline in club/fan relations" (Dunning, et al., 1989b: 6)

The Chairman, Mortimore, resigned in November of that year, citing "personal abuse from fans" (Luton News 22 November, 1984: 40) as his prime reason for resignation. His successor, David Evans, was a supporter of the Milton Keynes relocation plan. However opposition from Milton Keynes Borough Council made the move, at least in the immediate future, untenable. Thus, efforts were concentrated upon a move closer to home.
The Kohlerdome/Wyncote Stadium

Following the Council’s refusal to allow development within any of the green belt areas within Luton, a suitable site was determined on the outskirts of Luton, adjacent to Junction 10 of the M1 motorway, approximately two miles from Luton town centre.

Two opposing plans were proposed for development of the site, one by David Kohler, the chairman of Luton Town F.C., under the banner of Kohlerdome Plc., and the second by Wyncote Developments, a property development company with interests in sports stadia development.

The Kohlerdome was planned to be a multi purpose facility, providing an international standard football stadium, exhibition and conference facilities, and the ability to host large scale, non-footballing activities, such as rock concerts (see figure A.4). According to the Kohlerdome corporation, The Kohlerdome was be intended to benefit not only Luton Town F.C., but the town in general, by providing a “first class venue for all kinds of events of national and international importance” (Luton News 11 July, 1996).
The planning application by the Wyncote Development company differed to the Kohlerdome application in that the Wyncote proposal was intended to be predominantly used for football purposes, and that the use of the stadium for other events should be regulated by inclusions in the planning permission.

In the public inquiry, Luton Borough Council expressed a preference for the Kohlerdome scheme. The Council barrister said that the Kohlerdome project is the last chance for relocation. God help us if they go to Milton Keynes...The Kohlerdome would relocate the football club into a conspicuously well-designed facility (Luton News 11 July, 1996).

The Kohlerdome plans outline a facility consisting of a removable grass pitch, with a capacity c.20,000, (as opposed to the Kenilworth Road capacity of 10,017). Additionally, substantial leisure and hotel and conference facilities are planned. In terms of access, the Kohlerdome would be adjacent to the M1 motorway slip road from Junction 10, and close to the planned “Luton Parkway” railway station. Ease of access is stressed by the planners, and the overall objective of the club - subject to planning permission - is to create a flagship stadium for Luton Town Football Club. At the time of this research (August 1998), a decision on the project had yet to be made.
Appendix B - Classification of Travel To Work Areas
(TTWA’s)

B.1 Travel to Work Areas (TTWA’s)

In terms of demonstrating that Luton Town Football Club is, as far as possible, a not atypical football club. One existing framework that exists is that of Green and Owen (1990), using the concept of travel to work areas.

The justification for classifying football clubs using the TTWA classification is dependent upon establishing a link between the football club, its fans, and the TTWA within which the football club operates. Although empirical evidence is scarce, Dunning, et al. (1985) note that Luton Town’s support is highly localised. Two North American studies (Godbey, et al., 1979; Doyle, et al., 1980) highlight a connection between attendance at sporting events and proximity to the stadium. Thus a link can be suggested between the football club and it’s TTWA.

The Classification Framework

Green and Owen (1990) used nineteen classificatory variables to identify “clusters” of towns with similar characteristics. This methodology produced ten clusters. By applying these categories to teams in the Nationwide League Division Two in the season 1996/97, the following classifications were achieved.

34 As argued in Chapter Seven, it seems unlikely that there is a “typical” football club, due to the differences between teams. Thus, the objective of the classification system adopted within this section is to suggest that Luton Town is not an atypical football club, rather than to demonstrate it as a typical club.

322
Table B.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Football Teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Manufacturing Towns</td>
<td>Burnley, Crewe Alexandra, Walsall, Wrexham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Declining Centres</td>
<td>Bury, Notts. County, Plymouth, Stockport County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hi-Tech Growth Centres</td>
<td>Wycombe Wanderers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Male Employment Centres</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unemployment Blackspots</td>
<td>Chesterfield, Rotherham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resorts</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In Migration Nodes</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relatively Prosperous Areas</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Service Growth Areas</td>
<td>Bournemouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Established Service Centres</td>
<td>Blackpool, Bristol City, Bristol Rovers, Gillingham, Luton Town, Peterborough United, Preston North End, Shrewsbury, Watford Town, York City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• (Unclassified)</td>
<td>Millwall, Brentford</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus clubs classified under established service centres were the most common, accounting for 42% of clubs. This predominance of established service centres is understandable in light of the relationship between the development of urban centres and the resultant development of football teams (Holt, 1989). All but one of the teams classified as an established service centre turned professional before 1900, with the exception of Peterborough United, which is arguably exceptional in being a relatively new town. Thus, although evidence is scarce, that which is available suggests that Luton Town is not atypical in terms of characteristics of the town compared to other Nationwide League Division Two teams.
The Fan Questionnaire

(1) The Covering Letter

Dear Luton Town Fan,

Luton Town Football Club Fan Survey, 1996/7

I am a researcher at the University of Luton, where I am carrying out an investigation into football fans. With your co-operation, this study will determine a number of facts about today’s football fan, and his or her experiences of watching football. From the investigation it will be possible to find out what you as a football fan values, and whether your needs are being met. Questionnaires are being given to a selected number of fans such as yourself, who will provide a representative sample of Luton Town supporters.

The questionnaire may appear to be quite complex, however it is quite easy, and should only take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers. In most cases it is simply a matter of ticking a box. There are, however, a number of opportunities for you to say more about certain issues. Try and answer all questions if possible, as accurately as you can.

For those that complete and return the questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided, there is also the chance to win some prizes donated by the club. If you would like to enter the draw, please fill in the section at the end of the questionnaire. Please note that all information will be used for research purposes only.

THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE TREATED WITH ABSOLUTE CONFIDENTIALITY. INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE RESPONDENT WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED TO LUTON TOWN F.C. UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Therefore you should not worry about how you answer the questionnaire. The football club will not at any time have access to the completed questionnaires, although if I find out that Luton Town fans are particularly happy or unhappy about some aspects of watching their team, I shall be letting the club know, so that your comments may lead to improvements to your experiences as a fan.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation. I look forward to hearing from you.

Ian Jones
Researcher
University of Luton
(2) The Questionnaire Survey

Your Patterns of Support

1) Which football team do you support? - If you support more than one team, write the teams down in order of preference, your favourite team first.

2) Why do you support your favourite team?

3) Have you watched Luton Town F.C. play at home this season? (please tick)
   - Yes □ - go to question 4
   - No □ - go to question 23

4) How many years have you been watching Luton Town at Kenilworth Road ______ yrs

5) Who did you attend your first professional football match with? (Please tick one box)
   - Father □
   - Other relative(s) □ - please specify whom____________________________
   - Father+ other relative(s) □ - please specify whom_________________________
   - Friend(s) □
   - Alone □
   - Other (please specify) ____________________________

6) Did this game involve Luton Town F.C.?
   - Yes □
   - No □

7) How many Luton Town F.C. games have you seen? (If you cannot remember exactly how many matches, an approximate figure will be good enough)
   - a) First team home games
      - This season □ Last season □
   - b) Reserve home games
      - This season □ Last season □
   - c) Away First Team games
      - This season □ Last season □
8) If you do not attend all Luton Town F.C. First Team games, why do you not do so? (tick any that are appropriate). If you attend all games involving Luton Town F.C., go to question 9 now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Home games</th>
<th>Away games</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Tickets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Quality of Opposing Teams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Playing Performance of Luton Town F.C. at that time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat of Hooliganism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Really Interested Enough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV Coverage of Other Matches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9) How has your frequency of attendance changed over the last ten years? (or as many years as you have been watching if less than ten years)

10) Who do you normally watch Luton Town F.C. matches with? (please tick as appropriate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Home Games</th>
<th>Away Games</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With 1 or 2 friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a larger group of friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11) At the last Luton home match you attended, where did you sit? (please tick one box)

- Kenilworth Road - Upper
- Kenilworth Road - Lower
- New Stand
- Main Stand/Enclosure
- Oak Road
- Executive Boxes

12) How do you normally get to Luton Town F.C. matches? (tick the main one that applies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Away</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On foot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By own car or van</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lift in other car</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public bus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporters club coach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13) How many miles do you travel to watch Luton Town home matches?
Your Attitudes and Experiences

This section looks at your experiences of, your attitudes to, and perceptions of watching Luton Town Football Club. As well as answering the set questions, there is the opportunity for you to include your own opinions on watching Luton Town.

14) How important are the following factors to you continuing to watch Luton Town F.C.? (please tick as appropriate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>not at all important</th>
<th>very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team Success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertaining Football</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Tickets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Ground</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Players in Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15) What aspects of Luton Town F.C. are you satisfied and dissatisfied with? - This can be any aspect of Luton Town F.C.

Satisfied with __________________________________________________________

__________________________

__________________________

Dissatisfied with _______________________________________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________
16) How do you rate the following aspects of watching Luton Town? (tick one box for each aspect)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Terrible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policing at the club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewarding at the club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket prices at the club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone booking facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club attitude to fan views</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness of club to ‘family’ supporters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of refreshments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to match tickets</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from club about its activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football as value for money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard of refereeing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stadium ‘atmosphere’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness of football to “fans like me”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between the Club and the Fan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17) How have things changed for football fans in recent years?

This question looks at how a number of aspects of watching Luton Town at home have changed over recent years, and whether they have been improved or worsened from the fans point of view. Simply tick the box for each question that best describes your own point of view on each subject. Make sure that you tick just one box for each question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>Worsened</th>
<th>Worsened</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policing at the club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stewarding at the club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ticket prices at the club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone booking facilities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Club attitude to fan views</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attractiveness of club to ‘family’ supporters</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from club about its activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fan behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Football as value for money</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard of refereeing</td>
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<td>Stadium ‘atmosphere’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attractiveness of football to “fans like me”</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18) Have you ever wanted to contact the club about your satisfactions/dissatisfactions with watching this club?

No
Yes

19) If ‘Yes’, did you (tick all that apply)

End up doing nothing
Letter to chairman
Letter to manager
Telephone call to Chairman
Telephone call to Manager

Other (please specify)

20) What was the reason(s) (a) for contacting the club? (or for doing nothing if this was the case) and (b) for choosing a particular person at the club to contact?

(a)

(b)

21) Were you satisfied with the response from the club?

Yes
No

Why was this?

22) What improvements, if any, could be made to increase your own personal satisfaction with watching football at Luton Town Football Club?
You as a Luton Town Fan

23) This section looks at your own identification with Luton Town Football Club. For each statement, a scale of boxes is produced. Look at the statements at each end of the scale, and tick the box that corresponds where you feel you are placed on this scale.

How important is it to YOU that Luton Town F.C wins?

- Not important
- Very important

How strongly do you see YOURSELF as a fan of Luton Town F.C.?

- Not at all a fan
- Very much a fan

How strongly do your FRIENDS see YOU as a Luton Town F.C. fan?

- Not at all a fan
- Very much a fan

During the season, how closely do you follow Luton Town F.C. through either the television, radio, the newspapers, or through contact with other fans?

- Never
- Every day

How important is being a fan of Luton Town F.C. to YOU?

- Not important
- Very important

How much do YOU dislike Luton Town F.C.’s greatest rivals?

- Do not dislike
- Dislike very much

How often do YOU display The Luton Town F.C. team’s name at your place of work, where you live, or on your clothing?

- Never
- Always

24) Have you any other comments regarding watching football at Luton Town F.C. that have not been mentioned in the questionnaire?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Now go to question 27
Appendix C - The Fan Questionnaire

Non Attendees

This section of the questionnaire is for those who do not presently attend matches at Luton Town F.C. Questions 25 and 26 should only be completed by those who do not presently attend Luton Town F.C. matches. If you do watch Luton Town F.C. at present, go to question 27.

25) Why do you not currently attend Luton Town Matches?

Too expensive □
Not enough time □
Quality of football not good enough □
Changed support to another team □ - which team?
Fear of hooliganism □
Other reason ________________________________________ □ □

26) Do you intend to watch Luton Town F.C. in the future

Yes □
No □
Depends □ upon what factors?

Personal Details (to be used for research purposes only)

27) Age ______ 28) Male □ Female □ (tick as appropriate)
29) How would you describe your ethnic origin (tick one box)
White □ Afro-Caribbean □ Asian □ Other ________________ □
30) What is your current employment status?
Paid employment/self employed □
Not in paid employment □
Full time student □
Retired □
If in work, what is your current job title?

31) Where were you born? (Please state which City, Town or Village)
Appendix C - The Fan Questionnaire

32) Do you have Children aged 18 or under?
   Yes □ (Go to question 33)
   No □ (Go to question 34)

33) If the answer to question 32 was Yes, would you please write down their age, sex, and, if they support a football team, the name of their favourite team.

   1) Age ___ Sex (M/F) ___ Team supported ______________________
   2) Age ___ Sex (M/F) ___ Team supported ______________________
   3) Age ___ Sex (M/F) ___ Team supported ______________________
   4) Age ___ Sex (M/F) ___ Team supported ______________________
   5) Age ___ Sex (M/F) ___ Team supported ______________________
   6) Age ___ Sex (M/F) ___ Team supported ______________________

34) Would you be prepared to be interviewed for further research into football fandom? If so, please write your name and daytime telephone number below. The interviews will take about one hour, and will be arranged to suit you.

   Name: _____________________________________________

   Daytime Telephone Number _______________________

PRIZE DRAW

Please enter me in the prize draw.

Name: _____________________________________________

Daytime telephone number: _______________________
(include STD code)
Appendix D

Interview Schedule

Four predetermined themes were included within the interview protocol. The structure of the interview also allowed other themes to emerge from the informants. The themes were as follows:

Ex  The extent of identification with Luton Town.
A  The antecedents of identification with Luton Town.
M  Factors affecting the maintenance of identification with Luton Town.
Ef  The effects of identification upon the fan’s behaviour at Luton Town.
Gen  Generalised questions allowing information to emerge from the informant.

Introduction to project
Confirmation of confidentiality
Permission to record

General discussion about Luton Town (Gen)

Why do you support Luton Town? (A/Gen)
Elaboration probe - If general, i.e. ‘locality’, expand on answer - e.g. Why is ‘locality’ important?

Can you remember about when you first began to support LTFC? (A)

Can you remember why you first began to support LTFC? (A)
Elaboration probe - why that game, that age, why LTFC?

Can you remember any stages in becoming a fan? i.e. learning behaviour, feeling of “confidence” as a fan etc.? (A/M)

Your questionnaire indicated that you were a very strong/not so strong fan. How would you explain this? (Ex)
Clarification probe - relate to identity score on SSIS

Who were important in you becoming a fan? (family, friends etc.) (A)
Clarification probe - in what way?

Who are important now? (M)
Clarification probe - in what way?
Is it important that you go with other fans? *(M/Ef)*
*Elaboration probe* - what sort of fans - friends/non-friends etc.

How important is the statement “I am a Luton Fan” to your own sense of who you are? *(Ex)*

How important is that statement to the type of person that your friends and colleagues see you as *(Ex)*

How important is it for the team to be successful? *(M/Ef)*
*clarify* - success/team performance

Relationship between fandom and everyday life - How does being a LTFC fan affect your day to day life *(Ex/M/Ef)*
*Elaboration probe* - i.e. with friends, family, workmates etc. Do you make any sacrifices to be a fan?

Is there anything that prevents you from being as much of a fan as you would like to be *(Ex/M/Ef)*
*Elaboration probes* 
  Behavioural - Going to all games
  Cognitive - Sense of feeling that you are a fan
  Emotionally

Do you feel like a member, or just a paying customer of the club? *(Gen)*

How has the changing culture of football, i.e. Premier League affected your fandom? *(Gen)*

Any other comments? *(Gen)*
Appendix E

Interviewee Details

Table E.1
Interviewee details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Interviewee details</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Identity Score&lt;sup&gt;35&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Home matches attended, 1995/96&lt;sup&gt;36&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male: legal executive</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male: consultant</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male: retired</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male: student</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male: company director</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male: student</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male: solicitor</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male: finance manager</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Male: design engineer</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male: unemployed</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Female: administrator</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male: educational care worker</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Male: designer</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Male: managing director</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Male: lecturer</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Male: tax officer</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Male: marketing director</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Male: computer technician</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male: training officer</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Female: account executive</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Male: policeman</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>35</sup> Using the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann and Branscombe 1993).

<sup>36</sup> Maximum = 25.
### Appendix F

**Luton Town Football Club: Survey Data**

#### F.1 Survey Response Rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper/Lower Kenilworth</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main/New Stand</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(n=531)*

#### Demographic and Employment Data.

#### F.2 Age of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
<th>National Population Age Profile*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-19</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 years+</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(n=531) (* Source: 1991 Census)*

#### F.3 Gender of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>85.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(n=531)*

#### F.4 Ethnic Origin of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Origin</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/European</td>
<td>99.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-Caribbean</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*(n=529)*
### F.5 Social Classification of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Higher managerial, administrative or professional</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III (N)</td>
<td>Supervisors or clerical, junior management or professional</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III (M)</td>
<td>Skilled manual workers</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Semi skilled and unskilled manual workers</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Casual or lower grade workers</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FT Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.0</td>
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</table>

(n=522)

### F.6 Birthplace of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luton</td>
<td>37.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Bedfordshire</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n=531)

### History of support.

### F.7 Length of support of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years seen</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30+</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n=531)
## F.8 Age at first game.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at first &quot;live&quot; game</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-16</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-21</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-30</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 years+</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n=513)

## F.9 Who was the first game seen with?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relative(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father and other relative(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(n=521)

## Patterns of behaviour

## F.10 Distance travelled to home matches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miles travelled</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-50</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n=522)
F.11 Number of games seen in a season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean number of games seen</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>18.94</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Away</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F.12 Company at home games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Games mainly seen with:</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2 friends</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A larger group of friends</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and relatives</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(n=518)*

F.13 Main form of travel to home games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By own car/van/motorbike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lift in other car/van/motorbike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporters club coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(n=518)*